

Institute of National Security Studies

Round Table Discussion on

“Exploring Avenues to Affirm Social Harmony through Spatial Integration”

10th of September 2021, from 1400hrs – 1630hrs via Zoom

Press Release



Institute of National Security Studies (INSS), the premier think tank on National Security established under the Ministry of Defence, Sri Lanka organized a Round Table Discussion titled “Exploring Avenues to Affirm Social Harmony through Spatial Integration” on the 10th of September, 2021 from 1400hrs to 1530hrs via Zoom. Renowned Architect Murad Ismail graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour. Guest Speakers for the event were Dr. Senaka Dharmatileke, Chief Architect, Overseas Realty Ceylon PLC (ORCL)/ MIREKA Capital Land, Plnr. M. P. Ranathunga, Deputy Director General (Planning), Urban Development Authority and Plnr. Hemantha Jayasundera, Urban Planning Specialist, Greater Colombo Water and Wastewater Management Improvement Investment Programme. The proceedings were moderated by Dr. Thesara Jayawardena Head of the Department of Industrial Management and Director of Business Research Unit at the Faculty of Business University of Moratuwa while Rear Admiral Dimuthu Gunawardena, RWP**, RSP, VSV, USP, ns&wc, psc, Director (Communications and Publications) of INSS chaired the session. The audience comprised of planners, architects, officers representing ministries, Sri Lanka armed forces, police, intelligence agencies, researchers and academia.

After a brief introduction was given to the topic, the Chair invited the Guest of Honour Architect Murad Ismail to address the audience. Architect Murad gave his opening remarks by stating that the transition of space planning from micro to macro would be extremely important as it has been identified as one of the root causes which isolates people leading to frustration. Once frustration is set in, it is easy for unscrupulous people driven by religious, political or commercial motives to influence and mislead others to follow what they preach. He stressed the importance of examining the socio - economic impact upon the society when planning to build cities in the future.

Drawing attention to the significance of strategic spatial planning for ethnic harmony and social integration, Plnr. Hemantha Jayasundera mentioned in his presentation that business creation, development creation and wealth creation are the three key areas modern town planners should focus on to promote strategic planning. It is necessary to understand the importance of social integration -by town planners, urban designers, architects, and engineers during strategic spatial planning to create spaces enabling the engagement of all communities despite religious and cultural differences, and social status.

UDA Plnr. M. P. Ranathunga provided an overview of the planning and development regulations of the UDA and its implications on social integration. He stated that UDA had taken necessary actions to promote communal and inter-communal harmony in Sri Lanka as laid out in the government manifesto, thus enabling National Security.

Dr. Senaka Dharmatileke in his illustrative and informative presentation stated that Social integration can be considered as the vaccine that will immunize communities against radicalization. Accordingly, when adopting spatial strategies to build up urban resilience against subversion, Dr. Dharmatileke stated that it is vital to focus on certain important aspects such as structuring human habitat to reduce ethno - religious concentration and agglomerations, structuring settlement patterns to mitigate regional and local disparities, creating close knit neighbourhoods to combat enormity & and enhance surveillance and create vibrant public spaces to enhance inclusivity. The speaker highlighted that interaction within communities help to accommodate all socio-economic, religious and, ethnic aspects in one space and the creation of such structured public spaces enable active participation and engagement of citizens in collective urban rituals.

The event concluded with an interactive discussion where guest speakers and the moderator expressed their views and addressed questions from the audience. The comprehensive dialogue provided a platform for the stake holders to explore avenues that could potentially be utilized to address issues of religious and ethnic exclusivity through diversified structuring of urban landscape and thereby, promote social integration in Sri Lanka.