

Builders: Demolitions singe Bengaluru's image, rattle people: The Economic Times

The city's builders came together with leading legal experts, architects and academics on Friday to challenge the manner in which civic authorities have gone about demolishing alleged illegal constructions over the past few weeks.

The builders said the arbitrary methods have shaken the confidence of ordinary people and developers, adversely affecting the city's image.

The builders said while legitimate discussions are understandable, it is unfair on the part of the BBMP to target those who have plan sanctions and relevant certificates based on the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) framed by the Bangalore Development Authority.

"This is sending wrong signals to the owners of tech parks, MNCs and software companies, making them jittery," said Irfan Razack, national chairman of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (Credai). Namrata Kolar, real estate litigation expert in law firm Amarchand & Mangaldas, said when the whole city has undergone a sea change, relying on century-old maps is not a good idea. The BBMP is using village maps of 1906 to determine the paths of drains, but many say those maps have long become irrelevant and that the CDP supersedes these maps. "The claim of the BBMP commissioner that they can demolish structures on drains without issuing notice needs to be questioned," Kolar said.

Razack, who also heads property developer Prestige Estates, said he has received calls from private equity firms and mall owners seeking clarifications on their projects and the current scenario. "PE companies and NBFCs, which park their money in these residential projects and business parks, have a right to be worried as their investments would be rendered useless if such arbitrary actions are taken."

The Prestige chairman said the atmosphere is different in other Indian cities, where builders do not face such problems.

Credai said such moves have made companies look to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which have put in place consistent and long-term policies. This is counter-productive to the efforts undertaken by the government under the Invest Karnataka programme earlier this year.

Sobha Developers chairman JC Sharma said it is unacceptable that a city such as Bengaluru, which is about 920 metres above sea level, should be flooded due to a few days of heavy rainfall. Builders say that most of the storm water drains are filled with solid sewage, which prevents free passage of water.

To solve the drainage problem, Credai said it is open to working with the state government to design a permanent drain network for the city with the help of local and international experts and contribute through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds.