

City Needs an Expert- driven Single Authority

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By Invite



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Must've a carefully demarcated Lake Regulation Zone

Instead of talking about what went wrong or who is at fault, I would rather focus on what we need to do as a city and society now:

I think the most important change that needs to be brought about is the setting up of a single sanctioning authority, irrespective of where the project may be located in Bengaluru.

Today, the most significant milestone in the entire delivery life cycle of any project is the very first step itself i.e. getting the necessary sanctions in place.

Sometimes, this could take up to three years, sometimes even more. The sanctioning process goes through multiple authorities and finally is cleared by both BDA and BBMP.

There has to be a single planning authority that has professional architects and urban planners on its panel, who understand the topography, drainage systems and public utility requirements of the city.

The body should take into account all factors before sanctioning a plan for any kind of project. It should create a vision for Bengaluru and take a modern, futuristic approach rather than look back.

Secondly, there is no sanctity in using the maps of 1890 – especially when we have a comprehensive development plan (CDP) that is updated every few years. The high court also upheld this point in the case of a petition filed by Sobha Developers a few years ago – where the court ruled clearly that the CDP overrules all older maps. The last CDP was, in fact, drafted with the help of international consultants after a good study of the city's water bodies and drainage patterns.

On the demolitions, my personal view is that if all the papers are in order and a building has proper approvals and sanctions, then the demolition should only be taken up, if still required, through a formal process and not forcefully.

However, if buildings have been built illegally, then they should be dismantled and I appreciate the drive to get this done on priority.

Mumbai has gone through this cycle in the past where the Coastal Regulation Zone norms were actually relaxed to aid the development of the coastal regions. Bengaluru could similarly have a carefully demarcated Lake Regulation Zone, where focussed efforts could be jointly put in by the government and corporates to work towards improving the city.

(The writer is the founder of Total Environment Building Systems)