Integrated Housing Development Strategy

What is the issue?

- PURA (Provision of Urban Amenities to Rural Areas) was a policy measure to create a common development platform for rural and urban areas.
- Its potential goes beyond mere creation of economic infrastructure, and involves social infrastructure too, in which housing is a significant component.

What is PURA?

- There are growing disparities of material status in India.
- In this regard, PURA is a framework to mitigate the country's socioeconomic problems.
- It works at creating a common development platform for rural and urban areas.
- PURA is a scheme that proposes a holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Gram Panchayat(s).
- It is carried out through Public Private Partnership (PPP) framework.
- It aims at providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas.
- PURA's design goes beyond the mere creation of economic infrastructure and employment opportunities.
- It also aims to develop social infrastructure.
- To further this objective, access to good housing, including housing amenities, should become a priority.

What is the current housing scenario?

- Housing in rural areas is one sector that has consistently suffered from the lack of meaningful market interventions.
- Supply of developed land and financing for housing has been lacking.
- Due to incompatibilities in supply and demand, millions of Indians dwell in unsecured housing.
- This is largely driven by shortages in the supply of housing and a lack of redevelopment of collapsible or dilapidated units.
- Dilapidated units have contributed towards a high level of housing amenities deprivation.

- This is because they cannot safely be connected with electricity or solar energy, latrines, and drinking water, due to associated structural risks.

How does this reflect in poverty scenario?

- India did pursue effective poverty alleviation measures.
- But, in effect, the interventions carried out have hardly worked in minimising urban-rural divides.
- Officially, the incidence of housing-related poverty is in the order of 25.85 million.
- This is roughly 82% in rural areas and 18% in urban areas.
- Menial occupation workers and low-income earners have been facing these forms of poverty the most.
- The poor housing scenario has resulted in multiple deprivations of:
    i. 45% of rural families without electricity, biogas and LPG
    ii. over 69% without household latrines
    iii. over 82% of families without treated water for drinking at household levels
- Thus, the composite deprivation is in the order of over 58%.
- However, the regional picture depicts two contrasting scenarios of lower and higher levels, respectively, in 19 and 9 independent States.
- The lower range of deprivations is at around 20-52% and higher range at around 60-75%.
- These lead to higher rates of internal migration both due to dissatisfaction with housing arrangements and prospect of better housing elsewhere.

What do these call for?

- India needs an integrated housing development strategy for the rural context to be implemented in “mission mode”.
- Most importantly, it requires political will as expressed in party election manifestos.
- Development interventions must focus on rural and urban areas with due consideration for new construction and redevelopment of existing, dilapidated units.
- There must also be accountability in terms of implementing the mission agenda on a continuous basis, with social audits at multiple levels of governance.
- Also, a realistic resource allocation is required given the cost of redevelopment and new housing units besides other development costs.
- For these, penetration of the market, including the cooperative sector for the supply of critical inputs such as land and finances, is essential.
- Public-private-partnership projects should be encouraged on public or

government-owned lands, with fiscal and other incentives.

- Landowners should be encouraged to develop incentive-based affordable housing projects.
- The people facing housing poverty must be made partners.
- Micro finance and self-help groups could also be roped in to this end.

Source: The Hindu

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