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# INDIA'S BUILDING PROJECT: RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

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*India's dream of creating sustainable and smart cities requires partners and governance with inspiration from the Singapore story*

The populous nation of India continues its journey of urbanisation as its leaders work to meet the basic needs of its residents such as housing, mobility and jobs.

According to the World Bank, in 2015, India has 1.311 billion people in 35 states or union territories over 2,973,190.0 square kilometres of land area. With urbanisation, a growing economy and trade, cities such as Mumbai and Delhi are attracting the rural population in search for work and a better life.

In June 2016, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 14 smart city projects in Pune, thereby starting execution works of 20 smart cities. Under the national Smart City Missions, it aims to cover 100 cities over five years from 2015.

"Why do cities happen? They happen because you get livelihood, which is why cities were traditionally built on water-trade routes such as coasts and rivers. When you create a new city with livelihood, you end up with a great city," said **Shailesh Pathak**, Executive Director of Bhartiya Group, India.

He was speaking at the Singapore-India Business Dialogue 2016 with the theme 'Sustainable Urban Management in Singapore and India' on November 15, 2016. The panel session was organised by the International Office of the Singapore Management University.

"It is easy to say, 'Let's create 100 new cities' but what are people going there for? The more logical way is to create corridors like the industrial corridor in Mumbai, which has seven large nodes and livelihood will be created because of logistics and industries. That is the way to create new cities," he said.

## CREATING CITY STATES

To replicate the success of prosperous Indian cities, the right governance, leaders and policies are needed, such as mayors taking ownership of growing their cities while understanding the multi-layer governing structure that exists in India.

"Singapore has a successful story that we need to model after. Is it possible to transplant this success story into India? I would argue that there are certain difficulties here that we should be cognisant of," said panellist Professor **Dodo J Thampapillai**, Visiting Professor, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. He cites the multi-layer governing structure as one difficulty.

"Singapore is a city state. In a city state, the actors of the state are also the actors of the city, whether it be the Land Transport Authority, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Finance. All those actors act for the city and the state."

Besides, adopting a city state model will require empowerment to govern, said Pathak.

"On all the cities in the world that I have studied, they have been transformed not by the prime minister or the president of the country. They have been transformed by mayors. To move from third world to first, one of the most outstanding books that I've read is on Lee Kuan Yew's journey. He took ownership and transformed Singapore," said Pathak. Lee was Singapore's first prime minister since the country's independence in 1965.

"How can we replicate and structure it? One easy way is to look at the city state model. It is high time to turn Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad into city states. I am a business person. If the politics is right, finance will come automatically."

## SUSTAINABLE LIVING

With the large number of migrants and locals living, working and playing in cities, issues pertaining to transport, housing, water and sanitation require long-term planning, continuous evaluation and improvement to offer a comfortable living environment for all.

While building and maintaining infrastructure contributes to creating such an environment, sustainability ensures the longevity of cities as attractive areas to settle in.

Panellist **Teo Eng Cheong**, Chief Executive Officer (International), Surbana Jurong, Singapore, said sustainable urban and infrastructure development require a long-term vision. Also required are:

- A flexible plan to adjust to changes in the environment;
- Decisive priorities to development projects that caters for future growth and capacity;
- Balance of control by regulators;
- Incentives for the private sector;
- Timely approvals for building projects; and
- Managing lifecycle costs over a span of time

For these to work, Teo said the government plays a decisive and regulatory role.

“Sustainable urbanisation must become part of the planning DNA for both planners in Singapore and India. That must be intrinsic and integral in the way we think of developing our cities. Both Singapore and India can partner each other and lead in the area of sustainable development,” he said.

And collaborative projects are underway. On April 27, 2016, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise and Temasek Foundation launched a capacity building partnership on urban management with the National Institution for Transforming India, India. The three-year programme consists of a series of capacity building workshops to be conducted in both New Delhi and Singapore for 115 Indian government officials from the seven participating states of India – Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Assam.

“More recently,” said Teo, “we have worked closely with the Indian government to draft the masterplan for Amaravati, the new capital city of Andhra Pradesh. The project has been attracting interest from international players and we are already starting to see developments taking place.

“Singaporean companies have been investing in India across many sectors. The number of Indian companies that are based in Singapore have also been rising over time. Going forward, both Singapore and India will face many common challenges but there are also many new opportunities that are opening now.”

With close business and political relationships between India and Singapore, the sharing of knowledge, resources and expertise between the two nations will help India realise its dream of having more smart cities in the future, as Singapore creates a more sustainable living environment for her people.