

Smart leaders, smart people can only make Smart Cities, says Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu

Government keen to promote Wealthier, Healthier and Happier cities for better urban life

Technology to play major role in Smart City governance- Shri Naidu

Centre discusses Smart Cities initiative with States/UTs

States/UTs asked to convey their final views/suggestions in a week

‘Smart leadership and smart people are essential pre-requisites for making cities smart’ asserted the Minister of Urban Development and Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu today. He elaborated on the attributes of smart leadership and smart people while addressing the “National Conclave of States/UTs on Smart Cities” attended by the Ministers and Principal Secretaries here today.

After broadly defining the concept of ‘Smart Cities’, Shri Naidu spoke at length on the state of urban governance in the country and the imperative need to uplift urban life to a higher level. He said, effective urban governance requires smart leadership that is ‘bold, initiative bearing, willing and able to take hard decisions like raising, if required and recovering cost of services, implement reforms in governance, prevent unauthorized constructions besides removing encroachments and take on mafia’. Regarding the people, he said, ‘they should be alert, able to question, pay the cost of services, prevent fellow citizens from violating rules and demand their due.’ Shri Naidu emphasized that only then the task of developing smart cities can be realized.

Taking advantage of the presence of ministers and officials from different states and Union Territories, Shri Venkaiah Naidu invited their attention to the inadequacies in the implementation of Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) that fell substantially short of physical and financial targets. He noted that the political leadership of urban entities at various levels failed to provide the required impetus to galvanize urban local bodies that adversely impacted implementation of JNNURM. Shri Naidu urged that this should not be allowed in respect of Smart Cities Project.

Shri Venkaiah Naidu broadly defined a Smart City as one that makes urban life comfortable and improves living standards through good governance, efficient health care services and education, 24 x 7 power and water supply, efficient transport, high quality sanitation, employment to the needy and robust cyber connectivity and benefits all irrespective of income, age and gender. ‘The ultimate objective is building Wealthier, Healthier and Happier’ cities, he said. He said the Draft Concept Note on Smart Cities made public would be revisited based on the suggestions/views of states/UTs and asked them to send their final views in a week’s time. He made it clear that states/UTs/Cities which are willing to take smart/hard decisions alone will be qualified for inclusion in the Smart Cities project.

The Minister further said that effective urban governance should aim at prudent utilization of natural resources, minimum waste generation, recycling, water harvesting and efficient energy use.

Reflecting on urbanization scenario, Shri Naidu said that at present 377 million people are living in urban areas of the country (31%). In the next 15 years, this will increase by another 157 millions and by another 500 millions by 2050, by when more than half of the country’s population will be living in urban areas, for the first time. More than 70% of urban people live in

468 cities/towns with more than one lakh population. He said, this growing urbanization offered immense opportunities for converting it into 'engine of economic growth, since urbanization and economic development are interlinked. In support of this, the Minister said, though only 31% of the population lives in urban areas, they contribute over 60% of the country's GDP. It was in this context that the Prime Minister suggested building 100 Smart Cities besides improving amenities in other cities and towns.

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