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FROM THE DESK OF THE CHIEF EDITOR

Prof. Nishith Rai

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The process of urban development, throughout the world is related to the multiple growth of cities. It is subjected to the innumerable forces and process of changes in the man's overall environment. An ideal city has not only to be beautiful but it should also be functional in terms of providing a congenial living environment. In recent decades, the technological developments have increased mobility, reduced the loss of time, enlarged the economic developmental activities and multiplied the demand for services, and in turn has eventually generated the unprecedented demand for urban land. Thus, the situation is alarming in case of million plus cities in India. The growing menace of slums and unmanageable question of squatter and pavement dwellers is the symbolic evidence of a serious urban challenge for the planners and administrators.

The shortage of basic services and amenities like water, power, housing, problems of slums and squatters, traffic congestion and unhygienic conditions are ugly manifestations of explosive growth of the Indian metropolitan and large cities. Small and medium town settlements on the contrary, suffer from demographic and economic stagnation, and in some cases also from population decline. Both the explosion as well as the stagnation are vital symptoms of economic maladies. The remedies of these problems lie in the purposeful approach of urban development programmes which should include the creation and strengthening of economic and infrastructural base in small and medium town settlements.

It needs to be underlined that the urban development problems are complex and require a package of policies to manage issues of varied nature and character. One has to further refine one's own vision in the context of the fact that the urban development and policies are framed and implemented through a mix of local, state and national agencies. Therefore the inter governmental relations, institutional arrangements and mechanisms are important to be viewed as effective tools of planning.

Recent trends in the urban management suggest four types of initiatives and reforms. These are political empowerment, functional empowerment, fiscal empowerment and integrated and participatory planning including providing basic services to urban poor.

While elaborating the process of decentralization and its' follow up, the papers in journal suggest a range of issues which require suitable attention. This gives useful feedback for both the policy formulation as well as refinement of actions which are permissible and possible within existing framework.

NISHITH RAI

Lucknow
July, 2009

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CONTENTS

1. Developing Future Cities	- Sanjay Bhoosreddy	1
2. Status of Urban Poverty in India	- D. Pulla Rao	9
3. Role of Urban Local Bodies in Urban Poverty Alleviation in India	- Nishith Rai	19
4. Urban Poverty and Slum	- Ravindra Singh	31
5. A Slum Profile in the Hill Town of Kalimpong	- Indu Chetti	35
6. Status of Urban Sanitation In Uttar Pradesh	- Richa Varmani & A. K. Singh	48
7. Urban Transportation Management in India	- Shailja Dixit	69
8. Main Streaming Poverty and Managing Women Health	- Siddhartha Sarkar	88
9. Role of Citizens in Combating Climate Change	- Alka Singh	104
10. Local Government and Politics in India :Evolution and Development Policy of Local Government in India	- Akhileshwar P. Singh	112
11. Urban Poverty Alleviation in India : An Approach for Pro Poor Reforms	- Kamal Kumar Singh	121
12. An Outlook Towards Sustainable Development in India	- Divya Lyall	133
13. भारत में नगरीय जीवन पर उपभोक्ता संस्कृति एवं भूमण्डलीकरण का प्रभाव : गांधीवादी दर्शन के परिप्रेक्ष्य में	- धर्मेन्द्र कुमार सिंह	142