IIT Delhi hosts second annual Digital Delhi Conclave on the theme of 'Urban Science for Sustainable Cities and Communities', witnesses enlightening discussion on key environmental and urban challenges facing the national capital

New Delhi, 09th December 2020; IIIT-Delhi, one of India's leading technological institutes, hosted the second edition of Digital Delhi Conclave on 5th December 2020. This year, the agenda centered around the theme of 'sustainable cities and communities' which is an important sustainable development goal for the national capital. The theme was "URBAN SCIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES". This was the second edition of the institute annual conclave following the success of the inaugural edition in 2019. The theme for the first Digital Delhi Conclave was *"IT and Health for All"*.

The daylong event was hosted online due to the ongoing pandemic, but it didn't stop the Conclave from becoming a platform for lively and insightful deliberations and panel discussions. The 2020 Conclave brought together several leading academicians, industry leaders, national and international technology and AI developers, public intellectuals to deliberate on some of the most pressing themes relating to Delhi including the issues of air pollution and mobility challenges in the growing metropolis.

The event began with the welcome remarks from the Director IIIT-Delhi, Prof. Ranjan Bose. While sharing IIIT-Delhi's vision and the Institute's commitment towards solving societal problems, Prof. Bose added, *"The Conclave is designed to bring together all the important stakeholders – people who are facing challenges, IT innovators, industry professionals, government officials and policy makers to deliberate upon some of the pressing problems plaguing the NCR and the possible solutions. IIIT-Delhi being an Institute recognized for its cutting-edge research in information technology and allied areas is in a unique position to create a public platform where change-makers from different domains can come together and discuss possible directions for sustainable development of the national capital region."* In his presentation the Director also introduced the recently launched Urban Research Lab at IIIT-Delhi.

The first session of the event was **Developing DiverCities workshop,** by *Faiz Ullah, School of Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*. Participants of the workshop were taken through the process of creating the Divercity web-archive for Mumbai, in order to ultimately pose the question, can a similar platform be developed for Delhi? Can we also develop an open-source repository for Delhi?

The first panel discussion was on the topic **"Urban Mobility and Communities".** The speakers were **Anurag Mazumdar**, Ph.D. scholar at the Department of Geography and Geographical Science, University of Illinois; **Prof. Dinesh Mohan**, Honorary Professor at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi; **Dr. Pravesh Biyani**, ECE, IIIT-Delhi; **Piyush S. Girgaonkar**, International Fellow at International Metropolitan Institute, Founder, Plannogram; and **Sarayu Natarajan**, Founder, Aapti Institute. The panel discussed upon some very important question on transportation for poor, mobility needs of the city, how the workforce travels, are the city masterplans really working, and many more.

The second panel was themed around **Air Pollution Menace and The Future Of Delhi's Communities** which included **Kartik Ganesan**, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW); **Sruti Modekurty**, Platform Lead, OpenAQ; **Sagnik Dey**, Associate Professor, Centre for Atmospheric Sciences, IIT Delhi; and **Rohit Negi,** Associate Professor, School of Global Affairs, Ambedkar

University, Delhi as speakers. The panel discussed the issue of air quality as a public health and human rights issues. The issue of interdisciplinary understanding of the problem of air pollution and environmental justice was also deliberated upon by the panelists.

There were two Keynotes for the event. The first was delivered by *Prof. K. Gopinath, Computer Science & Automation, IISc, Bangalore*, on '**Smart Enough Cities'** and the second by *Prof. Awadhendra Sharan, Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies* spoke on the topic **'From Chimneys to Smog Towers: Technology and Air Pollution in Modern India'**.

Prof. K Gopinath spoke on the role of information technology in the reimagining of smart cities, their possibilities and related concerns. And Prof. Sharan spoke about historical aspects of Delhi's response to the theme of air pollution and highlighted the colonial antecedents which continue to shape the public and policy response to the issue. The conclave concluded with the film screening of 'Cities of Sleep', a documentary by Shaunak Sen who also engaged in a lively Q&A with the audience.

Having established itself as a torchbearer of technological innovations in the country, IIIT-Delhi as a research institute wants to take every step possible for fulfilling key sustainable development goals (SDGs) in urban India, especially in Delhi. Moreover, as a public institution, located in the heart of India's largest metropolis, the institution must play the role of an agenda-setter for issues of AI and IT and how they are related to the key SDGs for our shared future. The Digital Delhi Conclave 2020 provided a glimpse of how social and urban sciences, along with IT and innovation, are the key to providing answers to some of the pressing challenges of our times.

 For more details, please contact:

Mr. Sumit Kumar: +91-9999560239

Ms. Simran Jain: +91-8368504309