



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** Urbanization has long been associated with human development and progress, but it has been observed that urban settings can also lead to significant inequalities and health problems. Discuss the statement. (250 words)

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### Approach

- Write a few introductory lines about urbanization and current status in India.
- Discuss how it is associated with human development and the problems associated with it.
- Provide a way forward for these problems.
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

- Urbanization refers to the mass movement of populations from rural to urban settings and the consequent physical changes to urban settings. In 2019, the United Nations estimated that more than half the world's population now lives in urban areas and by 2041, this figure will increase to 6 billion people.
- Over 34% of India's current population lives in urban areas (UN World Urbanisation Prospects Report 2018). It has expanded rapidly as an increasing number of people migrate to towns and cities in search of economic opportunity.

### Body

#### Urbanisation is associated with human development and progress

- Urbanization has the potential to augment economic activity, provide employment opportunities and enhance access to basic services.
- Throughout history, cities have been the main centres of learning, culture and innovation. It is not surprising that the world's most urban countries tend to be the richest and have the highest human development.
- Ongoing rapid urbanisation has the potential to improve the well-being of societies.
- Although only around half the world's people live in cities, they generate more than 80 percent of Global Domestic Product (GDP).
- Cities are also younger: home to relatively more young and working-age adults than rural areas, making them pivotal places to capture demographic dividends.
- However, urbanization can turn cities into places of deprivation, inequality and exclusion.

#### Issues associated with urbanization

- **Poor nutritional health:** Urbanization has a major negative impact on the nutritional health of poor populations. The urban people sometimes lack balanced diets and this leads to malnourishment.
- **Obesity:** People in urbanized areas of developing countries are vulnerable to obesity due to lack of physical space, continually sitting in workplaces, and excessive energy intake and low energy

expenditure.

- **Urban Crimes:** Crime rates in urban areas are rising especially human trafficking, sexual assault, child labour etc.
- **Proliferation of Slums:** Due to poor infrastructure and rising cost of living in urban areas, the poor people are forced to live in slums. The number of slums have been rising from the past few years. The largest slum of Asia, **Dharavi** is located in Mumbai, India.
- **Pollution:** Pollution is another major contributor to poor health in urban environments. For instance, the World Health Organization estimated that 6.5 million people died (11.6% of all global deaths) as a consequence of indoor and outdoor air pollution and nearly 90% of air-pollution-related deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Waste generation:** Due to rising migration and population in urban areas, waste generated has been increasing exponentially which is posing a serious health problem.

## Way forward

- Although urbanization has become an irreversible phenomenon, we must tackle the root causes of the problem, such as **improving the socio-economic situation** of the urban poor.
- Some examples of policies and practices that should be considered include
  - Policies addressing urban environmental issues, such as planned urban space and taxes on the use of vehicles to reduce use or to encourage vehicles that use less fuel as well as encourage bicycle use, walking, and other forms of human transportation;
  - Greater cooperative planning between rural and urban regions to improve food security e.g., subsidies for farmers providing locally produced, unprocessed and low cost food to urban centers.
  - Social protection and universal health coverage to reduce wealth disparity among urban dwellers; including introduction of programs and services for health,
    - For example by establishing primary healthcare clinics accessible and affordable for all including those living in urban slums

## Conclusion

Until the conditions in rural areas improve, populations will continue to migrate to urban settings. The governments and development agencies should concentrate on adapting to the challenges of urbanization, while seeking to reduce unplanned urbanization.