

No relocation plan for Delhi traders

The government has no plans at the moment to relocate traders affected by the sealing drive, officials admitted Friday.

'We have no plan so far. It's a very complicated matter and we will think over it,' said Yashpal Garg, director, commercial land, Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

A top official in the urban development ministry said they would take up the matter with the state Finance and Urban Development Minister A.K. Walia.

'There is too much pressure on the government these days. Frankly speaking, there is no plan so far but things will be discussed with the minister. A few organised markets have some space and it might be allocated in the near future,' said the official.

The candid admission came two days after the Delhi High Court Tuesday issued notices to the central and Delhi governments as well as the DDA on a petition seeking directions to use surplus land available in the city to rehabilitate the affected traders.

The issue has virtually brought the city to a standstill with angry traders taking to the street in their protest against the sealing of illegal commercial establishments in residential areas.

The petition filed by a welfare organisation had stated that shortage of commercial space in Delhi had resulted in misuse of residential premises.

Traders, who Friday called for a one-day shutdown to protest the sealing, are demanding that the government give them adequate and suitable space.

'Like invaders, authorities are throwing us out of our shops without even thinking about our resettlement. Neither the government nor the DDA are coming forward to relocate us. Where should we go?' asked a disturbed Manveer Singh, whose shop in East of Kailash is likely to be sealed in the next couple of days.

According to the traders, only 16 percent of the total commercial space occupied by them had been developed by the government.

'We want to know what happened to the space that was meant to be developed for commercial space,' said Ramesh Khanna, vice president of the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT).

R.K. Singh, a former land disposal commissioner of DDA, dismissed the traders' allegations.

'What the traders are saying is not true. During the 1980s, traders preferred to open shop in their homes. They did not participate in the auction that DDA generally conducts to provide commercial space. Traders need to accept their fault too,' he said.

Political parties have been supporting the traders.

'We are concerned about the development and are doing whatever possible on our side. We

strongly feel that all affected traders must be resettled and compensation must be given to all the suffering families. The matter will be taken up with the central government soon,' said Rambabu Sharma, chief of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee.

Acting on a Supreme Court directive, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has been sealing illegal commercial establishments. In the last three days, over 250 such units in central and south Delhi have been sealed.

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