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Population in Asian cities to double by 2000

BANGKOK, Sept. 3:—The population in Asian cities will double by the year 2000 and two thirds of the people will be living in slums because most countries will be unable to cope with housing shortages, according to a regional United Nations meeting here, reports Reuter.

The meeting of the committee on industry technology, human settlements and environment which began here on Monday is discussing housing problems in Asian countries. The committee belongs to the U.N. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Documents discussed at the week-long meeting showed the housing situation was worsening because most Asian countries lacked amenities such as social services.

Government housing programmes were usually not only unsuitably designed and too expensive for most people, but they left no room for self-help, delegates said.

They suggested that governments should provide only essentials such as water supply, sanitation, access and secure all land tenure and leave individuals and the community to build their own houses.

Delegates said another solution was for governments to upgrade slums and squatter settlements by providing loans to help people improve their homes and set up small scale industries.

Delegates from Australia, Bangladesh, China, Democratic Kampuchea, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Soviet Union, Thailand and Vietnam are attending the meeting.