

NATURAL HERITAGE FIRST

Registered under the Society registration Act. 1860
A-10/4, VasantVihar, New Delhi-110057. E mail:naturalheritage@gmail.com
Ph:9212061046

847
17/11/11
15th Nov. 2011
D.D.A. N. DELHI-2



Director (planning)
MPR, DDA, 6th Floor,
VikasMinar, I.P. Estate,
New Delhi-110002.

Recd Central Dy. No 22
Dated ...17/11/11
R&D Section, Vikas Minar
Delhi Development Authority
Planning Assets

Subject : **Issue of Unauthorised Colonies**
Suggestions for Mid-term review of Master Plan-2021

Sir,

We are an organization working on issues of urban planning and natural resources since 1995. We have been majorly involved in two environmental campaigns in the city i.e Ridge BachaoAndolan and Yamuna Satyagraha. The undersigned, namely , Dr. VikramSoni and Diwan Singh were also members of Technical advisory Group (TAG) of Yamuna River Development Authority (YRDA). It was after these efforts that Lt. governor felt convinced and declared moratorium on further constructions on Yamuna Flood Plains. Prof. Soni, who is a Physics theorist with JamiaMilia University, is currently advisor to DJB and overseeing a study commissioned to determine optimum yield of water from Yamuna Flood Plains. These studies were commissioned on directions of PMO and are giving good results as can be seen from Press reports in all major dailies on Nov.2 , 2011. On the Ridge issue, our major success has been stalling of International Hotels Complex Project that was to be constructed on VasantViharMahipalPur Ridge in 1996. Today, this area of 223 hectares is preserved asAravalli Bio-Diversity Park. Our research include various published studies. One of our relevant work is "Water and Carrying capacity of a city: Delhi" by Dr. VikramSoni, published in Economic and Political Weekly in Nov. 2002.

We appreciate the steps taken by DDA for mid-term review of MPD-2021. Such flexibility is essential to accommodate the situations arising out of changing circumstances. Some issues like the following listed on your website, rightly reflect the challenges:

- 1. Development of large number of unauthorized colonies in haphazard manner.
- 2. Population deflection to NCR did not take-off.
- 3. Haphazard growth along linking corridors.

Issues on your website, rightly reflect the challenges
ADP MPR
17/11
ADP MPR

4. Strengthening of regional connection has given rise to **FLOATING POPULATION** rather than dispersing population.

1. **Development of large number of unauthorized colonies in haphazard manner.**

On the growing population of the city and expansion beyond its carrying capacity, we had discussions with the Lt. Governor. In the month of Sept. 2008, he organized our presentation before the officials of DDA including Vice-Chairman Shri Ashok Nigam at Raj Niwas. After that, we had held another discussion with Ms. Veenalsh, Mr. Nisbud and other officials in DDA office at INA, VikasSadan.

Sir, the growth of unauthorized colonies is a major challenge for the city's planning. After all the above discussions and our studies, we have come to the conclusion that one of the major factors for this haphazard growth is the management of agricultural land of the NCT of Delhi. Not a day has come, when the construction of these colonies has stopped in the city. They continue to be built as this letter is being written.

In our study, we went to the roots i.e. reasons for farmer selling his land to a colonizer. Its found that a farmer has little incentive to keep his land under agriculture use. In fact, the entire system of land management is so loaded in favor of selling that only a foolish farmer would continue do agriculture. Lets look at the disincentives:

- **REMUNERATION FROM AGRICULTURE:** In Delhi, the average land holding is almost the same as national i.e two acres per land owning family. The irrigation potential that existed in the city since British times is almost nil now, as the canal water has been diverted for urban use. Ground water table has gone down, increasing the cost of irrigation. Quality is posing another problem as saline layer is upconing in most of the aquifers in the city as per reports of Central Ground Water Board. Resultantly, cost of doing agriculture has gone up and yields come down. In almost 90% of the cases, not more than a single crop of wheat is possible in Delhi. Now, lets calculate the budgeting of a wheat crop. A crop of wheat on an acre of farm gives a yield of about 12 quintals. Sold at price of Rs 1200 per quintal, the revenue comes to Rs.14,440/-. On an average costs incurred comes to 6-8,000. So, net earning is not more than Rs.7000 to Rs. 8,000/-. For a two acre farm it would be Rs 14,000 to 16,000/-. Let alone other expenses, in so much of earning, a farmer can not even think of paying school fees for his children, if he too has a dream to send his child to a private school.
- **FEAR OF LAND ACQUISITION:** To add to the woes as above, the fear of land being acquired by the government aggravates his situation. Just to quote one

example: a farmer named Maha Singh in Village Nangloi in West Delhi did not sell his land to colonizer. His four acre farm was alone in middle of a newly formed unauthorized colony. His valiant effort to fight the trend received a jolt when, one fine day, he received notice for acquisition. He lost his land to the government and received a pittance in comparison to other farmers who had already sold to colonizers. Thus, the government taught him lesson for not allowing a unauthorized colony on his land. When many such MahaSinghs happened, the message was clear to one and all- sell your land to colonizer at first opportunity.

- SEC 81 OF DELHI LAND REFORMS ACT, 1954: This Act is like a dragon to the farmers of the city. If a farmer does not do agriculture in his land for three years, or use it for any other purpose, his land is taken away from him and vested in Gaon Sabha, under control of B.D.O. The farmer is sandwiched between devil and deep sea. Either he do unremunerative farming or lose his land; the only way out is to sell this land.

LOSS TO THE CITY:

Due to this haphazard urbanization, the city is fast losing its ecological balance and also turning into a planning nightmare. Its imperative that the remaining agricultural and community lands are now being protected as green buffers for the city. Only after providing infrastructure and amenities to the existing residents (including all those in the already existing unauthorized colonies) and assured ourselves of a sustainable existence within the carrying capacity of the city, should we allow further urbanization.

SOLUTION:

1. INCENTIVES TO THE FARMERS TO RETAIN THEIR LANDS FOR AGRICULTURE OR OTHER NON-INVASIVE LAND USES: As seen above the remuneration from farming is too insignificant in comparison to the cost of living in the National Capital territory of Delhi. Such problems are not new and not just specific to India. Diversion of uses is also a problem in other countries. Practices in countries like U.S.A and Costa Rica reveal that offering incentives to farmers works in favor of retaining these lands for non-invasive uses like agriculture, forestry, water recharge etc.. Costa Rica has often been quoted for its wonderful system called Payment for Eco Services(PES). Under this system farmers are paid extra incentives to retain their land for forestry and bio-diversity.

Improvement in forest cover and bio-diversity in these countries has been an encouraging result.

A small calculation can reveal the costs that Delhi may incur if such a system is followed in Delhi. Roughly One- fifth of Delhi's territory of 1483 Sq. kms is still agricultural land excluding the flood plain and ridge area. That is, approx. 300 sq.kms or 75,000 acres of land which is under cultivation. Looking at the problems above, we can devise an incentive package as follows:

Attractive remuneration for performing agriculture and other non-invasive uses: The city is badly in need of eco-services like forestry, water recharge, bio-diversity conservation to avoid increasing health costs (due to pollution), infrastructural costs (like more water, electricity, roads, etc.) and for maintaining a buffer between fast urbanizing Haryana and U.P. Considering that we pay Rs. 1.5 lakh per acre as incentive to the farmer, the cost comes to Rs.1125 crore per annum. If we pay, Rs. 1 lakh per acre ,it comes toRs. 750 crore. This is not a very big budget in comparison to the benefits that accrue in terms of conservation, ecological balance, less health costs, less pressure on infrastructure etc. Besides,this amount can be easily generated by the city through various Cess imposed on polluting industries, vehicles and also on goods and services. This would be a much cheaper cost in comparison to the mess we are making of our city.

2. ASSURANCE OF 'NO ACQUISITION': Mere monetary incentive of such small scale will not be enough to deter a farmer from selling his land to colonizers. The incentives on other side are much higher, as an acre of land can easily fetch him few crores of rupees.To strengthen the mechanism, we would need to assure 'no acquisition' to the farmer for an attractive period of say, 10, 15 or 20 years. And, after that period, allow him a percentage, say 25%, 40% or 50%, of his agricultural land for non agricultural use in consonance with planning in adjacent areas as per Master Plan.
3. AMENDMENT OF DELHI LAND REFORMS ACT 1954: Sec 81 and 65 of this Act divest land from the farmer and vest it withthe Gaonsabha if the farmer has not used it for agricultural purposes for three years. Agriculture in Delhi after the diversion of canals, water table gone down and ground water turning saline in most of the state, is turning into a loss making occupation. In these circumstances, the farmer is forced to dispose off his land. If the land is already vested in Gaonsabha, the farmer sells his possession rights to the colonizer. To disincentives' the farmer from selling his land because his land was lying idle, this Act must be amended.

The other three issues of concern listed are:

2. Population deflection to NCR did not take-off.
3. Haphazard growth along linking corridors.
4. Strengthening of regional connection has given rise to **FLOATING POPULATION** rather than dispersing population.

Our understanding is that more and more investments bring more migration. Investments have to be curtailed in the city. This may conflict with our objectives of providing more employment; but, in long term it's the only way to maintain balance. Holding Commonwealth Games in Delhi spurred overcrowding of city. First such wave of migration happened when ASIAD 82 was held in Delhi. Such events, marked by huge investments, must go to smaller cities far away from Metros.

We must give incentives in tax, electricity, water services and in other forms to residents in smaller cities. Say, buying and maintaining a car should be much cheaper in a smaller city than in Delhi; Taxes and other services should be so designed.

At the same time, some strong legislation is needed to ensure temporary housing and health insurance for transit labor.. Unauthorized colonies are 50% of urban Delhi since 1985. Real Estate builders are allowed to exploit migrant labour - they are given no temporary housing or health insurance. and they settle on all green areas - e.g. Vasant Vihar ridge. This makes it cheap for builder mafia with the collusion of the authorities. It is a criminal violation of human rights and urban planning and the environment.

Thanking you,

Yours Sincerely,

Sd! For
Kumar
Prof. Vikram Soni
(Vice-President)

DL
Diwansingh
(Executive Member)