

# REINVENTING CITIES: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON URBAN PLANNING AND DISEASE SPREAD

Relevant for: null | Topic: Urbanization, their problems and their remedies incl. Migration & Smart Cities

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi's call for a reimagining of urban planning](#) and development [to make cities and towns healthy and liveable](#) after [COVID-19](#) reflects the reality of decrepit infrastructure aiding the virus's spread. At the Bloomberg New Economy Forum, he emphasised resetting the mindset, processes and practices for safe urban living, and acknowledged that governments actually do little for the working millions. In the first hundred days of the pandemic, the top 10 cities affected worldwide accounted for 15% of the total cases, and data for populous Indian cities later showed large spikes that radiated into smaller towns. Rapid transmission in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai was the inevitable outcome of densification and an inability to practise distancing norms. In globally recognised Dharavi, which has one of the world's highest slum densities, epidemiologists attribute a seemingly low viral impact to screening and herd immunity. The pandemic's full social impact, especially among the poorer quintiles, has not been adequately measured here or elsewhere, and as the Prime Minister said, it is only clear that the cities "are not as they were before". If governments are serious about the reset moment — he likened it to a post-World War reconstruction plan — they must resist returning to business-as-usual.

Good, affordable housing is the cornerstone of a sustainable and healthy city, but it also represents India's weakest link. Unlike speculative housing investments, well-designed rental housing that is key to protecting migrant labour and other less affluent sections remains poorly funded. Mumbai is estimated to have added only 5% of rental housing in new residential construction (1961-2000), and that too led by private funding. The post-COVID-19 era, therefore, presents an opportunity to make schemes such as the Centre's Affordable Rental Housing Complexes deliver at scale, focusing on new good houses built by the state — on the lines of the post-war reconstruction in Europe, Japan and South Korea. The Ministry of Housing, which has thus far focused on a limited set of expensive showpiece smart cities, could work on this imperative with the States, digitally aggregating and transparently publishing data on demand and supply for each city. It is also an open secret that laws on air pollution, municipal solid waste management and water quality are hardly enforced, and tokenism marks the approach to urban mobility. Past scourges such as cholera, the plague and the global flu pandemic a century ago led to change — as sewerage, waste handling, social housing and health care that reduced disease. Governments are now challenged by the pandemic to show the political will to reinvent cities.

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

To get full access, please subscribe.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the

world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep pace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Dear subscriber,

Thank you!

Your support for our journalism is invaluable. It's a support for truth and fairness in journalism. It has helped us keep pace with events and happenings.

The Hindu has always stood for journalism that is in the public interest. At this difficult time, it becomes even more important that we have access to information that has a bearing on our health and well-being, our lives, and livelihoods. As a subscriber, you are not only a beneficiary of our work but also its enabler.

We also reiterate here the promise that our team of reporters, copy editors, fact-checkers, designers, and photographers will deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Suresh Nambath

Please enter a valid email address.

From the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, to the landmark Ayodhya verdict, 2019 proved to be an eventful year.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Start your 14 days free trial [Sign Up](#)

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com