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NATURAL HERITAGE FIRST

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR (Pig.)
M.P.R./DDA, N. DELHI-2
Dy.No. 848
17/11/11

Dated: 16th Nov 2011

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

Recd Central Dy. No. 21
Dated 16.11.11
R&D Section, Vikas Minar
Delhi Development Authority
Planning Asstt

Subject :Issue of Environment- Yamuna Flood Plains
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.

We appreciate the steps taken by DDA for mid-term review of MPD-2021. Our major concern is activities on the Flood Plains of Yamuna in Delhi.

The 97 sqkm,Yamuna floodplain has been established as a very valuable water resource that can sustainably (non invasively) provide over 300 Million cubic meters of drinking water , which amounts to over 25% of the supply for NCT.(Please see our study titled ' A New Scheme for Large Scale Natural Water Storage in the Floodplains: The Delhi Yamuna Floodplains as a Case Study' by Dr. VikramSoni et al published in Current Science on 25 May, 2009.) This amounts to a value of at least Rs 3000 crores/year if valued at the lowest market tanker rates for water (Rs 1000 for 10,000litres or 10 cubic meters).

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This works out to average water value of

1 sq. km of floodplain = Water value of Rs 30 crore/year

Going through the Zonal Plan of Zone 'O', we find that the Plan is largely based on NEERI recommendations. NEERI is the body responsible for destroying the floodplain by allowing the Commonwealth Games village by falsely revising the map and definition of the floodplain two times on unjustifiable grounds and the building of a bund further destroying the valuable floodplain area and the flood bearing potential of the city. Looking at maps downloaded from your website, we find that NEERI has divided the Flood Plains in various Zones such as 10 year, 50 years and 100 years return flood Zones and having recommended built up activities as no built-up, 30% built-up, 60% built up respectively. We wish to state here that the moratorium on further constructions on Flood Plains was announced on the basis of the water recharge and storage potential of Flood Plains. Expert bodies like Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) and National Institute of Hydrology (NIH) were involved in presenting their studies before the YRDA. Only after a convincing presentation by these bodies, honorable Lt. Gov., as head of YRDA, announced moratorium on further constructions. Thus, the spirit and the purpose behind the moratorium was to allow flood water spread over the flood plains, so that it can recharge and store in Flood Plains for supply to the city. To achieve this objective, no construction or any obstruction can be permitted on Flood Plains.

In spite of the above, we have found that, various activities on the flood plains have only aggravated the problem. Some of these are;

1. Building of slip roads on the Vikas Marg near Laxmi Nagar. These have cut off a sizeable part from rest of Flood plains.
2. Building of Ring Road bypass from Salimgarh Fort to RajGhat. Again a huge part of flood plains is dissected away from rest.
3. Continuing the Millennium Bus Depot.
4. Recent embankment construction opposite MayurVihar as reported in The Times of India dated 28/9/11.
5. Metro constructions as reported in the Hindu dated 1/11/11.

Going through the Zonal Plan map (MAP-II), we find more such constructions are proposed:

In Part 7 on East side-

6. Convention Centre
7. Congregation Ground.

8. Open air & Amphitheatre.
9. Golf, Polo and Race Course
In Part 2 on West Side-
10. Sports Complex, Theatre & Parking, Food Shops
In part 7 on west side-
11. Non-residential Urban use
12. Convention Centre.
13. Shopping Plaza.
14. PSP

In addition to the above, there exist about seven rail and road bridges and barrages that have effectively channelized the flood plain between Wazirabad Barrage and Okhla Barrage. The river channel in this area is forced to flow through 500 metres width under these bridges and barrages. True bridges on flood plains are raised on stilts from one end of flood plain to another. In this case, except for old railway bridge, all these cross structures, leaving a width of 500 metres, are raised on earth and serve as cross river embankments; thus, restricting free spread of flood water over the flood plain. The problem can still be rectified by creating water passes under these roads to allow flood water to spread on the cut off area.

Besides, there may be more that have escaped our attention. All these need to be corrected in the Master Plan

We suggest that any activities of following types must not be allowed:

Any construction, cement, flyash, pollution and other building activity like bunds which immediately kills the recharge potential of the floodplain. Hence as is customary for drinking water sources world over only natural activity can be permitted on the floodplain.

The following activities can be allowed:

Forest plantation, walking, bicycling, organic agriculture and any other human activity (regulated picnic areas) that is non polluting and non invasive for the sand aquifer.

We once again urge you to maintain the spirit and purpose behind the moratorium and allow no such activity on flood plain that would hamper spread of flood waters.

Rs 30 crore per sq km /year water value is the best return value one can get from the Flood Plains. Its more than any other and will go up and up in the water scarce future

Thanking you,

Yours Sincerely,

Sd/- ^{for}
Kuldeep Nayar
Kuldeep Nayar
(President)

Sd/-
Diwansingh
Diwansingh
(Executive Member)

sd/-
Prof. VikramSoni
(Vice-President)

Sd/-
SudhaSehgal
(President- Prakriti Foundation)