



Urban renewal will need a vision beyond the short-term gains associated with real estate development in the country at present

New urban professionals

The National Urban Renewal Mission, announced by the Prime Minister this week shall be formally launched in another week or so. But to achieve the mammoth tasks which the mission sets out to do, there will be a need to build a cadre of professionals and trained personnel in many spheres and disciplines which contribute to building sustainable urban settlements.

To begin with, the task ahead is very different from that of building new towns. This is going to be all about urban renewal - fixing the mistakes of the past, and cleaning up a lot of the cobwebs of thought which we have neglected since the last five decades.

Such a task will need the involvement of professionals like demographers, sociologists and urban management experts, apart from physical planners, urban planners

casion when the skills have been exposed to reality are really only in real estate development.

Beyond real estate

Which brings us to the other problem - urban renewal will need a vision beyond the short-term gains which are associated with real estate development in our country. Proper research and data collection will be needed and published so that informed investment decisions can



be taken - the present gold rush in the real estate industry is largely driven by the excessive liquidity in the

years have shown that whenever a domain is thrown open to private enterprise, there is a rush to exploit the customer and then, when it is regulated, things settle down.

But in the meantime, the harm is done and the common man feels cheated. The reforms in the power and telecom sector are glaring examples of this malaise. We now need to move to the 'regulator first, privatisation later' model of reforms in urban renewal.

Governance

The third area that needs focus is urban economics and urban management. How are we going to ensure that the money allocated for urban renewal is going to be well spent? Or, that the new/renewed towns and cities will be able to maintain and sustain themselves as logical fiscal models? How do we en-

These practices cannot be imported they need to be devised by us using managerial skills which need to be developed and polished over the next few years.

Then comes the need for professionals to create seamless urban laws. No governance system can work without a renewed urban legal system which addresses all the practical realities of the present and the economics of the future. This, in itself, is a daunting task and needs a specialised set of professionals - those who can create laws such that they are followed and not interpreted over the next few decades, laws which are simple to understand and easily implemented. Legal drafting can no longer be the domain of generalists - we need specialists in the field.

All this, perhaps, needs a university of sorts. One specialising in the education of all disciplines con-

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