

GOING TO TOWN

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This is a master plan for chaos, forget it



Barely did we put the festival season behind us that all hell broke loose. Forget about getting out of the planning chaos in the city — there are now bandhs by traders, violence in the streets, the unusual spectacle of the government admitting its inability to offer security and peace to its citizens and open defiance of the orders of the highest court of the land.

One had hoped that the October reprieve given by the apex court would be used by all concerned in the government to find holistic solutions to the problems being faced in urban governance but nothing of that sort has happened. On the contrary, we are being presented with the red herring of another hopeless Master Plan 2021, and with notifications made to the 2000 MPD which are in complete conflict with each other.

Firstly, it should have dawned on the government that the process of planning established in 1962 has failed miserably to deal with the growth pangs that the capital has been facing. The 20-year planning period itself is ludicrous. The economy is moving too fast and is dynamic — we need a five-year span for planning.

Then, the farcical system of public participation and the manner in which the DDA shows it has dealt with objections is now in the open. If the public participation process was fair, we would not have RWAs pleading for justice, nor traders cocking a snook at the law with the political and bureaucratic class stooping down to the levels that they did.

The government should have used the month to plan a strategy to implement the orders of the Supreme Court in a humane yet firm man-

ner, beginning perhaps with the big fish and in areas where it could expect the least street violence and resistance. This is the time for both the iron fist and the velvet glove. If the MCD is to be believed, it has no assurances of police assistance and, therefore, cannot carry out the sealings ordered by the court.

In all this hullabaloo, it needs to be remembered that both the MCD and police are under the jurisdiction of the Central Government; most of the MCD's senior officials are from the UT cadre (and have served in Delhi before) and the paramilitary forces are also under the charge of

plementing the Supreme Court's orders, the division between the executive and the judiciary is becoming wider.

Our leaders are, meanwhile, making liberal promises of relief in the form of another master plan for Delhi. The draft MPD 2021 is yet to be debated and is short on specifics — no drawings, no details. It's a document made for the DDA by the DDA and is clothed in ambiguities and jargon.

The Supreme Court of India, perhaps tired of the manner in which it is being blamed for all the woes of the last 11 months, showed signs

Uday



the Central Government. Despite all this security apparatus being in place, both the government and the MCD have the temerity to file affidavits in Supreme Court pleading their inability to ensure peace. One shudders to think what would happen if the city were to face serious law and order problems — this one is posed by only a bunch of unarmed shopkeepers and traders.

While both the Central Government and the MCD have lost whatever little credibility they may have had by openly conniving with the traders to shut the city down, the credibility of the judiciary is also at stake. With every hour of delay in im-

plementing the Supreme Court's orders, the division between the executive and the judiciary is becoming wider. The Supreme Court could, perhaps, appoint a Central-empowered committee kind of body — like it did in the matter pertaining to environment — and get professionals to look at the entire gamut of issues, both of planning and urban governance.

The kneejerk approach to the capital's problems, which has been the hallmark of the past 11 months, shall only bring more chaos.