



‘Bengaluru needs sustainable solutions to become a Smart City’

The software city is in dire need of smart waste management systems, clean water and energy access, and regulatory mechanisms to check worsening air quality. The role of citizen’s initiatives and urban local bodies is crucial for good governance and efficient delivery systems

Bengaluru, September 16: Sustainable development is the key to the growth and development of urban habitats, said participants at a Regional Dialogue held in the city today. Organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), the Dialogue was held as part of a series, and the first in Bengaluru, in the run up to the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2015. The Dialogue comes in the wake of the NDA government announcing 100 Smart Cities for India. Bengaluru, unquestionably, has all the ingredients to develop into a Smart City, but needs mammoth funding, sustainable solutions and enormous political will to accomplish this dream. Representatives of over 30 top corporate companies and a number of key senior officials, academicians and citizens participated in the Dialogue, which evoked an overwhelming response from various stakeholders.

Said **Dr R K Pachauri, Director General, TERI:** “In a diverse country like India and with a federal structure of government, it is important that sustainable development be pursued as an objective in different regions of the country. The DSDS Regional Dialogue aims to engage key stakeholders in Bengaluru to explore how sustainable development concepts and practices could be applied to growth and development in South India, and reduce their footprint on the ecosystems of that region.”

The Regional Dialogue focused on the themes of Smart Solutions for Sustainable Cities: Planning, Implementing and Building Capacity, and, Clean & Smart Technologies. It focused on the concept of introducing smartness in cities, embedded within strong principles of achieving sustainability across many critical areas. The

objective must enable a safe, healthy and sustainable environment that has adequate resource-efficient infrastructure; and, has environmentally-responsible mechanisms for good governance and efficient delivery systems.

The Dialogue deliberated on the fact that while citizen satisfaction holds primary focus in the Government's agenda for enabling smart cities, ownership of planning and implementation initiatives at the urban local body level would be critical to achieve success. The role of the citizens in defining holistic smart cities; the role of the private sector in enabling finance, planning and execution; and, the role of the government in facilitating effective environmental and implementation frameworks would help address fast increasing urban problems, said the participants.

Dr M Ramachandran, Former Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, said: "The smart city initiative is a timely and welcome initiative. What would be critical in taking the agenda forward would be what aspects of citizen interests' will get covered first, how people-centric the system would be, how the urban residents will be actively involved in the process, and, how inclusive the entire smart city arrangement is going to be. Also critical would be capacity creation and strengthening at the city level."

C N Raghupathi, VP & Head India Business Unit, Infosys, said: "Digital technologies, sensors and the communication revolution are finally going to come together to impact people's day-to-day life in smart cities. By 2030, cities will be so different from the cities of today. However a lot of work needs to be done."

Mr K Jairaj, Former Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka, said: "Sustainability has to be the *sine qua non* of modern and current day existence for all, and the challenge is to forge a consensus and execute a plan to create smart cities."

Mr Priyansh Dixit, Smarter Cities Program Director, IBM, said: "Building intelligence over instrumentation layer (like CCTV, GPS and flow meters) is critical to the success of smarter cities initiatives."

BOTTLENECKS FOR BENGALURU

Waste management: The city doesn't have proper solid waste management systems. Untreated waste gets dumped in the city environments, which is leading to a range of health hazards and social clashes between urban and rural populations. Though municipal corporations have made it mandatory, electronic waste is still not being segregated.

Affordable housing: Making affordable and sustainable housing available for the poor and the marginalized as well as slum redevelopment projects requires proper planning and substantial investments in the housing sector.

Power availability: The power situation in Bengaluru needs urgent attention as the energy demand is increasing by the day. Renewable energy technologies can meet a large share of this growing demand. Solar power and renewable technologies have the potential to generate clean and 24x7 electricity supply for all residents.

Water supply: Nearly 40 per cent of the water in the Cauvery river does not reach Bengaluru's homes, as it gets wasted during its course, due to a maze of old and leaky pipeline systems, or due to unauthorized connections.

Air pollution: Bengaluru's residents are now choking due to increased and deadly levels of air pollution, especially from particulate pollutants, which are very tiny and cause maximum harm to the human body. The Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM) level in Bengaluru is over four times the permissible limits. This is also due to the suspension of road dust, industrial and construction activities and diesel generators sets that are being widely used for commercial purposes. Effective implementation of air pollution norms and prescribed limits is urgently required. The city's other problems include poor traffic management and vanishing water-bodies, that once sustained the city's water needs.

A sustainable opportunity

The deliberations at the Bengaluru Regional Dialogue will provide intellectual inputs to the DSDS 2015. This milestone 15th edition of the Summit assumes greater significance as the United Nations is in the process of finalizing the Sustainable Development Agenda post-2015. It also comes in the wake of the findings of latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which has presented a grim picture for ecosystems, and poor infrastructure planning and unsustainable systems can aggravate the damage to critical utilities during natural calamities. The DSDS 2015, to be held in New Delhi from February 5 to 7, would present a unique and timely opportunity to discuss 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Dealing with Climate Change', which is the theme this time. The Bengaluru Dialogue held today is the first among a series of three; the other Regional Dialogues of DSDS 2015 will be held in Mumbai and Chennai.

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