

Petty politicians out to subvert land-use in Masterplan



POLITICS OF RELOCATION: Left rally on October 12

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WITH a month left for the Supreme Court to hear the matter regarding shifting of non-conforming "industries" from areas they are illegally occupying, suddenly all shades of politicians are crawling out of the woodwork, kicking and screaming in the same voice.

Sibal is mentioning the possibility of an ordinance; Khurana tearfully tells us how he tossed and turned on the Raj Bhawan bed (four times a week he needed sleeping

pills); Maken wants Masterplan changes; and Dikshit scurries off to meet the PM. The list is long.

What is all this hullabaloo about? Just a few odd workshops which are operating illegally? Yes, these are not industries. There are no Bajajs, Hondas, Tatas, Birlas, Bhartis or HLLs operating here. These are some small-scale units which have been helped by our petty politicians to set up shop next door and pollute what are primarily residential areas.

The Supreme Court has not asked the Delhi government to close legal industrial

Don't close down industrial units, SC says shift those operating illegally to planned estates

areas — Okhla, Wazirpur, Lawrence Roads and others. All that it is saying is respect land-use regulations and shift the units operating illegally to planned industrial estates.

Is there any shortage of legal industrial estates? No, we

have plenty around the Capital. Rajasthan has Bhiwadi, Bhawal, Alwar. And Haryana has a string of them. Faridabad has lots of empty industrial land and so does Sonapat etc.

Even for food products, the excellent road network which NHAI has built ensures that your curd comes from Philakwa, bread from Ludhiana, *atta* from Ambala.

The crux of the matter is that land-use regulations are the backbone of any town planning law and regulatory system in a city, and allowing illegal land-use to be "regularised" — even under an or-

dinance — will amount to violation of Delhi Development Authority Act. The second issue is that the Act is a Central enactment, not a state law. Any amendment to it needs to go through Parliament.

The Masterplan is mandated under the DDA Act for planning for the future, not for regularising illegal activities. Adjudicating on how laws have been broken and what punishment are to be imposed for illegal activities is the mandate of the judiciary, not the executive, and certainly not of legislative branch of the Constitution.

If such a move were to be

even contemplated by the Centre, it shall sound the death-knell for all cities.

Have our petty politicians forgotten that the hoardings have gone from Delhi's skyline? The air is cleaner and we have the CNG advantage.

One can only pray that the Supreme Court will not be impressed by tantrums thrown by a bunch of narrow-minded politicians who have a stake in illegal showrooms, illegal factories and illegal offices.

(Sudhir Vohra is a prominent architect and is part of the panel rewriting Delhi's building bylaws.)