

# PCMC: Awaiting its turn

Hopes are still floating that Pimpri-Chinchwad will be included in the second leg of the smart cities project

**P**impri-Chinchwad, a city area in the Pune Metropolitan Region, was seen as a case study in India's urbanisation. Its claim to fame was acknowledged by the Government of India when it received the best city award from the Union Urban Development Ministry a few years ago. However, it doesn't find a place among 100 cities to be developed as model smart cities.

Most urban planning experts, who have closely seen the developments here, maintain that Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) is a viable choice for inclu-

sion in the smart cities' list. The perception of PCMC as an industrial region has changed to urban living with quality infrastructure and high standards of living. This is reflected in the urban planning that is being implemented currently.

Nilesh Gore, regional manager - Pune, Square Yards, recommends Pimpri-Chinchwad, the two integrated towns, should not be separated from Pune in being a part of 100 smart cities that are to be developed by Union Government. PCMC presents a picture of urbanisation which is different from that of Pune. The infrastructure in PCMC is superior to what the cen-

tral Pune has ever had. It is more organised and is a better economic booster than Pune.

"To sum it up, we believe that PCMC has better potential and should be eligible as a smart city. Due to lack of strong political background, Pimpri-Chinchwad even with excellent infrastructure and extremely vibrant economy will lag behind other cities. This region has the richest corporation and citizens with high income levels, the local politicians should come together to create a pressure group for including PCMC in the smart cities programme," says Gore.

Abhay Kumar, CMD of Grih Pravesh Buildteck, says if PCMC is not part of the smart cities, there is a need to re-think. According to him, PCMC has emerged as India's answer to global smart cities on its own and that is something which cannot be ignored. It is time that the city is encouraged to elevate its standing as a city that has in its DNA all the ingredients of smart city.

"If a smart city is all about effective and simplified urban management, infrastructure, technology and the potential job magnet, PCMC has it all. As a matter of fact, it is among the best in India. Even without the tag of a smart city, PCMC stands out as one with sustainable living solutions. But my larger concern is that now it may lose out to other cities in the ab-

sence of competitive support by the government," says Abhay.

Some of the critics point out that PCMC lost the race of smart cities because it could not resolve the red zones debacle at Dehu Road and Dighi. Various parts of Pimpri-Chinchwad have been affected by the Dehu Road Ammunition Depot and Dighi Magazine Depot red zones as it restricts constructions in these areas. The civic body also cannot provide amenities to the affected residents, who have demanded reduction in the red zone limits.

Also, had the ailing pharmaceutical industry Hindustan Antibiotics at Pimpri been revived the city would have got better standing and facelift. From an urban development perspective, these are the kinds of issues which tend not to be seen as significant until they become stumbling blocks.

Anil Pharande, chairman, Pharande Spaces, seems still hopeful when he says that PCMC is not being included in the first phase of the smart cities project, but it is certain that its candidature will

hold up in the second phase. According to him, there have been issues which could not be resolved such as the restrictions on constructions in the red zones at Dehu Road and Dighi. The smart cities programme requires a high provision of local amenities to be provided to residents, and this is highly not possible in these red zones.

"PCMC has fallen short of civic requirements for smart city development, but it has always been ahead of the rest of Pune in terms of planned urbanisation and infrastructure. The smart city initiative is a recent development and PCMC has become a point of aspiration only of late. PCMC has been hoping along many of the parameters for a very long time now, and will continue to do so," says Pharande.

Despite certain pressures, what can be vouchsafed is that the residents of Pimpri-Chinchwad enjoy a higher level of social infrastructure availability than the Pune Municipal Corporation and property rates are also high in PCMC. This has resulted



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FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LIVEABILITY INDEX, THE PCMC IS THE MOST OBVIOUS SOLUTION FOR THOSE WHO WANT THE BEST OF URBAN LIVING WITH LIFESTYLE CHOICES

