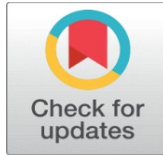
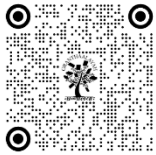


# SHILLONG SMART CITY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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## ABSTRACT

Urbanization is a symbol of modern civilization, development and technological power-house. No society can remain aloof from the process of urbanization and its consequent effects. However, given the technological advancement and industrial expansion, level of urbanization varies significantly from country to country. It is perhaps, rightly said that creators made the village and man created the city. It is the city that pulls people like a giant magnet from all walks of life to meet the demands of city life and exchanges its benefits and burdens. It is the city that attracts continuously people to come and engage in diverse fields of activity and in the production process of goods and services.

**Keywords:** Shillong Smart City, Projects, Priorities, SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle), Innovations, a Critical Evaluation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization is a symbol of modern civilization, development and technological power-house. No society can remain aloof from the process of urbanization and its consequent effects. However, given the technological advancement and industrial expansion, level of urbanization varies significantly from country to country. It is perhaps, rightly said that creators made the village and man created the city. It is the city that pulls people like a giant magnet from all walks of life to meet the demands of city life and exchanges its benefits and burdens. It is the city that attracts continuously people to come and engage in diverse fields of activity and in the production process of goods and services.

This has resulted in massive expansion of cities all over the world that has both problems and prospects for the mankind. Currently, more than half of the world's population (55%) lives in the cities, and it is estimated that it will reach to 68% to 70% by the year 2050. It is significant to note that a vast majority of human population will find their share in the city life and will be categorized as urban-dwellers rather than rural dwellers. As a result, cities face challenges of unprecedented magnitude in term of fulfilling the continual nature of inflow of demands from their citizens. Otherwise, cities will collapse under the burden of pressing demands and aspirations.

Looking at the present context of city development and expansion, it is refreshing to find several policies and initiatives have been undertaken recently by the Indian government. Smart City Mission (SCM) is one of the popular and important policies of the

Government of India in the journey of country's city development for the purpose of redefining, revamping and rejuvenating the city expansion and progress in line with the provisions of envisioning and promising better and efficient service delivery. It may be worth-mentioning that the term, SCM was first used by the Americans city planners in 2015, thereafter, by Japan and Singapore and later on other developing nations.

The present paper will evaluate and understand the basic objectives of SCM as are outlined, its specific programmes and initiatives, keeping in view of the demand of accommodating the ever growing population and its service needs, and a critical estimation of the ongoing projects in the context of Shillong Smart City in Meghalaya.

At the very beginning, it is prudent to admit that there is a dearth of adequate literature on Smart City Mission as this happened to be a new and recently evolved concept in the field of urban planning, research and development. A few definitions will definitely be helpful in highlighting the meaning and significance of Smart City Mission. According to OECD, smart city are, "initiatives or approaches that effectively leverage digitalization to boost citizen well-being and deliver more efficient, sustainable and inclusive urban services and environment as part of collaborative, multi-stakeholders process". With the proliferation of the concept in the world, greater attention has been given to innovation as a novel way to build new smarter cities or regenerate older ones. Innovation can be embedded in every stage of development from planning to construction to management and operation, implementation and support. A recent UNDP (2021) report claims that smart innovations are shaping urban cities across the globe by addressing the citizen's priorities. Innovation in smart city mission is divided between a techno-centric perspective originating from the American business community and holistic perspective promoted by the European institutions. Advocates of the techno-centric perspective suggests that digital innovation should be at the heart of a successful smart city initiatives while holistic perspective claims that other urban innovations should be considered in addition to digital innovation to build successful smart cities. Building cities involves not only technological changes, but also changes in regulation, infrastructure, industrial networks, practices and culture. The most cogent definition of the concept of a smart city is espoused by Microsoft, one of the leaders in technological advancement. It noted that a smart city is an urban area that uses an array of digital technological to enrich resident's lives, improve infrastructure, modern government services, enhances accessibility, drive sustainability, and accelerate economic development. This definition encapsulates the need for a digital twenty first century technology as the backbone of the cities of the future. According to Caragliu et al, (2009) and other, a city is considered smart "when investment in human and social capital and traditional (transport) and modern communication infrastructure fuel sustainable economic growth and a high quality of life, with a wise management of natural resources, through participatory governance. International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines it as "a new model and concept applying the next generation of information and communication Technology (ICT) to facilitate smart planning, construction management and services". (ISO, 2024).

According to European Union, the smart cities concept is about using, "a smart city as a place where the traditional networks and services are made more efficient with the use of digital and tele-communication technologies for the benefits of its inhabitants and businesses". The Smart city concept is often equated with other similar concepts such as the Knowledge City, Sustainable City, Digital City, and information City etc.

However, essentially, all these concepts focus on the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to urban management. Nevertheless, a holistic, balanced and integrated approach is appropriate for tackling urban issues and challenges. So far as India is concerned, there are rigorous efforts for city expansion and development in line with China, Japan, and Singapore. It has initiated SCM in 2015 with a mission of mobilizing massive level of urban activities and service expansion. It is marching towards urbanization in an unexpected faster and gigantic manner in a country about to be one and half billion of population and associated with innumerable problems. Currently, nearly 40% of India's population lives in urban areas which is much below the global average but likely to shoot up to 65% by the year 2050.

Urban planners and specialists are vigorously engaged in the novel and gigantic task of propelling the country towards a balanced and well-charted course of urban growth. In India, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA) has been entrusted with the responsibility of initiating and completing the tasks in tune with country's specific needs and socio-cultural practices. Urban development, renewal, and augmentation and environmental sustainability constitute its core and substantive policy framework. It is worth reminding and referring to some of the significant urban development and expansion programmes, initiatives, and policies in the country such as the Integrated Development of small and medium towns (IDSMT) programme in 1979, schemes of infrastructural Development Plan in Mega City in 1993-94 which was later subsumed into Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) in 2015. India also launched the National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), which aims at improving the overall quality of life, covering 12 heritage cities: Ajmer (Rajasthan), Amravati (Andhra Pradesh), Amritsar (Punjab), Badami (Karnataka), Dwarka (Gujarat), Gaya (Bihar), Kancheepuram and Velakanni (Tamil Nadu), Mathura and Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Puri (Odisha) and Warangal (Telangana).

## 2. A BRIEF PROFILE OF SHILLONG CITY

Shillong is one of the oldest cities in the north-east of India which dates back to the times of the advent of the Britishers. According to Nora Michel, the area developed and had its beginning in the concept of the British requirement of "Health Sanataria" and to find a place where they could spend their weekends and vacation. In course of time, it grew and developed into a beautiful hill station pulling people from all the neighborhoods of the Shillong Plateau. The British later found it to be a suitable enough to convert it into a centre of administrative and political Headquarters. Furthermore, its location in the middle of Assam and Surma Valley (Barak Valley), facilitated in the convenient growth as a collection of few households to village, to tiny town and town to city today. The satellites of villages across Shillong were initially mere hamlets with less than 500 inhabitants in many of them and not more than 3 to 5 houses in some. Laban was considered as having largest concentration of population and for this reason; the Khasis still fondly refer to Shillong as Laban even today. In the 1881 Census, Shillong recorded 4288 persons and Census of 1921 shows 17203 and at present, the total population is estimated to be around 5,20,000. As per population Census of 2011, the state of Meghalaya has a population of 29.67 lakhs which saw an increase from figure of 23.19 lakhs in 2001 Census. Sex ratio in Meghalaya is 989, i.e., for each 1000 male in 2011, in 2001, the sex ratio of female was 972 per 1000 males in Meghalaya. The state is primarily, a Christian dominated state with 74.59% of Christian population mostly tribal while Hindus (Non-tribal) constitutes nearly 10%. Amongst the non-tribal communities, the Bengali and Assamese are the dominant groups along with smaller groups like the Sikh Community, Nepalis and Gorkhas and Marwari business community.

The boundaries of the state are demarcated by the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam in the north, the south-western part of the district of Goalpara and a part of Rangpur district of Bangladesh in the south and the North-Cacher and Karbi Anlong district of Assam in the east. The total geographical area of the state is approximately 22,429 sq km and consists of primarily of steep hills and deep gorges with very limited areas covering valleys and plain land. The rate of literacy has grown considerably from 49.10 percent in 1991 to 63.31 percent in 2001 which is of course, still below the national average of 65.38 percent. The literacy rate among the male is 66.14 percent and it is only 60.41 percent among the females. The state has at present 7 administrative districts, 12 towns and 5629 villages. It is notable that the state of Meghalaya is one of the four tribal majority states of the North-Eastern Region, other being Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland.

According to the estimate of the government of Meghalaya, the total tribal population in the state is approximately 90.4 percent. It is the homeland of the three major hill tribal communities –the khasis, Jaintia and Garos with their numerous divisions into clans. Besides, there are smaller tribal communities scattered mainly in the southern and western parts of the state. They are Mikirs, Lalung, Hmar, Rashes, Hajongs and others. The account of the state and socio-cultural profile will be incomplete without mentioning the single most prominent features of their social structure. All the major tribes in the state-the Khasis, Jaintia and Garo are matrilineal. Female descent or chiefship line is practiced and followed unlike in most other societies.

## 3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The present research paper will be entirely based on secondary sources of data. Participant observation method can, suitably be, supplemented in order to fill any gaps and inconsistencies in the research context. For secondary sources, printed and online sources such as journal, magazines, book, newspaper, and archive records etc. will be consulted.

The Basic objectives of the research paper will be as follows:

- 1) To explore a historical account of the Government of India's approaches and initiatives towards urban development and expansion in India.
- 2) To understand and evaluate the core priorities and services as proposed under the Smart City Mission.
- 3) To evaluate the implications of Smart City Mission (SCM) for the city resident of Shillong.
- 4) To understand the level of effectiveness of the implementation of the aforementioned centrally sponsored scheme.
- 5) To deepen an analysis on the strategies and working methods for timely completion of the projects.
- 6) To evaluate whether sustainability and sustainable development are adequately prioritized and embedded into the Central Scheme.

## 4. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLE (SPV)

The Special Purpose Vehicle is one of innovative practice and new concept brought in the urban development framework for the purpose of carrying out the project work independently and in an autonomous manner with the provision of transferring government powers and authority to the specially created Agency. The central government has created the SPV exclusively for developing plans, approve, release funds, implement, monitor and evaluate the Smart City Development Projects. Each 100 selected Smart City throughout the country will have a SPV that will be headed by a fulltime CEO and duly have nominees of Central

government, and urban local bodies in the circle of the board. The projection execution can be done through the joint ventures, subsidiaries, public-private partnership, turnkey contracts etc. suitably dovetailed with revenue streams. The Special Purpose Vehicle will be converted into a Limited Company under the companies Act of 2013 at the city level, in which the state/UT and the ULB will be the promoters having 50-50 equity shareholding. The private sector or financial institutions can be considered for sharing stake in the SPV, provided the shareholding pattern of 50:50 of the state /UT and the local urban authority must be strictly maintained and insured that state/UT and ULBodies together have majority of the shareholding and control of the SPV. The state government and urban local bodies will determine the paid up capital requirements of the SPV commensurate with the size of the project commercial finance required and the financing modalities. Government of India grants will be permitted to be utilized as ULBs share of equity capital in the SPV, subjected to the conditions laid down in Annexure 5 of the guidelines. Initially, to ensure a minimum capital base for the SPV, the paid up capital of the SPV should be such that the ULBs share is at least equal to Rs. 100 crore with an option to increase it to the full amount of the first installment of funds provided by GOI (Rs.194 crore), with a matching equity contribution by the state/ULB, the initial paid up capital of the SPV will thus be Rs.200 crore of GOI contribution and Rs.100 crore of state/UT share. Since, the initial contribution of GOI is Rs. 194 crore along with the matching contribution of the state government, the initial, paid up capital can go upto Rs.384 crore at the option of the SPV. The paid up capital may be enhanced with the provision mentioned above ensuring that the ULB is entitled and enabled to match its shareholding in the SPV with that of the state/UT.

After selection of the cities in stage ii of the City Selection Challenge, the process of implementation will start with the setting up of the SPV. As already stated, it is proposed to give complete feasibility to the SPV to implement and manage the Smart City Project and the state/ULB will undertake measures as detailed in the Annexure 5 of the guidelines.

## 5. THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLE

The city level SPV will be established as a limited company under the companies Act of 2013. Private sector shareholding can be in the ratio of 40: 40: 20 or 30:30: 40. Ratio such as 35:45:20 or 40:30:30 are also not permitted since the state/UT can provide its contribution to the Smart City Mission as grant to fulfill the state government responsibility for ensuring the availability of funds for the mission and for ensuring the financial suitability and stability of the SPV. The ULBs, may, through the state government request MoUD to permit utilization of GOI funds as ULB equity contribution to the SPV subject to certain conditions. The funds provided by the GOI will be treated strictly as grant and the SPV will be permitted to access funds from other sources such as debts, loans, user charges, taxes surcharges etc. The Board of Directors will have representative from the central government, state government and urban local bodies, in addition to the CEO and the functional directors. The CEO of the SPV will be appointed with the direct approval of the MOUD. The CEO will be appointed for a fixed term of three years and can be removed only with the prior approval of the MOUD. Amongst the key functions and responsibilities of the SPV are: to approve and sanction the projects including their technical appraisal, execute the smart city proposal with complete operational freedom, take measures for complying with the requirements of the MOUD with respect to the implementation of the smart city programme, mobilizing resources within timelines and take measures necessary for the mobilization of resources, approve and act upon the reports of a third party Review and monitoring agency, overview capacity building activities, develop and benefits from inter-linkages of academic institutions and organization, ensuring timely completion of project according to set timelines, undertake periodic review of the activities of the mission including budgets, implementation of the projects and preparation of the smart city projects and co-ordination with other mission/schemes and activities of the various ministries, collect taxes, surcharges, user charges as authorized in the UL-Bodies. These are some of the important functions entrusted to the SPV amongst several others.

## 6. PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES UNDER THE SHILLONG SMART CITY MISSION

It can be fairly admitted at the beginning that the coverage of issues and items related to city retrofitting and expansion are very wide and extensive. There is hardly any area which is not touched upon under the Shillong Smart City Mission. City has always been the puller of population from the catchments areas as well as from the far-flung areas serving as the main engine of economic growth and technology development.

Broadly speaking, the following important initiatives can be summarized and highlighted in the process of developing Shillong as a Smart City under the aforesaid Central Scheme.

### 1) Local Roads, Transport and Communication facilities:

Road and communication are the very essential requirement for a region to embark upon a journey of development and expansion. For the city of Shillong, there is an adequacy of emphasis being laid down on the construction of pedestrian lanes, byelanes, and pedestrian over bridge, crossways and underground crossways, transit corridor, and development of local streets for connecting to the main market etc. Management of traffic congestion and blockages will be given priority for smooth and seamless flow and regulation of traffic, saving time and fuel for the users. Multi-level car parking facilities are under construction for the convenience of the city resident at Secretary Hill at Matphran and at Police Bazaar. Provision for street lights and CCTV camera would



be added in the agenda of urban services. Adequate number of Bus Shelter/Shed will be constructed for the commuters with modern wifi facilities and attached toilets facilities with regular paid cleaner and keepers.

- 2) **Clean Water Supply:** There would be policy framework for the regular and uninterrupted supply of clean water for the urban-residents. Construction of water harvesting facilities in each household would be initiated and encouraged for the purpose of helping the residents using the stored water during the dry seasons. It is important that water logging and drain blockages are properly and timely cleaned and cleared for the smooth functioning of the city drainage systems, particularly, during the rainy season. Umkhrah River cleaning is taken up on a priority basis. Measures for river and lake front development and erection of wall are essential for protecting land and riverside erosion are some of the other issues that can be pursued vigorously under the SCM. It may be suggested that human settlement should be allowed near on the bank of the river and other natural water bodies for protecting and preserving the pristine glory of nature. At least, 3km distance from water sources must be mandatorily maintained for the urban residents or even otherwise.
- 3) **Tourism cum Cultural Centre:** Meghalaya has immense tourism potential for its salubrious climate and breathtaking landscape with deep gorges and lofty plateaus. However, tourism has to be institutionalized, promoted and regulated scientifically keeping in view of sustainability factor of the natural resources. Lakhs of tourists visit the state every year both from outside the countries and domestic tourists. Policies and guidelines are essential for smart tourism regulation and management. A Tourism and Cultural Centre is proposed to be set up under the smart city mission for showcasing cultural richness of the state and their day-to-day life. A massive sized museum can be built on similar line which may reflects the legacies and cultural heritage of the state, a reminiscent of past struggles and achievement remembering and recognizing the cultural moorings and for furthering its continuity and preserving it. Organizing annual tourist festival, maintaining record of tourist flows, placing sufficient dustbins, keeping city clean and green, regular paid and rolled garbage collection and rightful deposits etc. are other important policy guidelines. Another futuristic smart plan will be to track and keep strict surveillance over the flow of foreign tourists in particular and their movements keeping in view of national safety parameters and to avoid any unlawful, anti-social and anti-national activities under the garb of tourist. Going by the available records, Meghalaya has recently seen a surge of the inbound tourists to the state with a total of 11,98,340 domestic tourist and 18,114 foreign tourist in 2018. In the year 2024, around 16 lakhs visitors arrived in the state, making Meghalaya as the second most popular tourists destination in north-east India, after Assam. It may find mentioned here that Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh topped the country's list of tourist destination with an annual flow of 38 to 19 crore of tourists for the aforementioned states. There is an urgent need of smart management and streamlining the tourism sector as with increased economic prosperity of the general populace, tourism business will grow and flourish in an unprecedented manner as this aspect is specifically, emphasized under the Smart City Mission.
- 4) **Scientific Waste management and disposal measure:** In India, issue of waste management and recycling is the most urgent and perplexing issue which demands utmost priority. Cities are rapidly growing in their continuous efforts to accommodate ever-rising population and expectation out of their city life. The waste collection and processes should be accorded prime importance in an institutional form in order to emphasize on the need of waste management and regulation. For, it will serve as a matter of professional dignity similar to any other professions and inculcate human values. It is imperative to enhance their respect and pay structure in order to draw out the best possible workers services. Like Megacities Delhi and Mumbai, every household must be sensitized and instructed to sort out their day's collection of garbage into four layers or buskets or any other method of rationalizing the segregation process. It can rightfully be proposed to spend a larger share of revenues on the waste collection and management.
- 5) **Intelligent City Safety:** In terms of city development under the SCM, it is an endeavor to go in line with other developed and smart city of the world. It is proposed to arrange for street lights in all the locations of the city. CCTV camera and smart police will be placed for round the clock security of the city-dwellers and movers. Anytime 24x7 marketing can be made possible and should be encouraged keeping in view Hour-Wise-marketing –business
- 6) **Green Park Development in the city:** Green Park and valuing the ever significance of forest and vegetation coverage is the basic need and necessity for human survival and well-being on earth. Almost all small towns and cities have the mandatory provision of Park facilities even might be with bare minimum facilities and decoration. However, it is a sad story that there has been utter lack of genuine political and government's interest towards the development of more number of Green Parks or directing any genuine interest in improving the existing ones. It must be emphasized on top priority basis for planning and organizing forest festival. Bush cultivation, saving old trees, growing different flowers and orchids, which requires dedicated attention, for this would enhance values and aesthetic sense to the life of the city-dwellers. Specially, this would be nicer for the senior citizens, aged people and children to spend their quality time in the midst of nature when most have unavoidably, a pressing hectic schedule in their daily life.

## 7. A CRITICAL ESTIMATE OF THE SHILLONG SMART CITY MISSION:

Since, regular monitoring and critical review are necessity for improving all type of projects and undertakings and practically nothing, be it a work or individual or institution can remain immune from its share of criticism as well as praise, if works happen to be good and satisfactory. So is the case with the Shillong City Mission. The Estimate Committee of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly led by its chairman Mayralborn Shyiem of Nongpoh Constituency, carried out an inspection of several key projects under the Shillong Smart City Project. The Committee reviewed the progress of the development and construction of the Municipal Market in Laitmukhrah being built at a cost of Rs. 28.84 crore. They also examined the development of smart roads in various parts of the city, which are intended to improve connectivity and reduce congestion. The team further visited the development of office cum automated multi-level-car-parking facilities at Mawkhar – a project basically designed to address the parking challenges in the city. They also inspected the commercial complex being developed at Polo at a cost of Rs. 100.33 crore, which is expected to contribute significantly to the City's economic activities, other projects being inspected were the IT Park, a hostel for working and oppressed woman, a new Secretariat Building and innovative hubs. Total perfections and success nowhere is possible and feasible, whatever be the task is undertaken, perfection is always a continuous efforts and sincerity of purpose towards accomplishing a set of works. Certain lacunaes and inconsistencies are bound to creep in the tasks and projects that are carried out. The state government had initially plans to convert the city's 17 roads into smart roads at a cost of Rs.36 crore but eventually cancelled the project citing non-feasibility. Another abandoned project was the smart road at lower Lachau miere-from the passport office to the MPSC (Meghalaya Public Service Commission) office. The road is still a source of inconvenience for the neighborhood areas, particularly, students of All Saints School. Out of the fourteen projects listed as ongoing, the status of some projects has been marked as completed. They are waste water Nallah Treatment, supply and installation of Open-Air- Gym (Outdoor), improvement of Laitumhrah area, improvement of drainage system in Laban area, improvement of storm water drains of Wahdesoi, Mawbah and the Bishop Falls and the setting up of Solid Waste Management( Supply and installation of segregated waste plants). The status of some other projects include the construction of a commercial complex at Polo – the financial and physical progresses of which are marked as 87.08% and 95% respectively. As regards the office-cum-automated Multi-level-car-parking at Mawkhar, their financial and physical progresses are recorded at 87.91% and 85% respectively. The government is constructing rain water harvesting system at various locations. The financial progress of the project was 92% and physical progress was 80 %. Similarly, a project involving the contribution of Shillong Business-cum-Tourism Centre had 38.89% financial progress and 40 % physical progress. The retrofitting and up-grading of 3 multi-level car park project had a financial progress of 13.63% and physical progress of 22%, while the mechanized multi-level car park at Matphran had financial progress of 16.66% and physical progress of 22 %. It may be mentioned that the expected date of completion of all these projects has met on 31ST of March, 2025.

## 8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Urbanization is an inevitable process. The growth of the population in a rapid pace and the nature of continual demands from the urban residents have thrown on the system its own weight, stress and strain for making provisions of diverse range of services. Cities must be able to deliver, withstand and adapt to the challenges of ever-changing world of city life. This has necessitated a periodic review and renewal of the urban policy and programme. With these in view, the prime minister of India has launched the Smart City Mission on 25th of June, 2015 throughout the country with the selection of 100 Smart Cities in a competitive manner. Shillong can be considered lucky enough to be in the 100 slot of smart city mission in the north-east part of India. It may be mentioned that there are certainly some new experiences and valuable urban services are added as the defining features of city life such as pedestrian roads, overbridge and crossways, street lights, provisions of CCTV camera, automated multi-level car parking facilities, 24x7 city app services and Green Park amongst several others programme of city retrofitting and upgradation. These will go a long way to the fulfillment of the basic needs, core services and demands of the city-dweller in particular. One-Stop-Solution Centre (OSSC) and Integrated Control and Command Centre( ICCC )are some of the prominent innovative practices adopted in the smart city Mission. As the saying goes either create and innovate or die. As a result, now-a-days, in most of the cities, there is a massive build-up of infrastructure and investment directed towards the delivery of basic urban services such as Health, education, and water-supply, transport and communication. One of the notable characteristic features of Smart City Mission has been the creation an independent regulatory body with its devolved powers and functions so that it can accomplish its objectives in a more expeditious and efficient manner. The main aim and rationale of the Smart City Mission has been to push the Indian Cities forward as per the prevailing global standard and making it sure that Indians are not left behind. Currently, India has relatively, lesser percentage of population living in the cities (40%), but it will increase dramatically in a rapid pace soon with its 7900 towns and 42 cities in the country. City-classification is another challenging area wherein experts must devote for a proper and scientific classification. Most importantly, in the Smart City Mission, the term Smart can be aptly interchanged with sustainability and sustainable development since nature is always at the centrality of development agenda, which cannot be perhaps ignored in the race for city development.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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