Active Mobility

Prelims – *General issues on Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change - that do not require subject specialization.*

Mains – *GS-III (Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment)*

Why in news?

Active mobility in India has gained attention due to increasing traffic congestion, pollution, health concerns and rising pedestrian deaths.

- **Active mobility** – Refers to modes of transportation that use human power instead of a motorised form of mobility.
- Active modes of transport include walking, cycling, skateboarding, and other non-motorised modes that are used for travel and not recreational activities.

In 2020, Karnataka recorded the highest number of pedestrian deaths in the country at 13% and in 2024, Karnataka saw a decrease in pedestrian deaths, with 233 fatalities reported in Bengaluru.

Measures taken by the states across India

- **Karnataka Active Mobility Bill, 2022** – It aims to promote urban mobility through the *protection of the rights of pedestrians and cyclists*.
- The inherent goal of this bill is to provide a legal structure protecting and promoting active mobility, and ensuring equal access to public space.
- **Delhi** – Is expanding cycling tracks and pedestrian-friendly streets under its Delhi EV policy.
- **Others** – ***Pune*** has implemented a Comprehensive Bicycle Plan and developed over 300 km of cycling lanes.
- ***Chennai*** is redesigning roads under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) to improve pedestrian safety.
- ***Kochi*** has introduced a Public Bicycle Sharing (PBS) system to enhance last-mile connectivity.

Status of other countries

- With more than 35,000 km of dedicated cycling lanes, *The Netherlands is a global leader* in promoting active mobility through cycling.
- The *European Union's Mobility and Transport department prioritises promoting*

walking and cycling as a means of transport to enable more sustainable mobility.

- *Germany's Berlin Mobility Act* *mandates wider sidewalks and dedicated cycling lanes*, reduced speed limits for motorised vehicles within city limits, and prioritises pedestrians/cyclists in urban planning.

Vision Zero, an initiative of Vision Zero Network that aims to reduce the number of incidents between pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles.

Benefits of Active mobility

- **Economic benefits** – It include *reduced household expenditure on fuel and transportation* and lower healthcare costs due to enhanced public health.
- It also boosts local businesses since pedestrian-friendly infrastructure attracts higher foot traffic.
- **Environment** – Walking and cycling are sustainable modes of transport as compared to motorised vehicles due to their *marginal carbon emissions*.
- They enhance energy security and significantly *reduce India's 12% carbon emissions from road transportation*.
- Cities with well-developed infrastructure for active transport report *cleaner air and reduced traffic congestion*.
- **Health** – Active modes of transport are known to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, improve cardiovascular health, promote mental well-being, and enhance public health among citizens.

Challenges

- Active mobility remains severely underutilised because urban infrastructure actively discourages it.
- The *lack of adequate pedestrian and cyclist-friendly infrastructure* hinders active mobility as a primary mode of transport.
- *Extreme weather conditions* and long distances of travel discourage people from adopting active modes of transport.
- Since in many regions, cars and bikes are associated with a higher social status, social perceptions act as significant barriers.
- High traffic congestion, along with weak enforcement of traffic regulations, makes walking and cycling unsafe.

Reference

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