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### The Great Lessons Learnt

It cannot be contested that the trail of death and devastation that followed the Alaknanda tragedy would never have been so severe had the slopes been attended to from time to time, **and if every developmental project in the area had undertaken preventive measures simultaneously with the implementation of the projects.** With the preventive effort ensured from time to time, the complexion of the whole problem would have been very different, and vulnerability low to nil.

### More could turn to Less

Now, let me explain how more in the above case may turn less. Despite investments in stabilization of slopes and retrofitting of buildings along the river banks, especially on the down stream, the area will remain continuously vulnerable and threatened by the onslaught of similar landslide dam bursts upstream. And if and when that happens, retrofitting of buildings which was meant primarily to impart them local stability would prove totally infructuous. At this stage, it would cost many times more even to add incremental instability, not to speak of absolute safety.

Road ahead should lead to our destination dream for the next millennium. In the housing sector, that destination dream is best described by Arthur C Clark as a totally self-contained re-cycling mobile home (envisaged almost a century ago by Buckminster Fuller). It is not difficult to visualise a spectacular future when smart buildings and intelligent townships are already in place. If only we have the capacity and will to harness breakthroughs in science

### LESSONS LEARNT

and technology for human welfare, there should be absolutely no doubt that life on other planets will be envious of our global family! How this transformation is to come? This will come by:

- Tapping the fullest potential of Science and Technology for human welfare through the path of sustainable development.
- Meeting the formidable challenge of exploding human population by converting it into a human resource. This would require housing for all, drinking water for all, food for all, clothing for all, and education for all. Once that happens, every Indian should become a knowledge worker, with assured quality of life.
- Facing natural disasters with proficiency to timely forecast hazardous events, and alert those vulnerable. The principal challenge would be to reduce vulnerability by the spreading culture of safety, and by shifting focus from post disaster relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation, to pre-disaster planning.
- Establishing vibrant National Knowledge Networks. The road ahead should look like an illuminated information super highway with India as an important node on the global network.
- Acting together as Team India.

In the rapidly changing scenario, the real wealth will lie in knowledge, innovation and speedy action. It would mean discarding the bureaucratic apparel and getting into the space suit of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The road ahead is bumpy, but exciting being totally in an uncharted territory. It is up to us to use our intellectual prowess and negotiate the road with bold imagination, and deep urge to succeed.

## 'EXCELLENT' Rating for HUDCO

The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has received 'Excellent' rating from the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) for 1998-99.

The rating awarded to the public sector undertaking for the fourth year in succession is in recognition of the outstanding results achieved by the company.

The HUDCO has been able to surpass most of the targets set for public sector undertakings convincingly to get the most impressive score of 1.06 from the Department of Public Enterprises.

The ratings are done with regard to the various benchmarks fixed by the Union Government in the form of Memorandum of Understanding signed every year by PSUs with the Government of India, based on evaluation of the operational performance in all spheres including profitability.