

Speech by Hon'ble Secretary

Hon'ble Prime Minister, Minister of Urban Development, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Minister of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Hon'ble Members of the Council of Ministers of the Central Government, Hon'ble Chief Ministers and Urban Development Ministers of States / UTs, senior officials of the Central and State Governments and other dignitaries and distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I deem it a great honour and privilege to welcome you all, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Ministries of Urban Development and Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, on this historic occasion of the launch of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. I am particularly grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for having agreed to be with us today, despite his pressing engagements. I am also grateful to the Hon'ble Chief Ministers and Ministers of Urban Development of the State / UT Governments to have taken the trouble to attend this conference, at a short notice.

We believe that launch of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is, probably, a very timely and desirable intervention of the government in the urban sector so far. It has the potential to radically change the urban-scape of India in the years to come.

As we all know, India's urban sector has been witnessing a rapid demographic shift. Around 1/3rd of the country's population already lives in urban areas. Cities not only contribute more than half of country's GDP, but also provide more than 60% of the employment potential in manufacturing, trade, commerce, financial services and transport sectors. These statistics only highlight the linkages that have come to be established between the processes of urbanization and economic development of the country.

Despite increasing role of the cities in the life of the nation, the growth of urban infrastructure and services has been far from adequate. Public infrastructure deficiencies in the cities get reflected in the poor quality of life indices. These deficiencies are quite often sought to be met by private provisioning. This, however, results in higher per unit cost of production, adversely impacting the competitiveness of goods and services produced in the cities, a phenomenon, which cities or the country can ill-afford, in this globalized world.

Process of urbanization is expected to continue unabated. Trends and forecasts based on macro-economic indicators and the forces of globalization will, in-fact, accelerate the pace of urban population growth. It has been empirically established that even countries that restrict and regulate migration to cities have encountered urban population pressures.

Therefore, the real challenge before the urban sector is to make the urban transition efficient, equitable and cost effective, by not only wiping out the deficits in urban infrastructure, but also providing for the incremental population.

It is in this context that setting up of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JN-NURM) opens up an unparalleled window of opportunity for the State

Governments and Urban Local Bodies to take up urban infrastructure improvement and upgradation programmes on a sustainable basis.

Detailed discussions on the Mission will follow in the subsequent sessions. At this stage, I will only like to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and the Hon'ble Finance Minister. But for their personal guidance and support, the Mission could not have become a reality.

In conclusion, I would, once again, like to welcome you all on this all important occasion.

Thank you.