

The Hindu 30.11.2011

Rope in experts, say urban planners

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“Not much groundwork” on city master plan

With just one month left for the submission of the revised master plan of Thiruvananthapuram city to the State government, urban planners have urged the Corporation to give a professional touch to the vision statement by roping in experts or outsource the preparation of the plan to a reputed consultant, preferably with global recognition.

Urban planners who attended a workshop on the master plan, held at the City Corporation office last week, said the way the workshop moved along showed that not much ground work had been done in preparing the revised master plan.

Councillors who participated in the deliberations expressed anguish over “lack of information” and the need for additional time to harness inputs and make the exercise a meaningful one.

The new master plan, now on the drawing board, is aimed at focussing on a land-use plan up to 2031, traffic and transportation, other infrastructure, and a heritage plan. Experts and professionals with talent and expertise should be roped in for preparing the master plan as development of waterfront areas, leisure and entertainment facilities, and maintenance of open spaces and parks are the thrust areas in infrastructure planning for the capital city.

Housing for the migrant population and rapid urbanisation will have to be factored into the development plans.

“It was apparent that two forces were already pulling the exercise in different directions — political interests trying to scuttle the process on the one hand, and a section genuinely concerned about methodology, validity, and transparency on the other,” an urban planner, who attended the workshop, said.

“The master plan will have to paint a social perspective of where the city has to be positioned and its inhabitants in the global scenario. Such a gigantic responsibility was being discharged by a group of relatively inexperienced people,” he said. Concerns were also raised by some councillors about the

working groups created for the preparation of the master plan.

While the government has a pool of appreciable talent, exposure to the projects like preparing a master plan for a State capital are inadequate. “A master plan has to be the effort of numerous experts and professionals, fine-tuned at each level, and consolidated by a visionary. What is in display, today, is a study in contrast,” another planner, who specialises in urban transport, said.

An urban planner said that from the display of ignorance, incompetence, and political considerations affecting the master plan, it was essential that the work should be outsourced to a consultant. “The recommendations of the consultant should be finalised democratically by putting them to discussions, rather than taking a bottom-up approach,” he added.

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- ***‘Plan will have to paint a social perspective’***
 - ***Councillors concerned over ‘lack of information’***