

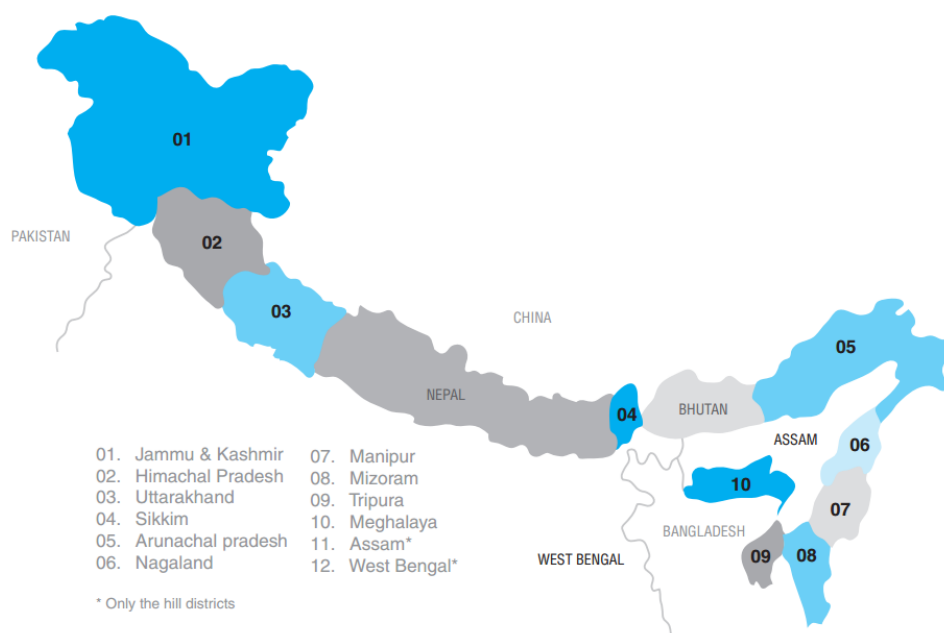
## Challenges of Indian Himalayan Range Towns

### Why in News?

Himalayan towns face civic issues due to unique challenges, requiring tailored development, but they often lack the necessary funds and resources.

### What is Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)?

- **Location-** It spans *thirteen Indian states and union territories* of India
  - Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, West Bengal, and parts of the northeastern states.
- **Geographical divisions-** They are divided into three main geographical entities
  - **Himadri** - Greater Himalaya
  - **Himachal** - Lesser Himalaya
  - **Sivaliks** - Outer Himalaya
- **Trans-Himalayan Ranges-** The northernmost ranges include the *Karakoram Mountains, with the Zaskar and Ladakh* ranges lying to the south.
- **Major rivers-** It is home to major rivers such as the *Indus, Sutlej, Kali, Kosi, and Brahmaputra*.
- These rivers are **glacier-fed** and **carve steep gorges** through the Himalayas to flow into the Great Plains.
- **Significance-** It *provides water* to a large portion of the Indian subcontinent and *supports diverse flora and fauna*.



**Note:** J&K (as in picture as (1)) bifurcated into UT of J&K and UT of Ladakh in 2019.

## What are the major issues in IHR Towns?

- **Civic challenges** - Himalayan towns, including state capitals like Srinagar, Guwahati, Shillong, and Shimla, face significant issues with sanitation, solid and liquid waste management, and water supply.
- **Ineffective planning**- Planning institutions often fail because they adopt models designed for plains.
- **Resource shortage**- City governments are severely understaffed, with a 75% shortage in human resources.
- For example, in the Kashmir Valley, over 40 urban local bodies have only 15 executive officers, excluding Srinagar.
- **Environmental impact**- In Srinagar, from 2000 to 2020, there was a 75.58% increase in built-up real estate where water bodies eroded by almost 25%.
  - Nearly 90% of liquid waste is discharged into water bodies without treatment, further harming the environment.
- **Inappropriate infrastructure**- Unsustainable infrastructure, poorly designed roads, and inadequate waste management are adding to the problems.
- **Climatic variations**- Changing precipitation patterns and rising temperatures exacerbate these issues, further straining the socio-ecological fabric of the Himalayas.
- **Tourism growth**- The expansion of tourism, often replacing eco-friendly infrastructure with harmful constructions, has a negative impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- **Development pressure**- They are stressing natural resources, leading to water scarcity, *deforestation*, *land degradation*, and biodiversity loss.

## What are the government initiatives for IHR Towns?

- **National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS)** - It focuses on research, technological innovation, and community-based solutions.
- They are tailored to the unique ecological and socio-economic conditions of the Himalayas.
- **Sustainable urban development Initiatives**- Programs like the Smart Cities Mission and AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) aims
  - To improve urban infrastructure, including water supply, waste management, and sanitation, with adaptations for the Himalayan region's specific needs.
- **Ecotourism initiatives**- Various state governments in the IHR have promoted ecotourism to balance economic development with environmental conservation.
- **Climate Resilient Infrastructure**- The government is investing in infrastructure projects resilient to climate change, such as flood control, landslide mitigation, and earthquake-resistant buildings in the Himalayan region.
- **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** - It is to clean and protect rivers originating in the Himalayas.
- It includes projects of pollution control, sustainable water use, ecosystem restoration in towns along the Ganges and its tributaries.
- **CAMPA**- Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management & Planning Authority Funds are allocated for afforestation projects in the IHR.
- It helps to mitigate the effects of deforestation and land degradation, aiming to restore

ecological balance in urban and rural areas.

### What lies ahead?

- *Tailoring urban planning* based on climate resilience and involving local communities in a bottom-up approach.
- A separate chapter on urban financing for the IHR towns should be included in the Finance Commission's report, *increasing intergovernmental transfers to at least 1% of GDP*.
- Emphasis should be on *eco-centric planning processes*, with public participation to ensure sustainability and resilience in urban futures.
- *Promoting ecotourism* is essential for balancing development with environmental preservation.

### Reference

[The Hindu| Unique Planning for Indian Himalayan Towns](#)

