

General Studies-1; Topic: Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

National Urban Policy (NUP)

1) Introduction

- India is in the midst of a major urbanization boom.
- India's level of urbanization is lower than its peer group of developing countries: China (45%), Indonesia (54%), Mexico (78%) and Brazil (87%).
- By 2030, India's urban population is projected to increase to 600 million.
- The Union government is set to come up with India's first National Urban Policy framework.
- Globally, around one-third of countries have a NUP in place.

2) Need for NUP

- To spell out the country's plan for urbanisation.
- To outline and highlight the importance and objectives of cities.
- UN Habitat mandates that all member-nations should have such a policy.
- For leveraging urbanization to the fullest extent and with the greatest efficiency.
- For addressing India's current urban distress.
- To build capacities at the state/urban local bodies level to prepare cities for future challenges.
- To focus on areas such as inclusive growth, infrastructure finance system and robust urban information system.
- To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable as per goal 11 of UN's SDG.
- To streamline development and ensure that all urban missions are brought under a common platform.
- To deal with issues like slum prevention and regularization, access to land, basic services and infrastructure, urban mobility, urban energy requirements and job creation.
- To address this, India needs to develop its own national urban policy (NUP) for future growth of cities.

3) Significance / Results Expected

- A NUP will provide a framework for states, which would be encouraged to adopt a state version of this policy.
- It would encourage programmes and policies to be integrated and aim at operationalizing the spirit of the 74th Amendment.
- NUP would involve participation of all stakeholders.
- The policy will look at urban legislation, urban economy, and urban planning.
- Increases private and public investments in urban development and consequent improvement of cities' productivity, inclusiveness and environmental conditions.
- Better coordination by national actors, as well as lower levels of government in all sectors.
- Environmentally friendly urban and national development.

4) The Paradigm Shift

- According to a draft note by UN-Habitat, India has moved from a 'business-as-usual approach' to paying systematic attention to urbanisation and its challenges.
- The paradigm changes it has brought while addressing the challenges of urbanisation are:

- Taking urbanisation as an opportunity rather than a challenge.
- Citizen-centric approach to align the development agenda of the cities with people's priorities and needs.
- Cooperative federalism: Freedom and resources to states/urban local bodies (ULBs) to design and implement.
- Renewed focus on integrated planning through convergence and qualitative improvements.
- Commitment to environment sustainability.
- Focus on inclusive growth.
- Technology to enhance efficiency of services delivery.
- Shift from project-based approach to outcome-based approach.

5) **Concerns / Challenges**

- Indian cities face challenges in terms of deficits in infrastructure, governance and sustainability.
- With rapid urbanization, these problems are going to aggravate, and can cumulatively pose a challenge to India's growth trajectory.
- The poverty and social isolation of minority groups in cities.

6) **Way Forward**

- Need for a comprehensive framework that takes a holistic approach to the interrelated challenges that have an impact on the growth of cities.
- Sustainable urban development needs to be led by the central government working closely with state and local governments.
- Since majority of city-related issues are state subjects, states must take the lead in order to make cities vibrant economic centres.
- Promoting non-motorised and other innovative mobility solutions, utilise human capital infrastructure and inclusion for persons with disabilities.
- The provisions of the 74th Constitution Amendments Act should be implemented by the civic bodies in true spirit.
- The urban policies should contribute to achieve the goals of poverty alleviation and removal of unemployment and under-employment.
- Focus on infrastructure that leads to delivery of services to citizens.