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## Only 5% town planners in state qualified for job

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Chennai, Nov. 10: Only five per cent of planners in various town planning authorities in the state are actually qualified for the job, said Mr. S. Balasubramaniam of the Institute of Town Planners, India.

This would be sobering thought for those who complain of flooded roads, traffic snarls, dirty slums and encroachments.

What is even worse is that the suggestions of even qualified planners hardly make it to the blueprint.

“For instance, in town panchayats, it is the maestri who has not passed Class 12 who sanctions building approvals,” said Mr. Balasubramaniam at a seminar on the occasion of the World Town Planning Day on Tuesday. “Rather than a planner with a masters’ degree in town planning who thinks beyond the engineering angle, it is the civil engineers, diploma holders and ITI graduates who are chalking out plans for the cities.”

He said the main reason for this was anomalies in the government's hiring policies that have not changed since the 1970s, and hence do not reflect the need to recruit qualified planners to meet the present challenges that urban areas were facing.

“What this means for the slum dwellers and the affluent alike is that cities are growing on their own without a definite path, merely reacting to the challenges thrown at them,” said Dr Abdul Razak Mohammed, professor of town planning in the Anna University.