

IE THING SECOND EDITION: OUR CITIES

'Inequality, climate change to be big urban issues'



(From left) Udit Misra, Associate Editor, The Indian Express; Jaya Dhindaw, Executive Program Director, Sustainable Cities And Director, WRI India Ross Center; MN Anucheth, Joint Commissioner of Police, Traffic, Bengaluru; Naresh V Narasimhan, Managing Partner, Venkataraman Associates; Nithya Ramesh, Director of Urban Design, JNNU Urban Space Foundation; MV Rajeev Gowda, Vice Chairperson, State Institute For The Transformation of Karnataka; Vivek Mittal, Executive Director, Deloitte India.

On the traffic problem in Bengaluru

MN ANUCHETH: The vehicle population growth in Bengaluru is exponential, whereas the infrastructure to cope with that growth is linear. There is a lack of public transport and not many people use it. One estimate says about 28 per cent of Bengalureans use public transport, whereas, in other cities like Mumbai and Delhi, it's much higher. At least we can reach 50 per cent of people using public transport. There are so many bottlenecks, our road dimensions are not correct and footpaths are inadequate or non-existent. We are not promoting mobility.

What is the fastest, cheapest and greenest mode of transport? Once you start thinking along those lines, the entire focus shifts. Historically, Bengaluru did not have a robust public transport system. BMTCL carries about 40-50 lakh people a day. But the problem is that it has the same number of buses in 2024 as it did in 2000, which is 6,400. Public transport didn't keep pace with the requirements of the day. Hence, there has been a tendency to go for private transport. Today, we have the moniker of having the largest number of private vehicles in India. We overtook Delhi in January.

On macro problems with urbanisation in India

NARESH V NARASIMHAN: All the infrastructure that the government can think of when they hear the word development or traffic mitigation is a flyover. The Indian political, administrative, lawmaking and policy systems have been hugely biased towards rural development. Only in

the last 20 years have we seen some attention being paid to urban India.

Mumbai has a population of 2.4 crore. Bengaluru has a population of 1.2 crore, about half. But Mumbai has 36 lakh private vehicles while Bengaluru has 1.1 crore private vehicles. I think it's the worst city in the world in terms of people-to-private vehicle ownership ratio, a vast majority of vehicles being two-wheelers. The cars in Bengaluru are about 15 lakh. This is a dystopian output from a cabal consisting of transport planners, consultants, politicians and the bureaucracy. Architects and designers have almost no role to play. I'm not saying architects and designers are the only people required. You probably need behavioural psychologists, economists and maybe poets to imagine beautiful things.

We have to completely abandon the fossil fuel era, models of the central business district (CBD) and living in the suburbs. These are all stupid Western ideas, which were predicated upon the availability of endless petrol, which is going to run out in 15 years. Before that, how are we going to move around? And no, electric vehicles (EV) are not the answer as you will just replace your petrol car with an EV. Traffic congestion won't change.

We've consistently eaten the green belt all around the city. We



MV RAJEEV GOWDA VICE CHAIRPERSON, SITK

In India, the pace of urbanisation is way more rapid than what the policy systems can cope with. One of the challenges in Bengaluru is that we add practically as many vehicles as we add people. The traffic problem is because we didn't put in place a public transport infrastructure ahead of time. We've got two major metro lines, and once the network kicks in, a rapid transformation will happen. The Siddaramaiah-led

should now make India's outdoors as good as our indoors. Everybody who has access to resources lives in good quality indoors. But the outdoors - public spaces, the quality of our streets, the quality of our attitudes towards garbage - all that also needs to change.

On infrastructure-related issues in cities

NITHYA RAMESH: Our focus is on large infrastructure projects, which are needed to grow our cities. However, there is not enough focus on urban design in most governments and bureaucracies. Urban planning and transport planning are, but urban design is often not recognised. The design of the outdoor space, the space as soon as you step

out of your home - whether it's your footpath, sidewalk, the neighbourhood park or the market where you shop - is not given adequate importance or funding. Cities grow and these places organically sprout because of people's needs, but they're not given priority. If we go to the West, one of the important places they'll take you on the walking tour is their food market. Whereas our food markets are smelly and not nice places to go to.

A large problem is recognising the need for the design of our cities in between buildings and not just streets. The second is looking at smaller infrastructure to improve the quality of life in your neighbourhood. If I have to create a compact community, then I should be able to walk to everything I need in 15 minutes. My

Congress government launched the ShaktiScheme, which opened up government bus travel for women free of cost. Suddenly there's so much demand for public transport that the government is coming up with innovative methods of financing and expanding the bus fleet. As that happens, you will start to see people shifting from using personal vehicles to choosing public transport.

our cities are more focussed on spatial planning. Most cities do not even have the master plan or spatial plans. But now cities should move around economic planning. This does not necessarily mean more industries. It means creating opportunities for everybody, an informal economy. We have to take all of that into consideration and say, where does my city go in the next 20-30 years? Then all the policies around my spatial growth and my infrastructure growth can result in long-term growth.

On cluster-based planning of cities

VIVEK MITTAL: Cities are engines of economic growth and people come to cities in search of jobs and economic growth. As of now, all

children should be able to go to football class without assistance and my aged parents should be able to walk to the market and buy their fruits. Economic growth and job opportunities need to be supported with a good quality of life which can come through planning and design. By design, it's not just aesthetics, it's also the engineering. Like a market has to be well-lit and ventilated. If it's a fish market, it needs to have drainage so that the water they constantly use doesn't overflow or smell.

Each city has its own identity and the entire planning should move around that. For example, Bengaluru worked around the IT industry. The city has to move around that - what kind of labour will be there? What kind of jobs will be there? What kind of infrastructure will be there? What kind of support systems will be put in? I think NITI Aayog has already started a pilot project of making economic plans for four cities - Mumbai, Surat, Varanasi and Visakhapatnam. If you see Indian urbanisation, it is not only about tier-one and tier-two cities. We have around 100,000 cities which have one lakh population. For economic development, we have to follow a cluster approach. How do we

give resources to the cluster approach? In most tier-two and tier-three cities, you'll find that the local bodies have one or two technical officials, the rest are all like conservancy workers or class C and class D workers. If I don't build their capacities, how will I make them future cities? The cluster-based approach is important for them.

On the changing definition of urban India

JAYA DHINDAW: Who do you think is responsible for cities, sustainability and progress? We don't have clarity on that. We say India is 30 per cent urban and there's rapid urbanisation. When you're talking about 30 per cent urban, you're only considering a certain administrative boundary. In the last 15 years, over 150 per cent of the growth in most Indian cities has happened outside the municipal boundaries from where you're actually accounting for the urbanised population. When you're talking about rapid urbanisation in terms of numbers, it's not rapid because city centres within municipal boundaries are actually hollowing out; people are moving outside those boundaries. The growth is happening outside. According to the World Bank, the socio-economic built dimensions of the

definition of urban for India is around 57 per cent. If you look at just built patterns, it's over 60 per cent already. So the basic definition lies with what is urban. When it comes to traffic, water, sewage, any service, it won't get provisioned for because you're not recognising it as urban. In Bengaluru, when you're building outside the peripheries, 85 per cent of the blue-green infrastructure is encroached by built-up because it's not regularised. Therefore, it just gets built in the wrong areas. Another issue is finance. In the last 10 years, the government has made that a central agenda. But climate action, environmental resource security and air quality are not electoral agenda for anybody still. Cities need something like \$10 billion-\$1 trillion in the next 10 years for infrastructure growth.



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Notice for Balmer Lawrie Staff Provident Fund Members. The list of inoperative Provident Fund account holders is available on the website of the Company www.balmerlawrie.com.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, REMOTE E-VOTING. Notice is hereby given that the 32nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Company will be held on Tuesday, 28th January, 2025 at 11.30 A.M. (IST) through Video Conferencing (VC) / Other Audio Video Means (OAVM).

TATA POWER. The Tata Power Company Limited (Mundra Thermal Power Station - UMPP). NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST. The Tata Power Company Limited hereby invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from eligible bidders for the following requirement for 4150 MW UMPP Mundra Thermal Power Station.

FORM A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (Under Regulation 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016). FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF JUHI INDUSTRIES PRIVATE LIMITED. RELEVANT PARTICULARS: 1. Name of Corporate Debtor: Juhi Industries Private Limited.

BARFLEX POLYFILMS LIMITED. CIN: U25209DL2005PLC132346. Our Company was originally incorporated on January 24, 2005 as a Private Limited Company as "Hitkari Polyfilms Private Limited" under the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 with the Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi and Haryana. Subsequently, the name of our Company was changed from "Hitkari Polyfilms Private Limited" to "Barflex Polyfilms Private Limited" and a fresh Certificate of Incorporation consequent to change in name dated June 30, 2005, was issued by the Registrar of Companies, NCT of Delhi and Haryana.