



Photo: Om Chauhan

# 'Kanpur can reclaim its glory as industrial hub with focused approach & action plan'

## Need To Study City's History, Legacy & Economics To Identify Sectors That Can Steer Revival, Say Experts

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**B**ack in the '60s, Kanpur was a thriving economy when Bengaluru was a sleepy laidback town. In the 1970s, Kanpur became a million-plus city - which was an entire decade before the state capital Lucknow reached that mark. At that time, one lakh of the total 11 lakh population in Kanpur, the Manchester of the East, was that of factory workers.

Today, if one looks at the state GDP, Kanpur stands at the seventh position among districts and Lucknow contributes more than Kanpur. Also, as compared to Bengaluru, which today is a 110-billion-dollar economy, the size of Kanpur's economy stands at a meagre 7.8 billion dollars.

The numbers that define Kanpur's then and now story came to fore during a panel discussion organized as part of the Kanpur edition of TOI Dialogues on Monday.

The statistics, shared by Prof Sanjay Kumar Singh of the Indian Institute of Management-Lucknow (IIM-L), served both as food for thought and motivation for those who believe in the city's potential to make a comeback.

The panel discussion, titled 'Transforming Kanpur into a thriving economic hub', featured speakers like chief executive officer of UP



**CHALKING OUT ROADMAP:** (From left) Moderator and RJ Raunac with Maneesh Mansingka, Mayur Maheshwari, Sudeep Goenka, Manoj Gupta & Prof Sanjay Kumar Singh during the session on Kanpur's revival as economic hub

State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) Mayur Maheshwari who contoured the pillars on which the path of progress may rest.

Sharing that the industrial legacy of Kanpur is well known and it is because of that it finds a place among top ten in terms of income tax payers, Maheshwari said: "Concerted efforts are being made now. One reason is that the govt's work has undergone a major change over the past few years. Earlier, we used to work in silos with one department being oblivious to what is happening in the

other. But now, we are working as a unified whole. Though there is room for improvement, this change has set many things in order."

Besides listing out the initiatives undertaken by the state govt to accelerate Kanpur's journey on the revival path, the UPSIDA CEO said: "Earlier, we used to think that Kanpur must make for UP but now the spirit is that Kanpur must make in UP for the world."

Comparing the development of Singapore with that of Cambodia of the 1960s, Prof Sanjay Kumar Singh,

who teaches business environment at IIM-L, suggested that there was a need for a focused action plan for Kanpur's revival.

"Case studies from various parts of the world suggest that cities and countries with focused approaches grow. In the case of Kanpur, we need to examine the history, legacy, geography, economics, demography and neighbours, among other things, to identify the sectors that can anchor and steer its revival. It is important to recognize the current economic clusters besides identifying areas of

future cluster formation and growth," he said.

Chairman of CIET's UP Infrastructure Committee and MKU Ltd Manoj Gupta said that Kanpur has always enjoyed a locational advantage. "It was linked to the GT Road, and even today, many expressways pass through it. Also, the city has great rail connectivity," he said.

"With Ganga flowing by our side, the score for waterway linkage can also be made," Gupta said, adding that there was the need to improve air connectivity from Kanpur as only a few flights take off from the city.

Maneesh Mansingka, director of Singer India Ltd and JK Urbanspaces, said: "Business community feels that there are large land parcels in Kanpur that can be used for infrastructure development. If the govt can explore and steer the land use change from existing to mixed use category, a leap may be achieved."

Director of Goldtoe Group Sudeep Goenka said, "Kanpur has given many millionaires to India but unfortunately many of them did not give it back to their city for reasons whatsoever. The opportunity for the city lies in the fact that business sense flows in the veins of the people of Kanpur. They just need to be reminded of their power for which skill development centres and incubation centres must be built."

