

Capacity building in MCG key to execute development plans

The takeover of private colonies by the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram will not yield results unless the institution undergoes certain structural and organisational changes.

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The MCG has a promising but a large development agenda and to implement these plans and projects efficiently and takeover new colonies, monitoring needs to be stepped up. (HT File)

Any urban local body has a lot to contribute to a city's liveability. In the last few days, several developments have once again put the spotlight on Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG). The latest was the news of the takeover of eight colonies by the corporation from private builders. This means that all services such as maintenance of roads, sewerage, drainage, upkeep of park and street lights as well as issues such as security, encroachments, etc. of these private colonies would now be in the hands of the MCG.

The MCG is also planning to get ward committees in each of the 35 wards of the city to ensure that citizens of these wards act as foot soldiers and watchdogs for maintenance of all civic activities and that councillors play a more active role in local governance. There was also the news that MCG was able to utilise only 25% of its allocated budget in 2018-19.

All these developments point towards the need for urgent capacity building within this large institution, which has several departments and a complex organisational structure. To begin with, frequent changes at the top is very unsettling for bringing any lasting functional changes. The organisation structure also doesn't allow any central intelligence to build up and very often the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.

Responsibility and accountability remain loose and the organisation is always in a reactive gear than a pro-active mode. Motivation of staff to outperform is also low. There is simply too much on the plate — too many functions to administer, several ongoing and new projects to be undertaken and too many special drives to be undertaken.

Some positive changes, such as increasing the use of IT in project monitoring (e-samiksha), encouraging online payments (e-payments), grant of certificates, etc, have not only reduced legwork and paperwork for residents, but also improved efficiency and removed delays.

The empanelment of vendors is another commendable step. A list of wet waste community composting agencies is provided on the MCG's website. Similarly, for rainwater harvesting, three agencies for installing and maintaining rain water harvesting systems have been empanelled and listed on the MCG's website. The MCG has also empanelled suction tank owners to collect sewage from unapproved colonies and discharge it at specific disposal points. RWAs often face a difficult time trying to find the right vendors for a particular task or an initiative. Now, RWAs will be encouraged to take up these at a greater speed. Besides, a standard design for all road cross-sections in the city has been finalised. This will ensure that the contractors adhere to the basic requirements and that all the cross-sections in the city will have a similar design.

Then, several sustainable initiatives are being tried out such as water ATMs, multi-level parking, vertical gardens, development of green belts, nurseries. Also, a state-of-the-art camera museum that showcases rare cameras, photographs and allied equipment at Chakkarpur Community Centre will be inaugurated this summer. Creating social spaces helps to enrich living experience and build the soul of the city, as people of all age groups and from all strata converge at these places for an engaging experience.

The MCG has a promising but a large development agenda and to implement these plans and projects efficiently and takeover new colonies, monitoring needs to be stepped up. Systems and procedures need to be defined and tightened and teams built to execute and monitor these projects well. The MCG must also create ways and means to mobilise the city's intelligentsia and talent in its development plan. There is a role and opportunity for local engineering firms, consultants, residents' welfare associations, CSR wings, corporates, NGOs, progressive citizens' groups can also contribute by becoming a part of the ward committees.

While the role of Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) will remain largely strategic, and the role of Haryana Urban Development Agency will diminish. The MCG will continue to carry the bulk of the city's development and maintenance on its shoulder. The more efficient it is, the faster it will show results. The GMDA is already creating a strategic development vision and plan for the city. If MCG too spruces up, hand-in-hand, they can connect the 'missing links' and ensure a better quality of life to the citizens.

(Shubhra Puri is the founder of Gurgaon First, a citizen initiative to promote sustainability in Gurugram through workshops and research books)