Rediscovery of Urban India

India is moving away from villages and is set to soon become more urban. To meet this demographic transition, experts say that we need to build 22 new Bengalurus besides recasting the landscape of the present 4,041 cities for a better living.

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How was India's Urban Management?

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- Long years of **vacillation** since Independence about our approaches to urban management, dilemma over the relevance of urbanisation to our socio-economic context along with weak policy approach have taken a very heavy toll of life in urban areas as one sees now.
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- This, despite the universal acknowledgement that **urbanisation drives economic growth** due to the attendant advantages of urban agglomerations.
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What were the recent measures taken to urbanize India?

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- The **Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission** (JNNURM) launched in 2005 was no doubt the first concerted effort to make a difference to the urban chaos.
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- However due to its poor implementation, the JNNURM fell much short of intentions.
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Participatory urban planning:

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- **Objectivity and transparency** in selection of cities and allocation of central resources under new urban missions are now the rule of law.
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- This is based on urban population and the number of statutory urban local bodies in each State.
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- Till 2014, every project needed for a city was being appraised and approved in New Delhi. With this **'top-down' planning**, there was no sense of involvement in and ownership of new schemes by city and State governments.
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- Consequently, project and investment approvals were being accorded in the last two quarters of a financial year causing implementation delays.
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- Citizen participation in urban planning and project prioritisation are now made mandatory. About one crore citizens contributed to the making of 'smart city' plans.
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- Urban planning is now made **'bottom up'** and the results are showing.
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How AMRUT mission performs?

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- The first priority under AMRUT is to ensure water supply connections to the 2.25 crore urban households that are deprived of them, followed by improving sewerage networks, drainage and non-motorised urban transport. Developing one park in each city every year is mandatory.
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- The Smart Cities Mission seeks to ensure core infrastructure, including health care and education, in an identified area besides improving service delivery across the city through information and communications technology-based solutions.
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- **The focus has shifted from a project-based approach to area-based outcomes**.
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How funding is done?

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- The Ministry of Urban Development has started approving investments for the next three financial years under AMRUT during this year.
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- This enables city and State governments to realise mission targets by the stipulated time through advance planning.
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- Cities are now looking at public-private partnership and value capture financing with a changed mindset.
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- Online integrated single-window clearance for construction permits is being put in place to improve ease of doing business.
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- States have also been empowered to spend more on cities further to **devolution of 42 per cent** of divisible resources, a hike of 10 per cent over earlier sharing.
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What are the results of these changes?

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- Involvement of citizens, increased sense of ownership of new urban missions by city and State governments coupled with delegation of powers are yielding results.
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- States just can’t send half-baked and shoddy projects to Delhi as the financial year draws to a close.
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- Under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and Smart Cities Mission meant for improving urban infrastructure, there shall be a comprehensive assessment of infrastructure deficit before drawing up city-level action plans.
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- Cities have been empowered to add to their technical capabilities. And now there is clear evidence that cities are rising to the occasion by rediscovering themselves
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- Over 500 cities and towns have already become open defecation-free. Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Sikkim have already declared all cities and towns as open defecation-free as the Swachh Bharat Mission gains momentum as a

people’s movement.
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