

Indian cities are growing rapidly

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Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of State (I/C) of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), has stated that the vision and strategy of ensuring access to clean drinking water and to provide sanitation and hygiene related services to everyone, is finding expression in vigorous implementation of critical flagship programs: Swachh Bharat and AMRUT", launched by the MoHUA, and added that "we are achieving significant success in both these missions". He was addressing "National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Innovation Summit 2018" organised by National Institute of Urban Affairs(NIUA) here today. Representatives from various states, USAID, and domain experts were present at the Summit.

Addressing the participants, the Minister pointed out that it is an undisputable fact that poor sanitation, lack of clean drinking water, and lack of hygiene in the household and the community creates an adverse impact on health, as well as economic losses. "The inadequacy of facilities is particularly visible with regard to the inhabitants of slums and informal settlements", he said. The Ministry is driven by the goal to provide adequate urban infrastructure and services that can ensure the development of healthy Indian cities where all our population can lead productive lives, he added. Stating that urbanization is now here to stay and that we need to plan for it, the Minister said that Indian cities are growing rapidly and providing an opportunity for growth of the economy as well as social mobility and poverty alleviation.

Shri Puri informed that to achieve the vision of an open-defecation-free India, we have focused on sustained behavioural changes through conventional as well as innovative means. Under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), over 2400 projects worth Rs. 74,000 crores that are targeted towards improved water supply, sewerage, and drainage have been approved under the State Annual Action Plans for the period 2015-2020. He further informed that "AMRUT Technology Challenge" has been launched which addresses the need for non-essential human entry for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. "These programs are also contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the United Nations, particularly the SDG 6 - 'Ensure access and sanitation for all by 2030' -through collective efforts and innovative approaches", Shri Puri noted.

The Government is providing various platforms to display, promote and recognize innovations happening across the nation and the youth is coming forward with great ideas and entrepreneurship models in WASH and other areas, through the Atal Innovation Mission, Start-up India, and the 'Swachhathon' - all organized to promote innovation and innovators, he said and added that while we continue in our endeavor to successfully implement new solutions at the pilot scale, our ultimate goal must be to spread these solutions to the entire country. He appreciated and acknowledged the significance of what the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is trying to do with their project 'Innovation Hub for Urban WASH Solutions' and noted that this is the only way that innovative WASH solutions can have the desired transformational impact by improving the lives of our people.

The Summit deliberated on various aspects and role of innovations to make transformational impact in urban WASH sector.

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