



Dear Member,

'State of World Population Report 2007' of the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) in a bold prediction of course based on substantial empirical data envisages that for the first time in the history, more than half of the world's population-3.3 billion will be urbanites in 2008. The figure will be pecked at 5 billion by 2030. As the report says such an unprecedented scale of urbanization – the increase in the urban share of total population will be largely confined to the developing countries of Africa and Asia where 80 percent of towns and cities will have urban share. Many of the neo-urbanities will be usually poor suffering with the attendant problems of urbanisation – concentration of poverty, slum growth, prevalence of crime, threat to personal safety, liberty and property, disruption of social life and deterioration of social and environmental conditions. Yet as the Report puts it “no country in the industrialised age has ever achieved significant economic growth without urbanisation”. Infact the potential benefits of urbanisation far outweigh the disadvantages. Urban areas are able to take advantage of opportunities of globalisation and to generate jobs and income for a larger number of people; cities are in a better position to provide education and health care, other services and amenities.

“Most urban growth now stems from natural increase (more births than deaths) rather than migration”. The Report takes a serious note of the imminent doubling of the developing world's urban population and spells out policy suggestions required to improve the social, economic and environmental conditions of growing urban population. It calls upon the urban and national governments and the civil society to make advances in social development, such as promoting gender equity and equality, making education universally available and meeting reproductive health needs. These will enable women to avoid unwanted fertility and gradually reduce the growth of urban populations. A proactive approach towards the urban poor is essential. This includes access to water, sewage, power, transport and an adequate piece of land on which they can construct their homes and improve their lives. The infrastructure facilities of this type will improve the social fabric and encourage economic growth of the poor. Population institutions and specialists need to support community organisations, social movements, governments and international community in improving the nature and form of urban expansion and thus enhancing its power to reduce poverty and promote environmental sustainability.

India, however, will continue to live in its villages for some more time to come. In the 2001 census, the country's urban population was 27.78% of the total population. But India cannot escape the impending trend of urban deluge.

I thank you for your co-operation.



Atluri Subba Rao