

Building Smart Cities- The India Way

DR JAJIT BHATTACHARYA
WHAT is common between Nalanda, Taxila and Timbuktu in Mali? They were all cities that developed based on education as the key activity.

In fact, any city develops around one or more key economic activities. Which is why it is so difficult to build a greenfield city, i.e. a city built from scratch. It has taken over decades for the new cities of Gandhinagar and Naya Raipur to see some semblance of activity, despite the might of the state governments pushing for these new cities to become economic hubs. However, it is cities that contribute disproportionately to the GDP of a nation. In fact, Mumbai alone contributes to over 7% of India's GDP.

In parallel, we see the issue of demand for quality education going up every year, while space in existing cities not permitting quality infrastructure for the required educational institutions. We also see the

phenomenon where states that have been granted an IIT, an AIIMS and an IIM, to spread them across the state for political reasons. The challenge with spreading such institutes of eminence is that we miss out in the collaboration between students and faculty of different areas, that could have led to an explosion of innovation, thereby growing the economy significantly. There is a need to put all these streams of studies into a single place to allow serendipity a chance to provide India with the innovations that we so badly need to propel to higher levels of prosperity.

Has there been such a template earlier where all streams of studies were housed in a single place? Yes, that is what Nalanda, Taxila and Timbuktu did. And each brought their regions to eminence and fed into the technological advances made. In fact, education being a service with an inelastic demand, is a perfect



candidate for being the economic activity around which new cities can be built. Students and the ancillary industries around education will move to where quality education is being provided. And India requires such mega-education cities that not only educates the 200 million plus Indian school children who

would need higher education, but also the millions from around the world who would require quality education.

What would make such a city even more effective is by providing such cities an SEZ status, so that foreign teachers, students and researchers can freely move in and out, with the benefits and the foreign

exchange accruing to India.

But how does one start such a mega-initiative of creating a city of million plus residents, revolving around education? Who will fund it? When I was involved in conversations around the greenfield city of Amravati in Andhra Pradesh, my calculations for the cost of building that city came to

around USD 30 billion. Where do we get such a large sum of money from?

Again, the solution lies in joining the problems. Institutions such as IIT Delhi, JNU, Indian Statistical Institute at Delhi and NCERT are starved of space. Their growth is constrained by the rapidly growing city of Delhi around their campuses. IIT Delhi appears to be completely running out of space in the near future. How can we get these institutions to grow ten folds to not only cater to the requirements of students, but also to get the requisite critical mass of faculties, required to become dominant globally in specific areas?

Coincidentally, these campuses are contiguous. Together, they amount to over 1,500 acres of prime land. Can these institutions of eminence be moved to a greenfield city, with each being given 10 times their current land, and become the nucleus of a mega-education city?

city?

Given that a conservative estimate of the cost of land in the existing area of these campuses is around Rs 70 crores (USD 10 million) an acre, this contiguous piece of land, which once used to be in the outskirts of the city till the city grew around it, is conservatively worth over USD 15 billion. That money can fund half a city straight away.

In fact, many eminent academicians such as Prof. M.P. Gupta of IIT Delhi have forcefully argued to bring institutions such as IIT Delhi, JNU and ISI under one institutional roof in order to bolster the faculty strength and to increase innovation by increasing the critical mass. The step of moving such large institutions to a greenfield education smart city, just becomes an incremental step in that larger context.

Such a new education city can have special regulations that foster innovation, such as

free usage of radio spectrum, freedom to build and fly drones without the regulations that exist over the rest of the country, freedom to try new business models such as drone based taxis, have access to sandboxes etc. It would be a mind-boggling cauldron of innovation, wherein students and faculty from around the globe can come in and contribute to creation of knowledge for the humankind. It can support its own airports, river ports, and perhaps even spaceports. It can build its own satellites. Have its own crypto-exchange, ringfenced from the rest of the economy. The possibilities are limitless.

Its impact on the lives of ordinary Indians would be deeply transformative. And in the short run, the relocation of the campuses from Delhi (and perhaps from other cities) would lead to an explosion of building activity and jobs, and revenues for the government.

Brace Yourself, The Second Covid Wave Is Coming: Centre Tells Maharashtra

New Delhi, March 16

HIGHLIGHTING that there is very limited active effort to track, test, isolate cases and quarantine contacts, a central team report observed that Maharashtra is at the beginning of the second Covid-19 wave. There is no adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour among people in rural and urban areas, it added.

"Measures such as night curfews, weekend lockdowns etc. have very limited impact on containing/suppressing the transmission", asserted Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan as he wrote a letter to the Maharashtra government based on the central report. Bhushan further appealed to the state to focus on strict containment strategies, strengthening surveillance and augmenting testing.

In a letter to Maharashtra Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte, Bhushan said even though the health infrastructure is adequate as of now, the "state should plan for a worst-case scenario with sufficient lead time".

The central team which visited the state from March 7-11 inferred in its report that the administrative mechanism should be re-instated to the level witnessed in August-September 2020 to contain/suppress Covid transmission.

"In all the districts visited by the central team, the test positivity rate was high, ranging from 51 per cent in Mumbai to 30 per cent in Aurangabad, implying that there are lot many cases that are not being tested and there is high transmission in the community," the report underlined.

In view of limited contact tracing, a large pool of asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic people among contacts are not tracked and tested, the report said and stressed that testing must be considerably enhanced and protocol laid down by ICMR followed.

"The absence of rigorous trac-

ing, testing and containment is leading to sustained community transmission," it said.

"The case-contact ratio is more than 1:20. Though it appears high, a deep dive into the methodology of contact tracing revealed that the main concept of contact tracing was not clearly understood by field-level staff, who were mainly listing the immediate family and neighbourhood contacts, for the sake of listing.

"The high-risk contacts in workplace settings, social settings and family settings were not investigated and listed," the report highlighted.

The report stated that the current case fatality was found to be very high among admitted cases in Government Medical College in Aurangabad and in Vasant Rao Pawar Medical College, Nashik which needs to be investigated in detail, including sending samples for whole-genome sequencing, it said.

Referring to the findings of the team, Bhushan said that containment strategy needs to be re-introduced, containment zones must be better defined based on contact listing, digital mapping of cases and contacts and should be much larger to include the area of influence of cases/contacts.

"The buffer zones need to be delineated. The perimeter control needs to be strictly enforced. For each containment zone, the Rapid Response Teams should develop an operational plan," he said.

Bhushan also stressed augmenting testing to bring the test positivity rate to less than 5 per cent and strengthening surveillance by the active house-to-house search for active cases/contacts in containment zones (as per the containment plan). Further, passive surveillance for ILI and SARI must be enhanced through health institutions and the involvement of private practitioners.

Do They Think They Will Win This Election By Killing Me?: Mamata Banerjee Hits Out At BJP

New Delhi, March 16

WAR of words between West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Union home minister Amit Shah escalated on Tuesday with the TMC chief alleging that Shah has been hatching a conspiracy to harass TMC leaders ahead of the Assembly polls.

Banerjee also wondered whether the Election Commission is working as per Shah's instructions.

Banerjee made the comments while addressing an election rally in West Bengal's Mejia.

"If the BJP continues to interfere with functioning of Election Commission (EC), I will stage a protest outside the poll panel's office," the TMC chief said.

Claiming that Shah is get-

ting "frustrated" by the "poor turnout" at his rallies, Banerjee also alleged that the BJP is plotting conspiracies to kill her as her security director Vivek Sahay was removed by the Election Commission after she sustained injuries last week in Purba Medinipur's Nandigram.

Referring to the "attack" on her in Nandigram, last week, Banerjee further said no one could stop her from tackling the BJP in the upcoming Assembly polls.

"Amit Shah is getting frustrated as there is a poor turnout at his rallies. Instead of running the country, he is sitting in Kolkata and hatching a conspiracy to harass TMC leaders. What do they want? Do they want to kill me? Do they think that they



will win this election by killing me? They are wrong," she said while addressing a rally here.

Banerjee also wondered whether the Election Commission has lost its independence, and alleged that the poll panel is working as per Shah's instructions.

"Is Amit Shah running the EC? He is giving instructions to the EC. What happened to

their independence? My director, security (Vivek Sahay) was removed (by EC) as per his instructions," she alleged.

On Sunday, the EC had suspended director security Vivek Sahay and Purba Medinipur's superintendent of police Pravin Prakash over Banerjee's injury.

Banerjee was injured while campaigning in Nandigram

on March 10. She had suffered severe injuries in her left ankle and foot and right shoulder, forearm and neck. While Banerjee had claimed that she was "attacked" by four-five unknown persons, the EC said that the incident was caused due to lapses on part of her security personnel.

Banerjee further claimed Shah, who came back to Kolkata last night from Guwahati and held a series of meetings with the BJP's state leaders, was "hatching conspiracy as he has understood after witnessing poor turnout at his rallies that the saffron party is still miles away from winning the assembly elections." Meanwhile, the home minister had taken a dig at Banerjee on Monday by reminding her of the pain of

the kin of BJP workers who were "slain by TMC goons".

"Mamata ji has hurt her leg. But it's difficult to reach a conclusion about how it happened. Investigation is on. The TMC claims it was a conspiracy but the Election Commission says it was not 'hamla' but a 'hadsa'.

"I wish her speedy recovery. Didi, you are hurt, you are in pain. It would have been better had you felt the pain the mothers of 130 BJP workers who were killed by TMC goons went through," Shah told a public meeting in Ranibandh in Bankura district on Monday.

The West Bengal Assembly elections will be held in eight phases from March 27 onwards. Results will be announced on May 2.

Amaravati Land Scam: TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu Asked To Appear Before CID On March 23

AN FIR has been filed against former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in connection with the Amaravati land scam. The state Crime Investigation Department (CID) also served a notice to Naidu in this regard and asked the ex-CM to appear before the agency on March 23.

Responding to the developments, Naidu's Telugu Desam Party (TDP) termed the FIR as the "most frivolous" one filed by a ruling YSRC MLA.

The FIR was filed under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and also under the SCs and STs (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The issue pertains to pooling of land for the development of the

state's new capital city Amaravati back in the year 2015.

CID investigating officer Lakshmi Narayana Rao asked Chandrababu Naidu to appear in person at the CID regional office in Vijayawada on March 23 "to examine you (A-1) in the above crime, to ascertain facts which are within your exclusive knowledge."

The FIR was registered by CID on March 12, based on a complaint filed by YSRC MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy on February 24, over a month after the High Court struck down a case pertaining to "insider trading" in the Amaravati land scam, naming Chandrababu Naidu and former minister P Narayana as "known/suspected/unknown accused."

The timing of the complaint and FIR raised eyebrows as it came after a lapse of six years and a related matter was struck down by the High Court.

Referring to the MLAs complaint, the FIR said, "some of the farmers (farmers) of his constituency represented him that some influenced persons of the then government have cheated them by taking away their lands illegally, fraudulently by keeping innocent peasants under confusion and fear of insecurity about their lands.

This set of middle man who were the part of the conspiracy by making false representation that the government was going to take away their assigned lands without giving any

compensation (sic)."

On that, the complainant verified the GOs issued by the government and found that several irregularities were committed by the respondents and caused irreparable loss to the SC and ST community and weaker sections and got wrongful gains and requested to take necessary legal actions, the FIR said.

A team of CID officials went to Chandrababu's Jubilee Hills residence in Hyderabad, where he was now staying, and served the notice.

As per Section 41 CrPc, any police officer "may without an order from a magistrate and without a warrant, arrest any person who has been concerned in any cognizable offence, or against whom a reasonable com-

plaint has been made, or credible information has been received, or a reasonable suspicion exists, of his having been so concerned."

Reacting to the CID notice, TDP state president K Atchannaidu said it was nothing but "vendetta."

In a statement, Atchannaidu alleged that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's family had occupied over 700 acres of assigned land in his family estate in Kadapa district for 30 years and claimed to have returned 300 acres after it was exposed.

"Did not your father, late Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, amend the Assigned Land (Prohibition of Transfer) Act in 2007.

Rashtriya Lokniti Party started for the reconstruction of the nation

New Delhi : Today we envisage a society and nation where even the last person of the society realizes that he also has an important role and stake in every development of the country. The euphoria of democracy and the emancipation of its sweat in the upliftment of the nation, only then the Ram-state of Lokshahi will be established in the true sense. A society that guarantees respect for elders, protection of women and golden future of navigators with transparent leadership, modern technology and noble intentions was to said Deepak Pandiya, Rashtriya Lokneeti Party's Convener. He said that where the

government is not in the ego of the donor and the public as the petitioner. But the government should discharge its responsibility and ensure that all the necessary facilities are available to the doorstep of every citizen. On the occasion of the launch of the Rashtriya Lokneeti Party, the national officials of the Rashtriya Lokneeti Party were unanimously selected, including Brigadier B. K. Khanna as Chief Convener, Deepak Pandia Convener Admin, renowned financial expert and former Sr. Public sector banker Sh. M.K. Sharma as Convener Finance, Dr.



L. C. Sharma was appointed as Mentor and Renu Negi as Convener Media Relations. The party's National Advisory Board includes renowned Election Technology provider E L E C T I O N A W A A Z 's Managing Editor J. P. Singh, Sr.

Media Correspondent and Ex Director ALL INDIA CONSUMER COUNCIL Sh. Alok Kumar, IAS Retired Gautam Marwah, Padma Shri Bharat Bhushan Tyagi and Brigadier Vinod Dutta. Brigadier Khanna is an international

personality, he has rendered his services to the country by staying in the army .M. K. Sharma said that today's conditions have changed so much that all areas including education, health, administration, agriculture, industry, including individuals,

family, society, have become completely new and different. In such a situation, politics based on our age-old administrative structure has proved c o m p l e t e l y meaningless.

The aim of our party is to bring door to door services with new reforms in Health, Agriculture, Horticulture, Education and all other divisions so that people can function with 100 percent capacity in their services, employing 15 people from the same area in each Panchayat. Those who will provide every service at home, uniform arrangements, fee structure and other facilities in

government and private schools are also to be made equal. It is a big truth that India is the largest democratic republic in the world, which we are also proud of. But a country should be considered democratic only when there is good governance established through democracy, otherwise it would be a daydream. J. P. Singh said that if the system is changing then why should we not change, along with the leaders, the rating of citizens should also be fixed, when other countries can do it, why should we not. The party's agenda is absolutely right, it is going to set a new direction. He gave the

example of Prashant Manti Bhartoya Janaushdhi Pariyojana which is lacking mass acceptance in the country due to doctors not prescribing Generic drugs due to large multi-national drug companies mafia like hold and inducements prevalent through their system. This is gross violation of Supreme Court directions to Medical Council of India, the regulator of doctor's practicing certificate. JP Singh further stressed on the usage of IT and artificial intelligence methods to be implemented right from the beginning as effective utilization of data which is already existing with the govt.