

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT
ETC****Unleashing the potential of urban India:**

Metropolises are going to be a key feature of India's urbanisation and will play a crucial role in fuelling growth.

Significance:

- The Global Metro Monitor 2018 reports that 36% of employment growth and 67% of GDP growth were contributed by the 300 largest global metros, with those in emerging economies outperforming those in advanced economies.
- Nine Indian metros feature in the top 150 ranks of the economic performance index. By 2030, India will have 71 metropolitan cities, of which seven would have a population of more than 10 million.

Definition: Article 243P(c) of the Constitution defines 'metropolitan areas' as those having "population of ten lakhs [a million] or more, comprised in one or more districts and consisting of two or more municipalities/panchayats/ other contiguous areas, specified by the governor through public notification to be a metropolitan area".

Constitutional provisions:

- It recognises metropolitan areas as multi-municipal and multi-district entities.
- It mandates the formation of a Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC) for preparing draft development plans, considering common interests between local authorities, objectives and priorities set by Central and State governments, and investments likely to be made in the area by various agencies.
- To ensure the democratic character of the MPC, it is mandated that at least two-thirds of the members of the committee must be elected by and from among the elected members of the municipalities and chairpersons of the panchayats in the metropolitan area, proportionate to the ratio of their respective populations.
- The size and manner of filling such seats are left to the State's discretion.

Issues with MPCs:

- Only nine out of 18 cities mandated to form MPCs have constituted them.
- Where constituted, their functionality is questionable, with the limited role of local elected representatives raising further questions on democratic decentralisation.
- Thus, the provision for an MPC has not introduced robust governance of metropolises, as the metropolises continue to be a collection of parastatals and local bodies in an entirely fragmented architecture.

What can we learn from the UK model?

- The U.K. has rolled out 'City Deals', an agreement between the Union government and a city economic region, modelled on a 'competition policy style' approach.
- The city economic region is represented by a 'combined authority'.
- This is a statutory body set up through national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate decisions, and which is steered by a directly elected Mayor.
- This is to further democratise and incentivise local authorities to collaborate and reduce fragmented governance, drive economic prosperity, job growth, etc.
- 'City Deals' move from budget silos and promote 'economic growth budget' across regions.

What India needs to do?: It is time India envisions the opportunities and challenges from a 'city' level to 'city-region' level. The Central government must create a platform to build consensus among State governments.

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Speaker of the Lok Sabha**

Om Birla has been named as the new Lok Sabha Speaker by the NDA. He is elected Member of Parliament from Kota, Rajasthan.

Speaker of the Lok Sabha:

- The chairman or the Presiding Officer of Lok Sabha is called Speaker.
- The speaker of the Lok Sabha is elected from all other members by simple majority.
- Any member of Parliament is eligible to be nominated as a speaker but most commonly the candidate of ruling party or the party with majority wins this post.

- However, there are certain cases when the elected Speaker does not belong to the majority ruling party of Lok Sabha (G. M. C. Balyogi, Manohar Joshi, Somnath Chatterjee).

Functions and Powers of Lok Sabha Speakers:

- Speaker of Lok Sabha is basically the head of the house and presides over the sittings of Parliament and controls its working.
- The constitution has tried to ensure the independence of Speaker by charging his salary on the consolidated Fund of India and the same is not subject to vote of Parliament.
- While debating or during general discussion on a bill, the members of the parliament have to address only to the Speaker.
- Whenever there is a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha) the Speaker of the Lok Sabha presides over this meeting.
- The Speaker of Lok Sabha comes at sixth position in the Order of Precedence of Government of India.
- In the normal circumstances the Speaker does not cast his vote over any matter in Lok Sabha. But when ever there is a tie on votes between the ruling party and opposition, the Speaker at that time can exercise his vote.
- It is the Speaker who decides the agenda of various discussions.
- The speaker has the power to adjourn or suspend the house/meetings if the quorum is not met.
- The Speaker ensures the discipline and decorum of the house. If the speaker finds the behaviour and a member of Parliament is not good, he/she can punish the unruly members by suspending.
- The Speaker decides whether a bill brought to the house is a money bill or not. In the case Speaker decides some bill as a money bill, this decision can not be challenged.
- Speaker is the final and sole authority to allow different types of motions and resolutions such as No Confidence Motion, Motion of Adjournment, Censure Motion etc.
- The Speaker of Lok Sabha does not leave the office just after dissolution of the assembly. He continues to be in the office till the newly formed assembly takes its first meeting and elects the new Speaker.

The Speaker of Lok Sabha automatically disqualifies from his post if:

- he is no longer the Member of Parliament.
- if he tenders his resignation to the Deputy Speaker.
- if he holds the office of profit under central government or any state government.
- if he is of unsound mind and that too declared by the court of law.
- if he is declared undischarged insolvent.
- if he is no longer the citizen of India or voluntarily accepts the citizenship of any other country.
- if he is removed from the post of Speaker by passing a resolution by majority of the members of Lok Sabha. This is to note that during resolution for removal of Speaker, the Speaker is not in position to cast his vote even if there is tie.

Speaker and the Committees:

- The Committees of the House function under the overall direction of the Speaker. All such Committees are constituted by her or by the House.
- The Chairmen of all Parliamentary Committees are nominated by her.
- Any procedural problems in the functioning of the Committees are referred to her for directions.
- Committees like the Business Advisory Committee, the General Purposes Committee and the Rules Committee work directly under her Chairmanship.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

Brazil's slavery 'dirty list'

Brazil's "dirty list" is under scrutiny as major firms have been found to have used legal means to avoid being put on it.

What is the "dirty list"?

- It is a registry of employers that have been found by the government to have engaged in slave labour. It gives transparency to a decision already reached by the Brazilian state. Created in 2004, it has been hailed by the United Nations as a key tool in Brazil's anti-slavery drive.
- The list is edited by the Division of Inspection for the Eradication of Slave Labor (DETRAE), a state body staffed by labour inspectors.

How does a company get added to it?

- If a labour inspector fines someone for employing slave labour, it starts an internal government procedure where the employer can defend himself.
- After all possibility of appeal is exhausted, if the employer is found guilty, his name or the name of his firm is added to the list.

Why is the “dirty list” feared by employers?

- Beyond having their brand or names associated with slave labour, employers on the list have their access to credit lines by state banks restricted.
- Private banks also use it to gauge credit risk. International buyers concerned with their supply chain also look up names on the list.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Forest landscape restoration (FLR) and Bonn Challenge

The centre has launched a flagship project on enhancing capacity on forest landscape restoration (FLR) and Bonn Challenge in India, through a pilot phase of 3.5 years implemented in the States of Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Karnataka.

Background: At the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 2015 in Paris, India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge pledge to bring into restoration 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by the year 2020, and additional 8 million hectares by 2030. India’s pledge is one of the largest in Asia.

What is Bonn Challenge? What is FLR approach?

- The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030.
- The 2020 target was launched at a high level event in Bonn in 2011 organised by the Government of Germany and IUCN, and was later endorsed and extended to 2030 by the New York Declaration on Forests of the 2014 UN Climate Summit.
- The Bonn Challenge is an implementation vehicle for national priorities such as water and food security and rural development while simultaneously helping countries contribute to the achievement of international climate change, biodiversity and land degradation commitments.

Underlying the Bonn Challenge is the forest landscape restoration (FLR) approach, which aims to restore ecological integrity at the same time as improving human well-being through multifunctional landscapes. It will create approximately USD 84 billion per year in net benefits that could bring direct additional income opportunities for rural communities.

What is FLR?

- Forest landscape restoration (FLR) is the on-going process of regaining ecological functionality and enhancing human well-being across deforested or degraded forest landscapes.
- FLR is more than just planting trees – it is restoring a whole landscape to meet present and future needs.
- It is long-term because it requires a multi-year vision of the ecological functions.
- The majority of restoration opportunities are found on or adjacent to agricultural or pastoral land. In these situations, restoration must complement and not displace existing land uses.
- This result in a mosaic of different land uses including: agriculture, agroforestry systems and improved ecological corridors.
- It integrates a number of guiding principles, including: Focus on landscapes, restore functionality, Involve stakeholders, Tailor to local conditions and Avoid further reduction of natural forest cover.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

Serious concerns over Bt brinjal

A month ago, Bt brinjal genetically modified (GM) to resist the brinjal fruit and shoot borer (an insect), was found growing illegally in Haryana. This was a different Bt brinjal from the one developed by the Indian company. Even as the government clamped down on the illegal GM crop, some farmer groups have demanded the release of Mahyco’s Bt brinjal and other GM crops in the regulatory pipeline. But is Bt brinjal actually ready for release?

The impacts

1. Effect on prices, consumer and farmers’ income

- The National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research anticipates that if Bt brinjal performs as Mahyco proposes, brinjal output will increase and retail prices will fall, benefiting consumers far more than farmers.

- The report ignores the scenario that companies might charge premium prices for Bt brinjal seeds, in which case farmers may not benefit at all.

2. Biosafety Issue

- The Dr. Y.S.R. Horticultural University highlighted crucial deficiencies in the characterisation of Bt brinjal, and in the environmental impacts assessment.
- The ecologist, Madhav Gadgil, warned of contamination of India's diverse brinjal varieties.
- Biodiversity is critical for nutrition and sustainability, and the government's own task force on biotechnology (2004) had recommended that no GM crop be allowed in biodiversity-rich areas.
- Further, a majority of the technical expert committee appointed by the Supreme Court (in the public interest litigations over GM crops), recommended a ban on genetically modifying those crops for which India is a centre of origin or diversity. Brinjal happens to be such a crop.

3. Nutrition issues

- Many health researchers and professionals, and scientists such as immunologist have argued that Bt brinjal poses risks to human health.

4. Responses from government

- Bt brinjal found no support from State governments. Kerala and Uttarakhand asked for a ban on GM crops.
- States with substantial brinjal cultivation, i.e. West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar opposed the release pending rigorous, extensive testing.
- As did Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and undivided Andhra Pradesh.
- In 2012 and 2017, respectively, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Science & Technology, Environment and Forests assessed the GM controversy.
- Both committees expressed grave concerns about lapses in the regulatory system.
- In fact, the Committee on Agriculture was so alarmed by the irregularities in the assessment of Bt brinjal, that it recommended "a thorough probe by a team of eminent independent scientists and environmentalists", which never happened.
- Further, both committees endorsed labelling GM foods to protect a consumer's right to know.

5. No scientific consensus

- In recent years, pests have developed resistance to Bt cotton, forcing farmers to spray lethal pesticides.
- This led to over 50 deaths by pesticide-poisoning in Vidarbha in 2017.
- A GM-based strategy of pest control is unsustainable, all the more so since farmers, already pressed for land, ignore the government's recommendation to plant refuge crops.
- The problem of sustainable, remunerative farming has become more acute, and alternative strategies such as organic and zero budget natural farming, which do not allow GM seeds, are gaining ground.

Way Forward

- The government Must detail the steps it has taken since 2010 to address the scientific lacunae, Clarify precisely how Bt brinjal will benefit farmers, Put the infrastructure to ensure labelling into place, Demonstrate how Bt brinjal fits in with sustainable farming and biodiversity conservation.
- As things stand, Bt brinjal runs counter to the framework for agricultural development and farmers' well-being devised by parliamentary panels and the government's own task forces and expert committees.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If it doesn't challenge you, it won't change you.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: The lack of resources is only a part of the challenge of urban development in India. What are the other challenges to sustainable urbanization in India? Critically analyze.

Urban areas have been recognized as “engines of inclusive economic growth”. Of the 121 crore Indians, 83.3 crore live in rural areas while 37.7 crore stay in urban areas, i.e approx 32 % of the population

Challenges in urban development

Urban Governance: 74th amendment act has been implemented half-heartedly by the states, which has not fully empowered the Urban local bodies (ULBs). ULBs comprise of municipal corporations, municipalities and nagar panchayats, which are to be supported by state governments to manage the urban development. For this , ULBs need clear delegation of functions, financial resources and autonomy. At present urban governance needs improvement for urban development, which can be done by enhancing technology, administrative and managerial capacity of ULBs.

Planning: Planning is mainly centralized and till now the state planning boards and commissions have not come out with any specific planning strategies an depend on Planning commission for it. This is expected to change in present government, as planning commission has been abolished and now focus is on empowering the states and strengthening the federal structure.

Finances: Major challenge is of revenue generation with the ULBs. This problem can be analyzed form two perspectives. First, the states have not given enough autonomy to ULBs to generate revenues and Second in some case the ULBs have failed to utilize even those tax and fee powers that they have been vested with.

Housing: Housing provision for the growing urban population will be the biggest challenge before the government. The growing cost of houses comparison to the income of the urban middle class, has made it impossible for majority of lower income groups and are residing in congested accommodation and many of those are devoid of proper ventilation, lighting, water supply, sewage system, etc. For instance in Delhi, the current estimate is of a shortage of 5,00,000 dwelling units the coming decades. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) introduced the concept of “Housing Poverty” which includes “Individuals and households who lack safe, secure and healthy shelter, with basic infrastructure such as piped water and adequate provision for sanitation, drainage and the removal of household waste”.

Safe Drinking Water: The safe drinking water sources are also found to be contaminated because of water in the cities are inadequate and in the future, the expected population cannot be accommodated without a drastic improvement in the availability of water. The expenses on water treatment and reuse will grow manifold.

Sanitation: The poor sanitation condition is another gloomy feature in urban areas and particularly in slums and unauthorized colonies of urban areas. The drainage system in many unorganized colonies and slums are either not existing and if existing are in a bad shape and in bits resulting in blockage of waste water. This unsanitary conditions lead to many sanitation related diseases such as diahorrea and malaria. Unsafe garbage disposal is one of the critical problem in urban areas and garbage management always remained a major challenge.

Urban public transport: As high income individual are buying more private vehicle and use less public transport. Such huge number of vehicles in cities is causing more traffic jam, which in turn decreases the efficiency of public transport. Also the penetration of public transport is less, which make people use private vehicle. Public transport is less disabled friendly. There is also lack of infrastructure and poor maintenance of existing public transport infrastructure

Environmental concern: Vulnerability to risk posed by the increasing man-made and natural disasters. According to UNDP 70 % of Indian population is at risk to floods and 60% susceptible to earthquakes. The risk are higher in urban areas owing to density and overcrowding. Urban areas are becoming heat islands, ground water is not being recharged and water crisis is persistent. Here making, water harvesting compulsory will be beneficial

Urban Crime: Prevention of urban crime is another challenge before the government of States having more number of urban areas and particularly metropolitan cities. The mega cities are facing increased criminal activities on account of unchecked migration, illegal settlements and diverse socio-cultural disparities, organized groups, gangsters, professional criminals for wishing a lavish life in metropolis. The cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru have accounted for 16.2 percent, 9.5 percent and 8.1 percent respectively of the total crime reported from 35 mega cities. Prevention of crime in mega cities is a challenge before the city government in India.

Poverty: Roughly a third of the urban population today lives below the poverty line. There are glaring disparities between haves and have-nots in urban areas. The most demanding of the urban challenges, unquestionably is the challenge posed by poverty; the challenge of reducing exploitation, relieving misery and creating more human condition for urban poor. There is rise in urban inequality, as per UN habitat report, 2010, urban inequality in India rose from 34 to 38 % based on consumption in period of 1995 to 2005.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Which of the following schemes of Govt is/are not intend for urban transformation?
 1. AMRUT
 2. HRIDAY
 3. Swatch Bharat Abhiyan
 4. PRASADSelect the correct answer from the codes given below
 - (a) 1 and 4
 - (b) 4 only**
 - (c) 1, 2 and 4
 - (d) 1 and 3
2. Which of the following statements is/are correct about the Speaker of Lok Sabha?
 1. S/He is the Leader of the Lok Sabha
 2. S/He comes at sixth position in the Order of Precedence of Government of India.
 3. In the normal circumstances the S/He does not casts his vote over any matter in Lok Sabha.
 4. S/He is the final authority to decided over a No-Confidence Motion.Select the correct answer from the codes given below
 - (a) 1, 2 and 4
 - (b) 2, 3 and 4**
 - (c) 3 and 4
 - (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4
3. Recently in news, Brazil's 'Dirty List' is related to which of the following?
 - (a) Migration
 - (b) Immigration
 - (c) Slavery**
 - (d) Indentured labour
4. Consider the following statements w.r.t the Bonn Challenge.
 1. It is a global effort to promote restoration of deforested lands.
 2. India has joined the challenge in the CoP, 2015Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2**
5. The benefits of Genetically Modified Crops can be
 1. Insect and Virus Resistant
 2. Provides High Yield and hence high income
 3. Helps in Food SecuritySelect the correct answer from the codes given below
 - (a) 1 and 2
 - (b) 1 and 3
 - (c) 2 and 3
 - (d) 1, 2 and 3**
6. Which of the following states had first developed Bt Brinjal?
 - (a) Maharashtra**
 - (b) Gujarat
 - (c) Haryana
 - (d) Punjab