

Idiot Planning

By : **Juggernaut**

A sewer treatment plant built on the beach front road, where it could be? In Vizag, a large metropolitan city in South India with a population over 2 million. “Whose idea was that?” inquired Juggernaut.
“Don’t ask me, I only work here,” replied the irritated lady engineer working at the plant. Then she calmed down, “Well, the planning engineers thought, a sewer treatment plant closer to beach would facilitate easy discharge of treated sewer deep into the sea.”



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Subba Rao

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“Don’t ask me, I only work here,” replied the irritated lady engineer working at the plant. Then she calmed down, “Well, the planning engineers thought, a sewer treatment plant closer to beach would facilitate easy discharge of treated sewer deep into the sea.

“Have they considered about possible stink from the sewage treatment at the beach and numerous homes around?”

“You ask them,” the engineer shot back and walked away.

“Constructing a sewage treatment plant near the beach, that’s a real idiot planning, all right,” thought Juggernaut, walking slowly from the stinking plant at the beach which was shut down temporarily from operational problems after spending millions.

“I am wondering if you have old records on the huge underground sewer pipe line project from 1964?” asked Juggernaut.

The respondent, an old bureaucrat working in the City of Vizag public works Department raised his head and looked at Juggernaut as if he was looking at an alien creature.

“I am talking about a project on which the City spent millions on laying underground drainage pipe lines in mid 1960’s, since then never brought into operation,” asked Juggernaut.

“Sir, I have been working here since 1970 and nobody mentioned about that project,” the bureaucrat was calm.

“Then what happened to those pipe lines and why it is not in operation?”

“I have no clue and you have to ask my supervisor who came on board only few years ago,” the bureaucrat threw a curve ball.

The underground drainage project in mid 1960’s after years of spending millions in digging and laying pipe lines was abandoned and forgotten without even putting to use, why? Nobody in the Public Works Department even aware of the existence of underground drainage pipes in the area. After waiting hours to meet the bureaucrats to get answers, Juggernaut left the office building asking himself “what kind of idiot planning was all that about?”

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The city's oldest college with prestigious name was in ruins in some sections. Roof was partially collapsed in some class rooms. The college auditorium is now an abandoned building with vegetation took over the structure. Dust to dust.

Squatters occupied the college play grounds and turned into a slum. During a visit to the college after several decades, Juggernaut confronted one of the officials in the college on the condition of the buildings. "You know this college operates on a private trust money with some assistance from the government, we can hardly pay the salaries to the staff and no money to maintain the infra-structure," said a tired looking man sitting in a dark dingy office room. During all these years of decline and decay, had the board of trustees made any attempts to get funding from other sources; say donations from the college alumni, many now successful entrepreneurs, the situation could have been better. Now the dilapidated buildings, some beyond repair look more like an archeological ruins rather than a school in operation. Idiot thinking or what?

Poorna Market, the oldest and largest daily bazaar was built decades ago in the low-lying area of town. Always under water when it rains. For decades, flooding from the rains was a serious problem in and around the market and yet, no serious measures were taken to prevent submergence. Juggernaut met with the civil engineer in charge for the area to find out what it takes to solve the flooding problem once for all. "How about installing several lift stations strategically around the market to pump the rain water out," suggested Juggernaut. The chief Engineer, a proud father of four, only wants to talk about his children, all living in the United States.

The main route to the city cremation grounds pass through railway bridge underpass; always few feet underwater when it rains. The entire funeral procession has to get wet up to the knee level when it rains hard. The only body that remains dry in the funeral procession was the dead one carried several feet high from the ground level. What it takes to fix the dreaded water logging problem below the railway bridge? So far only idiot thinking was hindrance.

Some years ago on vacation, Juggernaut was taking a morning stroll on the beach front road, several landscaping workers were planting palm trees right on the edge of the beach road; "I see water scarcity here, who will take care of these young palm trees until they establish?" Asked ever inquisitive Juggernaut. "Once these trees establish, this place would be like Marina beach with tree lined beach road," the supervisor on the job boasted. On completing the expensive tree planting project for miles, not a soul from the Public Works Department revisited to take care of the plants. The entire project costing a fortune evaporated just like the palm tree saplings under hot sun. Who was in-charge here?

On the opposite side to the dead trees lining project on the beach road, a wide area with potential to accommodate ever increasing traffic was wasted to erect scores of twice the life size statues of leaders in art, politics and whatnot. Millions spent on erecting these statues could have been well spent on expanding the narrow beach front road. 12-inch exhibits of these figures would be cost effective and serve a better purpose in the local museum than the gigantic statues occupying precious land space on the beach front road. Idiot planning or what?

Bad lands comprise of sharp peaks and deep valleys of red lateritic soil formations occupied miles of beach front road decades ago were now replaced by expensive high-rise condominium buildings. None of these high-rise condo units including several luxury hotels and scores of restaurants on the beach road have sewer collection system for treatment at a sewer treatment plant. The developers let the raw sewer sink into septic tanks in the ground or let it out to drain into sea. Whose was planning these multi-million projects without sewer collection and treatment? Was anybody checking E. Coli count in the sea waters for public safety after all that raw sewer draining into the sea on a continuous basis. Beach front property either condos or hotels demand high price for its beach scenery and easy access to beach, but not a beach that's part of sewer and debris collection system for the area. Was idiot planning entrenched here.

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The southeast part of the city is the hub of heavy industries, a huge iron ore conveyor system for off-shore loading, a steel and fertilizer plant, ship building plant, deep sea harbor, a major naval defense establishment and scores of other heavy industries. A temple to worship Lord Venkateswara was built on top of a small hill at the edge of the ocean in that area decades ago before all the industrial development. Now, the access to the temple was anything but easy and the immediate vicinity of the temple was highly polluted from dust and noise from the industries around. Relocation of the temple to an area more accessible to the devotees should be on the drawing board; instead money is being spent to expand the temple sitting on a hill in the middle of smoke stacks. One wonders what the temple (mis)management team were thinking. The temple and the idol inside were manmade in the first place, and it can be relocated.

While walking on the streets of Vizag and other major cities in the state, one can notice idiot planning. Just like a place designated for burials and cremations in a city; all the statues in every city, scores of them should be moved to a designated location for burial and can only be viewed for a price just like Qin Terracotta Warriors in China

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