



## **China's Xiongan New City Plan: The Promise and Possibilities**

Speaker: Dr T G Suresh

Chair : MV Rappai

**Seminar room, ICS**

The speaker delved into the issue of the urban question in China. His presentation focused on the new Xiongan city plan. He argued whether the new city will replicate the existing ones or will it ever be able to induce economic energies in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. Also, what kind of spatial legacies Xiongan will leave for the future generations which is all set to bear the mark of the Xi Jinping era.

The speaker stated that the new city of Xiongan is built basically by carving out the three northern counties namely; Xiongxian, Rongcheng and Anxin in Baoding prefecture. The new city will be located about hundred kilometers southwest of central Beijing thereby creating equilateral cities in China.

The speaker argued that in April of 2017, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly announced a plan to establish the Xiongan New Area, a designated special economic region in the northern Hebei province. One of the important features of these counties is that these are not rural. The speaker argued that the rationale for Xiongan is two-fold; the first is to transfer those economic sectors and institutions having non-capital functions out of Beijing.

The second is to coordinate the economic development of Beijing-Tianjing-Hebei regions thus, creating a new growth pole region in northern China. Meaning of the non-capital functions is vague in China. For instance, even the educational institutes come under the same. Recently

some branches of Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) have been shifted to the new location. De-congestion was also presented as a rationale for the project but more importantly it is the pressure on economy that drives such moves of the Chinese government.

The Xiongan is advertised as an antidote for not only the urban crises of Beijing but also for regional inequalities between the prosperous southeastern provinces and underdeveloped northern China. About 4 million people will be uprooted from the selected three counties soon. The new city will have 60 per cent of open areas. The primary agenda can be the possible industrialisation in China focused away from traditional coastal areas.

The Baiyangdian lake in Anxi county which is the largest lake in Northern China is already a subject of concern. The polluted wetland had raised a concern amongst the locals. It is certain that yet another round of large-scale demolitions, relocations, and disruptions of local economic and social life will be unfolding around the quiet Baiyangdian lake. Most importantly the water related life of locals in this region will be transformed over the years.

When Xi Jinping took over the problem of overcapacity of Chinese company was rampant. It created glut in the market which led to serious distortion in the prices and wages. Therefore, the key political idea that Xi Jinping adopted was the supply side reform and massive urbanisation. These developments led to rapid urbanisation in China. The speaker concluded his presentation by arguing that, apart from assigning the different functions to the new city, Xiongan is not very different from rest of the previous city plans.

*Report prepared by Diki Sherpa, Research Assistant, Institute of Chinese Studies*

### **About the speaker**

T G Suresh is currently an Associate Professor in the Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. His publications and conference papers on China covers a broad range of concerns including nationalism, the political economy of reforms in

Sichuan province, labour and building production in Shanghai and Delhi and the new urban labour regime in China. His current research focuses on how new forms of social labour are getting shaped at the intersections of urban spatial practices and global economic flows in Delhi and Shanghai.

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