

# HOW TO BECOME A WORLD CLASS CITY

“Show me one city in the world that managed traffic by building more roads? It's counter productive and absolutely disastrous”  
- Karuna Gopal



**KARUNA GOPAL, FOUNDER OF FOUNDATION FOR FUTURISTIC CITIES, AND A THOUGHT LEADER WITH A VISION FOR HYDERABAD, TALKS ABOUT WHERE WE STAND ON THE GLOBAL MAP AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO MAKE US A GLOBAL CITY. AS MUMBAI BATTLES RAINS, WE DISCUSS HOW RESILIENT CITIES CAN BE BUILT**



**You have always been someone who could look ahead – into the future. Has Hyderabad shaped up the way it is supposed to be?**

Hyderabad has the greatest potential to become the most liveable city in the country, but we are nowhere near the target. Hyderabad found no place in the latest ranking of top 50 smart city governments study done recently. Pune and Surat secured their place in the top 50. Not only cities, but the city governments too were ranked. They were evaluated on the vision for the city, leadership, budget utilisation, not just allocation, talent creation, citizen centricity etc. I am not surprised by the result. Just talking about wi-fi hotspots and incubation centers will not impress the world. Inclusion and Climate Resilience are the twin themes around which policies are being articulated.

**Where is Hyderabad vis-a-vis those two goals ?**

Today, the world is taking about not just citizen centric but 'Citizen Led' infrastructure design. Providing 'Universal Infrastructure' where not just the able bodied but every disabled person, every senior citizen, every child enjoys the city equally has become the norm around the world. Hyderabad has a long way to go.

**What were your dreams for Hyderabad 10 years ago and how much of it has been fulfilled, in terms of urban planning, roads, infrastructure?**

My dreams for the city were not Utopian then. They were rooted in reality. I wanted Hyderabad to be a 'World Class City' that gave opportunity for every citizen to maximise his potential. I created 'SCULPT your CITY' an innovation, a disruptive tool. It was a futuristic framework based on co-creation and collective action. It was meant to make Hyderabad liveable and it was envisaged 10 years ago. It was innovative, contemporary, and most importantly, crowd-sourced.

**You have traveled the world and have spoken at prestigious global platforms about future of cities. What is the learning?**

At the World Government Summit where 200 world leaders met we discussed 'Future of Living,' we concluded that it's about using transformative technologies for governance and not to just get carried away by jargon or the promise of technology. At COP21, when I represented India, there was a consensus the world is in fact at the threshold of destruction and climate change should be the priority. So the twin global themes are Inclusion and Climate

Adaptation are to be right at the top of development goals for any country.

**What are the three advantages that Hyderabad has and which we are still not utilising to its full potential ?**

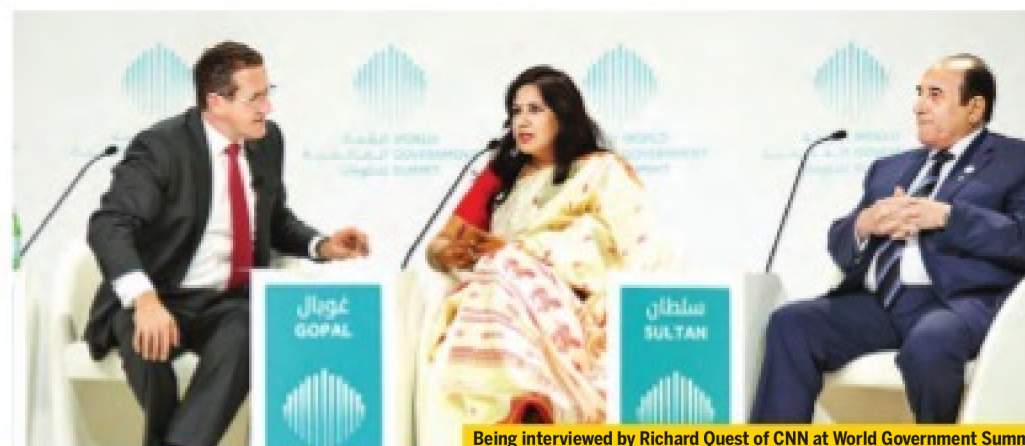
The current government inherited a city whose business eco-system was thriving. ISB, IIT, every conceivable IT company was already present here.. Hyderabad was the first city to access JNNURM funds of ₹3,000 crore for water supply. Hyderabad had several Vision Documents, City development strategies, Sectoral Investments plans done by World Bank and other international agencies.

T-HUB was conceived in 2010. It was called an incubation centre then, when I was a member of the Chief Minister's Advisory Council. It was incorporated into IT policy back then. It's not this government's innovation. City governments are experimenting with ideas, technology, investments and engagement. geographically-concentrated innovation ecosystems. But Hyderabad is just riding on its 'Inheritance' - The city After Telangana was formed, I was hoping that this government will have a fresh visioning exercise 'A Collective Vision,' but we still have a long way to go.

**You have been labeled the 'Futurista' for your ability to predict future trends. Can you us a glimpse of what to look ahead?**

I don't have a crystal ball, but the 'future' always presented itself 'crystal clear' to me. Back in 1994, I developed a framework for Enterprise Resource Planning for Small and Medium Enterprises. It became a rage 10 years later. I pioneered the concept of 'Virtual office' back in 1996, and created a virtual team in 2000. Almost a decade later IT companies started virtual teams.

I spoke of 'Branding of Cities' and developed a framework for branding in 2005. In 2007, we evolved a governance framework for citizen engagement that became a national best practice. In 2009, I came out with a protocol for 'Corporates for Cities'. Almost a decade ago, I gave a keynote on Big Data Analytics in Microsoft, when India had not heard of it. Smart Cities and Inclusion framework, Smart Procurement framework are my contributions to government poli-



Being interviewed by Richard Quest of CNN at World Government Summit



India Plenary Speech with Mayor of Amsterdam

ence? **Can you give us an example of international cities that Hyderabad can follow?**

Cities like New York, London, Montreal, Berlin, and Melbourne involve citizens in the design and improvement of their day-to-day environments. Helsinki works with its local community where citizens can exchange services with neighbours based on their interest, skills, need, and availability. How cool is that? And it's not difficult! New York decided to focus on social inclusion to overcome acute poverty in parts of the city. London revised its smart city strategy to eliminate 'Hate Crime'. Vancouver, Copenhagen, and Amsterdam, chose to prioritise eco-friendliness.

**Are there three suggestions that you want to give the government to make the city more liveable?**

- Have a Vision – a collective vision based on the tripod of economic development, environment and equity
- Shelve Strategic Road Development Plan (SRDP) – it's anti-environment and anti-people. SRDP violates all environmental norms. Show me one city in the world that managed traffic by building more roads? It's counter productive and absolutely disastrous
- Provide low-cost housing. Ape Singapore's Punggol District if you must, but please act fast. Hyderabad has a greatest potential to be a world class city. As a city we have everything. Business Ecosystem, Finances, Technology, and most importantly the Human Capital. In this era of Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning pray why is Hyderabad being run on analog devices ?

**What is keeping you busy these days? We hear you are going to take an active role in politics now?**

I have been inducted to BJP in 2014 by Venkaiah Naidu. In the last four years, I was busy with my international assignments and as such did not accept any role in the party. Now that elections are round the corner, I will become active. Strategy is my forte and I will aggregate support from urban voters.

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