

The Smart City Challenge has kick-started a bottom-up revolution in India's urban landscape.

# Getting Smarter by the Day



**M Venkaiah Naidu**

**T**he proposal for building smart cities was mooted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 as part of 'Mission Transform Nation'.

The announcement of 20 smart cities selected from a list of 97 for funding in the first phase is the first time investment in urban development is being made based on a competition.

The Smart City Challenge has states nominating cities through an objective and transparent competition without any central intervention. All the cities that have not qualified are still on the list of potential smart cities, and can 'move up' by revisiting and revising their proposals and participating in the second round of the challenge.

Twenty cities are funded in the first phase, 40 in the second phase, and 40 more in the third, making it a total of 100. The 20 cities in the first stage will get ₹200 crore in 2015-16 and ₹100 crore each year for the next three years, the total amounting to ₹500 crore.

All 97 cities were given ₹2 crore by the Centre to make their smart city plan proposals with technical assistance by national and international agencies. BJP-ruled states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Goa could not make it into the top 20. This speaks of the unbiased nature of the selection system.

The Smart City Mission marks the beginning of a 'bottom up' approach in urban planning. Citizen participation has been mandatory for the

preparation of smart city plans for which a weightage of 16% was given while evaluating the city-level plans. A total of 15.20 million citizens have participated in the preparation of plans at various stages, accounting for about 12% of the total population of the 97 participating cities.

MyGov.in enlisted an unprecedented response from citizens and other stakeholders with 2.5 million people sharing their views and suggestions. Another 11.7 million availed of other forums like state government portals, town hall and neighbourhood meetings, and different competitions.

## Citizens Become Netizens

A key element of the Smart City Mission is the use of information and communication technology to leverage citizen participation for urban planning by ensuring constant exchange of information personalised to the citizens' needs and preferences.

The ministry in consultation with Bloomberg Technologies, states and urban local bodies, has evolved a template with a set of 43 questions to assess smart city plans based on merit. Irrespective of the size and type of the city or town. This standardised format enabled the cities and towns to express themselves fully, bringing out distinguishing and unique features of each city which otherwise may have been missed out.

The Smart City Plans, all received by December 15, 2015, have been handed over to three teams of evaluators comprising Indian and foreign experts. The competition was based on the implementation framework, including feasibility and cost-effectiveness, which has a weightage of 30%, followed by result orientation (20%), citizen participation (16%), smartness of proposal (10%), strategic plan (10%), vision and goals (5%), evidence-based city profiling and key performance indicators (5%), and pro-



**Smart but casual: Connaught Place, New Delhi, 1950s**

cesses followed (4%).

In these 20 smart cities, a total investment of ₹50,802 crore has been proposed during the five-year period. Of the 20 cities, 18 have come forward with retrofitting proposals; one city with both retrofitting and redevelopment, and another to take up only redevelopment. A total area of 26,735 acres will be taken up for improvements in these 20 cities, including redevelopment of 425 acres.

## Smartly Flexible

Eleven states and the Union territory (UT) of Delhi have made it to the top 20. With Jammu & Kashmir still to decide on its choice, 23 states and UTs are still to be covered under the Smart City Mission. We are giving the top-ranking city in each of these 23 states and UTs an opportunity to upgrade their smart city proposals in a fast-track round of competition.

They will be given time till April 15, 2016, to submit their upgraded proposals. The normal Round 2 of the competition for the remaining 54 cities and towns will begin on April 1, 2016. Those who do not make the gra-

de in fast-track competition will also join this second round.

Many cities in the proposed list of 98 smart cities also qualify for the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (Amrut), the Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (Hridaya) and the Housing Mission. This convergence leads to integrated development.

The mission's implementation at the city level will be done by a special purpose vehicle (SPV) that will be formed for each of the cities, to identify all the potential partners from public and private sectors. Each SPV of a smart city will be headed by a CEO and will have nominees of the central and state governments, and of the urban local bodies on its board.

The Smart City Mission aims to provide world-class infrastructure, technology-enabled services, sustainable public transport and affordable housing in Indian cities. Nobody can stop an idea whose time has come. The smart city is such an idea.

*The writer is Union urban development minister*

**The Smart City Mission is leveraging citizen participation by ensuring constant exchange of information that is personalised to the citizens' needs and preferences**