

Innovative solutions are the only way out



Vaccination is the way out; sooner we all get it, earlier we reach close to normal, says **PRADEEP MISRA**, CMD, Rudrabhishek Enterprises

The ongoing Pandemic has badly battered the economy. Does infrastructure hold the key to revive the Indian economy? Your views

The prevailing pandemic situation has deeply dented the economic conditions, apart from creating huge loss on human life and health scenario. Before the economy regains its momentum, fundamentals have to stabilize and to be made even stronger than earlier. Simultaneously, it needs to be ensured that people have spendable surplus in their hands, so that consumption demand pulls up. This will happen only with the faster job creation in urban & rural areas. On both these key revival factors, the importance of infrastructure is crucial. It is well understood that the business activities in all the industry segments are heavily dependent on infrastructure support. Therefore, to create a trigger in overall economy, the focus on immediate infrastructure growth is indispensable. Moreover, the employment generation through infrastructure projects have quicker turnaround time. In smaller time span, no other sector can generate employment of such scale, both for the skilled and unskilled workforce. Distribution of work should be wide base, which will create job at all level

instead of work concentration with few companies only. The government is quite aware of these aspects and accordingly increasing focus on infrastructure.

What are your views on the need to adapt and remould the infra activities as per the New Normal to spur the economy?

The crisis has compelled us to again look into the long pending issues of infrastructure sector. This is a sector which needs long term financing on highly structured manner. Along with the participation of the private sector, the government spending stays crucial. In light of the same, the constitution of 'Developmental Financial Institution (DFI)' is a very important step. The government needs to ensure allocations and disbursements as per the plan laid out. At the same time when the physical contacts and movements are facing challenges, the need of 'centralised approval system' for infrastructure projects has become even more prominent. Lack of 'single window clearance' has been persistently causing hurdle in the project kick off and completions. Disbursement of payment and project approval should be faster. These areas need immediate attention and policy intervention.

The Pandemic has further expedited technological advancement such as minimum human intervention by integrating technologies such as IoT, AI. How are you integrating the latest technologies for faster completion of projects?

Among very few things that are certain about the infrastructure sector, one thing is the shift towards Automation and Artificial Intelligence. We have been investing in technology and making alliance with the global software giants to introduce new technologies not only on our projects, but also to disseminate in industry within the country. We have made tie-up with Hungarian MNC, Graphisoft for Archicad based BIM (Building Information Modeling) in design and construction. Similarly, with Italian firm TeamSystems, we are working on implantation of project management software, STR Vision. For many years, we have been implementing GIS (Geographical Information System) in urban planning projects. Now, we are working towards its application in other domains such as land-record digitization and property tax. On multiple smart city projects, we have already done extensive application of ICT solutions. This again we are taking forward on other infra projects.

What are the sustainability initiatives you have included for the project site to save the environment from further degradation?

Environmental & Sustainability aspects have always been integral and necessary part in all our project planning, design and execution. We incorporate the sufficient scope of green areas & water bodies; usage of local construction materials and regional flora in landscaping; use of renewable resources such as solar energy; harnessing the rainwater; recycle of waste water; solid waste treatment and similar other components. With the increasing realisation of environmental concerns, I expect that all the stakeholders will lay greater emphasis in coming times.

The focus is now on executing the impossible; be it the bullet trains, underground metros, coastal roads or tunneling projects in inaccessible terrains, which were unheard of in India, a decade ago.

What consultancy challenges do you face?

As the infrastructure support requirements increase with the increasing complexity of overall living conditions, the innovative solutions are the only way out. Things cannot continue on set patterns and historic methods alone. While there is need of

documenting the learning from previous experiences, and making extensive use of the data on previous projects, there is also a need of bringing in advance technologies and integrating the expertise of multidisciplinary teams. On the complex projects, such as building infrastructure on difficult terrains, the coordination between several concerned authorities heavily influences the speed of execution.

How are companies overcoming skilled manpower shortages?

Companies are fighting to find employees with right skillset. The lack of skilled workforce is something that concerns organizations worldwide. Companies that cannot fill positions with qualified employees will be left with extended resources that damage both short-term and long-term prospects of company. In REPL, we are investing to train the existing employees. We also give them sufficient time to adapt according to the requirements. There are set mechanisms to develop leadership skills that we persistently work upon, always keeping the mid-to-long term objectives in mind.

How do you see the economy, opportunities and challenges in this pandemic situation and please give us a brief idea about the strategies outlined to tap in the future potentials?

We at REPL, have been constantly aware of the evolving scenario and requirements of the industry. At every stage, we have been constantly upgrading ourselves, adding new service divisions, introducing technology to efficiently serve our clientele. Agility and innovation are at the core of our organizational approach. Despite the intermediary set-back due to coronavirus pandemic, India's growth story stands intact. As the country's economic growth resumes its upward curve, the need of supporting infrastructure will be even higher. REPL's future plan is to remain aligned with that growing demand in infrastructure consultancy space by delivering end-to-end solutions. We are already associated with the GOI's flagship programs such as Smart City Mission, PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna), Skill India, AMRUT and JJM (Jal Jeevan Mission) etc. We are now gearing up to enter or scale up our business in new domains like Tourism, Ports, Metros, Roads & Highways etc. We are also expanding in the IT & Software enabled services in infrastructure sector. In recent years, we have been further making presence in new geographical territories.

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