



Kochi is a city with a blend of rich culture, heritage & modernization: Vice President Inaugurates Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Kochi Municipal Corporation

Posted On: 22 NOV 2017 8:16PM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Kochi is a cosmopolitan city with a blend of rich culture, heritage and modernization. He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Kochi Municipal Corporation, in Kochi, Kerala today. The Governor of Kerala, Shri P. Sathasivam, the Minister for Local Self-Governments, Welfare of Minorities, Wakf and Haj, Kerala, Dr. K.T. Jaleel, the Mayor of Kochi, Smt. Soumini Jain and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that Kochi has had strong ties with the Greco-Romans, active trading relations with many South Asian and South-East Asian nations and also has been a colony of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British. He further said that it is one of the top destinations in the country for a wide range of industries - from Tourism, Shipping and Information Technology to International trade and Bio-technology. The Container Transshipment terminal at Vallarpadam, international bunkering terminal and the CNG Terminal have developed Kochi into an economic and logistical hub, he added.

The Vice President said that rapid urbanization, burgeoning urban population, unplanned and haphazard growth of urban areas, inability of the civic bodies to cope with increasing demand in services, lack of adequate financial resources and functional powers are the major problems faced by corporations and other urban civic bodies. He further said that since mayors and corporators are elected by the people, they would be directly answerable to the voters. They also need to be empowered with three Fs—funds, functions and functionaries, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am extremely pleased to inaugurate the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Kochi Municipal Corporation, which has carved a niche for itself in the area of local self-government. I convey my warm felicitations and greetings to all the delegates present here today, especially the Mayor and the council of the Kochi Municipal Corporation.

I would also like to express my appreciation to all the stalwarts of the past and present, whose vision, efforts and dedication enabled the local self government to serve its people for 50 long years.

Friends, the Golden Jubilee Celebration of any institution is not only an event of great importance and joy, but also an occasion to introspect, recollect the achievements and chalk out an action plan for the future. Today, when I stand before you to address on this happy and solemn occasion, my thoughts go back not only to about 50 years but beyond that.

Kochi, the commercial hub of Kerala, is a city steeped in history. It has been the part of urban history for hundreds of years having had active trading and cultural relations with almost all major trading centres across the world.

It has had strong ties with the Greco-Romans, active trading relations with many South Asian and South-East Asian nations and also has been a colony of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British. Kochi was one of the first regions in the world that provided refuge to the fleeing Jewish population and this vibrant Jewish population continues to contribute immensely to the overall development of the city.

In 1947, when India gained independence from the British colonial rule, Kochi was the first princely State to join the Indian Union willingly.

On 9th July 1960, the Mattancherry council of Kochi passed a resolution—which was forwarded to the government—requesting the formation of a municipal corporation by combining the then existing municipalities of Fort Kochi, Mattancherry, and Ernakulam.

Based on the report of a government-appointed commission, the Kerala Legislative Assembly approved the corporation's formation and on 1st November 1967, exactly 50 years ago, the Kochi Municipal Corporation came into existence.

In the last 50 years, Kochi has grown to become a vibrant metropolis with a composite culture. It is one of the top destinations in the country for a wide range of industries – from Tourism, Shipping and Information Technology to International trade and Bio-technology.

It is a cosmopolitan city with a blend of rich culture, heritage and modernization.

Kochi is one of the most prosperous cities in the country and contributes a major chunk of its revenue to the State's coffers. The Container Transshipment terminal at Vallarpadam, international bunkering terminal and the CNG Terminal have developed Kochi into an economic and logistical hub. Cochin international airport has set an example to others by becoming the first airport in the world to be completely operated on solar power, while Kochi Metro is effectively serving the commuting needs of the city's population.

In the coming years, I see Kochi to be one of the strongest and fastest growing cities in India. It is the first Indian Tier-II city to have a metro rail. It is a venue for one of the two submarine cable landings in India and is home to India's first global hub terminal. All these potential drivers act as growth triggers for the city.

One of the ambitious missions of the Government of India, the Smart City mission seeks to develop cities into throbbing, sustainable, resilient, inclusive and citizen-friendly urban centres. In the first round, 20 cities were selected and I am happy Kochi was among the top five cities. I really hope that Kochi excels in the mission and is able to transform itself into an all-encompassing livable city.

Friends, as all of you are aware, I served as Urban Development Minister earlier and have a fairly good idea of the problems faced by municipal corporations and urban local bodies, their administrators and elected representatives.

Rapid urbanization, burgeoning urban population, unplanned and haphazard growth of urban areas, inability of the civic bodies to cope with increasing demand in services, lack of adequate financial resources and functional powers are the major problems faced by corporations and other urban civic bodies.

Firstly, outdated laws and regulations which seek to centralize powers and functions rather than decentralize them must be reworked. The top-down approach must be replaced by bottom-up approach for finding effective governance at the local level. Times have changed and so have people's expectations.

The tax-paying public rightly wants corruption-free, accountable, transparent and effective governance.

While availability of funds might not pose a problem under various programmes, including the 'Smart Cities' initiative, launched by the Union Government, the timely execution of the projects must be accorded highest priority.

Laws will have to be amended if they come in the way of effective functioning of municipal bodies and lead to delays in execution of projects. If necessary, the municipal corporations must be given more legislative powers and the mayors empowered with greater administrative functions to enable effective governance.

Since mayors and corporators are elected by the people, they would be directly answerable to the voters. Therefore, greater accountability has to be infused in the functioning of the corporations and elected representatives. However, they also need to be empowered with three Fs—funds, functions and functionaries. In case, each local body is governed by a different act, the situation must be remedied by clubbing varied acts and bringing out a single, umbrella act for ensuring uniformity in functioning and governance.

I would also like the Kochi Municipal Corporation to reduce the interface between the citizens and its officials to the maximum extent by providing all services online. It would not only help in promoting efficiency but also reduce corruption.

Before I conclude I would like to congratulate the Kochi Municipal Corporation for transforming itself into a people-friendly institution with a high degree of transparency and efficiency. You have been successful to a great extent in carrying forward the spirit of decentralization and it is also highly commendable that you have been very responsive institution to the local needs.

I hope you will relentlessly work to be an institution of excellence, always alive to the current realities, agile enough to respond to changing contexts and forward-looking enough to anticipate future trends.

I wish you all the very best in your endeavors to deliver high quality services to the city and its people.

Thank you and Jai Hind!"

KSD/BK

(Release ID: 1510551) Visitor Counter : 79

