

India, US cooperation on mega-city governance growing: Indian envoy

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Washington: India-US cooperation in governance of mega-cities is part of a whole new paradigm of working together and forming habits of cooperation between the world's two largest democracies, according to the Indian ambassador Arun K Singh.

"It takes diplomacy beyond the nation-state," he said at an event at Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank, on the Megacity Challenge ahead of a conference on Megacity Security in Mumbai next month.

"As our bilateral partnership goes forward under the motto of "Sanjha Prayas, Sab Ka Vikas" or "Shared Effort, Progress for All," we need to take our cities along in this endeavour - with their myriad challenges and their limitless opportunities," Singh said.

Noting that an expert committee had in 2011 indicated a requirement of investment in urban infrastructure to the tune of \$1 trillion over the next 20 years, he said: "For us in India, the megacity challenge is a living challenge of massive proportion."

The US government, private sector, businesses and the civil society, Singh said had been associated in several transformative initiatives in India.

The Bloomberg Philanthropies have supported the India Smart Cities challenge, he noted. The US has been identified as the lead partner in developing smart cities in three Indian cities --- Ajmer, Visakhapatnam and Allahabad.

The USAID, through the Urban India Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Alliance, is serving as knowledge partner to support the Prime Minister's 500 cities National Urban Development Mission and Clean India Campaign.

There was also growing bilateral cooperation for making the two countries' megacities safe and secure, Singh said observing "the designs of terrorists over mega-cities was evident to both countries --- during 9/11 in New York City and during 26/11 in Mumbai."

To meet the challenges of modern day policing in megacities, Government of India has undertaken Megacity Policing initiative with focus on building the technology capability of Police forces.

Currently, police forces in seven cities - Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata and Ahmedabad --- are being modernized under this scheme.

Megacities Policing is one of the six major components of India-US bilateral homeland security cooperation pursued under the Ministerial Homeland Security Dialogue, Singh noted.

"Whether it is tackling terrorism, investigation of modern crimes, identification of suspects, managing intelligent traffic system or building effective command and control system or fusion centres, the US has capacities that can be considered and adapted in India for mutual benefit," he said.

"They will create security in our cities and potential for business and technology partnership," Singh said.

"Of course, megacity policing is only one small part of our growing cooperation in the field of homeland security," he

said citing several areas from building capacity in cyber security to a partnership for counter-IED cooperation.

"Security cooperation in turn is a small subset of our wide-ranging strategic and global partnership," Singh added.

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