



'Cities facing a crisis of character'

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CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 11

CHANDIGARH is precious. It must be preserved. At any cost. This message rang loud and clear on the first day of *The Chandigarh Conclave*, a seminar on urban town planning by *The Indian Express* at the CII. The chief guest, Jagmohan, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture, and other speakers drove home this point to a distinguished gathering.

The Minister, who came armed with a stack of slides to show the power of thoughtful planning, hit the nail on the head when he said the decline of cities was in actuality a crisis of character. "The face of a city is the face of a civilisation." Citing the example of the rot that had set in once-beautiful Delhi, he said: "It's a city oscillating between two worlds, one dead, and the other powerless to be born."



Jagmohan, Union Minister for Tourism & Culture speaking at *The Chandigarh Conclave*, a seminar on urban town planning held by *The Indian Express* at CII, on Wednesday.

Slamming *People Like Us* for the all-pervasive decay, he rued how short-sightedness and lawlessness had become a way of life. "Give a plot to anyone, be it a squatter or an educated elite, and

the man who started India's first magazine on design and architecture said: "It's a living city, it's a young city, give it time. Give it more life, it's all up to you."

his first instinct is to somehow make money out of it. The former will think of ways to sell it while the latter will dream of building a high-rise to get rich quick. Bylaws be damned."

Jagmohan underlined the need for political will to improve the living conditions of people and pointed out the successful rehabilitation of *jhuggi*-dwellers in Delhi and elsewhere.

Earlier, Patwant Singh, the noted writer-philanthropist, set the tone for the conclave when he took up cudgels on behalf of the city. Roundly chiding its critics for calling it soul-less,

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