

One man's mission to build India's most livable city

AMARAVATI, ANDHRA PRADESH

Plans for new state capital include miles of waterways, bike lanes and a tech hub

BY MUJIB MASHAL AND HARI KUMAR

In one corner of the vast construction site, engineers are rerouting water into miles of canals that will spread like arteries around the new urban space.

In another, workers in hard hats are pouring concrete for a state-of-the-art building that will soon host India's largest quantum computer — part of a broader project labeled "The Quantum Valley."

Here, on what used to be banana groves and vegetable fields on the banks of the sacred River Krishna, the ambition of building India's most livable city

of the future is taking shape.

Erecting Amaravati as the new capital city for Andhra Pradesh, a state of 50 million people in India's south, is an enormous task — the largest such exercise in urban planning in independent India. The country's track record brings little confidence. Its major cities, marked by inadequate infrastructure and increasing pollution, have become notorious for failing to meet the needs of their massive populations.

The man who has taken it upon himself to change that is N. Chandrababu Naidu, the state's 76-year-old chief minister. He has an obsessive eye for detail and a history of delivering projects of transformational scale. But he has also had setbacks, losing control of another state capital he helped build decades ago, along with legal battles and a stretch in the political wilderness.

Mr. Naidu has won the support of India's powerful prime minister, Narendra
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