



Key takeaways from the fireside chat on New Infrastructure for a New India.

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To celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, India@75 Foundation is organizing a series of virtual, fireside chats called **I have a Dream** with people who are helping build a new India. Rajan Navani, Chairman, CII India@75 Council had a conversation with Vinayak Chatterjee, Infrastructure Sector Specialist, on infrastructure priorities, gaps and solutions and his wishlist for the India of the future.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

What should India be in the next 25 years?

- In terms of Core infrastructure, which is water, electricity and transport, 25 years from now on a drudgery index scale of 100, we should be 0. Drudgery Index is an inconvenience index which looks at how far a person has to go for clean water or to catch a bus or for how long does the person get electricity.
- Social infrastructure, which refers to healthcare, housing, education, leisure and entertainment, should be at par with the best in western society and accessible to the common person.
- India should be as close to 100 percent on green energy and as near as possible to zero on fossil fuel.
- Infrastructure utilities should operate with a level of constant efficiency. Government should move out of operating infrastructure and hand over its running to private players. Govt should also provide an enabling environment for the private sector to work in.
- The rate of rural to urban migration is worrying. Need a movement much like Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's PUARA dream to provide urban amenities to rural India and make villages self-sufficient. People can choose to stay in their villages and be economically and socially productive.

What else can be core infrastructure in the next 25 years?

Green Energy will become core infrastructure. As will water. River and canal linkages that balance drought hit areas with water excess places will be critical. Transportation will be critical. We must look at a system where people opt for affordable air travel for long distances, green-energy driven fast trains for mid-distance travel and efficient and integrated multi-modal transport for short distance. There should be minimum reliance on personal transport.

Citizen driven technology is the basis of Japan's Society 5.0. Is it feasible in India?

Infra planning in India has been around geography and not the citizen. It has been a centric approach which involved making an area and its needs the centre of planning. We can indeed turn this on its head by putting the convenience of the customer at the centre of the planning. *Nal se Jal* programme is a classic customer-centric programme, which aims to bring potable drinking water to the house of every Indian. India needs more such programmes.

What kind of check and balances should we look at to ensure that we stay on track in green energy?

The power sector has four components - fuels, generators, transmission networks and distribution networks. Distribution is the weakest link in the chain. We need to focus on improving distribution. I recommend that in the next five years every house should have a smart meter and distribution should be privatised in terms of operations. The asset can remain with the state, but private players must manage distribution.

Where should the conversation for change begin? What are innovations at the policy level that can help?

At the state level. We need political will to push unpopular decisions. There have been cases when states have pushed unpopular decisions and benefitted. India works in the demonstration cum cascade effect. One metro in Delhi stirred interest in many other cities. Start change in small pockets, which are low-lying fruits and build from there. I also recommend that a National Power Distribution Company be created and capitalized. This will help at many levels.

How do we bring urban infrastructure into rural India? Is there a way to mobilize an agenda?

The stage setting will have to be done by the Government while the private sector will have to look at implementation and the capitalization. Hence, the conversation will have to move towards PPP. However, our PPP structures are not very robust. We need to convene the best brains to deliberate on how to recast these structures.

How do we prioritize the budget spend on infrastructure?

Infrastructure development will need a twin engine effort. First, we will need capital and then projects. Capital is available. The problem is with project and implementation. Let's set up a black cat commando team around Gati Shakti Programme to track projects, identify problems and go in and solve them. This will speed up the "projectization".

Role of MSMEs in infrastructure

There is authentic research to support the claim that 1 rupee spent on infrastructure has 3-rupee effect on GDP. 1 rupee on welfare leads to 0.9 rupee effect on GDP. The sheer act of spending on infrastructure will feed MSMEs and lead to their growth. Many entrepreneurs in this space are already selling technologies to builders and government.

How is the world looking at India's infrastructure development? How is India engaging?

After IT, it is going to be engineering and projects exports that will be the boom. But there will have to be very strong diplomatic push to help our countries to win contracts.

How do you think the India@100 infrastructure dream can come true?

Get private sector energy and capital to finance infrastructure and let the government provide an enabling framework to make this possible.

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