

Designer status

Architects have been empowered by the Noida authority to pass building plans

A QUIET yet significant change in the way architecture shall be practiced in the NOIDA suburb of Delhi is silently taking shape. The NOIDA Administration has empowered architects to sanction their Clients' building plans themselves, and to proceed with construction immediately, while filing a copy with the Authority.

This new empowerment of architects (very carefully specified by the NOIDA Administration to mean for those who are Registered with the Council of Architecture – the Regulatory body) shall mean speedier procedures, and possibly more creative architecture being practiced.

The Public Notice issued by the Authority on the 11th of October, and published in the National papers specified that the architect would have to issue a certificate stating that the proposed constructions are as per prevailing Building Byelaws of NOIDA.

Interestingly, this empowerment is valid for almost all types of buildings – Residential, Industrial, Institutional and for those commercial buildings where a control drawing has been issued by the Authority.

Architects are professionally bound to inform the Authority – to that extent, the empowerment also makes them responsible “urban watchdogs”.

There shall, no doubt, be some black sheep -- given the fact that we are not exactly the most law-abiding nation in the world. But if some architects misuse this new empowerment, the results shall be catastrophic, and other municipalities, may not follow suit. That would mean that such empowerment may not be allowed by other authorities.

BY INVITATION

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Logically, therefore, this occasion calls for a need for self-regulation of professional conduct and behaviour.

Perhaps the best “watchdogs” -- or shall we say “shepherds” of the flock (black sheep or white) shall be architects themselves. This new development in the profession of architecture is the result of more than a year of hard work by a little group of young architects led by Atul Gupta – President of the UP Architects Association. Acutely aware of the “double edged sword”, many architects now are articulating about how to regulate professional behaviour, and to ensure that

This unique move of empowerment should kick start construction activity in NOIDA. Whether it does or not is debatable matter -- there are many other economic and other factors which are relevant to this activity, but this shall definitely make the process of construction much faster and probably more hassle free.

Most house owners would agree that NOIDA's record of urban administration and governance is much cleaner and better managed than that of Delhi (where there is rampant corruption in the municipal bodies), and this new empowerment shall put part of the responsibility squarely into the lap of the architect. Part, because the law still authorizes the NOIDA administration to regulate, check, and if necessary demolish construction in the Authority's jurisdiction if the Building Byelaws are not abided by.

This new empowerment of architects is actually a double-edged sword. It is a test module to check if architects behave responsibly in the matter of interpreting and implementing building byelaws, as also to ensure that their clients follow the byelaws explicitly. If the clients do not, the

this new development leads to better quality design and construction in the NOIDA region.

While the NOIDA administration rightly retains the right to issue the Completion Certificates for all construction, it has also made this procedure simpler -- it has empowered the Architect to certify that the buildings built under his charge are as per the Building Byelaws, -- thereby ensuring that the architect shares both the glory and the responsibility.

Misuse of professional privileges, and professional misconduct -- if any -- is dealt with by the regulatory body which is the watchdog of the architectural profession -- the Council of Architecture -- a body created by Parliament as per the provisions of the Architects Act 1972.

This empowerment comes at an interesting stage of our developing economy -- when “reform” is a buzzword, when interest rates are set to drop every quarter, and when most houses building activity now is directed towards building for one's own living, and not for renting out, and much less for speculation and asset building.

