

**REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE
ON
URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
IN THE ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS
SECTOR
FOR THE ELEVENTH PLAN (2007-2012)**

**Government of India
Planning Commission
(March, 2007)**

CENTRE FOR POLICY RESEARCH

Dharma Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-21 (India)

Tel: 26115273-76 Fax: 91-11-26872746

E-mail coprindia@vsni.com Website www.cprindia.org

From: K.C. Sivramakrishnan, IAS (Retd) 06.3.2007
Former Secretary to Govt. of India and
Chairman Governing Board, Centre for Policy Research

To : Dr. Madhav Gadgil
Chairman, Steering Committee
Indian Institute of Science,
Bangalore – 560 012

Dear Dr. Gadgil,

Please find enclosed a brief Report of the Task Force on Urban Environmental Issues. The Report contains the salient points on which the Task Force agreed. This may be circulated to all concerned as considered appropriate.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(K.C. Sivaramakrishnan)

Report of the Task Force on Urban Environmental Issues

The Task Force on Urban Environmental Issues in the context of Eleventh Five Year Plan was set up under Planning Commission's Memo No. M-13033/1/2000- E&F dated 21.8.2006. The composition of the Task Force is as follows:

1. Shri K C Sivaramakrishnan, IAS (Retd), Former Secretary to Government of India, Chairman
2. Shri Shreekant Gupta, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi
3. Shri Miloon Kothari, B-28, Nizamuddin East, New Delhi
4. Smt. Sharvasree Gokhale, Principal Secretary, Environment, Maharashtra
5. Shri Bharat Bhushan and Smt. Indrani Chandrasekharan from the Ministry of Environment were also associated with the Task Force.

It is recognised that urban environment is a much larger and complicated issue than what can be contained in these three or four sets of issues, but given the very severe contest for urban

space, these issues require urgent attention. From the discussions among the Task Force members, it is felt the following points merit attention:

A. Sewerage and Solid Waste Management

- (1) The present situation is out of 35 cities, which have more than one million population less than half have a sewerage system. Where it exists, the coverage is less than a third of the area: of the sewerage that is collected and conveyed not more than half is treated; what is treated is discharged into streams which are also heavily polluted, rendering the treatment process itself meaningless.
- (2) There is a continued dependence on conventional sewer pipe approaches, notwithstanding the enormous costs. In reality much of the sewage flow is in surface drains. Efforts to intercept such flow on the surface itself and divert them for possible treatment are not being pursued.
- (3) Technologies being pursued for sewage treatment continue to be energy intensive and expensive. Alternative technologies for sewage treatment were attempted in some locations as part of the Ganga Action Plan but this has not been scaled up or taken up for wider application.
- (4) Sewerage systems continue to focus on domestic sewage and sufficient attention is not paid to trade effluents or industrial wastes which in turn are left to be dealt with by 'end of the pipe technologies' and approaches.

(B) Solid Waste Management

- (1) Collection continues to be a problem. Efforts to mobilise community participation or privatisation have been rather modest and limited to a few cities. Upscaling is not taking place.
- (2) Court orders for solid waste collection and management requiring segregation, sanitary landfills and other safe options of treatment are being looked at by an increasing number of cities. But here again scaling up is a problem. Technologies for waste minimization are not being pursued. Excepting a few cities sanitary landfills do not exist.
- (3) The existing regulations including Court orders have to be revisited to see the changes needed as well as the investments required.
- (4) Regarding toxic wastes, in particular, medical wastes, the problem is increasing in many cities. Here again, the regulatory framework does not take into account the financial and institutional inadequacies of urban local bodies.

(C) Vehicular Emissions

- (1) The focus uptill now has been on engine technology and fuel choice reinforced by a regulatory regime. While this has provided a limited time cushion for some cities, the problem is increasing significantly in both large and medium cities across the country.
- (2) Motorization is increasing rapidly. The Annual Economic Surveys note with pride the increase in automobile manufacture but the inability of the cities to cope with this increasing volume is not adequately recognised.
- (3) Addressing vehicular pollution needs to cover a range of issues such as proliferation of private automobiles, demand management, severely inadequate measures for allocating limited urban space for vehicle use, significant distortions in the taxation and pricing system indicating unjustified subsidies eg one time registration charges for cars, inequitable incidence of vehicle taxation etc.
- (4) Considerable data is available on these aspects in the Annual Report on Motor Vehicles Statistics prepared by the Research Wing of the Ministry of Surface Transport.

These policy aspects are only partly addressed in the national urban transport policy drafted by the Ministry of Urban Development.

- (5) Increased public expenditure and investment favouring private transport further distorts the situation.
- (6) Public transport investments have to be stepped up. Controversies about modal choice should not hold up such investments for long.

(D) Contest for Urban Space

- (1) The contest for urban space has become severe and outcome highly inequitable
- (2) The existing planning and regulatory regime is steadily undermined by market forces.
- (3) Institutional responsibilities for regulating use of land space continue to be fragmented. There is deliberate avoidance of constitutional requirements in the wake of the 73rd and 74th Amendments. Accountability of urban local bodies has been seriously compromised.
- (4) Environmental impact assessment procedures including CRZ have not been built into the basic town-planning regime and continue to be stand-alone exercises. There is a need to revisit these regulations to better understand and clarify the institutional responsibilities.
