



SDS-DPG ROUNDTABLE SERIES ON INDIA'S ECONOMY
"The Future of Urban Mobility"

3 APRIL, 2019

Society for Development Studies (SDS) in collaboration with the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) organised a roundtable discussion on the Indian economy entitled: "*The Future of Urban Mobility*" on April 3, 2019 at SDS. Discussions at the roundtable were initiated and moderated by Dr. A. Didar Singh, I.A.S. (Retd.) Senior Fellow, DPG. Shri Manish Agarwal from Siemens and Shri Shekar Viswanathan of Toyota, led off the discussion giving the industry perspective and Shri Raghav Chandra and Shri Vijay Chhibber (both former Secretaries to Govt.) gave the official perspective.

Ambassador Nalin Surie welcomed the participants on behalf of SDS-DPG and outlined the strategic importance of aligning India's policy to the technological breakthroughs and local requirements. Dr. Didar Singh while introducing the subject, outlined the challenges and possible policy responses.

Both Shri Manish Agarwal, Siemens and Shri Shekar Viswanathan, Toyota, while projecting the business view also pointed out the importance of viewing the changes in the context of global megatrends and industry's response to them. The two biggest issues are pollution and urban congestion and global trends are showing the importance of multidisciplinary approaches and coalitions of OEMs.

Shri Raghav Chandra and Shri Vijay Chhibber while outlining the several steps government has taken to ensure better mobility solutions (such as Bharat Mala Project; PPP projects; electronic tolling etc.) pointed out the challenge of implementing policy in a situation where urban local bodies lack empowerment and multiple agencies continue their role in both planning and implementation.

Several of the experts present made important contributions to the discussion and pointed out that:

- To understand the concept of the future of urban mobility, we should understand the concept of urban distress.
- Mobility as a concept must be seen as shared mobility/automobiles, alternative fuels, hybrid technology etc. Traditional ways of mobility are changing. Today we're looking at platforms and ecosystems (Uber, Airbnb, Oyo).
- In future, Mobility and the need of advanced mobility will arise at the juncture of the overlap between quality of life, sustainable solutions and international competitiveness of cities.
- There exist many disruptive technologies as well. Bottlenecks in electric technology including battery capacities. Once we have the technology of producing low cost-high productivity batteries, automatic switch to electric cars will happen. But again, is batteries a sustainable solution in the long run? However, the point is to commercialize these breakthroughs to make them available to the middle-class and local populations.
- In a situation of falling prices - costing of solar panels and alternate technology etc. we should develop low cost features to spread use of alternative fuels.
- Exploration of hidden capacities is a must for the future of mobility (reduce the downtime).

Overall, the interaction amongst the experts was lively and energetic and there was general consensus that mobility solutions need to develop at a much higher rate so that India's urban areas have better options.