



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

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Employment and Self-Employment

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Building Urban Infrastructure Through AMRUT

Introduction

- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)** has been initiated by the Government of India to address the challenges of water supply and sewerage/ septage in cities across the country.

Urban India: Key challenges and opportunities:

- India is witnessing, a **rapid increase in the urban population**. As per the **United Nations World Urbanization Prospects Report 2018**, around 34% of India's population lives in cities. By 2051, more than half of the nation's population will be living in cities.
- Such a surge poses significant challenges in terms of **demands for basic infrastructure services** such as water supply, sanitation, wastewater management, and solid waste management.
- In view of this, basic infrastructure will play a vital role in enabling the cities to adequately provide civic services to improve quality of life of citizens in becoming true engines of economic growth.
- Government of India has undertaken significant investments in these areas in the last five years, as a result of which there have been notable improvements in basic services. However, challenges remain.
- **Access to safe drinking water and scientific treatment of wastewater** including septage are essential for the country in order to accomplish Sustainable Development Goal 6.
- Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) was initiated by the Government of India to not only address the challenges of water supply and sewerage/ septage in cities across the country but also to harness the associated opportunities of economic growth.
- AMRUT, was launched with the aim of providing basic services like water supply to all households, significantly upgrade sewerage and septage and provide for non-motorized transport and public amenities like parks and green spaces at least one in each city, thus improving the quality of life for all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged.

AMRUT: Aligned with the needs of Urbanizing India

- **Cooperative federalism:**
 - Keeping in line with cooperative federalism, State Governments have been empowered to appraise, approve and sanction projects for their AMRUT cities.
- **Framework for institutional reforms:**
 - AMRUT lays major emphasis on institutional reforms which aim to improve governance and institutional capacities of ULBs.
- **Principles of 'incrementalism' and prioritization:**
 - In the pursuit of ensuring universal coverage of water supply and improving sanitation coverage for the citizens, a step-wise approach towards service level benchmarking by the ULBs, a principle of 'incrementalism' has been introduced under the Mission, which is a gradual process of achieving the benchmarks.
- **Incentivizing over penalizing:**
 - In order to encourage States and reward their initiatives constructively, reform implementation is incentivized under AMRUT-10% of the budgetary allocation is earmarked for reform incentive and it is over and above the allocation for projects.

Urban reforms:

- Some of the significant reforms are as under-

- **Online Building Permission System (OBPS):**
 - With a view to facilitate Ease of Doing business in construction permits, an Online Building Permission System (OBPS) with common Application Form and seamless integration of all clearances/ No Objection Certificate (NOCs) from internal/ external agencies has been made operational in Delhi and Mumbai since April 2016.
 - As a result, India's rank in **Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)** in construction permits has recorded an unprecedented jump of 158 spots in last 3 years as per latest World Bank Doing Business Report (DBR).
 - It has been targeted to get OBPS implemented in all cities/ towns across the country by 31 March, 2020.
- **Replacement of street lights with LED lights:**
 - 65 Lakh conventional streetlights have been replaced with energy efficient LED lights.
 - It has led to energy savings of 139 crore KWH per annum and reduction in CO2 emission by 11 lakh tonnes per annum.
- **Credit Rating:**
 - Cities with lower rating are following measures to improve their performance so that they become credit worthy and raise funds for their projects.
- **Municipal Bonds:**
 - Rs.3,390 crore have been raised through municipal bonds during 2017-19 for upgrading urban infrastructure by 8 Mission cities.
 - Raising of bonds leads to **improved governance, accounting systems, finance, transparency, accountability and delivery of services** in the ULBs.
- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan - Urban**
 - In order to address the national issue of water scarcity, Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS), Government of India has undertaken Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA) from 1st July 2019, driving a **campaign on water conservation, restoration, recharge and reuse of wastewater**.
 - The key thrust areas of Jal Shakti Abhiyan (Urban) are as follows:
 - Rainwater harvesting (RWH)
 - Reuse of treated wastewater
 - Rejuvenation of water bodies
 - Plantation

Way Forward:

- AMRUT has made remarkable strides in improving water and sanitation coverage in urban areas.
- During the Mission period, it envisages to cover over 60% of the urban population living in 500 cities with universal coverage of water supply and over 60% coverage of sewerage and septage services.
- Keeping in view SDG Goal 6 for ensuring sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, it is imperative to take forward the achievements of this Mission to smaller cities as well.

Urbanization and Informal Sector

Introduction

- Wellbeing, one of the crucial dimensions of which is access to productive employment opportunities, is pertinent particularly in the present context of globalization.
- **Growth that is currently taking place is accompanied by informalisation.** The informalisation process is feared to involve substantial welfare losses and deterioration in terms of governance.
- In the face of **inadequate livelihood opportunities in the rural areas**, even the urban informal sector which is grossly characterized by low productivity, tends to attract migration.
- Though in the Indian context rural-urban migration rates are moderate, **rural-to-large city population-flow has always been alarming.**
- Thus, city growth, informal sector employment, and low living standards including slum inhabitation involve considerable overlaps.

Migration and Opportunities

- Higher rural literacy and improvements in educational level may raise the rural-to-urban migration rate.
- The presence of disadvantaged social categories in the rural areas also has motivated migration rate, supporting the view that they migrate to escape their vulnerability.
- Rural poor by shifting to the urban location are able to access better livelihood opportunities and thus, poverty declines.
- Migration, urban informal sector employment, and the incidence of socially backward population in the urban and rural areas are all positively connected with each other, suggesting that such groups are more likely to migrate and land up in the urban informal sector.
- This pattern is accompanied by a decline in the incident of poverty in both rural and urban areas.
- **Concentration of poor in the rural agricultural sector** is prevalent; hence any diversification with or without migration is desirable from the point of view of poverty reduction.
- With rapid urbanization the rural transformation is faster as the positive spill-over effects initiate new activities and opportunities.
- **Higher per capita income, urbanization and industrialization can impact small manufacturing and trade simultaneously**, as both the activities are complementary to each other.
- The residential and infrastructural facilities in towns are inadequate to keep pace with the new activities that are spilling over as a result of saturation of the large urban centres.
- The new towns do not have enough living space to accommodate the migrant workers who are supposed to move in with an increasing concentration of activities.
- As migration is usually more than the actual number of job vacancies it would mean that the surplus labour would get residually absorbed in low productivity jobs.
- Usually in the urban economics once the largest cities exhaust the economic opportunities the second rank cities come up to replace them in terms of investment, growth and employment generation.
- These cities are certainly much better off in terms of infrastructure compared to the new small towns. But for them to take over the lead role, a proper coordination between the State and those who have a thorough understanding of the growth dynamics of the urban space is essential.

Mobility-Responsive Urban Planning

- A proactive approach to migration can lead to significant benefits for the city economy and city vibrancy.
- Mobility is increasingly circular, semi or non-permanent, and though a bulk of it is regional, many streams of migration are also long-distance and inter-state.
- There is an urgent need to equip city governments with necessary capacities, resources and powers to recognize and respond to issues of migrants.

Introduction

- While the census data estimates the number of migrants at 3.3 million; several studies including the Economic Survey of India 2017 suggest that this is a significant underestimation.
- The **scale of underestimation of migration is a concern in itself** because it leads to potential neglect of policy.
- Assumptions that city dwellers are sedentary and linkage of citizenship to long-term residence do not fit the emergent pattern of migration that is largely circular, temporary and non-permanent.
- Most urban policies, initiated at the central or state level, seemed to have overlooked these emerging forms of mobility.

How Mobility Transforms Places?

- Large-scale migration has significant implications for places.
- Temporary forms of migrants are people who contribute to the city economy while they are there but their effort is directed at places which they come from, i.e, the source areas. This is where they contribute in terms of **remittances, investments, asset building, and state revenues**.
- While **work and economic reasons may be the largest drivers for such migration**, education and health resource seeking may also be supplementary reasons for the same. These create specific demands on city infrastructures and services.
- Further, such demands may be locality-intensive. For example, hospitals attract many patients requiring long-term treatment and hence may emerge as nodes for such migrants.
- Demands on services may range from requirements of transport infrastructure and making it amenable to large-scale and long-distance commuting to creating a range of accessible basic services.
- A neglect of these needs pushes people into creating their own makeshift solutions. A road junction is then converted into an '*adda*'.
- In the absence of public conveniences, roads may become defecation or urinal spots; edges may become waste dumps, and the intensity of slum formation or homelessness may increase.
- On the other hand, a **proactive approach to migration** can lead to significant benefits for the city economy and city vibrancy. A good example is that of Hyderabad Metro that uses four languages in its written messages.

Need for Vision for Supporting Migrants in Urban Policy: Short-term Housing

- **Short-term housing** is perhaps one of the most critical and unmet needs of migrants to Indian cities. This is often seen as the need for rental housing; but needs for temporary housing go way beyond rental housing that extends to several months.
- There is a complete absence of options when it comes to the low-income end. In older days, cities had *dharmashalas*. Contemporary Indian cities lack such options.

- A moving example of this is of how cancer patients and their caregivers at Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai are compelled to seek shelter on the streets outside the hospital for a few months while the treatment is on.
- It is therefore essential to move away from the current State Government-based policy onus and equip local governments in terms of capacity to cognize such issues, collect data, and to possess the powers and resources to respond to dynamic phenomena such as migration.

Mission Indradhanush 2.0: Reiterating India's Commitment to Vaccines for All

- **Immunization programme is a critical component of government's commitment towards Universal Health Coverage.** It is integral to India's efforts of reducing the burden of vaccine preventable diseases and achieving universal care for children.
- **India's immunization programme is the largest in the world**, with annual cohorts of around 26.5 million infants and 29 million pregnant women.
- Despite steady progress, routine vaccination coverage has been slow to increase.
- According to the **National Family Health Survey-4 2015-16 (NFHS-4)**, the full immunization coverage is around 62%.
- The factors limiting vaccination coverage include the rapid urbanization, presence of a large migration and isolated populations that are difficult to reach, and low demand from underinformed and unaware population.
- India has achieved ground-breaking success in eradicating/ eliminating life-threatening vaccine preventable disease by systematically implementing vaccination programmes. These include small pox, polio and more recently, maternal and neonatal tetanus.
- Despite persisting challenges such as a vast population, poor sanitation and hygiene, and a difficult geographical terrain that make containing outbreak of disease and increasing access to vaccines difficult.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has employed an effective approach – such as involving the community, seeking support from other Ministries and partner agencies, establishing an organized surveillance system, and employing mass campaign management strategies to reach every unreached child for vaccination.
- Owing to low childhood vaccination coverage, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched **Mission Indradhanush (MI)** in 2014, to target under-served, vulnerable, resistant, and inaccessible populations. This contributed to an increase of 6.7% in full immunization coverage after the first two phases of Mission Indradhanush.
- In October 2017, the Prime Minister of India launched **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)** – an ambitious plan to accelerate progress. It aimed to achieve 90% Full Immunization Coverage (FIC) with focus towards districts and urban areas with persistently low levels.
- IMI was built on MI, using additional strategies to reach populations at high risk, by involving sectors other than health.
- It was an effort to shift routine immunization into a **Jan Andolan, or a "people's movement"**. It aimed to mobilize communities and deal with barriers to seeking vaccines.
- IMI showed that **cross-sectoral participation** can be effective in vaccinating children at the highest risk of infection
- Now the government is poised to launch Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) 2.0 between December 2019 - March 2020 to deliver a programme that is informed by the lessons learnt from the previous phases and seeks to escalate efforts to achieve the goal of attaining a 90% national immunization coverage across India.
- In order to mobilize the identified beneficiaries, there is intensive collaboration with other Ministries/ Department/ Agencies for working closely with the community, civil society and the youth.
- Development partners such as WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, IPE Global, Rotary International shall be supporting the government efforts.

- With the launch of Intensified Mission Indradhanush 2.0, India has the opportunity to achieve further reductions in deaths among children under five years of age, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of ending preventable child deaths by 2030.
- By building on successes of the past, learning from challenges, and consolidating efforts across stakeholder groups, the country can fulfill its aim of attaining a disease-free India.
- Vaccines are a truly critical intervention in this journey, and are the key to safeguarding our present, and building a healthier tomorrow for our further generations.

Developing Natural Forest Cover: A Case Study from Yadadri, Telangana

- With pollution becoming a seasonal nightmare across a large part of India, our cities need additional lungs in the form of green covers. The **State of Telangana** has taken such an initiative using technology and planning to leave greener footprints for the future generations through **natural forest restoration**.
- A systematic approach of forest management to sustain the ecological balance and stability of the forest is gaining momentum in India
- **Innovative reforestation approaches** are explored to increase the forest cover and climate amelioration. So far, no significant scientific study on natural forest restoration has been taken up due to diverse climatic condition and soil profile in India.
- **'Telanganaku Haritha haram,'** a flagship programme of State to create an entire forest instead of mere plantation
- It is also thought that forests that have been cleared in diversion cases can be compensated by creating forests instead of plantation.
- This leads to exploration of the principles of **Professor Akira Miyawaki, a well-known Japanese botanist**, plant ecologist and expert in restoration of natural vegetation on degraded land. He invented the **Miyawaki restoration technique** to protect the lowland areas against natural calamities like tsunami.
- The basic principle of Miyawaki is to initiate **high-density plantation in small piece of land with native tree species** that can protect the low-lying areas from natural disaster.
- A method of **developing a natural forest area** is developed in a cost-effective manner and is known as **Yadadri Natural Forest (YNF) Establishment Model**.
- The principles of Miyawaki method and local practices and local materials are utilized in developing this model. Miyawaki Principles are applied in this model for the accomplishment of the goal of creating a manmade forest.
- The successful YNF model can be a revolutionary intervention towards increasing the greenery, climate amelioration and wasteland development.

Addressing Stubble Burning with Cooperative Model

- Pollution by stubble burning has become an annual phenomenon in large parts of northern India.
- Rice-growing States including Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi add to the problems of stubble burning.
- The only reason to burn this asset that can yield income and fertility to the soil is the small gap of time between harvesting of paddy and sowing of wheat, the other main crop.
- Also, the **farmers have limited access to dispose the straw**, clean the land and prepare the seed bed for wheat well in time.
- Rice was not a traditional crop of Punjab but with increased availability of electricity, the number of tube wells increased, which in turn increased the areas for cultivation of paddy replacing the areas under cultivation of pulses and other commercial crops in the Kharif season.
- Punjab had been contributing about 60% of the share in the food stocks of paddy even with only 1.5% of the area.
- Apart from burning of paddy straw, the State has other problems like overuse of chemicals, depletion in the water table, etc.
- Disposing the paddy straw is not a problem that has no solution, rather, it is simple and remunerative and must be adopted at the earliest.
- The issue of straw burning has to be settled through other measures like manufacturing of paper and cardboard, production of mushroom where paddy straw can be used as raw material, etc.
- But there is skepticism that an individual farmer may not install such a unit irrespective of the size of the farm he is holding.
- Also, a single unit even of the largest size cannot be economical because the straw is spread throughout the area and transportation to a single point would be a big constraint.
- Therefore, the **cooperative model already experienced in the dairy is the most viable and prudent option in addressing this problem.**
- There is a need of at least two cardboard and paper manufacturing units in every block.
- A **cooperative society** in the area with the membership of local farmers and farm labourers can be formed and such units must be affiliated to the apex body of the state federation of cooperative for rice straw management.
- Such patronization can yield the most desirable results not only to tackle this problem but also to generate income and employment in the State.
- Production of bio-gas needs technical help and extension services.
- In case of rice, price and marketing is assured. The same assurance has to be granted for the alternative crops to increase the area of cultivation under them.
- Stubble burning has to be stopped. But looking into the real problem at micro as well as macro level concerned with food security and concerns of the farm community at large, it should be dealt sympathetically with the alternative measures, and cooperative model stands out to be the most appropriate approach to address this problem, which is more viable and sustainable.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019: A New Milestone In Empowering Consumers

Introduction

- The Indian consumer market has gone through a drastic change over the last two decades with the advent of digital technologies internet, rapid penetration of e-commerce smart phones, and cloud technologies.
- The Consumer Protection Act (CPA), 1986 being the foremost legislature for protecting the rights of the consumers had become archaic and does not cover rapid changes in the consumer marketplaces, especially those dealing with online shopping, teleshopping, product recall, unsafe contracts, and misleading advertisements. Therefore, it was felt to replace it with the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Justice Delayed Is Justice Denied

- With the growing number of **pending cases in the consumer courts** and huge delays in providing speedy justice to the consumers for petty amounts, the need of the hour was to bring in a new legislature to empower the consumers.
- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 provides for the protection of consumers and fast – track alternatives so that justice reaches to the aggrieved consumers immediately.
- Innovative methods such as mediation, establishment of **Central Consumer Protection Authority**, class action suits etc. would be part of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- Analysis of data regarding number of cases disposed by consumer courts shows that the performance of District Consumer Forums was better as 92.37% cases were disposed of.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- **Some of the highlights of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 are:**
 - The **definition of ‘Consumer’ would include both offline and online consumers**. The expressions “buys any goods” and “hires or avails any services” would include offline or online transactions through electronic means or by teleshopping or direct selling or multi-level marketing.
 - Establishment of the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers, to investigate and intervene when necessary to prevent consumer detriment arising from unfair trade practices.
 - Provision for **“mediation” as an Alternate Dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism** which aims at giving legislative basis to resolution of consumer disputes through mediation, thus making the process less cumbersome, simple, and quicker.
- There are huge challenges faced by online buyers such as breach of data privacy and security, substandard and duplicate products, phishing, territorial jurisdiction.
- CCPA would function on the same lines as the Federal Trade Commission in the USA and investigate into consumer complaints, issue safety notices for goods and services, and pass orders for recall of goods and work against misleading advertisements.
- The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, with its innovative changes, would help in empowering consumers and provide justice to the needy in time.