POSITION PAPER
MY CITY- MY HYDERABAD

-**Asok Kumar G.**

Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana, is a special city for me, as I have seen it grow from a 168 sqkm area city with 4.3 million population in 1991 to a 650 sqkm area sprawling metropolis with 10.2 million population and have the privilege to be closely associated with in its development for the last 20 years.

Why the special association:

Starting as Deputy Secretary {IT}, when the iconic HITEC city building was inaugurated by Prime-Minister in 1998 launching Hyderabad into the IT orbit of India; as VC&MD Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh overseeing the construction and upgradation of world class stadia for Afro-Asian games at Gachibowli in 2003; as Vice Chairman of Hyderabad Urban Development Authority (HUDA/CDA/HADA/BPPA) accelerating developmental activities in Kondapur/ Madhapur/Gachibowli/ Kuketpalli areas, notifying and starting the work on the prestigious Outer Ring Road, protecting many lakes and developing gardens around them, starting the Laserium and redoing the Lumbini park and developing the area around Hussain-Sagar; and later as MD of Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board providing drinking water from Krishna and Godavari rivers (Krishna Phase II completion and starting work on Godavari drinking water scheme), providing _Daily_ Water Supply to quench the thirst of Hyderabad and completing many STPs to handle 720 MLD Sewerage, I have been associated in various capacities and have contributed to development of Hyderabad as a world class city.

Uniqueness of Hyderabad:

Hyderabad or Bhagya-Nagar as it was known earlier is a unique city in India. Hyderabad is unique for its historical status -past and present-, geographical location, demographic and growth profile.

Hyderabad city was established in 1591. Ever since Nizams shifted their capital from Golkonda to Hyderabad in 1769, it has remained a Capital city- Capital of Nizams till its merger with Indian Union in 1948; of Hyderabad state till 1956; of Andhra Pradesh till 2014 and since then of Telangana.

Nestled in a cusp of North and South India, it's a city steeped in tradition, yet one of the most modern cities in the county.

Hyderabad probably has the best mix of infrastructure facilities among any metropolis in the country. It is bound by a 162 Kms long 8-lane Outer Ring Road, which encompasses huge tracts of virgin land ready for development. This is the USP of Hyderabad. Roads are good, well maintained and reasonably wide. Metro rail has just started but has not yet improved connectivity. MMTS line supports city traffic. Hyderabad is well connected to all parts of India. It has extensive railway network. Its airport is rated world's best in its category. A 11-km elevated expressway links it to city centre. No city in India can boast of a second equally functional civil airport either. Hyderabad has world class infrastructure for education, health and sports as well. Uninterrupted power and sufficient water are available. Concept of high quality gated communities and apartments is well entrenched, thanks to a large NRI population in the city. It is a very safe city. Crime rate is low and law enforcement machinery is good. e-sevas handling municipal issues are well established. Garbage disposal is not yet a big problem and the city is clean. Availability of world class infrastructure for business, travel, living, education, health, sports and entertainment at a reasonable cost-of-living and peace-of-mind makes Hyderabad very special.

No wonder, Hyderabad is one of the main IT hubs of India, with almost all major IT giants like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Infosys, Wipro, TCS etc having their development centres opened here. Apart from being a major software exporter, Hyderabad is also one of the main centres of pharma and aviation industry. It is also the nerve-centre of Telugu film industry.

Hyderabad is a knowledge hub and is home for educational institutions like ISB, IIT, NALSAR etc. This city produces the highest number of IITians. It has many highly rated corporate hospitals which provide specialised treatment. Osmania Medical College founded in 1846 and Osmania University founded in 1918 speak volumes of its tradition of education. Over 150 national level research institutions of Central and state government function here, in addition to many privately funded ones.

Hyderabad was a city of water bodies. The Esi and Musa rivers joins and flows along the southern boundary as Musi River. This is now an apology of a river as it is now a trickle of sewage rather than the fierce

Musi which drowned Hyderabad in 1908. There are over 400 lakes identified in city and its suburbs, the most famous of them being the heart-shaped Hussain-Sagar. Most of these waterbodies have vanished due to encroachment. Osman-Sagar on Musi river and Himayat-Sagar on Esi river were built to control flood and to provide drinking water to the city. These were the main sources of drinking water for Hyderabad, till water was brought from Krishna River in three phases, 100 kms away. To avoid dependence on a single source, water from Godavari is also now brought in from a distance of 186 kms. (I had the privilege of completing the Krishna Phase II and starting the Godavari scheme)

Famous for pearls, Charminar and Sarajung Museum the Muslim dominated old city possesses its own charms and poses its own challenges.

Hyderabad has special cuisines like the Biriyani, Haleem, qurbani-ka-meeta etc. The "Irani chay" and biscuits available exclusively in the old Irani hotels are a treat by itself.

Topping it all is the "Ganga-Jamuna" Tehazeeb of over 1 crore population – a high number of local Muslims co-existing peacefully with other local communities and those settled here from all over India - and the pleasant salubrious climate for most part of the year.

One unique problem of Hyderabad and one generic problem found also in other cities.

As in all major cities traffic congestion, over-crowding, pollution, inadequate public transport, drinking water and housing, improper sanitation etc are also issues in Hyderabad, but in varied proportions.

Traffic congestions due to shortage of roads is a unique problem of Hyderabad. Large number of vehicles ply on relatively less area of roads. In last seven years, number of vehicles have recorded a stunning 75% growth. Vehicle population, from 16.72 lakh in 2010, reached 28.28 lakh in 2017, out of which 20.26 lakhs are two-wheelers. It balloons to 45 lakh vehicles, if suburbs are included. [Telangana Today 19, June 2018]. Air pollution due to vehicles is not yet a severe problem here.

Congestion in roads is not due to parking of vehicles on roads. This is due to a decision of MCH/HUDA in 1990s itself to encourage cellar and stilt parking. The main reason for traffic congestion is non-availability of sufficient roads- the percentage of road area to the total area of the city is less than 12%, which is much less than the recommended norm. This is

perhaps the biggest challenge of Hyderabad today. Roads are few in numbers. Most of them are narrow, (ORR created with a 50-year perspective, is an exception, though I had to face a lot frowning faces of politicians and peoples'-representatives in its initial stages when such a "*10-lane road going far and around the city*" was proposed). There was only one road to reach Madhapur from the city, till we widened the Kukuetpalli -Madhapur road and constructed the flyover!

Non-availability of good public transport system is another issue. The metro rail has just commenced, but it is not covering all areas. The MMTS railway was badly planned and has few takers due to bad last mile connectivity.

Another unique feature of Hyderabad is its large number of bill boards on whatever little roads available. These are distractions causing visual pollution and are a safety-hazard.

Encroachments, unauthorised constructions, inefficient public transport system, its last-mile-connectivity and issues of old city are concerns Hyderabad share with most of the other cities.

Suggested Solutions:

To address the traffic congestion, the number of vehicles added daily to the roads have to be controlled by restricting or imposing higher taxation on more the number of vehicles per house etc; public transport and its last mile connectivity has to be improved; metro to be made more efficient, the culture of using public transport or smaller vehicles have to be deliberately promoted. It will be difficult to increase the area of roads in the main city by acquiring land. So, either satellite towns to decentralise the congestion in CBDs are to be promoted, or multi-layer roads have to be built over the existing roads. Due to issues of water logging, cellars should be discouraged, but more and more levels of parking on stilts are to be permitted to avoid spilling over of parked vehicles onto the streets.

Improved transparency, e-governance can reduce corruption and hence the encroachments and unauthorised constructions. Strong political will is needed to address the issues of congestion and civic issues in the old city area, where even water/electricity charges or taxes cannot be collected due to political interference. If revenue collection improves, infrastructure development in those areas can be improved.