

Rebuttal from Smart Cities Mission, MoHUA

23 May 2023

News Article published in Daijiworld – dated 23 May 2023 by the title “Don’t be in an AC room, walk through substandard Smart City work”: Goa Cong tells Minister.

The news article contains distorted facts and is nothing but a desperate attempt to seek attention.

The meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) was held on 22 May 2023 in Panaji, Goa on the subject of Smart Cities Mission. The Committee, comprising Hon’ble Members of Parliament cutting across political parties, meets at regular intervals in the year to deliberate on issues concerning MoHUA. The dates/ venues of these meetings are pre-decided months beforehand and therefore there was no local trigger that forced the meeting to happen in Panaji as claimed in the article.

The objective of holding the Consultative Committee meetings in different Cities, is not to sit in an AC room, but rather take stock of projects on-ground and enable peer-peer learning. The entire team, comprising of Central Minister, MPs and senior officials from various parts of the country visited multiple smart city projects in Panaji which is contrary to the allegation - ‘don’t be in AC rooms’. The entire team travelled in electric buses deployed by Panaji Smart City and found the projects visited beneficial for the people of Goa.

Panaji Smart city was selected in the Round 2 of National competition in May 2016. It was informed by the local team that 14 projects have been completed, while 23 ongoing projects will get completed by March 2024, well before the Mission ends in June 2024. At the National level, the progress of Smart Cities Mission has been exemplary with more than 5,600 projects worth ₹1,07,000 crores having been completed.

General allegations regarding corruption in project implementation have been made in the article without citing any specific details, clearly showing that the intent is sensationalization and not problem-solving.

In a good practice, MoHUA regularly organizes various kinds of meetings in different cities so that first-hand information on progress-on-ground can be gained, concerns of States/ cities can be addressed locally, and peer-peer learning between different cities/ states can be catalyzed. This approach supports speedy program implementation on ground, thus, ultimately creating positive benefits for citizens. The move to conduct such meetings in different cities should be welcomed instead of trying to score political points by making motivated statements devoid of appreciation of the context.

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