



Mains Practice Question

Q. “Cities in India contribute almost 66% GDP of India and give individuals a lot of freedom in their personal sphere”. In light of this statement discuss issues associated with urbanization in India and suggest a way forward. **(250 Words)**

26 Sep, 2022 GS Paper 1 Indian Society

Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief on Urbanization in India.
- Give a brief about the significance of Urbanization.
- Discuss issues associated with Urbanization.
- Conclude your answer by giving a way forward.

Introduction

Urbanization refers to the population shift from rural to urban areas, the corresponding decrease in the proportion of people living in rural areas, and the ways in which societies adapt to this change. As of Census 2011, **India’s population stood at 1210 million, with an urbanisation level of 31.1%.**

Significance of Urbanisation

- **Easier Access to Facilities:** Urban living is linked with higher levels of literacy and education, better health, longer life expectancy, greater access to social services and enhanced opportunities for cultural and political participation.
- **Access to Information:** There are also benefits from easier access to sources of information such as radio and television, which may be used to communicate information about health to the general public.
- **Individualism:** Multiplicity of opportunities, social diversity, lack of familial and social control over decision making leads to more self-interest and facilitates decision-making by an individual and choosing one’s career and actions by oneself.

Main Body

Issues Associated with Urbanisation

- **Excessive Population Pressure:** On the one hand, the rural-urban migration accelerates the pace of urbanisation, on the other, it creates excessive population pressure on the existing public utilities. Consequently, the cities suffer from the problems of slums, crime, unemployment, urban poverty, pollution, congestion, ill-health and several deviant social activities.
- **Overflowing Slums:** There are about 13.7 million slum households in the country sheltering a population of 65.49 million people across the country. As much as 65% of Indian cities have adjoining slums where people live in small houses adjacent to each other.
- **Inadequate Housing:** Among the numerous social problems of urbanisation, the problem of housing is the most distressing. A vast majority of urban population live under conditions of poor shelter and in highly congested spaces.
- **Unplanned Development:** The model of building a developed city comprises unplanned

development, which only bolsters the dichotomy prevailing in urban cities between the rich and the poor.

- **Pandemic-Induced Problems:** The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the misery of urban poor or slum dwellers. The sudden implementation of complete Covid lockdown severely affected the ability of slum dwellers to earn their living.
- **Non-Inclusive Welfare Schemes:** The benefits of welfare schemes for urban poor often reach only a small part of the intended beneficiaries. Most relief funds and benefits do not reach slum dwellers, mainly because these settlements are not officially recognised by the government.

Way Forward

- **Sustainable Urbanization for Successful Development:** As the world continues to urbanize, sustainable development depends increasingly on the successful management of urban growth, especially in low-income and lower-middle-income countries where the pace of urbanization is projected to be the fastest.
- **Integrated Policies:** It is needed to improve the lives of both urban and rural dwellers are needed, while strengthening the linkages between urban and rural areas, building on their existing economic, social and environmental ties.
- **Improving Access to Health Facilities & Welfare Schemes:** Accelerating efficiency of welfare and relief schemes along with ensuring access to free vaccines, food security and adequate shelter in the slums.
- **New Approaches for Urbanisation:** New approaches to urban planning and effective governance are the need of the hour. Instead of a top-down approach, a bottom-up approach shall be adopted to better understand the unique challenges faced by the urban poor.

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