

## Lok Awaas Yatra:

Institute hosted the inaugural function of *Lok Awaas Yatra* being organized by *Basin-South Asia*. The four days *Yatra* started from the premises of the Institute and covered four districts of Shimla, Mandi, Kullu and Kangra. The *yatra* had already been organized in three other regions of India. For Northern region, the states of Himachal and Uttarakhand were selected. Sh. Jitender Verma, from Centre for Sustainable Development welcomed the Key speaker, Prof. S. P. Bansal and other distinguished guests. Sh. Sunit Anand, Consultant, Knowledge Works, Ms. Dhvani Shah, Deputy Manager Taragram, Satender Nath Pandey, Programme Manager, CLAP and research staff of Institute was present during the inaugural function.

Sh. Sunit Anand briefly introduced the purpose of the *Yatra*. He said, *Basin South Asia* conceptualized the idea of *Lok Awaas Yatra*, as a move to provide an insight into improved ways of working for sustainable development and habitat primarily to *Panchayati Raj* Institutions, local level government, NGOs and professionals working in villages. Aim of the *yatra* was to provide exposure to the members of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRI's) to good practices & initiatives pertaining to safe housing and to find out the roles that the PRI's can play in improving the quality of housing and habitat at village level. He further elaborated on the need of promoting alternate technologies of habitat development, eco-friendly & sustainable construction techniques. The *yatra* was supposed to be culminated at Dharamshala with a seminar on the theme.

*Prof. S. P. Bansal*, Director of the Institute congratulated the participants and organizers for the noble cause undertaken by the agency in collaboration with the NGO's. Prof. Bansal proposed for undertaking the collaborative research tasks on common themes pertaining to Himalayan regions. He further said that such programmes are the means of finding answers to planning of an eco-friendly habitations, generation of knowledge. They also help in the documentation of good processes and practices prevalent in the region. There is need of building ecologically sustainable and safe homes and fortunately rural people have indigenous technologies that can be of great help. There is need of promoting the sustainable techniques in a good manner, he further added. Prof. Bansal concluded saying that, the academic input from the academic institutions can serve as beacon light for improving the initiatives undertaken by NGO's with a purpose of advocacy, capacity building and awareness.