

Citizens must be at the centre of civic governance, VP tells local bodies

Vice President's Secretariat

Citizens must be at the centre of civic governance, VP tells local bodies**Develop sustainable, resilient, inclusive & citizen-friendly urban centres: Vice President****Every city must have dedicated bicycle tracks, pedestrian lanes;****Inaugurates new building of Pune Municipal Corporation**

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that local bodies should always place citizens at the centre of civic governance, adding that people's participation in formulating and planning projects and services will improve execution and delivery of the services. He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the new building of Pune Municipal Corporation, in Pune, Maharashtra today. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Devendra Fadnavis, the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Prakash Javadekar and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that Pune has the chance to become a trailblazer in urban governance by adopting a futuristic and people-centric approach. He complimented the Municipal Corporation for issuing municipal bonds for augmenting resources to take up developmental projects in the city. He has also asked the local body to improve its credit worthiness to borrow finances from lending agencies.

Highlighting the importance of healthy lifestyle, the Vice President suggested authorities to create non-motorized zones. Every city must have dedicated bicycle tracks, pedestrian lanes and parks, he added.

The Vice President said that local body representatives must work collectively, irrespective of political affiliations, to protect water bodies and prevent their encroachment. While expressing his appreciation at the progress made in the implementation of projects under the Smart City mission, he cautioned against cost and time overruns while executing various projects. To improve the governance in urban local bodies, a bottom up approach has to be implemented with zero tolerance towards corruption, he added.

The Vice President said that local bodies need to be provided with the three 3 Fs - Funds, Functions and Functionaries - for effective governance. He said that 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments should be implemented in letter and spirit.

The Vice President said that authorities must ensure that people get better and quality services. It should be noted that in the present digital age, citizens are seeking prompt and quick action on every complaint or petition submitted by them to the municipal authorities, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely happy to inaugurate Pune Municipal Corporation's new building which is equipped with modern facilities.

Pune is one of the most progressive cities in Maharashtra and India. It has witnessed rapid growth over the last decade and is fast becoming a model city for peers, international agencies and governments. With this kind of economic and urban growth, the expectations from various sections will be high.

Pune is the second largest city in Maharashtra in terms of population. From being known as the retired people's paradise to being one of the key growth centers of the country, Pune has come a long way in the recent past. All this has been achieved while implementing sustainable practices (Pune is rated as the 1st best city in India in terms of quality of life according to Mercer's Quality of Living Rankings in 2017). The GDP of Pune city is 69 billion USD which is fifth highest in the country.

The city also has a huge presence of academic and educational institutions, apart from a strong industrial base.

I am told that the PMC has made provisions to make the new building more citizen-friendly with a single window feature to accept all applications. It also has a Citizen Facilitation Centre. I am sure the vision of the corporation is to make Pune of the most liveable cities with clean, green, beautiful and liveable neighbourhoods.

With people from rural areas increasingly migrating to urban areas in the country, it is estimated that half the Indian population will be living in the urban areas. While it is wonderful to have a new

swanky building, there should also be a new work culture to meet the rising expectations of the people.

As one of the cities selected under the Smart Cities Mission, Pune city today has the chance to become a trail blazer in urban governance by adopting a futuristic and people-centric approach. The Smart Cities Mission seeks to develop cities into sustainable, resilient, inclusive and citizen-friendly urban centres and turn them into hubs of economic activities. It is vital to ensure that there are no cost or time overruns while executing various projects under the Smart Cities Mission.

Local bodies should always place citizens at the centre of civic governance. The greater the participation of the people in formulating and planning various projects and services, the better will be the execution and delivery of the services. I am happy to note that Pune Municipal Corporation has issued municipal bonds for augmenting resources to take up various projects.

Friends, burgeoning population in urban areas had led to haphazard and unplanned growth in many cities. As a result, cities are finding it difficult to cope with the increasing demand for civic amenities and services. Inadequate finances have also handicapped the functioning of municipal bodies and there is a need to augment their resources to improve civic infrastructure.

To improve the governance in urban local bodies, a bottom up approach has to be implemented with zero tolerance towards corruption. Tax-paying public will rightfully demand accountable, effective and transparent governance and both officials and non-officials must work towards achieving this endeavor.

While reducing the interface between officials and citizens, it should be ensured that the local bodies are provided with the three Fs—funds, functions and functionaries— for effective governance.

It should be noted that in the present digital age, citizens are seeking prompt and quick action on every complaint or petition submitted by them to the municipal authorities. Simply put, people want better and quality services.

The Pune Municipal Corporation, which was established in 1950, is catering to the needs of 34 lakh people.

I am told the other features of the new building include a post office, public transport bus pass center. In addition, the building will have a dome-shaped general body meeting hall having

capacity of 224 Persons, standing committee hall, offices of mayor, deputy mayor, party leaders and municipal secretary. I am happy that the construction of the new building is according to the norms of the Indian Green Building Council with eco-friendly measures.

I am also happy to know that Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has conceptualized “Plan 2020-Pune towards Urban Transformation”. Under this plan, several key projects such as Pollution Abatement & Rejuvenation of Pune Rivers, Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS), Pune Metro project, High Capacity Mass Transit Route, Comprehensive Pune Bicycle Plan, Smart City Plan, Storm Water Drainage Project, Solid Waste Management Project, Sustainable Livelihood “Lighthouses of Pune” project to empower under privileged youth and 100 per cent Digital Literacy Project, among others are taken up. I am sure these will impact Pune city’s development in a positive way and help in providing better delivery of urban services to citizens.

Various other projects of PMC like City-wide Cycle Plan, Policy for Pedestrian safety, proposals to increase share of public and non-motorized transport, provide safe and equitable water supply to the entire population for the next 30 years and the Riverfront Development Project will go a long way in making Pune one of the best livable cities.

I am told that Pune now features in the list of very few Indian cities by floating Municipal Bonds worth Rs.200 crore. It further plans to raise additional Rs. 2,000 crore through municipal bonds to fund Rs. 3,000 crore to 24x7 Water Supply Project.

I am happy that various projects under the Smart City Mission are progressing rapidly. With its forward looking attitude, PMC’s aspiration to become one of the most digitized Municipal Corporations through its citizen-centric initiatives is laudable. I am happy that PMC is also collaborating with many international bodies to bring the best know-how.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that it is important for the civic body and its official and non-official representatives to constantly engage with the citizens for improving governance and providing better services.

JAI HIND!”

AKT/BK/RK

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