

## EXPERTS FLAY MOVE TO ALLOW COMMERCIAL OUTLETS IN

### INDUSTRIAL AREAS ON 'TEMPORARY' BASIS

# Body blow to planned development in city

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SNUGGLED almost invisibly between tender notices was the ad through which the DDA this week quietly announced a scheme which will allow industrial plots in Delhi to be used for commercial purposes.

The DDA Act, which gives the DDA its powers, does not have any provision which allows such a change in land use — whether temporary or permanent — without changing the Master Plan of Delhi; it specifies a process of law by which the DDA may change land use in any plot of land.

The DDA is the authority which is empowered to implement and execute the law — and yet here it wants to break it.

There is no such thing as temporary permission to change use of land since once carried out, it is impossible to reverse the action. Violation of land use is prevalent in almost all our cities and towns — the result is the holy mess we all live in now. For instance, using residential premises for commercial purposes is be-

coming so prevalent now.

The notice says "there has been an increasing tendency to use (an) industrial plot for commercial activities due to decline in industrial activity in Delhi." It is true. There has been an increasing tendency to break land use laws in Delhi but the reasons and excuses given by the DDA in the notice are not true.

The truth is that the DDA shuts its eyes to such misuse and allows it to happen. Now, with impunity, the DDA is cocking a snook at the very law it is meant to protect and is granting a backdoor temporary permission.

To the violator the message is: Go ahead and break the law — we shall allow you to do so for a price.

And to the law-abiding citizen? You're a fool, just see the glee on your neighbour's face who has broken the law and gained an advantage. Industrial plots are the cheapest land in any city. This is done to encourage industry to come up in pre-planned zones of the city. Also to control pollution in pre-planned zones. And to

provide for power and other utilities in a planned manner. It is all about PLANNING.

By changing land use arbitrarily, the DDA is not only breaking the law but also violating the entire process of planned development.

Changes in land use are not uncommon—the growth of a city needs such steps. But it is done in a process which involves disciplines like transportation planning, utilities planning, parking and pollution control and a host of other issues. It cannot be carried out in isolation.

A temporary permission? What will the DDA do? Withdraw the temporary licence after a few years? Has it ever done any such thing in the past? On the contrary, it has been described as a den of corruption by a host of agencies. What right has the DDA got to destroy the very planning process it is charged by law to protect? And what right has it got to destroy the city we try to live in with dignity and self-respect?

*(The writer is a prominent Delhi-based architect)*