

Minutes of Meeting of NCHSE Environment Helpline held on 14th March 2017

The meeting was held in NCHSE on 14th March 2017 to discuss the implications of Government Notification under Section 23-A of MPT &CP Act, 1973 regarding proposed amendment in Development/Master Plans of 77 towns of Madhya Pradesh including Bhopal to facilitate change of land use for establishment of facilities for Information Technology and non polluting industries (as notified by MP Pollution Control Board) in public & semi public (PSP) land use and in agricultural land use. Mrs Nirmala Buch, Chairperson, NCHSE chaired the meeting. Participants of the meeting included professionals, architects and town planners, engineers, environmentalists, intellectuals, and members of Citizen Forum. The list of participants is at Annex –I.

During the deliberations, it emerged that the proposed amendments if allowed may lead to far reaching environmental consequences and as such actions are required to prevent such changes in the development plans. Points against the proposed amendment as emerged from the deliberation are as follows:

1. The notification gives only 15 days time to offer objections which even for the development plan the minimum time given is 30 days and the proposed notification makes very major changes to the town planning and development plan.
2. The conventional approach has been to draft the development plan first and only subsequently amendments to sub sections are made. At the least the proposed amendments and development plan ought to be drafted simultaneously. Moreover, since there is substantial diversity among the cities of Madhya Pradesh, a differentiated approach is needed. Furthermore, a vision for the whole as well as subparts is needed to contextualize the approach. Going by the experience of Madhya Pradesh and other states, it has been observed that vast swathes of land were allotted to major IT firms, most of which lies unused even after three decades. It is obvious that without a vision the uniqueness of the sector is lost which brings down the competitive edge in the long run. Suitable norms ought to be designed in the light of the character of each city. In any case, the change of land use outside the development plan area should be avoided.
3. As per sec 17 of the Act, every land use has to be marked in the development plan. With the publication of this notification the IT sector and non polluting industries will develop as per the ownership and will of the land owner, and this will lead to scattered development without proper infrastructure, such as road, electricity, water supply, etc. and amenities, which will

lead to other illegal development around these IT industrial sector, as we are facing the same problem in case of educational institutions. Therefore some restrictions should be imposed on such development , such as road should be at least 30m wide and this type or development only be proposed up to 500-1000 m from the centre of at least regional roads, etc.

4. Although development plan has been prepared as per the need and the prescribed land uses are reserved as per the future growth of the city, by virtue of the proposed notification all the exercises for the preparation of development plan will be defeated. Further, it will lead to a scattered development of the concerned cities.
5. It has been observed that in the last 4-5 years many amendments and provisions have been made in the development Plan, such as change in road section for BRTS, provision of smart city, proposed metro rail network under section 16 of the MP T & CP Act. The adhoc provisions will complicate the process of preparation of development Plan.
6. By virtue of this proposed amendment, all the land in development Plan reserved for agriculture become marked for IT industry and non polluting industries. Agricultural land marked in the development Plan is reserved for future development. By making proposed changes permitting such change of agricultural land use, will lead to uncontrolled development putting the agriculture at stake.
7. By this publication it seems that all the development plans of the cities are handed over to vested interest, so they can get any type of approval from any T & CP office of the district. It will defeat the process of section 23 of the Act, under which any specific land use of the development plan could be modified under certain provision checked by SITOP.
8. Permitting too many permissible uses of agricultural land will affect its sanctity. Therefore, there will then be no use of development plan.
9. As there is no industry in the world, which does not cause any type of pollution, this notification opening for non polluting industries will lead to development which will contaminate water, soil, air or cause noise pollution. We are already facing the problem arising due to uncontrolled extraction of ground water. Any development cannot survive without water. Without check on water supply, no development should be permitted without proper planning.
10. It was decided that the Chief Secretary and concerned government officials may be appraised of the citizens concerns as well as are requested not to issue notification for the proposed amendments.

Meeting ended with vote of thanks to all.

Annexure –I

List of participants of the meeting held on 14th March 2017

1. Mrs Nirmala Buch, Former Chief Secretary, Madhya Pradesh & Chairperson, NCHSE, Bhopal
2. Shri Arun Gurtoo, Former DGP, Madhya Pradesh
3. Shri Narendra Prasad, Former DGP, Madhya Pradesh
4. Dr Ram Prasad, IFS(Retd), Former Director, IIFM
5. Shri L.S. Hardenia, Senior Journalist
6. Shri N. K. Singh, Senior Journalist
7. Shri Shasidhar Kapur, Film Maker and Senior Journalist
8. Shri Ajay Kataria, Architect, Bhopal
9. Shri Awnish Saxena, Architect, Bhopal
10. Dr. Sudesh Waghmare, Forestry Expert
11. Shri S.K.S. Raghuvanshi, Engineer
12. Shri H.N.Golait, Former Chief Engineer, WRD, Madhya Pradesh
13. Shri Harish Bhawnani, Engineer and Convenor, Citizen Forum
14. Ms. Rashmi Saraswat, General Secretary, Mahila Chetna Manch, Bhopal
15. Shri Raghuraj Singh, MCM, Bhopal
16. Dr. Pradip Nandi, Environmentalist, NCHSE, Bhopal
17. Shri Avinash Shrivastava, Dy Director (Computer expert), NCHSE