

## **VICE PRESIDENT CALLS RAPID URBANIZATION AN OPPORTUNITY; EMPHASISES THE NEED FOR PEOPLE-CENTRIC URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Urbanisation and related Issues

The Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu today called for viewing rapid urbanization as an opportunity and emphasised the need to focus on people-centric urban planning and development. "We must see that our cities are inclusive cities that cater to basic needs of the urban poor by increasing their access to water supply, sewer connections, housing and improved service delivery," he said.

The Vice President made these remarks at a civic reception hosted in his honour by the Government of Tripura. On this occasion, Shri Naidu also launched the project of conversion of roads of Agartala city into Smart roads.

Emphasizing that good connectivity is a prerequisite for the overall development of any region, he said that this is even more true in the case of our landlocked North-Eastern States.

"Connectivity—be it physical or digital, has to improve for investments to flow and economic activity to pick up pace," he further said. Under the newly inaugurated project, the roads within Agartala city and those connecting the capital with its peripheral area will be converted into climate-resilient roads with an investment of Rs 439 crore. The Project not only aims to decongest the city but will also provide better facilities to residents of Agartala by way of better lighting, footpaths, signage, storm water drains and a utility corridor, among others. "Together, these development initiatives will also improve public health by reducing urban floods and air quality," Shri Naidu said.

Taking note of massive infrastructure development taking place in the Northeast region under the Act East Policy, the Vice President expressed satisfaction that leveraging this thrust, the Government of Tripura has taken several initiatives to boost social and economic development of the state. Listing a number of projects to ease transportation bottlenecks, he said that the railway network has already expanded to the far end of Tripura—to Sabroom, and efforts are being made to revive waterways which could soon emerge as an efficient and cheap mode of transportation. Lauding the efforts for upgrading the MBB Airport and making the Kailashahar airport operational, Shri Naidu said that these combined efforts will lend a fillip to tourism and other industries in Tripura.

Recognizing that Tripura is a fertile land for fruits like pineapple, jackfruit, lemon, orange, the Vice President praised the state government's initiative for creating right market linkages for these fruits in India and abroad. "The newly introduced Kisan Rail connects Tripura to New Delhi, Kolkata and other cities, thereby opening up a new avenue for the farmers of Tripura to market their produce in the country viably," he said. He suggested that the Centre and states should focus on increasing the exports of our horticultural products, given the global popularity of our indigenous products. He called for improved access to information for our farmers and better branding, marketing and connectivity to boost agri-exports.

Shri Naidu also welcomed the Agar Mission which was launched in Tripura recently with an aim to create an agar-based economy in the state to the tune of Rs 2000 Crore per year by 2025. It will not only promote agar-based industries in Tripura but also encourage plantation of more and more Agar trees thus leading to conservation and propagation of this endangered plant species,

he said. Noting that Tripura is the second largest producer of natural rubber in the country after Kerala, he appreciated the state government for assisting rubber plantations and encouraging the rubber-based industry.

Observing that the agarbatti stick industry in Tripura has been adversely impacted by decrease in import duty on bamboo sticks in the past, the Vice President expressed happiness that the Government of India has now raised the import duty on agarbatti sticks and as a result, the industry in the state has begun to thrive. He also complimented the state government for launching a new scheme called Mukhyamantri Agarbatti Atmanirbhar Mission to give a further impetus to this household business activity.

Wishing the people of the state, Shri Naidu hoped that the Government of Tripura under the Chief Ministership of Shri Biplab Kumar Dev would keep working for the welfare of the people of Tripura. Stressing on the importance of transparency and accountability in governance, Shri Naidu said the fruits of government initiatives should reach even the last beneficiary. "There should be no delay, deviation, dilution to the government funds", the Vice President reiterated.

Later, the Vice President interacted with achievers from the primary sector, SHG members and frontline workers.

Praising the SHGs for their dedication and hard work, he said that they are playing a crucial role not only in empowering women but also in strengthening the rural economy. Shri Naidu evinced keen interest to about the activities and experiences of the women SHG members present during the occasion. He listened to their experiences and posed many questions about their activities and welfare.

Interacting with the healthcare workers, the Vice President lauded their services to the country during the pandemic and learnt about their experiences during the second wave.

Shri Biplab Kumar Deb, Chief Minister Of Tripura, Smt. Pratima Bhounik, Union Minister Of State for the Ministry of Social Justice And Empowerment, Shri Jishnu Dev Varma, Deputy Chief Minister Of Tripura, Dr. Kumar Alok, Chief Secretary, Govt. Of Tripura and other dignitaries were present during the event.

### **Following is the full text of the speech:**

"Namaskar and Khulumkha,

Let me begin by conveying my greetings to all of you. This is my second visit to Tripura, and I feel overjoyed to be here again. Indeed, I have no words to convey my gratitude to the people of Tripura for the love and affection they shower so generously on me.

It gives me immense pleasure to inaugurate the project of conversion of roads of Agartala city into Smart roads. Agartala is one of the first 100 Smart cities declared by the Government of India. With an investment of Rs 439 Cr, the roads within Agartala city and those connecting the capital with its peripheral area will be converted into climate-resilient roads. This will have far-reaching impact. The Project will not only decongest the city but will also provide better facilities to residents of Agartala. Naturally, this translates into better lighting, footpaths, dedicated parking, bollards, signaling, construction and rehabilitation of stormwater drains and a utility

corridor, among others. Together, these development initiatives will also improve public health by reducing urban floods and air quality.

Dear friends,

Good connectivity is a prerequisite for the overall development of any region, and this is even more true in the case of our landlocked North-Eastern States. Connectivity—be it physical or digital, has to improve for investments to flow and economic activity to pick up pace. This is the cornerstone of the Smart Cities Mission— smart roads and public transport lie at the core of the scheme. I am glad to note that till June 2021, some 70 cities have developed and operationalized Integrated Command and Control Centres under Smart Cities Mission. Also, 310 Smart Road projects, 57 Smart Solar Projects and 101 Smart Water Projects have been completed under this scheme.

The rapid urbanization in India needs to be viewed as an opportunity. It is also important to give due weightage to people-centric urban planning and development. We must see that our cities are inclusive cities that cater to basic needs of the urban poor by increasing their access to water supply, sewer connections, housing and improved service delivery.

Friends,

Tripura is a land with vibrant culture and a rich cultural heritage of the royal era, as also different tribes besides a large Bengali population. Sharing its borders with Bangladesh on three sides, this land-locked state of Northeast India, has in recent years, seen accelerated development. Massive infrastructure development is taking place in the Northeast region under the Act East Policy, with a fair share of it happening in Tripura. I am happy to note that leveraging this infrastructure development, the present Government of Tripura has taken several initiatives to boost social and economic development of the state.

To ease transportation bottlenecks, a network of internal and national highways is being developed in the state. The railway network has already expanded to the far end of Tripura—to Sabroom, and work on the Agartala—Akhaura rail line is also progressing speedily.

In the pre-independence era, waterways constituted a major means of transportation in Tripura. The Government's endeavour to revive this mode has paid off and the first goods vessel from Daudkandi (in Bangladesh) reached the floating jetty of Srimantapur Terminal at Sonamura as a trial run through this water route in September last year. In future, with enterprise, initiative and management, this mode of transportation could be made efficient and more operational, thereby slashing the transportation cost of goods from other parts of India to a minimum.

MBB Airport is the second busiest airport in the Northeast region after Guwahati airport and I am told that it is likely to be declared as an international airport. Efforts are also on to make the Kailashahar airport operational, besides promoting new destinations through helicopter services. All these are added feathers in Tripura's colourful cap. I am sure that they will lend a fillip to tourism and other industries here. It is good to know that the State government is encouraging the youth to take up IT and ITeS ventures for employment generation.

Tripura is a fertile land for fruits like pineapple, jackfruit, lemon, orange etc. Earlier, for want of adequate marketing and processing facilities, large quantities of such products used to get wasted. I am happy to know that the state government has come forward to create a linkage for marketing of these fruits. Resultantly, queen pineapple, scented lemon and jackfruits of Tripura have started finding markets in Dubai, UAE, London, UK and Germany. The newly introduced Kisan Rail connects Tripura to New Delhi, Kolkata and other cities, thereby opening up a new

avenue for the farmers of Tripura to market their produce in the country viably.

Agar tree is the State tree of Tripura. The Agar Mission which was launched in Tripura recently with an aim to create an agar-based economy to the tune of Rs 2000 Cr per year by 2025, is a welcome initiative. It will serve to tap the enormous economic potential that the Agar tree offers and will not only promote agar-based industries in Tripura but also encourage plantation of more and more Agar trees thus leading to conservation and propagation of this endangered plant species. I compliment you on this initiative which serves to promote agriculture while contributing to natural conservation.

As you are aware, Tripura is the second largest producer of natural rubber in the country after Kerala and rubber-based industry is one of the major industries in the state. Therefore, the state Government's efforts in assisting rubber plantations and encouraging the development of rubber-based entrepreneurship among its people deserves appreciation.

I was told that agarbatti stick industry has been a household business activity traditionally which had declined due to cheap imports caused by decrease in import duty on bamboo sticks. I am happy to note that the Government of India has now raised the import duty on agarbatti sticks and as a result, the industry in the state has begun to thrive. I am happy to know that a new scheme called Mukhyamantri Agarbatti Atmanirbhar Mission has been launched recently to give further impetus to this sector. We should provide all possible support to our traditional bamboo artisans.

I am convinced that the Government of Tripura under the dynamic leadership of Shri Biplab Kumar Dev is committed to the welfare of the people of Tripura, as reflected in its excellent work.

I convey my sincere appreciation to the Government of Tripura and my best wishes to the people of the state for a happy, healthy and prosperous future.

Jai Hind!"

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**MS/RK**

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**END**

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