

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT
THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE
11TH METROPOLIS WORLD CONGRESS 2014**

Hyderabad, October 09, 2014

Good evening,

I am honoured to attend the closing ceremony of the 11th Metropolis World Congress 2014 being organized in Hyderabad by the Government of Telangana. I believe this is the first major international conference in the newly formed state. I understand the “Metropolis World Congress” meets triennially and brings the best urban leaders, administrators, city managers, practitioners, organizations and citizen representatives from 136 metropolitan cities on one platform to discuss current issues of their cities and share knowledge. This is the first time this Congress is being held in India and representatives of over 100 Indian cities are also present here today.

I am sure the intellectual churning over the last three days has been fruitful and will provide new insight into urban planning and administration with the ultimate goal of making ‘Cities for all’ which is the theme of the Congress. I congratulate Government of Telangana and Metropolis on successfully hosting this event.

Friends,

Urbanisation is sweeping the world. It has been said that the 19th century was the century of empires; the 20th century was the century of countries and the 21st century will be the century of cities. During 2008, according to the United Nations, mankind became for the first time in its history a predominantly urban species. Demographers estimate that three quarters (75%) of the global population could be urban by 2050 with most of the increase coming in the fast growing towns of Asia and Africa.

According to India’s census of 2011, about 377 million Indians comprising 31% of the country’s population, live in urban areas in comparison to 45% in China, 54% in Indonesia, 78% in Mexico and 87% in Brazil. Urban population recorded an annual growth rate of 2.76 per cent and the 2011 Census reported a dramatic increase in the number of million plus cities from 35 to 52. Urban areas are now acknowledged as “engines of economic growth” and more than 60% of India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) emanates from urban areas. The top 100 largest cities produce about 43% of the GDP, with 16% of the population and just 0.24% of the land area. Globally it is also being recognized that rather than a ‘rural-urban

dichotomy', the phenomenon of 'rural-urban continuum' is the order of the day. In India too, there is realization that planned urbanization is one of the keys to unlock India's growth potential.

At a time when more than fifty percent of the world live in urban areas, it is important that administrators address the ever rising challenges of sanitation, pollution, mobility, civic amenities and public safety in an innovative manner. Most cities from the developing world are unprepared, both at local and global levels, to face the challenge of urbanization and ensuring equity in the provision of basic infrastructure and amenities. There is urgent need to strengthen urban governance and local finances in order to meet current demands and the challenges ahead of us. These challenges are not only in the context of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions but also with regard to provision of basic services to all the inhabitants, development of networks for water supply and transport, collection of waste, provision of equitable access to land and energy, building of green buildings, expansion of mass transportation systems etc. Also, our cities are having to do more with less and less financial resources.

Urban India today faces a backlog in the provision of basic amenities and infrastructure. About 9 percent of urban India does not have access to safe drinking water and 12.6% per cent have no toilet facilities.

The first challenge for any urban administrator is sanitation. A clean city is the first and foremost parameter of equity. A clean environment is the right of every citizen. Urban administrators must treat cleanliness as a non-negotiable requirement. They must make a paradigm shift from waste dumping to waste processing. Garbage must be seen as a resource. A city which only dumps waste but not processes is not a smart city. I am happy to learn that the city of Hyderabad has taken right steps in this regard.

As many of you would be aware, the Government of India has launched a massive campaign called the "Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan". This five year Clean India Mission seeks to provide sanitation facilities for all and create a clean urban India in the 4041 statutory towns by 2019, the 150th anniversary of the birth of the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

Pollution is another huge challenge in cities today. The focus must be on prevention rather than mitigation of pollutants. Apart from creating lung spaces and green cover, we must encourage people to adopt energy efficient technologies. Green buildings and green zones must be an integral and imperative part of urban planning and citizens must be encouraged to plan their new dwellings accordingly.

Unless we include greenery and conservation in the policy making and planning stage itself, the green deficit will always remain huge and impossible to fulfill.

With an ever increasing population in cities, the need for comprehensive traffic management cannot be over emphasized. Efficient and affordable urban mobility solutions are a critical component of a smart city. Traditionally municipalities in India have not treated urban transport as their core function. But there is new realization that a city should think and act about how its people move from one point to another. Mobility and transport are a development issue and not just a regulatory issue. Cities must encourage their populations to use public systems as their first choice. The Hyderabad Metro is among the best models of public transport available in India. I hope it will set an example for similar efforts worldwide.

Urban administrators must use technology to provide better amenities to our people. Since cities are growth engines and time is money, people should not have to waste productive time in accessing basic amenities. Government to citizen services should be available online with minimal human interface. In the past decade, India has taken many novel steps in this direction. As people increasingly depend on the internet for getting their services, entire cities will need to be wi-fi enabled.

As migration into cities grow, housing for all becomes a critical issue. It is imperative for city administrators to evolve sustainable housing policies which will prevent the creation of new slums. Private partnership should be made an integral part of such policies. Creation of satellite townships is another way of addressing this issue. Several state governments have adopted innovative approaches in creating housing for the poor and there is need for cross-learning from each other.

Safety is a major concern for city Governments across the world and a sine-qua-non of smart cities. As urban populations rise, public safety is bound to become a major concern. City administrators have to leverage new technology to ensure maximum public safety. A city is as safe as its people want it to be. Public support and participation is critical for effective administration of law and order.

Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government of India proposes to launch a new Urban Development Mission to support states by handholding them in building infrastructure and services in step with the rapid pace of urbanization. A new

mission mode program is being designed to take up these activities for 500 cities of the Nation. Private sector participation by way of PPP (Public Private Partnerships) methodology will be encouraged. The Government's focus will also be to support capacity building programs for our elected as well as officials working in Urban Sector.

Another initiative of the Government is to develop 100 Smart cities. The smart city approach will merge urban Planning, governance, ecology, environment, infrastructure and information technology to ensure that benefits of technology reach every neighbourhood and improves the quality of lives of citizens.

Finally, the Government proposes to launch HRIDAY or Heritage City Development & Augmentation Yojna. Under this programme sustainable development of heritage centres will be taken up bringing together urban planning, economic growth and heritage conservation in an inclusive and integrated manner with focus on livelihoods, skills, cleanliness, security, accessibility and service delivery.

Friends,

Conferences like Metropolis provides the perfect platform for sharing ideas from different parts of the globe. Our ancient scripture, Rig Veda states 'Aano bhadra kratavo yantu vishwatah' which means 'let noble thoughts come from all directions'. I am sure that noble thoughts have flowed in from all directions during this conference. I hope these thoughts will result in speedy action and better cities in the near future.

I thank all the distinguished dignitaries, experts and delegates from abroad for visiting India and wish them a safe journey back to their homes. I congratulate Metropolis and the Government of Telengana, especially Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and his officers once again for having made this Congress a grand success.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
