

February 16, 2016

Report on Field Visit to the site of the Art of Living function from 11-13 March, 2016

I received a phone call just before lunch from a representative of DDA informing me that I am required go for a visit to the Yamuna flood plain near DND where a function is being planned from 11-13 March, 2016 by the Art of Living. It is desirable that proper notice should have been given by DDA enabling me to avoid embarrassment of coming out of my prior committed engagements.

I accompanied Mr Jai Prakash Aggarwal, Principal Commissioner (Land Development), DDA on this field visit. There was an official photographer who also accompanied us. As per the agreement with DDA, I was supposed to send my comments to DDA on the e-mail id sent to me. Having waited till late night in vain, I am sending my comments on the visit directly since I was also told today that there is a hearing tomorrow where this issue is to be discussed. I am extremely sorry that I would not be in a position to be available in person because of my lecture class and other prior meetings.

After visiting the site and also getting clarifications to some of my queries from Mr Gautam, Director, Art of Living, I have the following observations to make (all these observations have supporting photographs captured that should be provided by DDA, however, I have attached a few photographs which I happen to take with my cell phone).

1. A massive activity of mauling a huge tract of the flood plain of Yamuna close to DND is under way. It is very difficult to capture even with the help of photographs and the impact can only be visualised after going to the site. All kinds of JCB machines are plying there. Lorries are moving in and out of the site and compacting the soil with every move. Portable cabins have been installed.
2. The site has been cleared of all the natural vegetation and consolidated with machinery. It appears that the site has been raised with the help of JCBs. This is visible from the attached Photo 2. It can be seen that the edge close to DND is still having some part of the wetland that is still having water whereas the adjoining area is raised.
3. Ramps have also been made joining the DND with the flood plain (this is again visible in Photo 2). Around 3 such ramps have been made giving connection to the vehicles from the DND side to reach the rear of the stage (see Photo 3).
4. A gigantic stage made of steel rods is under preparation that is proposed to house thousands of artists performing simultaneously (see Photo 3).

5. Five Pantoon bridges (2 big ones on Yamuna and 3 small ones on Barapulla) are under construction.
6. A huge amount of debris and construction waste has been dumped into the Yamuna main channel close to the location of the Pantoon bridge.
7. All the vehicle parking sites are in the flood plain, majority of them being on the eastern side. Thousands of vehicles are expected.
8. In nutshell the activity can not be termed as a benign activity and shall have a permanent footprint on the flood plain and if allowed shall be in complete violation of the NGT order of January 2015 and shall also set a bad precedent.



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