



NEW URBANISATION - GS II AND III MAINS

Q. Examine the implications of India's shift towards emphasizing religious significance in urban development. (10 marks, 150 words)

News: *A new sense of urbanisation that is dominating*

What's in the news?

- The recent inauguration of the new Parliament building and the Ram temple has sparked discussions regarding the intersection of politics and religion in urban development.
- These events raise questions about the role of elected representatives in both democratic governance and religious affairs, as well as the future trajectory of urbanization in India.

Difference between Colonial and New Cities:

Colonial Cities:

- Colonial cities like Mumbai and Kolkata were designed primarily for economic purposes, centered around trade, taxation, and the transport of goods.
- They facilitated rural to urban migration, supporting the nation's industrial growth.
- Modernism: Modern cities have traditionally been characterized by elements of modernism, including innovative design, technological advancements, and cultural vibrancy.

New Cities:

- In contrast, new cities such as Ayodhya are being developed with a strong focus on religious significance.
- Ayodhya, for instance, is receiving a massive investment of ₹85,000 crore for infrastructure, underlining this shift in urban development philosophy.

Emergence of new religious cities signals a paradigm shift in urban development, where religious identity takes precedence over industrialization and modernization.

Trends in Current Urbanization:

1. Religious Significance:

- The current trend in urbanization is blending traditional workplaces with religious significance. Cities like Ayodhya are being developed not just as economic hubs but also as centers of pilgrimage and faith.

2. Corporate Investment:

- The current trend is attracting corporate investments in infrastructure.
- Ayodhya, for example, is witnessing heavy investment, indicating a significant shift from the traditional, industry-focused urban development.



Unlike the past emphasis on modernism and industry, the focus now is on developing cities aligned with religious importance, marking a distinct shift in India's urbanization approach.

Concerns in the Current Trends:

1. Centralization of Finances:

- The trend shows a centralization of financial resources towards religious projects.
- This can lead to imbalanced economic development focused more on religious cities.

2. Diversion from Social Infrastructure Investment:

- The significant spending on religious projects, like ₹85,000 crore in Ayodhya, raises questions about the prioritization of funds.
- It is potentially diverting resources from much-needed social infrastructure such as education and healthcare.

3. Shifting Away from Democratic Governance:

- The trend may indicate a move away from secular, democratic governance towards a religiously influenced urban development strategy.
- The emphasis on monumental projects and religious infrastructure suggests a deliberate attempt to merge religion with politics, signaling a departure from the secular ideals enshrined in India's constitution

Role of State in Urbanisation:

1. Focus on Social Good:

- The state should prioritize urban development that serves social good over religious purposes.
- This includes enhancing infrastructure for education, health and social services.

2. Promoting Inclusive Urban Development:

- Urban planning should cater to diverse needs, ensuring inclusivity and democratic values in city development, as opposed to focusing primarily on religious significance.

3. Adhering to World Bank Recommendations:

- The World Bank has estimated that India requires an investment of \$840 billion in urban infrastructure over the next 15 years.
- This suggests that the state should prioritize these broader developmental needs.

4. Inclusive Development:

- Addressing this trend requires a shift towards decentralization, democratization and dynamic coexistence, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens.
- Rather than promoting religious exclusivity, urban planning should strive for inclusivity and social cohesion, fostering a diverse and vibrant urban landscape.

As India grapples with the challenges of rapid urbanization and socio-economic disparities, the role of the state in promoting social welfare and equitable urban development becomes paramount. Policymakers must prioritize investments that benefit all citizens, irrespective of religious affiliations, to build a more inclusive and sustainable urban future.