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Smart Cities are all about sustainable development

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To understand the aspect of sustainable development vis-a-vis smart cities, we need to focus on the Indian government's initiative, the 'Smart City Mission'.

As a nation we have identified that the actual economic growth lies in urbanisation. We need to treat urbanization as an opportunity and not as a problem. This naturally gives a

thrust to the development of smart cities across the nation which is well planned peripheral urban citycentres. We need to ensure that smart cities evolve from the existing urban conglomeration as well as proposed newly-planned smart cities. This needs to be done by going along the route of urban renewal, adopting environment-friendly measures which will also ensure that they become economically strong, financially viable and from an environment perspective, 'sustainable' – not just for today but also for the future.

To understand the aspect of sustainable development vis-a-vis smart cities, we need to focus on the Indian government's initiative, the 'Smart City Mission' which has been defined as an 'urban renewal and retrofitting program' with the mission to develop 100 smart cities across the country, making them 'citizen friendly and sustainable'. The agenda is sought to be achieved with tangible results between 2017 and 2022 planned by both the Central and state governments by providing financial aid to these cities.

So, how does one define 'sustainable' in terms of urban development and growth? Very simply, it refers to the 'magic mantra' of reuse, recycle, replenish. It is all about being in sync with nature and its elements. This is easily done with the new real-estate development, which has to be developed into a 'Smart City'.

Sustainable, in reference to smart cities, is ideally about projects which implement 'Green Building' concepts within an existing city. Being an eco-friendly and sustainable township is also about recycling garbage to form compost for gardens, to create methane gas to power utilities, to harness wind and solar power to provide a part of power requirements. It is also about charging the water table through rain water harvesting, as also sewage treatment which provides treated sewage in form of water for gardens and construction/ cleaning purposes. It is about smart architecture which ensures being in sync with wind and natural light resources, so that load on HVAC and luminaries is reduced. This is the best manner of ensuring that new conglomerations turn out to be smart cities. It is important to focus on areas like air and water pollution control, sewage disposal, connectivity that ensures low pollution emission on the roads, a maintenance and management system which includes e-governance and internet-based solutions for

citizens and also using construction material that is 'eco-friendly' which should not create ecological imbalance.

While the Indian government's initiative about Smart Cities is largely about retrofitting and regular maintenance on one side, I would also look at planning new urban conglomerations as Smart Cities. In Mumbai, Thane, Panvel and Oragadam, Chennai we have created integrated townships which essentially are Smart Cities. They differ from other similar projects as we conceptualize and plan our ecosystem as green and environment friendly. It should be able to deal with natural calamities without any major causality.

So, when we look at the Smart City mission, the key concern is to address issues like unmatched civic and social infrastructure with a focus to 'leapfrog' in terms of technology-driven approach of urban planning, implementation and proper maintenance.

CONCLUSION: The Smart City agenda entails improving the citizens' quality of life, strengthening and diversifying the economy while prioritizing environmental sustainability through adoption of smart solutions.

(By Dr Niranjan Hiranandani, President (Nation), National Real Estate Development Council [NAREDCO])

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