

India's Urban Growth in Recent Times: Need for Sustainable Urban Development Strategies

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Abstract: India's urbanisation process can be characterised as divisive and uneven, owing to lack of sustainable public strategies benefitting to all sizes of cities and towns in the country. The urbanisation is highly inclined to major urban centres, including the state capitals and is conspicuously uneven, due to improper development of public infrastructure and public services, especially in the small and medium towns. The urbanisation process has largely driven by the economic considerations like increased employment opportunities, higher income earnings and other social benefits and comforts than the human settlement challenges. Having been promoted and nurtured the main urban centres, the urbanisation process has not only divided the settlements over the decades but also displaced smallest towns in the recent years. The small and medium towns being the settlements of low-income groups and the immediate tiny service centres, continuing to suffer without the basic socio-economic infrastructure. Realisation of the urban outcomes although has led to the public intervention in the late 80s but its effectiveness to ensure sustainable urban development is far from satisfaction. This is largely due to mandatory participation in expenditure sharing by the states and due to lack of political will for the sub-regional development. As a result, the impact of IDSMT is not widespread across the country but limited to selected major states, which have had the capacity to share the public expenditure and exhibited the political will. Above all, complete abandonment of the ongoing strategic development without adequate alternative design is a serious setback to decent and orderly urban life at the hitherto neglected small and medium towns. The emergent urban challenges have been discussed in greater details and this paper offers a sustainable policy imperative, as contributions to the effective public intervention, to achieve the desired goals of the inclusive urbanisation and orderly urban life in the country.

Key Words: Urbanisation, Disparities, Interventions, Ineffectiveness, Sustainable, Strategies.

Biography Note: Dr M. Mahadeva has earned his PhD Degree in Economics from a century old institution of higher learning - University of Mysore (1916) on the theme 'Economics of Market'

with special reference to cooperatives in housing market in a regional context of India. He has worked as research faculty in Economics for two decades at the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) – one of the think tank institutions of the country. He has earned five international fellowships, including the Commonwealth Academic Scholarship and was also a visiting scholar to a few universities and institutions abroad. He has extensively published covering the broad areas of housing poverty and deprivations, housing market and housing development players, financial exclusion/inclusion policies and human settlement issues in urban and rural contexts of the poor and vulnerable households. Apart from guiding doctoral dissertations in Economics in the span of over two decades of academic period, he has engaged in the highest policy making bodies like the Planning Commission of India (formerly) as subject expert and served in various committees/commissions at the regional and national levels.

I. Introduction: India has been advocating inclusive growth since 2007 or from the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) period, in response to its late realization that the benefits of the growth achieved till then has not been sufficiently reached all sections. Especially, it is being commonly said that the marginalized and economically weaker sections have been by and large excluded from the benefits of socio-economic development (GoI 2008a). Although the realization took too long a period sixty years after the independence but thereafter, a road map has been drawn to include the excluded unfortunates into not just the growth process but also to share the benefits of the growth itself. This landmark decision has laid foundation to the present inclusive growth process, which is presumed to yield broad-based benefits and to bring about equality of opportunity to all. To meet this critical milestone, major thrust was laid on rapid growth and poverty reduction, employment challenge, access to essential services, social justice and empowerment, environment sustainability, gender equity, governance, and responsive role of the state. One of the governance related issues pondered over is the management of urbanization and urban affairs, with a focus on the development of infrastructure and the poverty alleviation. It was rightly observed by then Planning Commission that the urban centers due to their accelerated growth and enormous employment opportunities attracts migration from rural and backward areas. Providing affordable shelter and decent living, especially in the slums, as part of the urban poverty alleviation have been the thrust area under the inclusive urban growth (GoI 2008b). Ever since, the thrust has paved for the urbanization very conspicuously, which has resulted in expansion of geographical areas along with the demographic changes over the time. Obvious to say that people have migrated largely to seek better prospects like employment opportunities, higher income earning, better infrastructure, better educational and health services and what not in the urban areas.

But at the same time, it is apparent to note that the urban growth taken place hitherto has been lopsided towards the major centers. Besides, the urban expansions have led to the urban disparities mainly in the development front. These trends have prompted human settlements in the advanced regions and as a result most of the semi-medium, small, and very small towns have

become backward and have been neglected from development fronts. One Million Population Municipal Corporations (OMPMCs) and the other major urban settings continue to be the magnetic centers, whereas the other segments of the urban settings have been development starving. Especially the later ones have handicapped with the investment in the development of socio-economic infrastructure. Public interventions to minimize the urban settlement disparities as well as to make these urban settings living friendly have not yielded the needed results over the years. Unfortunately, there are hardly any attempts in highlighting the urban ground realities in the country, despite these development divide in the urban walks of life. Therefore, this research mainly emphasizes the emerging urban scenario and the human settlements pattern with the selected demographic parameters. Contributing to the public policy making debate by exposing the governance issues of the India's urbanization process and to facilitate effective policy making to meet the urban development gaps/challenges are the overall purpose of the paper. This paper has two specific objectives: (a) to review the emerging paradigm of urbanization taking various factors into analysis; and (d) to propose alternative policy imperatives as the policy inputs. These objectives are consciously selected to ponder over the emerging mismatch between the urbanization trend and quality human settlement attainments. The paper has extensively used official sources of data (Census and National Sample Survey Organization) for the analysis.

II. The Urbanization: Paradigm of Disparities: India's urbanization trend, like in the past, has not only been an uneven momentum (Rao 1983) but also concentrated in a few major urban centres (Crook and Tim Dyson, 1982). This unscrupulous trend has continued even in the last decade (2001-2011), in the absence of any corrective measures on the part of the public intervention and public investment. The phase of urbanization between 1991 and 2001 has offered a few insights besides recapitulating the growth, especially in terms of the number of towns by their size, geographical areas, population, and density (Table 1). From the scenario, what impresses is the number of urban towns and agglomerations that have increased to 5161 in 2001 from 4615 in 1991, across the length and breadth of the country (Census 2001). The net addition of 546 towns across the different sizes is itself an indication of the geographic expansion and demographic growth in urban settings. But what disappoints the growth is the uneven growth and marked divide among the various sizes of the cities and towns, as evidenced by the disaggregated examination. In other words, the urban development scale is not uniform in term of the investment induced employment opportunities, state induced socio-economic infrastructure development, people's preferences and what not. From all these fronts, some urban centers have an edge over the growth, which is complimented by the socio-economic infrastructures and the others have continued to suffer and lagged on these fronts. To be precise, all the major cities (mostly the state capitals) have been the centers of urbanization with huge potentials for employments for skilled and unskilled work force with large scale investment and socio-economic developments.

Between the two censuses, Class I cities like in the past have continued to be the centres of urbanization (Mohan, 1985), because of the concentration of the public - private services, educational, employment opportunities and what not. In fact, Class I cities have increased their numbers from 331 in 1991 to 441 in 2001 – a net increase of 110 cities and these segments are the second largest that have registered higher growth. Falling line with the trend have been the Class III and Class IV urban areas, which have also registered a phenomenal increase. Their numbers have respectively increased from 1161 to 1387 and from 1451 to 1564 during the periods and the net additions have been in the order of 226 and 113 towns. Against the fast growth centres, Class II and Class V towns have registered almost a moderate/natural pattern of growth in their numbers at 75 and 71. Consequently, the number of second category of towns has increased from 421 to 496 and 971 to 1042 correspondingly. However, much against this increasing trend in the first and second category of towns, Class VI towns have decimated by 58 towns during the period of review, obviously owing to lack of preference for settlements. The numbers have dropped from 289 to 231 largely on account of poor socio-economic opportunities and basic infrastructure facilities. Having been regarded that these undeveloped towns as neither with urban image nor rural, these towns could have been prompting upper mobility of the people to the other prosperous urban centres. The disparity in urban growth can be further articulated that Class I urban areas have posted a highest growth of 36.96 per cent, followed by Class III (19.47 per cent), Class II (17.81 per cent), Class IV (7.79 per cent), Class V (7.31 per cent). However, the last category (Class VI) towns have recorded a negative growth of - 20.07 per cent for the reasons explained.

Table 1: Glimpses of Urbanisation in India 1991-2001

Urban Class by Population Size	Class I (1,00,000 & Above)	Class II (50,000 - 99,999)	Class III (20,000- 49,999)	Class IV (10,000- 19,999)	Class V (5,000- 9,999)	Class VI (< 5,000)	All Class
Number of Urban Agglomerations and Towns							
1991	322	421	1161	1451	971	289	4615
2001	441	496	1387	1564	1042	231	5161
Change	119	75	226	113	71	-58	546
Total Area (In Square Kilometre)							
1991	24,022 (38.92)	6,306 (9.82)	14,177 (22.01)	12,806 (19.90)	5,426 (8.03)	1,099 (1.32)	63,836
2001	30,985 (39.62)	8,827 (11.29)	17,283 (22.10)	14,090 (18.02)	6,193 (7.92)	822 (1.05)	78,200
Change	6,393	2,521	3,106	1,284	767	-277	14,364
Population by Size of Town (Lakh)							

1991	1223 (56.67)	288 (13.35)	353 (16.36)	211 (9.77)	74 (3.43)	09 (0.42)	2158
2001	1782 (62.28)	345 (12.06)	421 (14.72)	226 (7.90)	79 (2.76)	08 (0.28)	2861
Change	559	57	68	15	05	- 1	703
Population Per Town (Lakh)							
1991	38.0	6.8	3.0	1.5	0.7	0.3	4.7
2001	40.4	7.0	3.0	1.4	0.8	0.3	5.5
Change	2.4	0.2	-	0. -1	0.1	-	0.8
Density Per Square Kilometre							
1991	5,633	3,766	2,040	1,343	1,101	785	2,445
2001	6,337	3,153	2,034	1,381	1,075	813	2,466
Change	704	-613	-6	38	-26	28	21

Source: Census of India (2001), Cities and Town Agglomerations, A 4 Table-2001, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Government of India, New Delhi.

Note: The analysis on the selected parameters is confined to 1991- 2001 census period to capture the urban trend. However, the comprehensive as well as compatible Census data on Cities and Town Agglomerations (A 4 Tables) for 2011 is not officially available.

Apart from the people's settlement, geographical expansion is the second most influencing factor of the urban areas. The geographical expansion that has taken place during the period has been in the order of 14,364 Square kilometers, having increased from 63,836 to 78,200 square kilometers (22.50 per cent), owing to mobility of people from rural and backward areas of the country. The geographical expansion of the urban areas can be classified with four different traits: (a) Centralized growth; (b) Moderate Growth; (c) Stagnant Growth; and (d) Decimated Growth. Centralized growth can be straightaway referring to Class I cities that have alone accounted to 44.51 per cent in the total urban areas expansion and it can be said that no other urban towns have grown the way Class I Cities have expanded. The Class I cities have physically increased their net areas from 24,022 to 30,985 square kilometers, which is 29 per cent. The next in line of the expansion was the Class III and Class II cities that have moderately grown and accounted for 22 and 18 per cent, respectively with 14,177 to 17,283 sq kilometers and 6,306 to 8,827 sq kilometers. The families in these cities and towns would not have liked the crowded and hectic life of the Class I centers and would have attracted to second grade cities owing to affordable urban land price, decongestion nature, better environment etc. Added to these, many such cities have picked up the development of infrastructure, services etc. of late like the most advanced ones on the lines of the Class I cities. But the same argument does not hold good to Class IV and the Class V towns that have registered an expansion of 8.94 per cent and 5.34 per cent. It can be said that these towns have almost become stagnant and continue to suffer without the needed

investment on infrastructure development, public services and what not. The last disarray of the urbanization is about Class VI, which have not only lost their geographical areas but also their decimated numbers. These towns are often attributed as “advanced villages” without even proper road connectivity and drainage systems, whose absence leads obviously to the problems of water logging and unhygienic situations. Further not to denigrate, 58 Class VI towns have lost 277 square kilometers to the other towns, partly for definitional reasons among the many.

Demographically, the total population has increased by 703 lakhs into the urban areas during the assessment period, which is almost 33 per cent growth. Interestingly although all size of the urban areas has recorded an increase in the population in absolute terms but in relative terms, its share has been decimated across the board, excepting in the case of Class I cities, which have proved destinations of urban human settlements. Astonishingly, Class I cities alone have attracted as much as 559 lakh population or 80 per cent of the total net addition. It only points to the fact that Class I urban centers have become the most sought-after cities of the country. As a result of this tilted urbanization, the share of the population increased to 1782 lakh (62 per cent) from 1223 lakh (56.67 per cent). Disappointingly, all the other sized towns have experienced erosion of their population roughly from 43 per cent in 1991 to 38 per cent in 2001, especially in relative terms as is evident from the table. Regarding the population density, India’s urbanization process has added 21 persons additionally to every square kilometer, although the trend is not universal across all sizes of cities/towns. Further, the density of population in Class I cities continued to be at the highest in the country with 6,337 per square kilometer- a net addition of 704 over the 1991 position. This is two-and a half fold more than the national average itself. In the case of the similar segments, Class IV and VI have also marginally registered higher density above the average. Against this, drop in population density is the case of all others and especially conspicuous in Class II cities. If the positive trend could be largely due to proximity of the class I cities and class VI towns and the drop could be resettlement decisions of the people due to changing economic status.

Household is a critical unit of consideration in public policy making process. Especially, household and its size are the basic requirements in making various provisions for the public supply of goods and services and planning and development of housing facility for different segments of the population. Interesting to note household details are made available across different ranges from single to nine + persons and their numbers have increased by more than one-fourth in the country and over one - third in urban India. Against an overall increase of over 28 per cent households in the country (Table 2) (Census 2011), the urban households heralded enormous increase at 46 per cent, which is far more than the country’s average. An actual increase from 5.37 to 7.88 Crores – net addition of 2.52 Crores households in 2011 and in percentage term from 28 to 32, with a net addition of 4 per cent is a definite indication of decimating rural character of the country. In other words, it can be said that the trend indicates the preferences of the newly formed households. That apart, both push and pull factors could be

attributed for this change in the composition of households between the rural and urban India, especially among the newly formed ones. If lack of adequate employment opportunities, decent living environment, adequate educational and health services could be attributed as push factors from the rural areas, high income earning opportunities, availability of social and economic opportunities, good educational and health services can be the pull factors of the urban areas. Objectively, it must be mentioned that the households migrated for better prospects leaving behind all their belongings have been willingly prepared to face new settlement challenges in urban areas and compromise with deprivations of both economic and social services to a larger extent. Further, pertaining to size of the households in the country, two observations are imminent to note: (a) Positive growth in the case of small households (ranging from 1- 4 persons); and (b) negative growth in the larger and largest households (ranging from 5 to 9+ persons). This classification is obviously due to the tendencies towards the growing nuclear households and eroding joint households (families) culture, including in the urban areas. The share of the first category has increased from 41.85 in 2001 to 49.73 per cent in 2011 in the country and similarly in urban areas from 47.13 to 55.45 per cent, whereas the other category of households dwindled from 58.15 to 50.27 and from 52.87 to 44.55, respectively.

Table 2: Growth of Households in India by Size and by Number of Room: 2001-2011
(Figures in Lakhs and Percentage)

Households by Size & Room	2001		2011		Change	
	Total	Urban	Total	Urban	Total	Urban
Total No of Households	1919.64	536.92 (27.97)	2466.93	788.66 (31.97)	547.29 (28.51)	251.74 (46.00)
Single	3.55	3.75	3.67	3.61	0.12	-0.14
Double	8.19	8.24	9.72	9.55	1.53	1.31
Three	11.08	12.72	13.65	15.92	2.57	3.20
Four	19.03	22.42	22.69	26.37	3.66	3.95
Five	18.69	19.23	18.75	18.50	-0.06	-0.73
Six- Eight	28.11	24.39	24.89	20.61	-3.22	-3.78
Nine +	11.35	9.25	6.63	5.44	-5.91	-3.81

Source: Census of India (2001), Tables on Houses, Household Amenities and Assets, Series 1, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Government of India, New Delhi & Census of India (2011), Tables on Houses, Household Amenities and Assets, Series 1, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Government of India, New Delhi

III. Responsive Public Actions: The emergent urban patterns and the disparities crept in the process of urbanization have been well sensitized by the government and responded positively in terms of the schematic interventions in the late 1970s. Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) was introduced as a national commitment as a centrally sponsored

scheme (GoI 2009) with all measures to redress the disparities urban development. The un-avowed objectives were to decongest the major urban centers and to make the other urban segments settlement friendly. It is evident specifically that the IDSMT intended to promote orderly urban development, irrespective of the size and the development scale (See Appendix). What particularly true is the intentions of the scheme to provide financial assistance to such small towns with as small as 20,000 to up to 5 lakhs population and elected body in office to supervise the urban development. Being the funding partner, state governments have been given the responsibility of selection and recommendation of the towns for the development assistance under the scheme. Equally significant is the number of components identified for the purpose of financing under the scheme, which covers the entire gamut of the facilities a town or city needs to ensure decent outlook and for orderly living of the people. Interestingly, the project funding is defined keeping absorption capacity at Rs 100 Lakhs (or One Crore) to towns up to 20,000 population, Rs 200 Lakhs (or Two Crores) to towns between 20,000 and 50,000 population, Rs 350 Lakhs (or Three and a half Crores) to towns between 50,000 and 1,00,000 population, Rs 550 Lakhs (or Five and a Half Crore) to towns between one to three Lakhs population and lastly Rs 750 Lakhs (or Seven and Half Crores) to town between three to five Lakhs population. Further, the funding pattern is such that both central and state governments provide higher grants as assistance (80 per cent) to the smallest towns (<20,000 population) and 60 per cent assistance in the case of the towns with population up to 5 Lakhs. In all the case, the elected body of the local bodies are expected to raise loans from the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) or from financial institutions that could be ranging between 20 to 40 per cent of the defined project costs. Secondly, Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) – 2012 is yet other initiative of the government, which was subsumed in 2015 with a sub-mission of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). With the launching of the UIDSSMT from 2005-06 and subsuming of the same with JNNURM, no new towns were covered under IDSMT. Especially from 2007-08 onwards, central grants have been stopped completely to IDSMT. But what disturbed the corrective actions of the government is that the process of development of the small and medium towns has been completely halted without attributing any reasons nor has been made known as to what is happening to the ongoing process of the development. Nor has there been clear indication of targets and components defined under UIDSSMT.

**Appendix: An Overview of Public Actions for the Reduction of Disparities and
Development of Small & Medium Towns**

Sl. No	Name of the Scheme	Objectives of the Scheme	Selection Method of Towns	Components for Funding
01	Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) – 1979 (A Centrally sponsored Scheme and Amended up to 2004-05)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving infrastructure facilities in small & medium towns. Decentralising economic growth & employment opportunities. Increasing availability of serviced sites for housing, commercial and industrial uses. Integrating spatial and socio-economic planning and Promoting resource generating schemes to improve the local bodies financial position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies only to towns/cities with up to 5 lakhs population. Towns are to be identified by the State Government/ UTs according to their urban strategy. Applies to only such towns where elections to the local bodies have been held and elected bodies are in position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening roads like ring, arterial, bypass/link roads and small bridges with street lighting Sites & services Development of bus/truck terminals Construction of /upgradation of storm water channels Solid waste management Development of market complexes / shopping centres Provision of tourist facilities Development of parks, slaughterhouses, gardens, playground marriage halls, pay and use toilets etc. Cycle/Rickshaw stands Traffic improvement schemes, Construction of retaining walls in hill station towns. Social amenities for

				the poorer sections.
2	Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) – 2012 and subsumed in 2015 with a sub-mission of JNNURM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve infrastructure facilities in towns & cities. • Urban sector reforms • Enhance public-private partnership in infrastructure development. • Promote planned integrated development of towns/cities 	NA	NA

Source: Collated from the Scheme Design of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of IndiaWebsite.

Thirty years of implementation of the IDSMT (1979-80 to 2006-07) has impacted in its own way the selected small and medium towns, if not all the country. The scheme has benefited 68 towns on an average in 28 states, although majority of the states have responded very poorly. In many cases, the development response for the schemes was far below the national average. Equally, Union Territories have also responded positively to the scheme rather effectively (Table 3). With the intervention, as many as 1,907 small and medium towns (1,382 in ten major states,

512 in the remaining eighteen states and 13 in the Union Territories) have been reportedly completed the selected developmental works within the purview. The country has incurred a total expenditure of Rs 1,813 crores at an average of Rs 60 crores every year during the period of its implementation. It must be noted that the IDSMT being a centrally sponsored scheme, assistance from the Central Government constituted the substantial expenditure at around 60 per cent and the remaining borne by the state governments, as their share. In other words, higher the participation of the state and the center with their share of resources, larger is the development of the towns at the sub-regional level and vice versa. But what disturbs the implementation is that not all the states have received the scheme with all concerns for the development of the small and medium towns in their respective states, which is to a larger extent evident. This group of the states have implemented the scheme equally with their own resources and have accounted to over 72 per cent of the towns in the total achievement and have incurred more than 81 per cent of the total expenditure. It can also be said that these states have contributed about 47 per cent (on an average) of the total expenditure in the implementation of the scheme, which is certainly above the national average. It only speaks of the development interest and promotion of people's welfare at the cost of the financial challenges. Equally important to note is that Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra have together led the development success of the IDSMT, in terms of the number of towns covered and the total expenditure, apart from receiving maximum central assistance. Similarly, among the Union Territories, Pondicherry has garnered the major benefits than the other. It has accounted for very large number of towns with a total expenditure of Rs 7.44 crores with most of it (59 per cent) met by itself under the scheme. Perhaps no other UTs have received the impetus the way Pondicherry received. In this regard what matters is the political will showcased among the ten major states and the union territory with the participation own resource contribution, in addition to the central assistance received for the scheme.

Against the active participation and the success achieved, eighteen states which have been laggard in the implementation of the scheme have undertaken the development of only 512 towns at an average of 28 towns, which is more than two fold less than the group of ten states. The unsatisfactory or disappointed outcome could be explained with two specific reasons: (a) unwillingness to participate owing to their mandatory share of the total expenditure towards the development; and/or (b) not interested in the development of small and medium towns at all in their regions and to bring in improvement in the walks of life of the people. If the latter is the case, it only means that majority of the states have failed to exhibit the political will for the sub-regional development. The exhibition of half-hearted interest and concerns to the scheme could perhaps one of the reasons for the lack of widespread impact of the scheme in these states.

Table 3: Performance of IDSMT in India – 2018 (Rs in Crores)

No	State	No of Towns Covered	Total Expenditure	Central Assistance	State Assistance
01	Uttar Pradesh	206	176.92	106.52	72.29
02	Maharashtra	178	343.85	126.37	84.83

03	Tamilnadu	172	164.86	91.64	63.44
04	Karnataka	169	110.56	87.65	57.88
05	Madhya Pradesh	146	103.30	64.22	45.99
06	West Bengal	121	156.82	95.12	69.02
07	Gujarat	115	124.42	75.88	48.94
08	Andhra Pradesh	90	122.27	65.27	44.08
09	Rajasthan	78	130.75	48.53	28.04
10	Odisha	67	43.06	29.42	18.96
	Total	1,382	1,476.81	790.62	686.19
	Total of all other States	512	325.53	279.28	46.25
	All Union Territory	13	10.63	5.56	5.07
	Grand Total	1,907	1,812.97	1,075.46	737.51

Source: Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) Scheme: Performance Details, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India. Website: mohua.gov.in/integrateddevelopment.idsmt.pdf

V. Discussions and the Policy Imperatives: The paper has illustrated the traits of the urbanisation and its trend in the country, across the different size of towns geographically and demographically. While doing so, it has also highlighted the disparities emanated in the urbanisation process between the major urban centres and the small and medium towns in terms of the areas, households, population, and density. An attempt is also made as to how the government has taken note of the emergent urban scenario and responded publicly. While examining the public interventions as redressal measure, the paper has brought to the fore the main characteristics of the IDSMT and UIDSSMT in terms of their objectives, components, and others. Besides attempt was also made in capturing the success and limitations of the development success. The purpose of pondering over all these issues is to recapitulate and re-sensitise the development process, including the public commitments in terms of the policies and the expenditure to ensure both orderly and decent urbanisation process. Because urbanisation would be an unstoppable and inescapable course of development for any country irrespective of their standings. Equally, the public action must ensure and create a necessary condition on sustainable basis for human settlements across all size of the towns. From these perspectives, the present trend in the urbanisation process needs to be modified or reversed. Class III cities to Class VI towns with the population range respectively between 50,000 and 5,000 cannot afford to be neglected any longer, as has been the case all along the commencement of the process. Unfortunately, owing to the continuous inattention throughout, these centres have acquired the images of neither urban nor rural, which needs to be changed with a strong public commitments and institutional mechanisms. The social and economic infrastructure development in small and

medium towns with the public-private investments has many benefits. This would not only minimize migration to the major cities but would even facilitates reverse migration, which is already started owing to various pressures. Most importantly this process would decongest the state capitals and other major Cities. Development of infrastructure coupled with investment can create employment opportunities, which would have multiplier effects like increasing income, purchasing power, living standard and what not. Above all, such initiatives would pave the development of magnetic centres in the peripheries for the purpose of the human settlements. Failing to do so would only results in increasing congestion, manifold increase of all forms of poverty, amenities deprivation and degraded urban establishments and what not, as is urban India experiencing currently. Yet other limitation of the small and medium towns is the excessive dependence on the government for the investment and allowing the private investment. Public authorities need to explore the possibility of financial incentives and sops to the private and corporate world in promoting the investment in the small and medium towns. Secondly, the decision of shunning the exclusive scheme IDSMT has caused the development damage in its own ways. However inefficient was the IDSMT, its repeal has shattered the only hope for the development of neglected segments of urban life since 2005-06. There after no new towns were selected and funded for the development at all and these towns continue to face the agony of distress and deprivations in all measures. That apart, it must be noted that of the total number of 4224 towns (small and medium) (Census 2001), IDSMT has developed only 1854 or 42 per cent of the total and left behind the remaining 2370 towns due to be developed. At the same time, it is neither clear that UIDSSMT is given the responsibilities of what IDSMT was doing all along nor are there any other means of development of the small and medium towns alternatively. Complete eschewing a scheme which was yet to make significant inroads into other unattended towns and impact the walks of life of the hitherto neglected towns has led to further marginalisation. Undoubtedly, IDSMT with laudable objectives has lived up to its mission with all the funding limitations but complete wiping off the scheme in the middle without an alternative in place is preposterous. Keeping the need and necessity in view, the following specific policy imperatives are offered for public action.

First, apart from the development of magnetic centres for want of decongestion and development of the neglected cities, meeting the emerging challenges and to create human-friendly urban living environment in the other centres is the need of the hour, to ensure sustainable urbanisation, which is going to be very fast. The Report on the Urbanizing World of the United Nation's Centre Human Settlements (UNCHS 1996) has clearly indicated that India's urban population by 2025 would be in the order of over 45 per cent. Given the saturation that most of the state capitals and major cities have attained in terms of the resources and the development interventions, undoubtedly adoption of urban development decentralisation is the need of hour in the country. This is warranted not only to face the challenges future urban growth but also to ensure orderly urban life in terms of the basic infrastructure. What India should do is that it need not have to create new towns but to develop the existing ones in large numbers.

Reintroduction of the IDSMT which was designed with multipronged objectives. The medium and small towns would serve as immediate service centres (especially for educational and health) at the sub - regional levels besides the immediate centres of absorption for the rural migrants. Secondly, mere development of the medium and small towns alone does not suffice decent and orderly urban life but equally essential is the upgradation of the existing service providing authorities like Housing Boards, Water Supply and Sewerage, Municipalities etc. These statutory authorities should ensure that all the urban settlements developed by public authorities, private builders, co-operative societies or by individuals connected and integrated. Housing development approach should give equal importance for the replacement of the dilapidated and unserviceable units as well as increasing supply of good houses corresponding to the need (Mahadeva 2006). Regarding sustainable and efficient water supply, it is even more necessary to share the financial burden between the public authority and the users (World Bank 1999). Also, rectification of the pilferages, unauthorised and un-priced consumptions in the current supply mechanism should be attended. Alternatively, the urban families depending on the unsafe water sources for drinking should be financially supported (one time grant or subsidy or both) to adopt the necessary technology to get the water treatment/purification at the household level to make it fit for consumption. Additionally, the state should ensure that families living in urban areas should harvest the rainwater compulsorily to facilitate recharging of ground water level by meeting the financial assistance. It is indeed a necessity to popularise the use of solar energy for lighting the deprived families, as the progress achieved in this regard is far from satisfaction. The government needs to work on meeting initial capital expenditure for solar energy of those who cannot afford this facility by themselves. Above all, there shall be a mission mode action plan for eradication of open defecation by the sanitation - deprived families in urban areas, as is an indecent practice and against orderly living. A special drive with financial grants and subsidies by the governments for the urban poor families to put up household toilets is a need of the hour to achieve the total coverage. Also, the local authorities must establish community latrines for floating population under their supervision and management with the support under the corporate social responsibility scheme. Lastly, it is very essential that the people should follow the basic tenets of smart living and act smartly in all walks of their living in private, in public and in the society by sharing financial burden and by promoting clean environment in their surroundings.

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