

Expert ranks city high on transport, urban planning

Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD: Eminent policy thinker and chairperson of the High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) on Urban Infrastructure Services Isher Ahluwalia has rated Hyderabad high in urban planning, transport and in unlocking its land value.

Dr. Ahluwalia, who looked at best practices across the country in urban development, said Hyderabad figured high in her study in improving transport – be it the ORR, revival of Metro project, and transit-oriented development.

However, the State capital had a lot to improve in solid waste management and drinking water supply, areas where Kerala had done well. The former remained a challenge, but 30 per cent of the problem would be addressed if garbage was segregated at source, she said.

She rated Vijayawada high, better than Gujarat in inclusive planning.



Isher Ahluwalia

Interacting with reporters here on Thursday, Dr. Ahluwalia noted that urban development remained largely neglected in the country because of the age-old belief that India still lived in its villages, despite huge migration to urban areas. It was time to work for an urban-rural synergy, rather than pit the development of one against the other.

“As a result of cumulative

neglect, the infrastructure investment deficit in the country is around Rs.40 lakh crore that should be spent over the next 20 year period for improving the quality of urban life. We need Rs.20 lakh crore to maintain existing projects, while going forward based on various norms,” she said.

Dr. Ahluwalia, whose book *Challenges to Urbanisation in India* would be released shortly, had been meeting Chief Ministers across the country.

“We are trying to build awareness that the State governments are principal actors in urban development, and sensitise policymakers to the challenges involved,” said the brain behind the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).

Complimenting the State for its strides in e-governance, Dr. Ahluwalia pointed out that improvement in urban infrastructure and services would not be a reality without better local governance and devolution of funding to local bodies.