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URBANISATION is at the core of any cities transformation and real-estate plays a crucial role in the infrastructure development. Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd, the real and infrastructure development arm of the Mahindra Group is one of the leaders in this segment. **Sangeeta Prasad**, CEO, Integrated Cities and Industrial Clusters, Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd talks to Manali Jaggi of BW Smart Cities about developing the cities with the ethos of ‘Livelihood, Living and Life’ and digital disruptions becoming the backbone of Smart Cities.

You have been a pioneer in conceptualizing the township concept in India, what essential features accord-

ing to you should a smart city entail?

Modern India is urbanising faster than ever before and much of the country’s future economic growth is predicated on rising urbanisation. At Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd., we believe that urbanisation in India must embrace social, economic and environmental growth in equal measure. In doing so, not only can we address present-day urban issues, but will also be able to secure a prosperous and harmonious future for generations to come. Mahindra World City embodies our approach to urbanisation via the development of pioneering integrated cities built on the ethos of ‘Livelihood, Living and Life’. Though architects, urban planners, public entities and sociologists of the world debate about the essential features of a smart



city, the fact is that there is no universally accepted definition what such a city constitutes.

Technology is a necessary feature of smart cities. How can a city combine smart technologies with sustainable living and eco-friendly solutions?

Urbanization is an inevitable progression. Businesses and governments are starting to recognize the role of technology in meeting the goals of urban infrastructure provisioning both today, and in the long term.

The smart city transformation will be fuelled by advanced technology, and the deployment of intelligent information management systems. Smart cities can be realised at an accelerated pace with higher reliance on ICT (information and communications technology). Smart technologies act as a strategic enabler of sustainable living and eco-friendly solutions. The critical aspect is to take an integrated view at the city planning stage, with Information and Communication planning to be included, which ensures that future implementation has inbuilt elements of sustainable development. In other words, a 'smart' framework will map requirements to solutions across utilities and services.

Our vision for a smart and sustainable city is one that uses information and communication technologies (ICT) to improve quality of life, efficiency of urban operations and services, and competitiveness. At the same, such cities meet the needs of present and future generations with respect to economic, social and environmental aspects

With the current big focus being on the SME and start-up sector, what is MWC doing to attract them in the development process?

The core value proposition of Mahindra World City lies in the creation of an enabling ecosystem that drives accelerated business growth by way of ready industrial infrastructure; plug-and-play solutions; the presence of world-class companies co-located with supporting commercial and residential development; and expertise in operations and security. This proposition has already been leveraged by multiple SME & start-up organisations based in MWC Chennai & MWC Jaipur. In fact, our customer base in Jaipur is relatively varied, comprising an eclectic mix of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as large multinational organisations.

Do you think private developers have significant opportunities in the Government's Smart Cities Mission?

The starting point for the Smart Cities Mission has been to create Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV) for Area Based Development (ABD). This is good strategy for brownfield implementation as these ABDs can act as nuclei for the next round of implementation. However, as pointed out in answer # 3 earlier, India is expected to experience fast-tracked urbanisation going forward and more hands on the deck can help efficiently address the current housing and infrastructure needs of the nation. Private sector developers with a long-term vision for the sector can play an active role



in structured, responsible and sustainable urban growth, leveraging their extensive development experience, industry networks and technical knowhow.

What do your future plans entail both in the city of Jaipur as well as pan-India?

Our first integrated city, MWC Chennai, is in advanced stages of development and we are working towards augmenting the social infrastructure within the integrated city. This includes multi-format residential projects, retail outlets and educational facilities, among others. With respect to Mahindra World City operations in Jaipur, we have successfully strengthened Rajasthan's reputation as a global business destination of choice, with 75+ clients, investments exceeding Rs. 3,325 Cr and employment generation of over 29,000 (direct and indirect) jobs till date. In addition, MWC Jaipur has signed on an Indo-Swiss University as a client in the skill development space. An economic land use plan for approximately 450 acres of residential, institutional and social infrastructure at MWC Jaipur is now completed; we are working towards the launch of this residential/social zone, which will pivot around place-making, and a multi-faceted approach to planning, design and development.

As one of the fastest-growing economies of the world, India continues to display a robust macro outlook. Sustainable and well-planned industrial infrastructure development will be a key driver of India's growth story and will bolster competitiveness across global indices. Accordingly, as part of our growth strategy to establish

a network of industrial parks across India, we have announced the launch of ORIGINS by Mahindra World City (please see earlier answers for details). International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, has also recently partnered with us for the development of industrial parks across India, with an investment commitment of USD 50 million.

You are strategically located along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor which is a lucrative business opportunity for many companies. Do you think there should be right kind of synergies between the Government and private stakeholders in realizing the smart city projects?

The Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) has been envisioned as a Model Industrial Corridor of international standards, with emphasis on expanding the country's manufacturing and services base, and development as a global trading hub. MWC Jaipur lies within the influence zone of the DMIC corridor, and with its integrated city execution, can accelerate the pace of industrialization while providing strategic access to Northern & Western markets for industrial clients. We believe there is ample scope to leverage the synergy between private and govt. stakeholders, to effectively collaborate and create centres of urban excellence across India's cities. A case in point - MWC Jaipur as an example of successful public-private-partnership resulting in the development of differentiated industrial infrastructure, with strong environment and community focus. ■