

Planning can't compensate for poor governance. Making urban laws and plans is one job, running the city efficiently is quite another

Wither urban renewal

The recent demolitions and sealings of illegal buildings in Delhi have thrown up a plethora of issues which shall progressively concern urban management and planning all over the country. Especially as the National Urban Renewal Mission takes roots and, hopefully, helps to clean up and breathe fresh air into Indian cities.

In the midst of this hectic activity, it is essential to ensure that the issues are not confused. Urban re-

the planned use or not? Nothing more and nothing less. In one case, the Court ruled that industrial activity in planned residential areas was not legal. In another, it has ruled that commercial activity in residential areas is also illegal, and the urban local body - the MCD in Delhi — has the powers to seal a building that is being misused.

An interesting aspect of this matter was the fact that it was the MCD which was the petitioner in the case, and which sought a direction from

transport, infrastructure, and other such broad brush planning considerations: the second level goes into more details and interconnections between various segments of the plan; and the third segment caters

The Delhi experiment shows that urban planning has failed in the city

colonies, in the long run. At present, Delhi seems to be moving into a stage where it will have gated colonies, with each colony having fences and gates to regulate entry into it (some even have walls). This creates the impression of ghettos, albeit not in the original, negative sense of the word. This move is a dangerous one and could have detrimental long-term effects as, instead of integrating communities, they would be further divided and compartmentalised.



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newal is never an easy task, and this is especially so in a developing country like India which does not have the resources to demolish and rebuild all the time.

On the cards

Firstly, the Supreme Court and various High Court orders concern issues of urban governance and administration and have nothing to do with flaws in urban planning. The matter adjudicated by the Supreme Court was simple - did the municipality have the powers to seal premises, which are being used contrary to

the Court about whether the law permitted them to seal buildings being misused or not.

The second issue is that of urban planning. The Delhi experiment of the last four decades has shown that the urban planning process being followed in the capital has not been successful. In fact, the failure of the process leads to the need to institutionalise a different system, which is

the three-tier system followed globally.

In this three-tier system, there are three levels of planning - the Master Plan, the zonal plans, and the local plans. While the first

looks at macro- and city-level issues and addresses matters concerning

to the needs of the local population.

Visible change

It is indeed a pity that over the years we have been unable to generate forces that will initiate the processes needed for local level planning. This despite the fact that the 74th amendment to the Constitution mandates peoples involvement in such planning processes.

But the beginnings are visible in Delhi. The MCD has begun work on five LAP studies which will involve both the stakeholders and residents. The studies should engender learning and lessons on how to involve people in planning their own neighbourhoods, helping to build communities, and not only

Lessons

It is commonly observed that whatever happens in Delhi is often copied in other states as the capital sets the benchmark for others to follow. In this context, the LAP exercise in Delhi assumes great significance for all city managers across the country.

However, the crucial fact remains. Issues concerning urban governance cannot be confused with those dealing with urban planning. No amount of good planning can compensate for poor urban governance. Making urban laws and plans is one job, running the city honestly and efficiently is quite another. ♦

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**aerial
view**

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