

Smart Cities Mission

Why in news?

The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) has experienced a shift in focus within the political landscape, particularly in the context of recent elections and government priorities.

What is Smart Cities Mission?

- **About-** A smart city in the context of the mission is one that has basic infrastructure, utilizes 'smart' solutions to improve infrastructure and services, and relies on area-based development.



- **Launch year-** 2015
- **Implementation-** By Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- **Fund-** The Mission is operated as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- **Aim-** To drive economic growth and improve quality of life through comprehensive work on social, economic, physical and institutional pillars of the city.
- **Focus-** The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development by creation of replicable models which act as lighthouses to other aspiring cities.

100 cities have been selected to be developed as Smart Cities by 2024 through a two-stage competition.

- **Pan-India solutions**- The mission employs strategies like pan-city initiatives where at least one smart solution is applied city-wide.
- **City selection process**-Cities are selected through a competitive process that emphasizes cooperative and competitive federalism, with each city constructing its vision of a smart city aligned to its local context.
- **Convergence**- The mission seeks convergence with other government programs like AMRUT, Smart Bharat Mission, Digital India and Skill Development for holistic urban development.
- **Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC)**- They are designed to enable authorities to monitor the status of various amenities (water, power supply, traffic movement, city connectivity and internet infrastructure, etc.) in real time.
- **Assessment of indices**- It also assesses various indices to track urban development such as the Ease of Living Index, Municipal Performance Index, City GDP framework, Climate Smart Cities assessment framework etc.,

Features	About
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote cities that provide core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment • Give a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of smart solutions.
Area based development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofitting- City improvement • Redevelopment- City renewal and • Greenfield development- City extension
Key focus areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of walkways, pedestrian crossings, cycling tracks • Efficient waste-management systems • Integrated traffic management and assessment
Fundamental principles of smart cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community at the Core • More from less • Co-operative and Competitive Federalism • Integration, Innovation , Sustainability • Technology as a means • Convergence

What are the challenges of Smart Cities Mission?

- **Flawed city selection process**-The competitive selection of 100 cities for the mission failed to adequately account for *dynamic nature of urbanization* in India, resulting in a mismatch between project objectives and local needs.
- **Exclusionary approach**- The focus on developing only a small % of a city's geographical area led to *neglected needs of marginalized communities* and areas within cities that require urgent attention.
- **Fund deficit**- The allocated funds were insufficient compared to the estimated capital expenditure required to make Indian cities *liveable by 2030*.
- **Concern with governance structure**- The use of Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) for smart city governance was criticized for being *top-down* and not aligned with the *74th*

Constitutional Amendment, which emphasizes decentralization and local self-governance.

- **Displacement**- The execution of smart city projects resulted in the displacement of marginalized communities such as street vendors and disruption of urban commons.
- **Social impact**- The focus on infrastructure development may have neglected social issues, exacerbating inequalities within cities.
- **Unintended environmental consequences**- The projects led to enhanced urban flooding as they have altered water channels and contours in certain towns made them more vulnerable to flooding.

What lies ahead?

- Tailoring smart city projects to address the specific needs, priorities, and characteristics of each urban area can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes.
- Governments must prioritize investment in urban infrastructure, technology, and human capital to support long-term sustainable development.
- Establishing inclusive and participatory governance structures is critical for ensuring that smart city initiatives reflect the diverse interests and perspectives of urban residents.
- The need of the hour is to prioritize environmental sustainability and social equity in urban development initiatives.

References

1. [The Hindu- Overview of smart cities mission](#)
2. [Smart Cities- About the mission](#)