Indian Economy · GS - III

What are ‘Smart Cities’? Examine their relevance for urban development in India. Will it increase rural-urban differences? Give arguments for ’Smart Villages’ in the light of PURA and RURBAN Mission.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2016	GS - III	Indian Economy

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
12.5	~200 words

Answer Hint

Smart Cities Mission; urban infrastructure; technology-enabled governance; rural-urban divide; PURA; Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission; balanced development

Model Answer

Introduction

Smart Cities use improved infrastructure, digital technologies and participatory governance to enhance urban liveability, sustainability and economic opportunities. India's Smart Cities Mission was launched in 2015.

Relevance for Urban Development

- **Better infrastructure:** Improved water supply, sanitation, electricity, transport and waste management.
- **Technology-enabled governance:** Digital services, intelligent traffic systems and integrated command-and-control centres.
- **Economic growth:** Better urban infrastructure can attract investment and support employment.
- **Environmental sustainability:** Energy efficiency, public transport and improved resource management can reduce environmental pressure.
- **Citizen participation:** Digital platforms and local consultations can improve service delivery.

Could Smart Cities Increase Rural-Urban Differences?

Yes, if investment and quality services become concentrated in selected cities. Rural areas may experience greater migration, unequal digital access and widening gaps in education, healthcare and employment. However, these outcomes are not inevitable; balanced regional planning can reduce them.

Case for Smart Villages

- **PURA:** Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas, associated with former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, emphasised physical, electronic, knowledge and economic connectivity.
- **RURBAN Mission:** The Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission aimed to develop rural clusters with urban-like amenities while preserving their rural character.
- Smart villages can improve digital connectivity, healthcare, education, local enterprises, renewable energy and agricultural services.

Conclusion

Smart Cities should form part of an integrated settlement strategy. Combining urban modernisation with smart villages, rural infrastructure and local employment can promote balanced and inclusive development.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP