



## EDITORIAL

The early half of 2015 has been quite eventful for communities, scholars and practitioners associated with urban India. It has seen the official launch of some of the most promising initiatives unveiled for cities by the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Government of India, namely the Smart Cities Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) and last but not the least, Housing for All. Collectively the schemes pose to be a reckoning and unprecedented force of such a scale, in transforming the living conditions of so many city dwellers in a planned manner in the history of human civilization.

The much anticipated Smart Cities Mission aims to make 100 major cities of the country smart through a competitive process of selection. The Government has committed to collaborate with states and local bodies in implementation of the scheme and dedicated Rs.98,000 crore for five years. Research reveals that, in spite of having no internationally accepted definition of a Smart City or a national urbanization policy in India, the Smart Cities objectives none the less hold immense potential to achieve multiple benefits of sustainability, systems efficiency, economic growth, participatory governance and better quality of life.

AMRUT would select 500 cities having 1 lakh and more with the aim to (i) ensure that every household has access to a tap with assured supply of water and a sewerage connection; (ii) increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery and well maintained open spaces (e.g. parks); and (iii) reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport (e.g. walking and cycling). All these outcomes are valued by citizens, and their indicators and standards have been prescribed by the MoUD in the form of Service Level Benchmarks. The mission includes components of public private partnership, capacity building and urban reforms.

HRIDAY aims towards holistic development of heritage cities. With a duration of 27 months and a total outlay of INR 500 Crores, the scheme is being implemented in a mission mode in 12 identified cities namely: Ajmer, Amaravati, Amritsar, Badami, Dwarka, Gaya, Kanchipuram, Mathura, Puri, Varanasi, Velankanni and Warangal. It supports development of core heritage infrastructure projects, including revitalization of areas around heritage assets identified/approved by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and State Governments. Meanwhile, Housing for All is an ambitious scheme that aims to construct 2



crore houses in urban areas in the next seven years. Each house in the country is stipulated to have basic facilities of 24-hour power supply, clean drinking water, a toilet and connection of road.

It is in this context and spirit that *Urban India* carries forward its zeal to research into appropriate and sustainable pathways of urbanization. For instance, homelessness is a perennial problem in India, especially due to the wide rural-urban divide in terms of economic opportunities. Lack of stable housing has complex forward and backward linkages like unemployment/unstable employment, poverty, ill health and lack of education. A study of homeless people in the city of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh attempts to evaluate the socio-economic conditions of these people on the basis of their needs and demographic characteristics. The study reveals that a majority of the homeless lack any proof of identity, public healthcare services, safe drinking water and conservancy, and have never heard of various government schemes for poor. The study suggests a framework to reduce the incidence of homelessness and mitigate deprivation.

It is generally accepted that local land-markets shape investment into the built environment or real estate. It is seen that the nature of economy has vital implications on housing markets. It follows that in open land markets with no restriction on purchase of land, and having unlimited number of buyers and sellers, the effects of liberalisation are likely to be more pronounced and easily traceable than in quasi markets (like several areas in India's North-East under the Sixth Schedule, where ethnic or other ceilings on land transaction restrict the number of buyers and sellers). Among the states of India's North-East, Assam has traditionally had an open land market which offers a feasible vantage point to compare its housing sector with other Indian cities which have reflected liberalisation's most immediate effects. The paper by Kanungo attempts to locate aspects of liberalised privatisation in the housing market by studying Guwahati Municipal Corporation Area. The paper reveals several imperfections, inequities and un-sustainable practices in the housing market that pose a formidable challenge in achieving housing for all. Similar studies in other Indian cities could help bridge the widening gap between demand and supply of houses, particularly for the urban poor.

But a lot depends on the inherent economic status of different cities. In case of India, evaluating competitiveness of cities has ever been a challenge, particularly due to lack of sufficient and classified data structures for economy at the city level. The research paper by Sabyasachi Tripathi tries to not just address this gap, but also ascertain the hidden patterns in economic status of 52 large cities in India for the period 2000 to 2009. The



paper reports with substantial evidence that agglomeration has a strong positive effect on urban economic growth, at least up to certain level of economic development, the critical income level being Rs.37049 per-capita. Evidence suggests that as large settlements can't promote urban GDP endlessly, appropriate policies for promotion of agglomeration in smaller settlements (probably through cottage industries, agro-based and food processing industries, micro small and medium enterprises, etc.) should be encouraged.

The transport and urban sector together play a key role in promoting economic growth. Transportation policy crucially determines external and internal shape of urbanization. The inter-linkages between the transport policy and urban policy have not garnered adequate attention in the past. The paper by A. Narender meticulously reviews the transportation policy in India and highlights the linkages with urbanization. The paper suggests to set up a task force by the MoUD to examine the nexus and develop an integrated approach at the national and state level. This will help in developing an optimal portfolio of cities and strong urban-rural linkages between them. There is also a need to prepare a comprehensive mobility plan for each city with a focus on promoting public transport and integrating land use planning with transport planning.

The rapid growth of rural-urban migration due to urbanisation has been a common feature in developing societies. Informal sector provides the means of survival to the squatters and slum dwellers. But the socio-economic status and of quality of life of the older and new migrants living in the inner and peripheral city squatter settlements may differ drastically, as Pramanik investigates in Siliguri Municipal Corporation Area. For modeling a composite quality of life Index, twenty socio-economic variables are selected on judgment orientations that possibly reflect the general well-being of the people at the household level. The paper reveals that inspite of having low levels of economic well-being, the inner city squatter settlement is much better of as compared to the peripheral city. It reinforces the belief that the overall quality of life is not only contingent upon the economic well-being or income levels, but also on various demographic, physical and social set of variables. In this regard, provision of basic services to squatters would not only improve their lives but also save the local environment from further degradation. Curbing rural to urban migration through rural development may offer as a long term solution to the deteriorating quality of life in urban slums. The research also suggests that the local governments should be more sensitive towards educational attainment, job oriented training programmes, skill and knowledge acquisitions etc., which have direct impact on quality of life or well-being of the locals, particularly migrant squatters.



Indian cities increasingly face a growing challenge to not only provide equitable access to basic resources and utilities like energy, water supply and sanitation, but also handle complex waste streams like industrial emissions, bio-medical waste and electronic waste. Based on a post-graduate thesis, the paper by Ajith, Mani and Bhaduri explore the management of electronic waste in the capital city of New Delhi. While empirically determining the waste generation through formal and informal channels, the study reviews policy implications on the ground and failures in integrating environmental and urban planning regulations. To promote formal disposal of electronic waste in the city, the research puts forward space standards and zoning regulations for handling centres. The study is a good example of how well-oriented academic research could be instrumental in capturing local problems and policy augmentation.

Most of the infrastructure and physical planning problems in cities are associated with how poorly these are governed by the local bodies. Fiscal decentralisation is a crucial step to ensure an effective governance structure at the local level. Local finance in India requires specific attention. Not only devolution of funds from higher levels of the government requires streamlining but also local level own sources of revenue need to be augmented. In this perspective, Anita Rath's paper analyses the erstwhile property tax system in Greater Mumbai, a system which remains prevalent in many cities of India. It evaluates multiple components of rateable value based schema like collection efficiency, tax rate effect, assessment effect, and base effect to report inelastic results and inefficiencies due to quasi-buoyancy in the system. The findings could help local bodies to either fix systemic shortcomings or switch to customized taxation types that are relatively transparent, convenient and representative of market behaviour.

Decentralization of functions and financial powers is incomplete without participation and inclusion of all sections of the society in local governance. Under-representation of women in civic bodies limits their ability to influence local decisions, impacting provisioning and prioritization of basic services, allocation of resources and quality of life. Evidence shows that women make up only 9% of mayors and 21% of councillors in the world. The paper by Payel Sen makes an empirical enquiry into the role perception and role performance of women councillors in metropolitan context of West Bengal. Field findings indicate that mere political representation of women as a necessary first step has failed to usher in gender-equitable urban governance. For want of right knowledge, skills and attitude, the leadership potential of women councillors largely remains untapped resulting in their low level of performance as city managers and community leaders.



The learning from such diverse researches across the Indian landscape enriches our understanding about human settlements, the plethora of problems they face and their hidden potentials to address them. In addition to the above, we cover a review of two books: (1) *The Durable Slum - Dharavi and the Right to Stay Put in Globalizing Mumbai* by Liza Weinstein and (2) *Colonial Delhi-Imperial and Indigenous* by A.K Jain. The journal will also update its readers with findings from important seminars and workshops. While the first half of 2015 will be remembered for launching of prominent national programmes in the urban sphere, it would also find mention to the sudden demise of not one but two legendary icons that shaped the modern urban agenda in post-independent India, namely Mr. M.N. Buch and Mr. K.C. Sivaramakrishnan. Urban India commemorates their long standing dedication to the field and pays rich tributes to their contribution in the Obituary section. But their work in urbanization, decentralization and greater autonomy to local bodies is not finished yet. The society needs to cultivate similar thoughtfulness, ethics and commitment to realize just, responsible and sustainable cities. We hope that the knowledge generated through this issue would illuminate our tryst with global environment and urbanization challenge, our newly simulated discourse for national urban development, as well as the micro-level issues that continue to concern urban planners and managers in practice.

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