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GOVERNANCE TRANSFORMED



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Viksit Bharat @2047

Governance Transformed

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Mathew, C.K., Tripathi, Surendra Nath, Reddy, C. Sheela, and Singh, A.P. (2025), *Viksit Bharat @ 2047: Governance Transformed*, IIAS Public Governance Series (Vol. 7, 2nd ed.), Brussels: IIAS-IISA, 717+xvi p.

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The International Institute of Administrative Sciences, Brussels,
2025, <http://www.iias-iisa.org/>



IIAS Public Governance Series
Vol. 7, 2nd Edition
Series Editor: Steve Troupin
(IIAS)

ISBN: 9798306547237; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46996/pgs.v7e2>

Chapter 13. Urban Development: Rise of the City-State India's Urban Renaissance, Empowering Cities, Transforming the Nation

Durga Shanker Mishra¹⁴²

There was a time in our country when urbanisation was considered a big problem. However, I feel differently. We should not consider urbanisation as a problem but as an opportunity. Cities have the strength to digest poverty and provide economic opportunities for the poor from other less developed areas. We must further strengthen the cities to increase their “digestive” ability, making them faster and wider ... economic prosperity will automatically follow.
Prime Minister Narendra Modi¹⁴³

Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2022 Independence Day address unveiled a transformative vision for Vision India@2047, a developed nation by its centennial year, encompassing

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¹⁴³ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's address at the first-anniversary celebration of the Smart Cities Mission and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) in Pune on June 25, 2016.

economic growth, social progress, environmental sustainability, good governance, and an elevated quality of life for all citizens (Modi, 2022). Central to this vision is a call to shed colonial mindsets, embrace India's rich heritage, foster unity, and instil a sense of duty and integrity. Guided by the mantras "Collective Efforts, Inclusive Growth, Trust of All, and Efforts of All" (सबका साथ, सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास) and "Reform, Perform, and Transform," India is forging a path of rapid progress and prosperity to become Viksit Bharat@2047.

This paper delves into the multifaceted strategies and initiatives underpinning India's progress, with a particular focus on urban development. It explores historical context, current policies, and future projections, underscoring the significant role of metropolitan/urban areas in realising the vision of a developed India by its 100th Independence Day.

Cities as Engines of Growth

The collective efforts of the government, citizens, and various stakeholders across all economic sectors have ignited a transformation across India. Urban areas, in particular, have been at the forefront of this development, witnessing comprehensive growth that has improved the quality of life for residents and accelerated economic growth and employment. With a strong foundation laid over the past decade, the relentless pursuit of ViksitNagar@2047 continues, promising a future where cities thrive as vibrant centres of progress and prosperity.

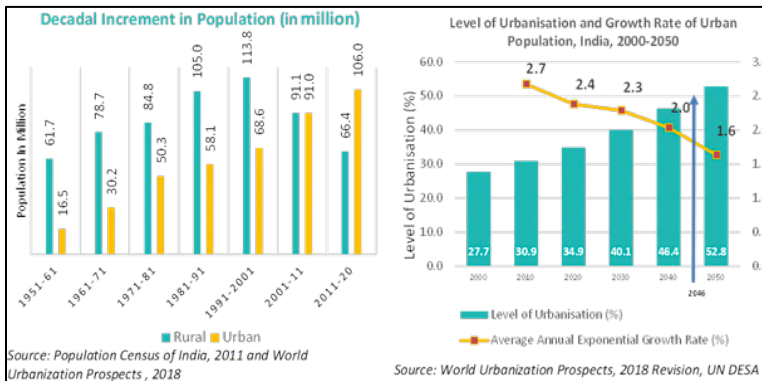
It is universally acknowledged that cities are the engines of economic growth. However, post-independence, the primary focus on rural development has led to the neglect and overlooking of the transformative power of urban centres. A thriving economy is built on planned and sustainable urbanisation, where cities act as vibrant hubs for innovation, manufacturing, and services, fuelled by resources from rural

areas. This symbiotic relationship is the key to enhancing the quality of life for all citizens and unlocking their full potential.

The Rise of the Urban Population

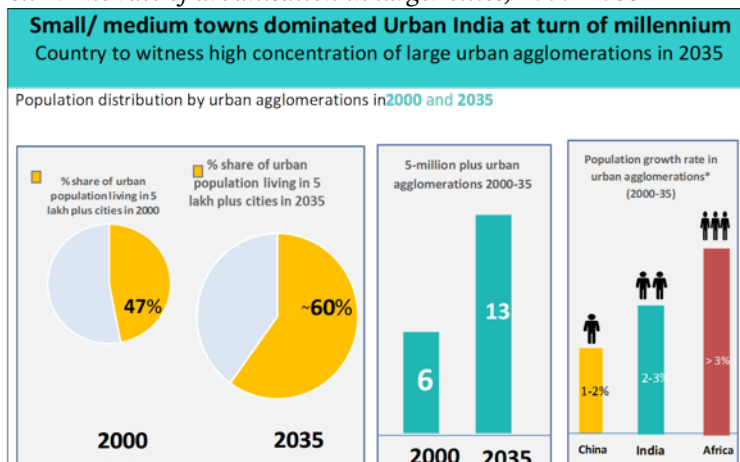
At the time of independence, India was predominantly rural. However, since 2001, urban growth has accelerated significantly. The 2011 Census revealed an urban population exceeding 370 million, representing over 31% of the total population. Projections from the World Urbanization Prospects report (see graphs in Box 1) indicate that this trend will continue, with the urban population expected to surpass 450 million (35%) by the present day, 600 million (40%) by 2030, and a staggering 880 million (52%) by 2051 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018).

Box 1: India's Rural-Urban Transition



This rapid urbanisation is concentrated in larger cities, with those exceeding 500,000 inhabitants projected to house 60% of the urban population by 2035 (see graph in Box 2). The number of metropolises with a population of over 5 million is projected to rise from 5 to 13 by 2035, and annual growth is likely to be around 2.5%.

Box 2: The rate of urbanisation in larger cities, 2000–2035



Box 3: Urban India Through Different Lenses

Our level of Urbanization through different lenses	
How Urban is India? (2011)	
• Administrative definition (STs only)	26 %
• Census Definition (STs +CTs +OGs)	31 %
• 10000+ Population (used by UK, Australia, Greece, Bahrain)	33 %
• 50000+ Population (used by Saudi Arabia, Belgium, Ghana)	47 %
• 25000+ Population (used by France, Mexico & Venezuela)	65 %
• World Bank Agglomeration Index (2010)	55%
• Global Human Settlement Layer (GSHL) database (2015)	77%
• Only Density (400/ sq. km.) criterion	78%
Source : UN- World Urbanization Prospect, 2018 https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/india/brief/leveraging-urbanization-india	
ST-Statutory Towns, CT-Census Towns, DG-Outgrowths	

This growth was fuelled primarily by increased job opportunities in urban areas, which attract youth and a mobile workforce. With a large working-age population, India's demographic dividend today further amplifies this migration trend and contributes to economic growth. It is important to note that India's official definition of "urban" is more conservative than in many other countries. If broader criteria

were used, India's urban population would be considerably larger (Box 3).

Addressing the Challenges of Urbanisation

While the formation of Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd. (HUDCO) in 1970 marked the beginning of efforts to address urban housing and essential services, these early approaches were ad hoc and lacked a comprehensive vision. The 74th Constitutional Amendment of 1992 aimed to empower urban local bodies (ULBs) by devolving funds, functions, and functionaries, but its implementation fell short nationwide (UN-Habitat, 2022). Although the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) in 2005 was a significant step towards improving urban infrastructure, it remained limited in scope and lacked a clear long-term vision. Furthermore, the Union government's centralised implementation control adversely impacted its effectiveness.

As urbanisation gains momentum, it brings many challenges, including inadequate sanitation, drinking water, urban flooding, heat traps, traffic congestion, air pollution, and health hazards. Recognising these challenges, the government has been proactive since 2014, improving city infrastructure and amenities through various missions and in the peri-urban areas through Rurban development. This approach aims to transform these challenges into opportunities for growth ultimately contributing to the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, 2023c).

This transformative period has been a part of my professional journey. As a former Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Urban Development, I assisted in formulating new and innovative Urban Missions to enhance infrastructure, improve living standards, and foster sustainable growth in cities nationwide. Later, as Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, I oversaw their rapid implementation

nationwide. Until recently, I was Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh and was overseeing the consolidation of these efforts. Execution on the ground gives birth to new ideas. With its diverse and rapidly growing urban centres, Uttar Pradesh is a microcosm of India's broader urbanisation journey.

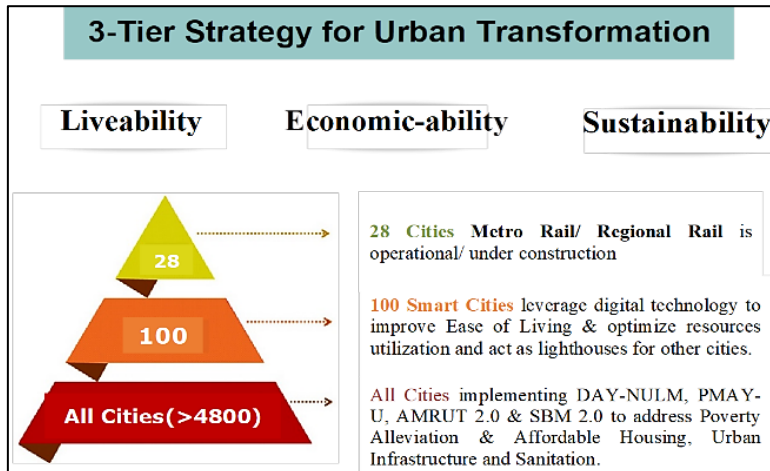
This decade-long experience, combined with my earlier roles in urban development at the state and municipal levels, has given me a unique perspective on India's urban transformation. I have seen urban policy evolve from its conceptual stages to tangible improvements as engines of economic growth and epitomes of quality living, innovation, and sustainability.

Urban Transformation Strategy

The urban transformation strategy of the past decade has been threefold (Box 4): enhancing liveability, promoting economic viability, and ensuring sustainability (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2023a).

1. **Enhancing Liveability:** Elevating the quality of life for urban residents by improving infrastructure, public services, and amenities, ultimately making cities more liveable and enjoyable.
2. **Promoting Economic Ability:** Fostering a conducive environment for businesses to thrive while equipping citizens with the skills and opportunities needed to secure meaningful employment and improve their livelihoods. This is a strategy and a call to action for making this vision a reality.
3. **Ensuring Sustainability:** Integrating economic, social, and environmental considerations to create resilient, resource-efficient, and environmentally friendly cities for future generations.

Box 4: Three-Tier Strategy for Urban Transformation



Over the last decade, India has made significant strides in urban development, achieving what many considered impossible just 10 years ago. These achievements have laid a strong foundation for the future, paving the way for even more significant progress in the years to come. India has embraced this citizen-centric approach to urban development, actively engaging with communities to understand their needs and involve them in the planning and execution of projects. Under the principle of “Competitive Cooperative Federalism” championed by the Prime Minister, the central government has empowered and supported states and cities to drive their development agenda. The mantras of “Reform, Perform, and Transform” alongside “Skill, Scale, and Speed” have guided this transformative journey, prioritising the well-being and aspirations of urban residents and making them feel empowered and integral to the process. In his seminal work *Cities for people*, renowned urban planner Jan Gehl from Copenhagen emphasises that cities should be designed and developed to serve the needs and aspirations of their inhabitants rather than those who govern them (Gehl, 2010).

This comprehensive approach aims to create sustainable and prosperous urban centres where residents and businesses can flourish while minimising negative environmental impacts. Cities are now more liveable, sustainable, and thriving than ever before. This progress is a testament to the Indian government's commitment to urban development and its vision for a more urbanised India. Here are some of the critical accomplishments and strategies of the past decade:

- **Increased Investment in Urban Infrastructure:** The Indian government has significantly increased its investment in urban infrastructure, improving roads, water supply, sanitation, housing, and other essential services. This has made cities more liveable and attractive for residents and businesses alike. The government has invested over US\$180 billion in urban infrastructure over the past decade, compared to US\$17.8 billion in the previous decade (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2023c). This has significantly improved roads, water supply, sanitation, housing, and other essential services.
- **Improved Urban Planning and Governance:** The government has enhanced urban planning and management, making cities more efficient and sustainable. This includes initiatives such as the Smart Cities Mission and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT).
- **Competitive Cooperative Federalism:** The central government encouraged states through a national challenge to plan, compete for, and execute urban development projects/schemes under the Smart Cities Mission, Global Housing Technology Challenge, etc. States were empowered to implement urban missions under the broad framework.
- **Empowerment of Local Governments:** The local governments were empowered to play a more active role in their development. This has led to incredible innovation and accountability at the ground level.
- **Focus on Citizen Engagement:** The government has increasingly focused on engaging citizens in the planning

and implementation of urban development projects. This has helped ensure that projects are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people they serve and that the outcomes are sustainable.

- **Emphasis on Ease of Living:** In all urban transformation missions, the focus is to promote ease of living for the citizens so that they can contribute freely as per their potential to the economy. Be it sanitation, basic infrastructure, housing, skilling, livelihood, transport, or any other, the central theme was the ease of living for all, especially the poor and deprived. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) introduced an annual survey for the Ease of Living Index to promote healthy competition among cities and achieve better results for citizen.

We see urbanisation as an opportunity and we are committed to making our cities world class urban spaces that further Ease of Living.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

A decade of urban transformation has fostered a culture of continuous learning and improvement among urban local bodies, state governments, and other stakeholders. This collaborative effort, including unprecedented partnerships with industry and academia, has significantly enhanced the quality and scale of urban development initiatives. The overarching goal is to empower cities to become “AatmaNirbhar” (self-reliant) through national Urban Missions, equipping them to address future challenges and drive sustainable growth independently. This vision of a self-reliant urban India, where cities are the epitome of progress and prosperity, should inspire us all to continue our efforts in urban renaissance.

Policy to Practice to People: Strategic Interventions

Swachh Bharat Mission, a Cleanliness Revolution

Launched in 2014, the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), with its 2.0 version in 2021, has revolutionised sanitation and waste management in urban India. The mission has led to the construction of nearly 7.5 million household and community toilets, achieved 100% door-to-door waste collection in 96% of urban wards, and increased waste processing capacity from a mere 18% to almost 80% (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2015b).

The SBM has transformed urban landscapes by remediating massive waste dumps and sparked a nationwide public movement for cleanliness, profoundly altering behaviour through citizen engagement and initiatives like the world's largest annual cleanliness survey, Swachh Survekshan.

Further, SBM has spurred entrepreneurship and innovation, fostered numerous start-ups, and created substantial employment opportunities. The Prime Minister's vision of "Wealth from Waste" is becoming a reality, converting municipal waste into valuable resources like CNG, building materials, organic fertilisers, and recycled products.

The mission's commitment to human safety is evident in its "manhole to machine-hole" initiative and Safai Mitra Protocols, ensuring the safety of sanitation workers through mechanised cleaning and strict safety measures. The development and widespread adoption of low-cost, high-impact Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) solutions further demonstrate the mission's comprehensive approach to urban sanitation.

The SBM exemplifies a comprehensive approach to urban transformation. It addresses critical sanitation challenges while

fostering economic growth, innovation, behavioural change, and public participation.

PMAY-U, Affordable Housing for All

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban (PMAY-U), launched in June 2015, marked a monumental shift in India’s urban housing landscape. Despite daunting challenges such as land scarcity, financial constraints, and skilled labour shortages, PMAY-U has emerged as the world’s most extensive housing programme. With over 12.3 million houses sanctioned and 8 million completed, equipped with essential amenities like toilets, electricity, gas connections, and clean water, the initiative has transformed the lives of countless families, providing them with dignified homes, social recognition, and a pathway to realising their aspirations (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2015b).

With the enactment of RERA, we have liberated those middle-class families whose hard-earned money used to be parked unnecessarily for years in some projects by some elements. It has created a new trust among them, and now they find it easy to build their own house.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

PMAY-U’s commitment to innovation is evident in the Global Housing Technology Challenge (GHTC), which introduced six rapid, resilient, and resource-efficient construction technologies, resulting in over 1,000 affordable housing complexes across India in Chennai, Rajkot, Indore, Lucknow, Ranchi, and Agartala. Furthermore, with two distinct models, the Affordable Rental Housing Complexes (ARHC) initiative has created 96,226 safe and affordable housing units for migrant workers and the urban poor, a first-of-its-kind endeavour in the country.

The landmark Model Tenancy Law has revolutionised the rental housing sector by balancing the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, thus fostering a more equitable and transparent rental market. Additionally, implementing the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (RERA) has brought much-needed transparency and accountability to the real estate sector, protecting homebuyers from unscrupulous practices and ushering in a new era of consumer confidence. The widespread adoption of RERA has fundamentally transformed the real estate landscape, making 2017 a watershed year in the industry.

AMRUT, Universal Access to Basic Services

In June 2015, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) was launched to revolutionise basic urban infrastructure in cities with a population of over 100,000 (as per the 2011 Census). Its upgraded version, AMRUT 2.0, further amplified this mission in 2021 to all cities. AMRUT has profoundly impacted over 4,800 cities and towns, focusing on essential services like household water tap connections, sewer lines with sewage treatment plants (STPs), drainage systems, and green spaces (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2015a).

Smart City Mission, Innovation Is the Key

The Smart Cities Mission was launched in June 2015 to catalyse urban transformation through technology and innovation, optimising resources to serve citizens' needs better. Focusing on 100 cities, the mission employed an area-based approach, encompassing retrofitting, redevelopment, green-field development, and at least one pan-city intervention to positively impact all citizens' lives (Smart Cities Mission, 2015).

A nationwide challenge-based selection process, a first for India, fostered deep citizen engagement in shaping their cities' futures. Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs), acting as the city's brain and nervous system, have been established in all smart cities, streamlining the delivery of essential services like sanitation, water, transport, healthcare, education, and more. Nearly 7,000 innovative projects have been completed, showcasing groundbreaking initiatives like Cycles4Change, Streets4People, and DataSmart Cities.

The mission has sparked a wave of technological innovation, integrating solutions like CCTV surveillance, smart parking, environmental sensors, and adaptive traffic control to improve urban living. It has facilitated public-private partnerships in critical areas like transportation, housing, and renewable energy, fostering economic growth and creating vibrant public spaces.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Smart City infrastructure proved invaluable in managing the crisis, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of these digitally enabled urban centres. The lessons learned from the Smart Cities Mission have been widely disseminated, inspiring similar innovative development initiatives in other cities and paving the way for a nationwide movement towards ViksitNagar@2047.

Sarvodaya to Antodaya, Leaving No One Behind

The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) has empowered millions in India's urban landscape. By mobilising nearly 10 million women into self-help groups (SHGs) and providing skill training and accessible loans to over 1.7 million individuals, DAY-NULM has fostered economic self-reliance and entrepreneurship at the grassroots level (Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission, 2013).

Furthermore, the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AatmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme, launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been a lifeline for street vendors, the backbone of India's informal economy. Its innovative digital implementation has enabled the swift disbursement of over 8.9 million loans, with over 45% going to women. Incentives for timely repayment, interest subsidies, and access to higher loan tranches have revived livelihoods and promoted financial inclusion through over 1 billion digital transactions (PM SVANidhi, 2020).

Through the SVANidhi Se Samriddhi initiative, the scheme has extended its impact beyond individual vendors, reaching over 6.9 million family members and connecting them with various government scheme benefits. This holistic approach has significantly boosted incomes and improved the overall quality of life for street vendors and their families, reinforcing the government's commitment to uplifting the most vulnerable sections of society.

The pandemic has shown the importance of street vendors. They are part of our journey. We cannot leave them behind.
Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Further, the MoHUA developed Harmonised Guidelines and Space Standards for Universal Accessibility in India, a set of rules and standards that aim to make the physical environment, transportation, information and communication, and other facilities and services accessible to people with different abilities (National Institute of Urban Affairs, 2022b).

Urban Transport, Paving the Path to a Prosperous Urban Future

Rapid urbanisation has strained urban transportation systems, but India is tackling this challenge head-on. The development of over 945 kilometres of metro and regional rapid

transit systems (RRTS) in 20 cities, with an additional 940 kilometres under construction in 28 cities, is revolutionising urban mobility.

Furthering this commitment to sustainable transportation, the MoHUA launched the PM e-Bus Sewa scheme, promoting electric bus adoption through central assistance. In Uttar Pradesh alone, 740 e-buses have already been introduced, with plans for 2,000 more.

In addition to these infrastructure investments, integrating intelligent traffic management systems (ITMS) and improvements in road conditions are easing congestion. However, a paradigm shift towards walkable, cyclable, and transit-oriented cities is crucial. MoHUA has taken a proactive step by advising states to integrate comprehensive city transport plans into the master plans.

Revitalising Urban Spaces, Culture, and Heritage

Building upon the success of the National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), which revitalised the cultural landscape of 12 iconic cultural cities, namely Mathura, Varanasi, Ajmer, Puri, Dwarka, Amravati, Badami, Gaya, Velankanni, Warangal, Kanchipuram, and Amritsar, India continues its commitment to preserving heritage and enhancing visitor experiences through the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD). Under the Ministry of Tourism, this broader initiative underscores the nation's dedication to the holistic development of its rich cultural and spiritual legacy.

In parallel, Delhi's Central Vista project is a testament to India's bold vision for urban transformation. This ambitious endeavour seamlessly marries historical preservation with contemporary design, breathing new life into the national capital city's heart. By creating inviting public spaces that

prioritise functionality and accessibility, the project promises to become a vibrant hub for cultural events, recreation, and civic engagement. While the project has sparked debate, its potential to revitalise Delhi and establish it as a world-class destination is undeniable. The iconic new Parliament building and rejuvenated beautiful Kartavya Path (erstwhile Rajpath) are complete, and the rest is ongoing.

Digital Connectivity, Building Sustainable Urban Ecosystems

The National Urban Digital Mission has been launched to build the shared digital infrastructure that will strengthen the capacity of the urban ecosystem to solve complex problems at scale and speed. It is built as a public good and provides the ecosystem with foundational digital building blocks, ready-to-use platforms, standards, specifications, and frameworks to enhance the ease of living in our cities and towns.

Urban Reforms, Beyond Infrastructure

AMRUT is a catalyst for comprehensive urban reform. It has spurred the adoption of energy-efficient LED streetlights and appliances, advanced GIS-based urban planning, and the issuance of municipal bonds for improved governance and financial autonomy. The mission has streamlined construction permits, promoted innovative water conservation technologies, and championed sustainable initiatives like 24×7 water supply, “Drink from Tap” facilities, sponge city planning, and the creation of Amrit Sarovar and city tanks for water security.

Mainstreaming climate into an urban discourse initiated the world’s first-ever climate-smart city assessment framework to evaluate the preparedness of Indian cities to address the impact of climate change. This exercise covers 126 cities, including 100 smart cities across India. The ClimateSmart Cities Assessment

Framework consists of indicators across five categories, namely (i) Urban Planning, Green Cover, and Biodiversity, (ii) Energy and Green Buildings, (iii) Mobility and Air Quality, (iv) Water Management, and (v) Waste Management. The “ClimateSmart Cities Assessment Framework” serves as a tool to assess their present situation and provides a roadmap for cities to adopt and implement relevant climate actions (National Institute of Urban Affairs, 2022a).

These transformative efforts have resulted in over 19 million household water tap connections, 15 million sewer connections, and nearly 10 million LED streetlights installed. AMRUT empowers cities to become self-reliant through financial reforms, efficient tax collection, and a competitive spirit among urban centres, setting a new benchmark for urban development in India.

Key Learnings

Economic Specialisation and Diversification

Cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Kolkata are carving out niches in finance, technology, manufacturing, and cultural industries. With its central bank and stock exchange, Mumbai solidifies its position as the financial capital, while Bengaluru’s emphasis on information technology has earned it the moniker “Silicon Valley of India.” This specialisation attracts targeted investment and talent, creating globally competitive ecosystems. Encouraging other cities to develop their unique specialisations would further diversify the national economy, mitigating over-reliance on a few urban centres.

Infrastructure as a Growth Catalyst

High-quality infrastructure is paramount for city-states' success. India's Smart Cities Mission, aiming to develop 100 such cities, is a significant stride towards this goal. Improved transportation, robust IT connectivity, and reliable utilities foster self-sufficiency, boost trade and commerce, and bridge the urban-rural divide. Cities with sustainable infrastructure contribute substantially to GDP and become magnets for investors.

Governance and Regulatory Reforms

Efficient governance enables city-states to navigate economic challenges adeptly. Empowering India's urban local bodies with greater autonomy can lead to more responsive governance. Fiscal decentralisation and regulatory reforms would grant cities more control over their finances and regulatory environments, attracting domestic and foreign investment. Cities could then tailor education systems to local industry needs, enact business-friendly labour laws, and implement policies fostering economic growth.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Emulating prosperous city-states like Singapore, Indian cities can cultivate innovation ecosystems by fostering collaboration between universities, businesses, and industries. Innovation hubs and incubators attract talent and spur the development of cutting-edge technologies and companies, vital for economic diversification and job creation. Nurturing a culture of entrepreneurship can transform traditional industries into modern, innovation-driven enterprises.

International Relations and Trade

City-states have flourished historically through international trade. Indian cities can amplify their global economic presence by strengthening trade relations and participating in international forums. Establishing sister-city partnerships with foreign counterparts can further enrich cultural exchange, trade ties, and economic cooperation.

Sustainable Urban Development

Sustainability is essential for modern city-states. This encompasses environmental sustainability, social inclusivity, and economic viability. Planning cities with ample green spaces, energy-efficient buildings, and effective waste management systems enhances the quality of life and attracts businesses seeking sustainable environments.

In conclusion, empowering Indian cities to function as economically autonomous city-states presents a transformative opportunity for the nation's economy. This strategic approach aligns with global trends and establishes India as a sustainable and inclusive urban development leader.

Way Forward

My extensive experience in urban governance has underscored the pivotal role of urban planning in creating high-quality living environments that unlock citizens' full potential. Recognising this, the central government has prioritised urban planning through initiatives like the High-Level Committee (HLC) on Urban Planning. The HLC's "Pathways to Amrit Kaal" report outlines a vision.

Urban Planning will determine the fate of our cities in Amrit Kaal and it is only well-planned cities that will determine the fate of India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

I am emphasising local and regional plans and the development of a skilled workforce for sustainable urban planning in existing and new cities (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2023b).

In Uttar Pradesh, we have embraced this vision, prioritising GIS-based master plans and implementing innovative urban planning concepts to enhance the quality of life for our residents. Our focus on regional planning, encompassing larger areas, aims to foster planned development and accelerate economic growth. The Fifteenth Finance Commission's allocation of substantial funds for developing eight new cities through a national challenge further underscores this commitment. In this spirit, we have envisioned a sustainable, water-secure, smart, and spiritually significant city in New Ayodhya, strategically located near the international airport. This city is participating in the national challenge for securing 10 billion from the 15th Finance Commission Fund.

The ambitious goal of achieving a US\$35 trillion GDP by 2047, outlined in the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, necessitates a parallel transformation of our urban landscapes. With the urban population projected to reach over 50% by then and the number of cities with over one million inhabitants expected to more than triple, we must invest an estimated US\$5 trillion in urban spaces. This demands robust municipal governance, innovative financing mechanisms, and significant public-private partnerships to create cleaner, greener urban environments, continued investment in urban infrastructure, advocacy for citizen participation, and the promotion of sustainable urban development practices.

The key to this transformation lies in empowering urban local bodies with greater financial autonomy, leveraging technology for efficient tax collection, and institutionalising

citizen feedback mechanisms. The learnings from the Smart Cities Mission must be scaled up to create a nationwide movement for innovative and sustainable urban development. We must address the critical issue of slums through redevelopment and the creation of affordable housing ecosystems.

Furthermore, climate-resilient planning and green-field development funds are essential to mitigate the challenges of urban heatwaves and flooding. The past decade's tremendous progress has been to integrate, incentivise, and introduce reforms aligning with infrastructure development to transform the urban ecosystem, laying a solid foundation for India's urban future. India's urban evolution is emerging as influential economic powerhouses, increasingly resembling self-reliant city-states. This model presents a compelling opportunity, and strategically empowering these urban centres could significantly boost national economic growth. By sustaining this momentum and addressing these challenges, we can create thriving, sustainable, clean, green, beautiful, and inclusive cities that drive economic growth and innovation and ultimately contribute to the realisation of Viksit Bharat@2047.

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