

'For sure, planning does not fail vulnerable communities'



VIJAY GOHIL

FPJ NEWS SERVICE / MUMBAI

Holding that the work of building future-ready cities requires a systems approach, extensive planning and holistic solutions instead of siloed ways of thinking, experts from a range of fields agreed that conversations regarding sustainability goals for urban areas must be dispersed widely among diverse stakeholders. The urban planning practitioners and advocacy professionals were speaking at a panel discussion hosted by The Free Press Journal through its novel initiative called The Sustainability Network.

Urban planner Lubaina Rangwala, programme head for urban development and resilience at World Resources Institute (WRI) India, said the Mumbai Climate Action Plan, a policy document that the WRI has worked on along with the municipal corporation and other agencies, is an opportunity to ensure that planning does not fail vulnerable communities that may often be at the heart of the impact of the climate crisis.

The Sustainability Network is an effort to go beyond disseminating information and instead embarking on a journey of change through, among other programmes, a series of conversations through which Mumbaikars



"The development plan must be for all, planning must be for all," said real estate developer Jitendra Mehta, president of the Maharashtra Chamber of Housing Industry's Thane chapter.

"Upgradation will be the way forward to make slums resilient," said Shweta Damle, founder of the Housing And Livelihoods Welfare Association (HALWA) and panelist.

can listen, learn and then amplify calls to action for building a more sustainable world. The first such discussion was held at the Free Press House on September 15, on the subject 'Sustainability And Urban Planning: Building Resilient Cities'.

"The development plan must be for all, planning must be for all," said real estate developer Jitendra Mehta, president of the Maharashtra Chamber of Housing Industry's Thane chapter,

also a panelist. He said the problem with development plans to date has been that reservations for amenities remained on paper, while plots of land earmarked for those amenities were encroached. Multiple agencies, including SRA, BMC, MMRDA and MHADA working on city planning also contribute to chaotic and disintegrated processes, he said.

Another panelist, Shweta Damle, founder of the Housing And Livelihoods Welfare Association (HALWA), discussed a pilot project in a Bandra slum to retrofit roofs of informal housing structures to give residents thermal comfort, or reduced indoor temperatures at the height of the summer. "Upgradation will be the way forward to make slums resilient," she said.

Other panelists were Prati-bha Pai, founder of Project Chirag, an organisation that works to provide renewable energy solutions to the rural poor, and Chirag Shah, the 'bicycle mayor' of Thane who works to promote green mobility and public transport in cities. Pai spoke on the role of youth in effecting change, while Shah said he hoped to build wider advocacy for cycling, through better road and parking infrastructure for cyclists and more awareness.