

Book launch:

Changing paradigms of urbanization – India and beyond

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Moderator(s)**Laveesh Bhandari**

President and Senior Fellow

Know more details: <https://csep.org/event/changing-paradigms-of-urbanisation-india-and-beyond-authored-by-om-prakash-mathur/>

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7lwTjl3n1g&t=33s>

The following is an edited and revised transcript of the event. It has been generated by human transcribers and may contain errors. Please check the corresponding video for the original version

Rakesh Mohan:

First let me welcome all of you for coming to this momentous occasion both in the life of my friend who is Om Mathur and if I may say so Laveesh in CSEP. I have known Om since early 1980s where I came back the first time from the US World Bank to work on urban development. That is where I first met Om. Although at that time he was enjoying himself eating sushi in Nagoya. But he visited here and he came and saw me and gave us inspiration. So, the first thing that one must say about Om Mathur is that he is indefatigable. No sooner that he published a definitive volume on 'the state of the cities in India', in late 2021, that an early 2022 he started compiling this volume of a small selection of his articles. If you see the size of this book and it is the small selection of his articles, you know what he has been doing in his life. The CSEP is very lucky to have had the privilege of sponsoring the book and providing him with research assistance. Before anything else I must... Ashley are you here? She is the culprit who has helped him all through. Om Mathur is beyond doubt the foremost urban scholar in India and has been for some time. He has worked on global and Indian urban issues on a continuous basis for almost half a century. A record that may never be surpassed. In recognition of his impressive scholarship from the Delhi school of economics his alma matter for his MA, I wouldn't say which year, because he has told us not to reveal his age. They honoured him with DSE, distinguished alumnus award last year 2023. He has had a long career in various institutions in India and abroad. His early work was promoting the idea of regional planning which forms a section of the book. This was his focus in his early stint in the planning commission, in his multi-level planning unit. He continued working in this area for almost 10 years abroad. First with the then imperial government of Iran. Then at the United Nations centre for regional development in Nagoya, Japan. On return from Japan the government of India appointed him as one of the early directors of national institute of urban affairs which he steered skilfully in his early years. The last three decades is mostly spent at the national institute of public finance and policy, followed by return to the NIUA and then appointed in the institute of social sciences. He is the go to person for advice for urban policies for government, the central government committees related to urban policies, state governments, international institutes, the World Bank, ADB and others. His advice is always given unlike many others, with the back up well research papers, drawing extensive empirical and historical knowledge. The papers in this volume trace his intellectual journey and scholarship over the last four decades. These articles also reflect evolution of urban thinking in India. For me one of the lasting puzzles of India urban thinking has been the consistent view that has been apprehensive of large cities. Despite the history of development globally, the unequivocal on the continued _ of urbanization accompanying economic development particularly from the early 19th century, a large range of voices often wanted to slow down urbanization in India. It is refreshing to see that Om has had a positive view on this general issue and not subscribed to these persistent erroneous positions. His papers document the features of urbanization. But the one issue there is om has covered in other works but not in this volume and that is to do with the definition of urbanization which has been a controversy in recent years. Unfortunately, we have not had 2021 census yet. But the 2011 census said it was 31%. Many others say it is 40 or 60% etc. Suffice to say from my side that in my own view of the census definition is reliable, consistent across time and basically correct. We will have

to wait now with bated breath for the 2021 census or the 2031 to know what has happened since 2011. I just want to say about few peculiar characteristics that have emerged about India's pattern of urbanization. First the speed in urbanization has not been high as shown and has shown some signs of slowdown since the early 1980s. And this has happened during the period when Indian economic growth accelerated relative to previous periods. The normal expectations would be that urbanization accelerates with economic growth. But that hasn't happened in India which is big puzzle. Second, contrary to dominant perception, rural urban migration has not been very rapid in India right through its history of urbanization. Its contribution to net rural urban migration, contribution to urban population growth has been only 20%. At least in the last 5 decades if not longer. Third, Indian industry appears to have been ruralizing. Contrary to almost all other experiences in the history of development and urbanization. And fourth, there has been a stagnation in the growth of urban share of GDP since at least early 2010s. For that I attribute this knowledge I have from Shishir Gupta who picked up his book to figure out if he is saying the same thing or not. I mentioned these four issues as further work that he needs to do. To solve these issues so that this is not the last book that he does. In addition to all these issues he has also devoted lot of time to practical issues of urban governance. And on the other hand, in successive finance commissions in talking about municipal finances etc. not that the finance commissions have heard them, written about them, not that anyone else has taken care to improve municipal governance in cities. Yet another work that you have to continue doing further. That's also very important. As I said, this volume of Om Mathur's urban research journey for 40 years is really invaluable research for anyone interested in Indian urban development. And I am sure it will feature in leading list all across the world. I feel deeply privileged to be part of the launch of his work. Only problem is whenever he writes something, I have to write the foreword. This causes me extra work also. So, don't write anything quickly. But I have given you enough work to do. I am also absolutely delighted that Nandan Nilekani has accepted to launch this book. He has been instrumental in changing the lives of all Indians. Very few people in our history can claim that of changing the lives of all Indians through all the innovations that he has been doing in the digital sphere. If it was up to me, I would award him Bharat Ratna right now. But so far, I have not had the privilege of being able to award Bharat Ratnas. Laveesh, you heard that. CSEP Ratna. I am also delighted that my friend Nitin Desai is here. One thing I should say, I mentioned how I came to planning commission in December 1980 to work in urban development. The welcome I got by the then additional secretary IAS in charge of administration, the welcome I got was – why have you come here. December 1980, the first day I entered the portals of Yojana Bhavan, he said why have you come here? You know we don't treat people like you well. The only fellow who treated me very well was Nitin. If it wasn't for him and lunch in his room every day for three years, I would probably have gone back to the World Bank. And languished in a golden cage and probably would not be here. Finally, I would really like to welcome Om's whole family who is here. Can you all raise your hand? There is his son hiding behind somewhere. On this really momentous occasion, especially his wife Sharada who has suffered him through thick and thin, again because of his request I won't say for how long. So, let me now hand over to Laveesh Bhandari, the president of CSEP. And thank you all very much.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you, Dr Mohan. So, I have the privilege of introducing Mr. Nandan Nilekani and unfortunately everyone knows much more about him than they do about me. But what I will do is go over a life of amazing achievements. And also, amazing accomplishments and of course, how he has touched as Dr Mohan said almost all life in India. So, he is the co-founder as you all know, the chairman of Infosys technologies. The founding chairman of the unique identification authority of India from 2009 to 2014. He has co-founded and is the chairman of Ekstep foundation. A not for profit to create a learner centric technology based platform to improve basic literacy and numeracy for millions of children. In January 2023 he was appointed as co-chair of the G20 task force on digital public infrastructure for economic transformation, financial inclusion and development. His efforts on DPIs are so massive and impacts even more massive. We are still struggling as economists to even figure out how to start estimating those impacts. I will be in touch with you about that as well. Born in Bangalore, he received his bachelor's degree from IIT Bombay. Was awarded by the fortune magazine the Asia's businessman of the year in 2003. In 2005 he received the prestigious Joseph Schumpeter prize for innovative services in economic sciences and politics. In 2006 he was awarded the Padma Bhushan and was also named as the businessman of the year by Forbes Asia. Time magazine listed him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world in 2006 and 2009 something that we have known much before. Foreign policy magazine has listed him as one of the top 100 global thinkers in 2010. In 2014 he won the economists social and economic innovation award for his leadership of India's UIDA or Aadhaar. In 2017 he received the life time achievement award from E &Y, CNBC tv 18 conferred on him the India business leader award. He also received the 22nd Nikkei Asia prize for economic and business innovation in 2017. Amazingly his profile on the net does not talk about his deep interest in human settlements. I was quite amazed that there is very little mention of the tremendous work that IHS something that he conceptualized, founded and continues to chair has done. He has been inducted as the international honorary member of the American academy of arts and sciences in 2019. He was also conferred a life time achievement award by the business standard. Nandan Nilekani is the author of 'imagining India'. His second book 'rebooting India' is coauthored with Viral shah and his third book 'art of bitfulness' keeping calm in a digital world with Tanuj Bhojwani was released in January 2022. I would also like to introduce our chief guest, Nitin Desai. He was the former national and international civil servant. And a global advocate for sustainable development. After teaching at two UK universities and serving briefly as an economic consultant he began his public service career with the planning commission in 1973. He served as the secretary of the economic advisory council to the Prime Minister and became the secretary and chief economic advisor, the ministry of finance in 1988. At the international level he was a senior advisor to the Brundtland commission where he introduced the concept of sustainable development. I had no idea about this until I read this for the first time Dr Desai of the term that got coined under your leadership. He joined the UN in 1990 as the deputy secretary general of development. Was appointed undersecretary general at the United Nations in New York in 1993 and stayed in that post till 2003. During this period, he led the work on sustainable development and in other economic and social areas. After his retirement Nitin Desai was appointed as the special advisor to the

secretary general on internet governance and in that capacity, he chaired the group that organized the annual internet governance forum. A position he occupied till 2010. He was in July 2004 inducted as the honorary fellow of the London school of economics and public science. He has been involved in various public policy activities nationally and internationally. Dealing with economic policies, climate change, energy, environment, internet governance and security. He writes a monthly column in business standard and like Professor O P Mathur, who was my guide when I ventured into working on urban issues, Dr. Desai was the one who actually first guided me and actually pointed me in the direction of working on environmental issues. It's a great privilege to have both of you here. Thank you very much. May I request Mr. Nilekani to release the book and also address the audience... there has been a slight change of plans and Professor Mathur can I request you to talk about your work and your book. Thank you so much.

Om Prakash Mathur:

Before I talk about book, let me thank CSEP, especially Rakesh Mohan and Laveesh and Shishir who is sitting there and their teams for the stint that this book is done and done at the fastest speed within a matter of 15 to 16 months. Also, to all for organizing this particular event. I am really very grateful to all of them in CSEP. I am also very deeply touched by the presence of Nitin Desai, whom I have known for 5 decades. We were together in the planning commission in the 70s, very challenging and interesting times. Dealing with Mrs. Gandhi's call, 'Gareebi hatao'. That was the fifth plan period. And the task of the planning commission was what strategies, what programs, what projects would serve that particular _ 'Gareebi hatao'. Very charismatic minister at that time Mr. D P Dhar and a very enlightening membership of the planning commission with Sukumar Chakravathy, B S Midas and several others. I am also very equally touched by the presence of Nandan Nilekani. From the year 2004 when Nandan, Sheela Patel and myself were nominated to the advisory council of the former Prime Minister on one of the flagship programs JNNURM and how we should take it forward. I do recall that as and when we had some other agenda besides the NURM we would rely on Nandan for his help. I remember one such incident very clearly when we told the Prime Minister that Rakesh Mohan's 1996 report has become outdated and it needed to be revised. And second suggestion we made to the PM in the same meeting was that, now that urbanization has picked up some importance, it would be useful to have a subcommittee of the national development council especially looking at urbanization. Prime Minister asked what does it want. He looked at Nandan. Nandan pointedly nodded his head. And both the proposals went through in no time at all. So, that is the value of Nandan we have known since 2004. Let me come to the book. The book is a collection of 20 papers written from between the years 1981 and 2023. With the exception of the first paper, the remaining 19 papers were either commissioned by international organizations like the World Bank, the UN habitat, the FAO, the UNCRD or presented at various conferences, also at various universities like university of California, Toronto, university of Hawaii and several other such institutions. This four decades during which the papers were written, I am sure our urban colleagues in this room would recall, that extraordinary important changes took place in the manner the urbanization in the 70s and the way in which we understand urbanization today. The three or four things which are very, very dominant coming out of these four decades. One is that the animosity with

respect to urbanization that we had in the early 70s, a large number of countries would like the rural to urban migration to be slowed down and curb the growth of large cities in those years. The UN monitoring reports, bi annual reports that would compile the positions of various developing countries and informed everyone that look, 68% of the countries don't want large cities and they want the rural to urban migration to be slowed down. Now this animosity against urbanization has not only thinned out but more or less disappeared over these 40 years. There is a far greater acceptance of urbanization as a phenomenon that has come to stay with us. It is seen as a _ it cannot be reversed. It is just inevitable. The more recent report of the UN says that there is no country in the world that has seen a dip in the proportion of urban population over the past 50 or 60 years or so. This is number one. A second very landmark development that has taken place over these 40 years is the connection between urbanization and macro economy. Much has been written about it that urbanization and economic growth go together. They are very close connections between the two. And more recently based on evidence, Michael Spence one of Rakesh's friends and a noble prize winner, who was in Delhi recently about a month back and here at CSEP. He said, no country has become a middle income country without choosing the instrument of urbanization. That is the kind of importance that urbanization has acquired over these 4 decades or so. The third, which will be certainly interesting to our urban economists here, a remarkable period for conceptual development as far as urbanization is concerned. Remarkable. One was the role of spatial proximity and acclimatization. What spatial proximity and acclimatization play in inspiring growth, inspiring urbanization and whole sort of development scenario. Many authors have written about it. And it has come more or less as a _ that spatial proximity and acclimatization are important. The second conceptual development that has taken place which became a very important one is the impact of globalization, social adjustment and urbanization. The reshaping of urbanization that we have seen since the early 70s is remarkable in many, many developing countries which have taken globalization far more seriously than India has taken. As a third very important development that has taken place is the incorporation of the principle of subsidiarity changing the modes of governance, changing the modes of finance, across countries. 74th amendment, 73rd amendment is really an off shoot of the principle of subsidiarity, incorporation of this in the charter of European union and its impact all over the world. I have in the book the table that shows that there are 31 or 32 countries which has passed legislations that are somewhat similar to the 74th amendment or amended their constitution. Now these are the conceptual developments that have taken place over these four decades. Very, very important ones. Coming to the book, let me tell you, let me pick up three examples of few papers. Because they are somewhat different from the usual ones. One is the paper requested by FAO. Normally we do not associate FAO with urbanization. But a phone call asking me to do a paper saying that can you give us a paper that would advocate reduction of rural to urban migration in order to ensure global food security. They were apprehending that rural to urban migration continues to be on a scale that it is going to at present, the world food security might be adversely affected. For someone who already believed that rural to urban migration is essential for economic growth, it was a very difficult proposition that was made by the FAO. But in the correspondence and meetings both in Rome as well as Delhi, we came to the conclusion that, all right, I will do the paper which would test the question that read something like this – that is there an optimal rate of rural

to urban migration that would ensure food security on the one hand and also meet the growing demands for urban labor from the urban areas. That was the question that was finally put for testing in ten different countries. It is a different matter altogether the 10 countries to which we wrote the proposal did not agree to this proposition and that proposal was dropped. I got my fees, but the proposal was dropped. The second paper that I wrote very briefly mentioned is an Asian paper. That was the FAO's paper was really a global paper. But this Asian paper. Dinesh would recall it, it was just before Istanbul conference. Just before Istanbul conference. It was a conference in 1996 and this was in 1995. The pattern of urban growth in some of the south Asian countries is very, very different. A single city like Jakarta in Indonesia, Manila in Philippines, Bangkok in Thailand, to some extent Ho Chi Minh city which is the second largest city in Vietnam, South Korea's Seoul in South Korea, these single cities were occupied anywhere between 40 to 50% of urban population and anywhere between 50 to 60% of the GDP. One single city, the primate city. And it was getting to be worrisome both within the countries as well as with the UN community, particularly the UN Habitat at that time, they were putting up this new conference in 1996 based on balanced spatial development. So, they wanted to look at the more seriously what is going on in these countries and one of the papers in the book deals with that particular subject. They were employing mechanisms such as counter magnets, growth centers, growth poles, development of small cities, more as a counter to the primate city and nothing was working. The paper really argues the limitations of these kinds of interventions that perhaps mark it the proposition that I made for market ought to be allowed to play a much larger role than this top down kind of positions taken in those countries. The third paper, the last paper is the India one which is already very complex to deal with. Number one, there are multiple narratives of urbanization as far as India is concerned. Multiple narratives. But the true narratives that I have talked about is that urbanization has increased at a rapid rate under conditions of low economic growths. This is one situation that we find. And the second situation that we find is that when the urbanization rates are low, growth rates are low those years have also experienced very high economic growth. Something that it would not gel with our thinking. We will see it a more positive correlation but here was a negative correlation between economic growth and urbanization. But this is simply to demonstrate how complex the situation is. The real challenge that India is facing today is that between now... since everyone is talking about the year 2047 and India becoming a developed country... one paper, the opening paper deals with it. To some extent that between now and the year 2047 India will add roughly about 333 or 340 million people to its urban population. It will be anywhere between 850 or 840 million by the year 2047. Or India will transit from a lower middle urban economy that it is today to an upper middle urban economy by the year 2047. If I simply substitute the word urban instead of economic. The question that arises is how to make this transition more productive and more inclusive. And all the evidences that we had in the paper, it is somewhat dated but we can't help it... census has not been made, _ census has not been made... but given that, how to do that. I should look at one additional fact that countries that have moved from let's say from about 30% urban to about 50% urban, the average years are roughly about 20 to 23 years. It takes that much time for a lower middle urban economy to become an upper middle level urban economy. There are only 7 countries in fact, if you take countries which have populations of 50 million plus, there are only 7 countries that have moved from a lower to upper middle over

the past 50 years. Everything that we are now getting in... I am sure that all of us would have seen a World Bank paper talking about urbanization without growth. And that is the danger that many of the countries are faced that you had this problem with you of transiting but you have not taken the steps to ensure that this transition is a protected one and the transition is an inclusive one. The real issue that arises here are... being economics my subject, can't help invoking it, of the four factors of production. The growth that we are seeing today is capital driven and technology driven. The two other factors of production, that is land and labor are not rising in the same proportion as they ought to in order to make growth both stable and urbanization more stable. So, these are some of the challenges that we are facing at present and we don't know whether we would be able to mobilize adequate support. It is being talked about every now and then. The labor market... there are rigidities in the labor market. There is a huge problem with the land market. Everyone knows about them but not really been taken care of. Now this is just a sample of the papers of the 20 papers that I have dealt with. The book is before you. It is an expensive book. The publisher is right in this room, you can negotiate the price. It's costing 1995 rupees. It's an expensive one. But you can negotiate the price. Thank you all very much, for bearing with me.

(Book release)

Nandan Nilekani:

I am really delighted and privileged to be here today at the launch of my friend Om's book on urbanization. A magnum opus as you can see on urbanization. I got to know him 20 years back. In fact, while a lot of work I do nowadays is on digital transformation. My career in public life began in the space of urbanization. Because in 2009 I was asked by then chief minister of Karnataka S M Krishna to run the Bangalore agenda task force where I learnt the first time what happens in cities and what does not happen in cities. That led to in 2004 contributing to the JNNURM and then there was advisory council where Om and I were there and we got to know each other and have been friends ever since. So, I have known him for 2 decades and I remember going to his house for breakfast and having a wonderful time with him some 15 years back. So, I think Om has been in some sense a lonely person because he was holding the flag for urbanization when nobody else was. Ok, Rakesh also. Rakesh was holding the flags for many things including urbanization. Om was holding only urbanization. Of course, there was also Mr. K C Shiva Ramakrishnan also on that. What I meant was very few people 40 years back or 50 years back really gave big importance to urbanization and they thought about it. The whole notion of urbanization was somewhat looked down upon. India lives in its villages and all that. I remember a meeting in Delhi about 40 years back where there were two stalwarts, I will not name them, were both arguing as to who spends more time in villages. As if spending time in villages is an act of virtue and spending time in the city is like devaluing yourself or something. But that was the mental model. And in that model, I think Om has always been holding the flag for urbanization and I think it's really great to see that after so many decades his point of view has really gained traction. But look at urbanization in India is also to look at history. I think pre independent India and post independent India the view on urbanization has been very different. What we don't often remember is that all the leaders of the freedom movement actually came out of cities. Vallabh bhai Patel was the chairman of

municipal corporation of Ahmadabad 100 years back in 1924. Jawaharlal Nehru was the chairman of the municipal corporation of Allahabad in 1925. Jinnah was a member of the assembly in Maharashtra or whatever it was called then, and representing Bombay. So, actually pre independent India's leaders came to their abilities through running cities. So, cities are a big part of that time. Because the British had devolved management of cities to Indians and that's how they got the opportunity. But in 1947 when the constitution came everything was turned upside down. Because the constitution does not even recognize the idea of cities. It was only federal government, central government and states. There is hardly any mention of the cities in the constitution of 1947. So, to use the words of K C Siva Ramakrishnan, cities were constitutional orphans. They had no parents. A lot of that is to do with the people who got independence and they be of cities. Because cities had become an emblem of British imperial power. They had built the cities whether it was Delhi or Shimla or the cantonments. They were seen as representatives of British power and therefore one way was to not bother about them. Then therefore I think they didn't get the sort of the clout. Therefore, all the power was between states and the central government. And to some extent something happened with 73rd or 74th amendment. Even then the 73rd amendment was a primary amendment. It was to deliver panchayat rule. And the 74th was an afterthought. Let's do it for the cities too. So, in fact, that was the way it was. After independence the cities were orphans in the sense and the only cities that were built were cities built for the new imagination. It was Chandigarh as a bureaucratic city or Durgapur where the steel city and so on. But otherwise, cities had their issues and also you know very well on the financing the division of finances were done in a way that cities didn't get any money except property tax. They didn't really have access to capital. So, what we are seeing today of course, is a huge resurgence of cities. And the recognition that cities are aggregations of economic activity, that you need safe and secure cities, that you need good governance of cities. But even then, there is challenge because cities to become... able to be in charge of their destiny, the states have to let go of the cities which is unlikely to happen. And therefore, there is that constant struggle about how cities become more powerful. At the same time, I think that delimitation, the last delimitation done, while it did not change the number of Lok Sabha seats, it reorganized the seats in each state. So urban areas got more seats. And therefore, parliament had a lot more MPs representing urban areas. And that also led to urban issues getting much more traction. So, I think all this has played a big role in what has happened. After working with Om and all that, I felt about 15 years back that we need to create an institution to focus only on cities. And that's how it led to the formation of IIHS, the Indian institute of human settlements which is there in Bangalore and Om is very much involved with that. He is on the editorial committee and he comes every year. Here we are now creating a university dedicated to urbanization. It has already touched about 50 million people. It has worked in 1000 cities, 10000 villages. Its trained 100s of officers and professionals, published several 100 research reports, 37000 citations. So clearly, we are trying to create intellectual base only for cities. And that's what IIHS is doing. And I would welcome any of you to participate in what is happening there. Also, I had looked at the intersection of technology and cities which is what led me to set up another body called E-governments foundation. Which has built up platforms for cities and its running about 2000 cities and essentially it looks at all the functions of a city, building plan approvals, water tax,

property tax and so on. And this office now is running everywhere. And it's actually been taken up by the ministry to roll it out as an open source platform for cities. So that most cities can have a standard platform. So, I think cities actually are my first love before I started digital infrastructure. But I found cities too difficult to solve. So, that's why I moved to digital, I thought that was easier to do. So, nobody knew what I was doing. I could get away with it. I really feel that this has been a very special thing. Its wonderful Om has brought all of us city lovers together. His friends, his admirers, his protegees, his students, they have all come together to honor and salute somebody who is really the father figure of Indian urbanization. And I think this book is extraordinary and not just articles, but there is a breadth of topics that he has covered. And he is someone who is very special and I am delighted, honored and humbled to be here. Thank you, Om, for having me.

Nitin Desai:

Thank you very much, for inviting me. It's nice to be with you again Om after 50 years. We worked together in the planning commission. It's a pleasure to have Nandan also here. Nandan has shown great interest in the whole issue of urbanization. Let me tell you, he has seen urbanization. About 30 years ago when Infosys had to set up its campus, they moved to two villages which are about 20 miles from what is supposed to be the center of Bangalore. That's where they moved. These are two villages. Lots of villages etc. around. Now today that area has become what is known as electronic city. It's no longer rural area. It is not in the city, but it's an extraordinary developed city. So, what I sense is he made his income from digital in life, he also saw how urbanization happens and develops. I also greatly appreciated his remark that urbanization was a constitutional orphan. And he is right about 73rd and 74th amendments. The focus of Rajiv Gandhi and Mani Shankar was very much on empowering panchayats. And they did a 73rd and then somebody came and said why just panchayats. Why not municipalities also. And they did the 74th. Even today if you see the implementation of 73rd and 74th, 73rd is in a better state of implementation. The basis on which the panchayats get funds is now much more liberal, much more focused on giving them the freedom to decide what to do with the money. Then is the case for the... there is actually no system of devolution in the 74th. And most cities are dependent on grants that they get from somebody higher up. State government, central government or whatever. In many ways... there are three questions which are raised by Om in his what he wrote in memory of Ramakrishnan. I will read the questions out for you. Who is in charge of the city, especially metropolitan city? Who delivers the basic services to city houses? What is the system that enables city level priorities to be determined? That's what I really wanted to focus attention on really. There is a lot of discussions on this right now. One discussion which is going on which I have also advocated, many other friends have done, which is to make this third tier part of the devolution of fiscal resources. We have a system for devolution of fiscal resources between the center and the states when the finance commission comes up with it. Now there is thought that let us now also include the third tier in this system of devolution so that they also have certain rights to the amounts of fiscal resources which are available. The GST today is available 50-50 between the center and the state. Somebody said why not make it 40-40-20. 40% for center, 40% for state and 20% for that third tier whether it is a municipality, whether it is a local panchayat. Here I want to remind you of one or two things. One, our definition of urban areas is very

poor. If I take the census number 31% it was in 2011, almost third of the people the census has counted as urban dwelling do not have a municipality. They are living in what are called census towns. Towns which the census thinks are urban but which are not a part of urban municipality or something of that sort. This is on the census number. Now the census number itself is being questioned by many. It is to say this 31% is much too low. The actual urban percentage in India is higher and there are many estimates which are done. I have come across a recent one which used a combination of the information about population at the local level from the census which is available in detail and satellite images about the nature of the land, the density of the land, the location and many other parameters. The one I am referring to is called . Let me not translate that . But that one they have worked out that the population in India that is within areas that are urbanized and which the population density number higher than what the census defines. Census number is 400 people per sq.km. their standard was 750 people per sq.km. and they worked out the number 43%. This is 2011. Since 2011 we are about more than a decade away. I will be surprise that the number that we have now is less than 50%. Half our population lives in areas which are essentially urban. Incidentally that may also partly explain the rural numbers you get from manufacturing. Because our definition of the rural areas and urban area is a very poor one. Many of the areas that we are talking of as industrial areas, living in rural areas are probably in a meaningful sense urban in character. So, in some ways many people have argued, let us make municipalities the third tier to receive these resources. I would say that do that after you have really put people, urban people, half of them are probably living in areas which are not under a municipality. There is another problem that I would point out. Municipality is not the total coverage of the urban area. Example is Delhi. We are in Delhi, but there are a lot of areas around us. Gurgaon, Faridabad, Noida which are not part of Delhi municipality. So, you can't just say that lets give money to Delhi municipality, to Gurgaon municipality, to this municipality and not take into account the fact that they need to be coordinated in a meaningful way. There was a case in cochin, where they had applied for something under Jawaharlal Nehru national urban renewal mission. And they couldn't get it because a whole lot of little municipalities and even panchayats around cochin objected. And cochin city could not get the ward. So, is said, when we start looking at this third tier lets understand better what the third tier should be. The third tier cannot be just defined as a municipality. You may have to put it a provision where in a place like Delhi you have to plan areas with a coordinated connection between municipalities compulsorily. Bombay. Look at the number of things outside Bombay. Thane, the film city etc. so, wherever you go there is hardly any area, urban area in India that you see which will be within a defined municipality. You almost always find if other municipalities breeching on this and you need to bring those things together very much. I would say that this is going to be the real challenge. We must do this because that's the only way you will have governance of 50% of the people. Governance which will really help them to determine how they can live. The fact is, as just told by Mr. Nilekani, that a lot of people are leaders of freedom movement who are urban people. They all glorified village areas. I can understand why. Living in an Indian city you have to glorify. I am over stretching my time. Let me just stop here. And go on to one more thing which I have to say as a sustainable development man you must reorient the urban planning. Urban planning is not just about roads, designing industrial areas, residential areas, taking care of water supply. Urban planning has to take into account particularly climate change. You are

going to have temperature increase, we are going to get risks of floods, uncertainty about weather and the answer to that is the greening of cities. If you look at the evidence the greening of cities in India is less than half of what we find in say the more developed parts of the world and certainly other developing countries also. This is what we require very badly. Finally, just let me stop here, there will be much more to do after this. That is the focus on the migration. The issue of, Rakesh correctly told that the amount of migration is modest. And why do people migrate into cities. They don't just migrate for work. You also migrate because of better education and better health than what they can get in a village. This is why they have to migrate. So, I end with this delightful quotation from a document which I suppose older people like me have valued. Not younger people. The communist manifesto. I am reading a line from it. 'The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns. It has created enormous cities, has greatly increased urban population as compared with the rural and has rescued a considerable part of population from the idiocy of rural life'. So, let's get our cities right. That's where they are all going to go.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you very much. Now we go on to the next phase of our plan today. May I invite our panelist Kala Sridhar here and Mr. Dinesh Mehta. May I request Prof O P Mathur and the silent power behind this book Shishir Gupta to be on the panel please. Thank you. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Professor Dinesh Mehta. Professor emeritus and head of the center for water and sanitation. He has been for over four decades of experience in urban policy, urban planning and management in Asia and Africa. He was involved in global urban policy and dialogue as the head of the urban management program at the UN habitat headquarters in Nairobi. He also significantly contributed to urban policy formulation by the government of India while he was the director of the national institute for urban affairs new Delhi. He was also the director of the school of planning at CEPT university, Ahmadabad from 1986 to 1992. In 2013 he was awarded the international water association's development solutions award in recognition of his contribution to research and practice in water. In 2017 he became a fellow of the IWA and chair of their specialist group on water and sanitation in developing countries. He has a PhD from the university of Pennsylvania, a masters in city and regional planning from Harvard university. And a bachelor of technology in civil engineering from IIT Madras. Professor Kala Sridhar is head of center for research in urban affairs institute for social and economic change. She has authored and edited books published by Routledge, Oxford university press, Palgrave, Macmillan, Springer and Sage. Has published papers and journals by regional science and urban economics, urban studies, applied economics, Area and development and policy and environment and urbanization in Asia among others. She was a visiting scholar at the United Nations university world institute for development and economic research. She is recipient of the Fulbright Nehru fellowship. She was hosted by the university of California, Los Angeles, Luskin school of public affairs, in 2021 and in 2022. She was a visiting scholar at George Mason university from June-July 2023. She has done extensive research for Asian development bank, is the managing editor of the journal of social and economic development, she is on the editorial advisory board of journals like area development and policy, urban India and frontiers inbuilt environment, urban science. She was in panel to the Indian council for cultural relations, chair professor of Indian studies in foreign universities.

Has won several international awards for her research on urbanization including the highly competitive global development network medal for outstanding research and development and has received national awards such as the VKRV Rao prize for the contribution to social science. She is among the top 10% of authors globally on the social science research network. She has a PhD from the Ohio state university and MS from the city of Iowa, USA. Thank you and welcome. So, may I first request Professor Mehta to address us.

Dinesh Mehta:

Ok. Thank you, Professor Bhandari, CSEP and Om for inviting me. Om as we have heard, everybody says they have known him for 50 years or 40 years. I think likewise. I succeeded Om at the national institute of urban affairs. And since then, we have been, not working together as much as we would have liked, but also keeping in touch. Evenings at his home whenever I am in Delhi is always a pleasure. Given that we are running out of time, I had many comments. But let me just pick up three points from the book and the sections that he had. One is about this... his first section is the chapter one talks about urban transition but then he ends that section by wither urbanization. So, there is already some doubts. I want to take up the point what Rakesh also alluded to in terms of economic growth and urbanization. I am not going to get into the debate Nitin about definitions of urban because otherwise we will have a new series urban and old series urban and like the GDP, we will continue to have double counting of all this. So, instead, back in the days when in the 90s you may have seen reports out of the ministry of then called urban development – cities are engines of growth. Very common phrase. And that they contribute to 2/3rd of the national economy. Now, nobody knows where this number two thirds came from. The only reason during NIUA days we found was that in the national accounts you felt, you saw that agriculture contributed something in the region of one third, 30%. So, everything else is urban. So, that was the kind of an understanding. I think the papers in the book and maybe the work of Shishir and others is now bringing to the forefront that the urban sector, urban areas per se, have not contributed more than 50% of the national economy. Om's papers are talking about 40 to 51, going up to 54 maybe. One can argue that these are still old numbers and it may be little more. But not to the extent of 2/3rd that you are talking about. The reason we were doing all this in the early days was to draw attention because urban was neglected in the national budget. To get the attention of the policy makers and that's how JNNURM and the various other programs actually came into being, expecting that cities will contribute to the national economy. And I think it's like Rakesh giving more work to Om, I think all of us sitting in this room we need to start looking at what is really happening in the new urban scenario. Are we really... the cities are really contributing more? The numbers... we may not have the census, but I think the national accounts and the other information is still out there. So, let's see what we can make out of that. One small chapter in Om's book where he talks about city size and primate city. But I think the small cities in India actually are becoming the... I wouldn't say the economic hub... but the thriving economy. We work a lot in the state of Maharashtra and Gujarat and we can see small towns along the Pune-Kolhapur belt, Satara, Sanghli, all fancy malls and you can see that... if you want to talk about economic progress or rural urban convergence, then these are the towns where one needs to study the transformation that is actually taking place. Because the media does not... the media only talks about the floods in Bangalore or traffic jam

in Bangalore because that is what Bangaloreans are good at on social media. But I think there is lot of energy, lot of strength out there in the smaller towns and I think we need to first of all understand them and we need to find ways to harness them. I would sort of leave it at that. More work is needed. The second work or the second area that I want to touch upon is Om's favorite. Finance. Municipal finance. And something that I think Nitin Bhai mentioned also that when it comes to devolution, first of all we say cities are dependent on grants. But that is historic. I come from Ahmadabad, never got any grant. Ahmadabad had local taxes. Professor called them bad tax. The octroi. But I said excise was as bad as octroi. But that's made the city build hospitals, run bus services, do all kinds of things. That was a local source. So, in our wisdom we do away with all these local sources of revenue that Maharashtra, Gujarat and many states have. And now we have the GST. And as you rightly said the share of GST is not there. Professor Kelkar and many others have argued and I would say and use this platform and the presence of CSEP, colleagues and others that what do we inform the 16th finance commission that is now set up. What is the share of... although the article 280-3C talks only about... I think somebody once said that it is not in the mandate of finance commission to talk about funding urban bodies. But I think we need to make a case for looking at... currently they are talking about ad hoc measures and now we need to say, what is the share? Whether it is the GST, 40-40 or 80 or as Dr Kelkar argued 2% of the GDP share should go to the cities. There are ways, but I think we really need to make a case. Because large cities and we have looked at cities of the world, Paris, London, many big cities are dependent on grants. Grants, inter-governmental grants contribute to 40 to 50% of that. I think some of our big cities actually receive much less than that. I think that is a case to make. The second point in the finance thing that everybody hops on is that we must talk about property taxes. Our own sources and property tax is the only one. Property tax is... we have been looking at credit worthiness of Indian cities. You find Chennai which is 6.5 million municipal city, property tax it collects per capita is one fifth of what Pune which is a 4 million city collects. So, Pune property taxes are five times more than Chennai. This is something to do with not just the administration. It is the way in which property tax is administered, the way it is levied. So, the problem with the finance commission is that experts like Om and others go there and they take a macro view and say ok, only condition is property tax should rise in consonance with the state GDP. Now Pune city is already growth is much more than the state GDP. Now what more can you... say this is a mandatory condition, if you do not fulfill this you don't get the grant. So, it's the same thing that the southern states are arguing. With population as the basis of transfer of things. We really need to get into the nuances of property taxes across the states. Odisha very little tax. 300 rupees per capita tax, municipal tax in Odisha as compared to 2000 rupees per capita tax in Maharashtra or Gujarat. I think we need to... and my final point and something that I really feel is this whole urban infrastructure that we are talking about and any area Om that you have not worked? But we have been tracking the municipal services, water, sanitation for 1000 cities in the country. And we realized that the situation across the size, class that there is lot more to be done despite Swachh Bharat and Amrut and the whole issue of how infrastructure is managed and what is happening. So, lots of work still left Om for you. Thank you.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you. Now, Professor Sridhar.

Kala Seetharam Sridhar:

Respected Dr Rakesh Mohan, who I haven't met in a long time and the chair of the session Dr Laveesh Bhandari and the protagonist of today's event, Professor Om Mathur and Dr Shishir Gupta, professor Dinesh Mehta, my co panelist and distinguished family of professor Mathur, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be here. I am absolutely delighted to be here at an urban event and it is so nice to see the urban research group growing by the day. At the risk of repetition, I can't help but share some comments made by Dr Nitin Desai and also Mr. Nandan Nilekani, about the enthusiasm of Professor Mathur in urban research. I mean he was way ahead of his time and everybody was just talking about villages. So, I really am delighted to see this book which is the assimilation and accumulation of all his hard earned experience across many countries of the world including our own India. I am really delighted to see this. Now, I should confess it is a very voluminous book and I didn't go through the book by every chapter. But I have skimmed through substantial part of the book I should say. And the book contains 20 papers divided into 4 clusters. For those of you who have not seen it yet. Urbanization urban sustainability, regional planning in national development, governance and local governments, issues in urban research and lot of which as professor Mathur himself said are commissioned by the World Bank, ADB, the FAO, the UN habitat and so forth. At the outset let me commend Mr. Mathur for this excellent work which is actually nearly the magnum opus as Nandan said and it must be read by all urban scholars, policy makers, bureaucrats, researchers and practitioners also. I have many comments about the book. The wide canvas of topics that he has dealt with. But I will just touch upon just two or three important things. I think many of our contemporary Indian cities are battling with problems like congestion one, professor Mehta mentioned about Pune, let me talk about Bangalore. Bangalore is known for its massive traffic deadlocks. And it was designated world's sixth most congested city. Followed by Pune actually. Pune was 7th in this. I would have liked this book to speak a lot more about congestion and mobility because they imply a lot for the city as an effective labor market. Whenever commuters spend more time commuting this basically restricts the size of the city's effective labor market. Not because we as individuals get tired of commuting and say that my back is hurting and leg is paining and I am really frustrated. No, it's not like that. But at the macro level the number of jobs accessible within a certain commute, will drastically reduce whenever our commute time increases. So, Bangalore is really in a very, very poor position as far as that is concerned now. I would have really liked to see the book talk a lot more about this issue because congestion and long commute times also undermines the ability of the city for its scale economies for which it is much acclaimed. So, that is one thing. The other thing is that in the cities that are known especially for their very strong land use control and Mr. Mathur does mention and refer to floor area ratio. But I would have liked to see a lot more discussion on floor area ratio because some research which I coauthored with Jan Brueckner some years ago, very well cited, we find that one unit relaxation in the cities FAR basically reduces the cities spatial area by 20% which actually can if you translate that into time commuting and fuel costs can translate to a welfare gain of 106 million rupees per Indian city of 7.5 lakh population. So, I think that is one thing that we all need to duly acknowledge. Now the third thing is professor Mathur himself talked about Michael Spence Nobel laureate.

He also came to Bangalore actually. He talked about artificial intelligence and I had not met him for a long time so I talked to him. He said that artificial intelligence in Indian cities can be used to reduce solid waste management for example. If they can reduce the chaotic environment a bit, for the robots to work and so forth. In the age of chat GPT, chat box, artificial intelligence and google maps and all this I would also like to see a lot more about the effect of technology in cities, how they affect commute time and how the limiting role played by land use regulations in our country can be actually reduced. Last but not the least I and Mr. Mathur we have coauthored one oxford university press book on the cost and challenges of providing local urban services of India cities. We argued – cities I think even Delhi, Bangalore is also growing through a water crisis now as the summer dawns upon us. In that book what I and Professor Om Mathur argued was that a city usually uses its least expensive sources of water first. And then as the city keeps growing bigger it goes to more expensive sources like drawing water from Kaveri. Bangalore is now at phase 5 of Kaveri project. So, these are some reasons why a city finds it increasingly expensive to source one unit of water which is the reason why a city should use the marginal cost as the basis of pricing its water. Not the average cost. If you were to use the unit cost to the average cost of water, you will be underestimating the cost of water production in the future. So, that's one thing that as an urban public finance argument, I would have liked Om Mathur to emphasize the marginal... we found in that book if you remember Professor Mathur that many Indian cities significantly are underpricing their water compared to the marginal cost of providing them. Bangalore was the only city which was kind of providing a pricing which was equivalent to unit cost of providing it. That is one thing that I am a bit dissatisfied about when he talks about the local government finance's part. I resonate with Om Mathur, he talked about the FAO paper that he was commissioned to do and did not agree. That's completely right because in somewhat which was commissioned by ADB and part of which professor Mathur also wrote two chapters for the ADBI, what I found in my chapter was that, although the land under cultivation in India remains more or less the same devoted to food grain cultivation from 1970 all the way to 2015, the food grain per yield kept rising in the graph. So, urbanization is an excellent way to remove excess labor from agriculture and deploy them in cities without really affecting agriculture output, because there is anyway mechanization and you can increasingly use to retain the productivity of land. So, that is one thing that I wanted to say. I was really happy to see the treatment of primacy, primate city, but what Om Mathur does is that he treats urban primacy at the national level. But the constitution of India makes urban development a state subject. So, I would have been happier if the treatment of urban primacy had been at the state level. In Karnataka for example urban primacy is really severe. Bangalore is 10 times the size of Mysore which is the second biggest city. And in Telangana Hyderabad is nearly more than 10 times bigger than the second biggest city Warangal. And so forth. The Mumbai primacy has he rightly points out has come down. But I would have really liked this treatment to be at the state level. I find that I completely agree with Professor Dinesh Mehta that a lot of work needs to be done. And I agree with Dr Rakesh Mohan that Professor Mathur should write another book in the next 12 months. Especially because this book is more historical and evolutionary. I would have liked the book to be more forward looking in the age of artificial intelligence and Chat GPT. I wish Om Mathur 100 years of healthy living and many more years of urban scholarship. I really immensely enjoyed working with him and I thank CSEP, Dr Rakesh Mohan,

Professor Mathur and Dr Shishir Gupta for this opportunity to comment on his work and catch up with many people whom I haven't met in a long time. Thanks a lot for your attention and I am open to any comments or questions.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you to both panelists for keeping to the time. Sorry, you had little left. It is established practice that when you have a successful book launch you always go beyond scheduled. So, we will extend this panel for about 15 minutes. The way I am going to do is I am going to ask Professor Mathur in case he has some comments. Then I am going to take questions.

Om Prakash Mathur:

As I said this book was commissioned by the World Bank, the FAO, the UN and others. The themes of the papers were not decided by me. It was decided by the sponsors of the book. It's a series story with all the papers that were presented in various conferences. The subject of the conference was determined by the universities who organized them, with virtually no flexibility with the authors to write on a subject what they wanted to write. This is one clarification. That's why you find the papers really run a particular manner. These themes were important in the years papers were written. Digital planning was important at one point in time. Small cities were important in 70s. Informal sector was important in 80s. So, the importance on this subject was in the years papers were written. That is one clarification that I wanted to give. What Kala has mentioned that, we should really be focusing on the areas the different phase of urbanization. I have no problem with alternate ways of looking at it. But then we are not... see the book is based on formal data sets comparable over time. I am not choosing anything else. If the data are not comparable over time, I am not using those data. I am not using what are inflections, you look at the dashboard and produce a paper. I am not doing that. Nor would I ask my fellow researchers to really base their solid research on things about which we are not sure. You can have a dashboard of X Y Z, or have a dashboard of A B C and therefore we resisted using that not just now, but even earlier. The GDP question that Dinesh was raising and continue to sort of _ all the time. Whether it is 60% or 50% or 55%. We are once again going by the CSO and the NSSO. The last estimate that they had is of the year 2011-12 and after that no estimate has been made. So, this is where we rest our... anyone can say 60%. Now in fact if you see the G20 deliberations, in at least one paper I found a figure going as high as 70% by someone who is extremely responsible and also saying simultaneously that the Indian cities will demonstrate to the world, how cities ought to be planned. These are statements which have come in and which are part of the G20 minutes. Now you can only say that God save our other countries if those were really model for other countries. Then God really save the other countries. We have had serious problems including in the first paper. Which is the only one that I produced, all other ones I did at the request of various organizations. And the real problem was where do we find post 2011 data. _ . Fortunately... forget question raised both by Rakesh and both of you, fortunately the way these census towns are computed and estimated, the census allows us to estimate what the numbers would be in the year 2021. This is the only figure which can be estimated with some degree of certainty. And those estimates have been done. I do not know where our representative from Niti Aayog is here. Because that is what Amitabh Kant was very seriously looking for. And we

could give him the estimate based on the work that has been done by the CPRP people right there. But has been done by CPRP with respect to that one. But apart from that we are at disadvantage at this point of time in respect of our understanding, in respect of how we can better understand the process or urbanization in the post 21 period. And what have been the linkages between urbanization and GDP growth.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you. Shishir.

Shishir Gupta:

Thanks, Laveesh. Pleasure to be here. I will just make three points in the interest of time. One is the thing that has been said multiple times, which is urbanization process will continue. But whether we much benefit or value we derive from the process is in our hands. So, it is not automatic as has been said. our _ of GDP is flat at 50% for the last decade. Second is we did some work for Professor Mathur's book which we will hopefully release the paper in some time, which say that why this is flat at 52 has to do with size class distribution of cities. So, I don't want to discuss the details of it. But there is an issue of what size class is contributing how much with respect to the productivity of urban areas and that is why it is flat. Third thing and I will end there is that I think we have been thinking and talking a lot about three things that cities need to focus on which is governance, funding and planning. We always look at Indian cities and compare it to the best in class. One helpful thought experiment could be whether how our cities compared to each other and can we learn from each other. Because one of our papers that we did looking at solid waste management as one service. The finding was that it is not necessary that cities that are spending more also has better solid waste management service. I think there is a lot that Indian cities can learn from each other while we try and achieve for the global best. Thank you. I will just end here. Thanks.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you. I am going to ask you to raise your hands for any interventions, comments or queries. But please keep them short.

Audience:

Hi, my name is Surendar Singh. Just a question. We have talked about urbanization and cities in a lot of other areas about it. Just want to ask. I haven't read the book, so please forgive me. But we haven't talked about how sustainable our future cities are going to be. There was just one mention by Dr Desai and he has talked about sustainability just once. My request would be (why) can we not have more discussions which are centered on sustainable urbanization and not just urbanization per se. And second what are the innovations we are looking forward to, this would be the question to Mr. Mathur, to make our cities more sustainable. Thank you so much, for taking more time.

Audience:

I have an observation and a question. Why none of the panelists and the speakers never spoke about Delhi. Or may be Delhi has no problems at all

Audience:

I am Deepak Maheshwari. My question is about, broadly I look at urbanization as two different types. One is migratory, the other is __. Are there anyways that we should be looking at these two in a different manner? Thank you.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you. I will just start with you. I will request both the panelists to answer the questions.

Om Prakash Mathur:

Let me take the Delhi question and my colleagues can take the other questions. We have been studying Delhi very seriously. In fact, even in this book you will find one paper on property taxes in Delhi. When the paper was done there were no formal count in Delhi of the number of properties that we have. And this is what the fifth finance commission is reporting that in Delhi we do not have a count of the number of properties. Number one. Number two of the properties which we have a count only 31% pay property taxes. Only 31%. The property tax was last laid out in Delhi in 2004 with the recommendations of a high power expert committee of which I happen to be a member. That every third year there would be revision in the property tax assessment. There is a MVA which is a municipal valuation committee in place in Delhi which meets every third year. And makes a recommendation that says we did revaluation. What is interesting is that those who live in A class colony like Sundar Nagar or Vasant Vihar, they have been saying that we should be downgraded to B because now there is so much noise coming in that our A category had a certain measure and those measures do not allow us to remain A., we should be downgraded to B simply because the rate at which valuation is done in A class is 670 rupees per square meter, compared to 520 in B class. There is a very interesting quote which really, I borrowed from the economic survey of 2016 by Arvind Subramanyam which says that this is the one area where the governments all the three levels of government, that is the central government, the state government, the municipal corporation and the Delhi population, they all agree is that our valuation should be brought down. They all agree. You can imagine what the property tax is. One of the lowest in Delhi as far as India is concerned. Lowest property taxation. But this is only one comment. This is the kind of response both by the levels of governments as well as by people to something which affects them. If you take a subject which does not affect them, probably might get a more nuanced kind of response than we would get. Something we are all familiar.

Dinesh Mehta:

Quick comment on migratory urbanization, I think just look at the numbers. The migration is only less than 20% of the total urban growth in the country. And for strange reasons we have been looking at it across the decades and it is consistent. So, there is no reason why 2021 census whenever it is done would show any different and much of these migrations is for non-economic reasons. And so, I think that is a very different stream than those who come to cities for economic reasons or for some other as other speakers said for other reasons like education and health etc. These are the two very studied and proven facts that migration, rural to urban migration. Just an anecdote. Om, when he left NIUA he said beware with the parliament

question. One parliament question that always came – cities are growing rapidly, rural urban migration is rising, what is the government doing about it. That question always came to NIUA and he had a prepared answer which I always submitted and there was no other...

Kala Seetharam Sridhar:

I will take the other question, sustainable urbanization which others did not respond to. I don't know if you listened to our comments carefully because each of the things that I pick, I am just looking through my notes, has direct implication for sustainable urbanization. Land use regulations, floor area ratio. The higher the floor area ratio, the more sustainable our urbanization will be. Because that way we will be producing less carbon emissions briefly. Now the second thing that I talked about. Congestion and mobility. Those have a lot of vehicular emissions. And that also really smacks of all the bad things that our cities mean for sustainable urbanization. And I think the only way out is public transport. About which we have not debated much today. But we can take that up separately. Water. That is also a very important aspect of sustainable urbanization and I really think that water scarce cities like Delhi or Bangalore in the summer months can overcome this successfully with marginal cost pricing of water. I don't know... professor Mathur had always had doubts about this. But I was, I am and I continue to be a diehard optimist that if we price our water and all our basic services more appropriately, we will still be able to get over the crisis with other suitable methods. And food security. I really hated that people blame our cities for all the pollution, crime, congestion and food security. But as I demonstrated and as I have found based on data from RBI, this is not data from any census or any other entity. It's from the RBI and I looked at this data, I said with increasing mechanization of agriculture its always possible to remove excess labor to the cities and not affect food security at all. So, those are my broad responses. Thank you.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you. One of our questions was on the Delhi problem. I am going to change that question a bit. And I would like both the panelists to give your views on it. The biggest challenge arguably is the governance challenges of cities and since that conversation hasn't really happened here, I would like you to talk a little bit about it and of course, we know the ideal of having elected bodies and empowered mayors and all of that. But the way the politics is we don't really expect any major changes in that front say for the next decade or two. Now taking that as a given what do you think needs to be done to at least partially address, if not fully address the governance problem of cities.

Dinesh Mehta:

Laveesh I am reminded of one of the dissertations that my student did. This was during the period when there was a debate of whether Delhi should have one municipal corporation or three and all of that. I think she looked at and identified about 25 agencies that are in some way involved in Delhi in providing urban services including milk supply. If you counted all of that. And we looked at and the whole debate was that it is too big to manage. So, we compared Delhi with Mumbai. Now Mumbai is one city, one corporation in those days at least when the study was done, Mumbai was about 12 million, Delhi was roughly 10 million. Mumbai is managed by one single municipal corporation, but they have a very decentralized

ward level system. And their what ever 28 wards and each ward there is so much... we saw during covid times. It was a city of a scale that managed covid in the best possible way and with much less deaths or whatever. So, Mumbai was the case and the commissioner got all kinds of awards for that. But I think there is a lesson for Delhi in my opinion. You experimented with three municipal corporations. Now I believe it's one again. And then you have the NCT. I don't know enough, so I will not comment what Delhi should be, but I think there are lessons from big cities like Mumbai that I know well and you can find lessons there. Send Delhi-wallas to Mumbai, they will learn from them.

Laveesh Bhandari:

Thank you, but my question was not just about Delhi. The larger governance thing. I will take three more questions towards the end after this round.

Kala Seetharam Sridhar:

Laveesh, thank you for this question. I was at the World Bank headquarters in Washington just past week I came back on Sunday. The lady, there was the mayor of Freetown in Sierra Leone. She came and made a beautiful presentation. She has masters in public administration from London school of economics. She made a beautiful presentation. And said that my town does not have any urban planning tools. We cannot really plan and we are really severely undermined in our ability to do any form of urban planning. Then I stood up during Q&A and I asked her that maam, this is very well taken. Our Indian cities are very well equipped, they have all the tools, we have GIS tools, we have planners, we have software. We have expertise. But Indian cities plan. We plan a lot. But 90% of our cities represent violations. For example, in Bangalore more than 94% of the buildings represent violations. So, I said, there is a provocative question I want to pose to you and is there a point in planning cities at all. So, I continue to say that here. So, I think that can we allow our cities to be really... instead of allowing the entire city to be violations, can we allow a little bit of less planning regulations and see what happens. Because cities are the places where the best minds are there. And they are all very, very innovative. And the best ideas are born in cities. Our start-ups, Bangalore is the start-up capital of the country. So, can we allow this and see what happens. It is my kind of lesson for all the cities.

Dinesh Mehta:

You mean more flexible regulations.

Laveesh Bhandari:

So, you answered my question with a question. And we will get professor Mathur to answer it.

Om Prakash Mathur:

Just a very short comment. Capital cities are very difficult places of all to govern. There is no one single model that you find. You do find that they are like Berlin. A city state. There is only single government but combining the powers of the central government or the federal government, of the state government and of the city government is city state government

today. The other extreme is South Africa where there is no capital city. No one capital city. Pretoria is where the executive sits. And Cape Town is the one where the legislators sit. And every morning and evening people are flying in and flying out because the legislators are there and the executives are here. So, they are very difficult places because they have to serve two sets of goals. One is they have international image, it's an international city. And it requires a different order, different discipline. And the second is the local priorities in development priorities where people vote. Therefore, this conflict between which ought to be given priority. Whether international image, which is what the central government in Delhi does or supposed to be doing and what the local people want that remains in a clash all the time all over the world. Including in Washington DC this problem persists. Just my brief comment.

Laveesh Bhandari:

I apologize. I have been told that the time is now my 15 minute extension is also about to get over. So, I will have to close this and I know there are a couple of questions. I will request you to take them right after this. We are all here. May I request our Shishir to close the today's session.

Shishir Gupta:

In the interest of time let me just very quickly thank Mr. Desai for being the chief guest for today's event. Very thankful. To Mr. Nilekani for being the key note speaker. Our two panelists Dr Sridhar and professor Mehta for taking the pains to come down from Bangalore and Ahmadabad respectively to join us. Special shout out to Dr Mohan as always for being the energy and a source of inspiration for all of us to assemble today. And to Laveesh for pulling off moderating this session with so many people and still over shooting by just over 15 minutes. Lastly, I just want to thank professor Mathur for just doing this book and I can't speak as much about the scholarly aspects of it, which all of you who have talked about it. I am his student. But for all of us at CSEP it has been a remarkable journey in learning from you, how to go about it, with humility, unmatched eye for detail and indefatigable as Dr Mohan referred to you. This has been an amazing journey and we hope to continue that in the future. All of us have by the way have indicated. There is an open agenda right. Lastly, Laveesh I think always events and comms team. For just pulling together an amazing event. And the publisher of course. Thank you so much.