

## National Seminar on 'Land Questions in Neoliberal India' (09-11 October 2017)

### Concept Note:

In recent years, questions pertaining to land in India have become more relevant and critical for policy planners, bureaucrats, civil society activists and academics than ever before. Earlier land revenue was a critical factor for the consolidation of the British Empire. In the post-colonial period, the contribution of the land revenue to the national exchequer has lost its central place. Yet the importance of land ownership/land tenure/land rights as the basis of the Indian state's vision for a just and democratic social order continues to be an important concern. Land questions /issues in India can be said to have appeared, disappeared and reappeared in the policy agenda of the Indian state since the 1990s thanks to the neoliberal economic reforms. Demographic pressure, massive and uncontrolled changes in land use, conversion of agricultural and irrigated land for non-agricultural purposes and related sustainability issues, vanishing common property resources, changing agrarian relations, marginalization of landless agricultural labourers and tenants, growth of landlessness across all social categories, decline in per capita landholding size, rise of the rich agrarian classes, continuities and change in tenancy, gender issues in land, forest rights to tribals and other forest dwellers, are some of the indicators of the importance of reemerging land issues in India. The state in India, in the contemporary political economy, has virtually abandoned its redistributive agenda of land reform and instead is pursuing land titling regime in a "reform by stealth" approach. Land management issues have taken the place of land reform agenda.

India's rural-agrarian scene is undergoing massive changes. Urbanisation and peri-urban growth, the rise of the so-called rural phenomenon and urban villages, point towards important short term and long-term policy implications. In urban areas, massive investments initiated by the Indian state to develop the so-called 'smart cities' in order to make them emerge as engines of growth, have brought up the hitherto unexplored subject of urban property rights and records. The commodification of urban land and rapid growth of real estate sectors in the Indian cities have created the problems of the urban commons, right to city and inclusive city. This abstract should foreground a problematic and provoke a discussion around the land questions outlined earlier.

A National seminar on 'Land Questions in Neoliberal India' was organised at IAS during 09- 11 October 2017. Dr. Pradeep Nayak, Fellow, IAS was the Convener of the seminar. The welcome address was given by Professor Vijay Shankar Varma, National Fellow, IAS. The Keynote address was given by Professor Nirmal Sengupta, National Fellow, IAS.

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