

Land borrowing a Viable Solution

What is the issue?

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- For development related infrastructures land acquisition is being a major challenge across the nation.

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- **Land borrowing** by the government can be a viable solution for India.

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What are the land acquisition challenges?

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- Acquisition of land implies that private owners sell the land to the government at a price mutually agreed on and then the ownership of that piece is transferred and this transaction is complete, with no dispute later.

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- Infrastructure, rehabilitation, resilient housing for disaster mitigation and others has the biggest challenge of land acquisition.

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- Particularly for countries in South Asia and East Africa, this is a major concern.

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- In Africa, the land is typically owned by the tribe but in India individually owned private plots of land in rural and urban areas are coming in the way of development projects.

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What are the reasons for hassle in land acquisition?

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- Land Owners are not willing to sell land for sentimental reasons considering land as “mother earth” and selling land appears to be a cultural taboo.

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- They also have the fear of being cheated by the bigger agencies.

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- There are also anxieties that the money which is gained after selling the land will either be stolen or dried up.

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How land borrowing will be viable solution?

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- The government can borrow land for particular project, uses it for that project and returns it to the owner after it is no longer used for the purpose for which it was borrowed.

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- The state can borrow land from the owner under certain conditions such as

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1. When the assigned use by the state ends, temporarily or permanently, it is returned to the owner, who is then free to use it the way he chooses.

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2. The owner continues to use that part of the land till it is required for the purpose it is intended for, say a road or bridge or a power plant.

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3. Only that much piece of the land is lent that is required for the project and the owner continues to use the remaining part in way he wishes, including renting out.

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4. When the financial life of a project (typically 20 years) ends, the lease is renewed or re-negotiated

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Has this idea ever worked in practice?

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- In the State of Hyderabad historically and till date this idea is being followed.

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- Being a land-locked state with one river, between 1724 and 1947 the State of Hyderabad did not have enough water for irrigation.

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- Bunds or low walls were built by the then Nizam along the river and streams of the river, to save water in tanks.

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- The Nizam of the State of Hyderabad “borrowed” private land for a specific purpose and under predefined conditions.

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- The land continued to be owned by the land owners and they had papers to prove it.

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- These are not very large-sized tanks, hence, no count is kept in the government records, but they are many and ran into over 500-plus in the metropolitan area alone in 1901.

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- While the tanks lasted, this system worked to everyone’s advantage.

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- However, after Hyderabad became a state capital, it urbanised rapidly. The tanks dried up or just vanished as the city grew.

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- The pieces of land were reclaimed by the owners and the judiciary respected their property rights.

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Source: Business standard

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