**URBAN SPRAWL**

**(Propitious or Inauspicious)**

**Introduction:-**

“Nearly all our cities are at risk of floods because of unchecked urbanization & depletion of water bodies”, reported by Centre for Science & Environment, a New Delhi based think tank.

Urban sprawl is another name for urbanization. It refers to the expansion of poorly planned, low density, auto-dependent development which spreads out over large amount of land, putting long distances between homes & stores which cause wildlife displacement & ecosystem disruption.

Although, some would argue that urban sprawl has its benefits, such as creating local economic growth, However, urban sprawl has many negative consequences for residents & the environment, such as higher water & air pollution, increased traffic fatalities & jams, loss of agricultural capacity, increased car dependency, higher taxes, increased runoff into water & lakes, loss of natural habitats, wildlife & open space.

**Present Scenario:-**

India is projected to add 404 million people to its urban population between 2014 & 2050. The annual growth in urban population in India between 2010 & 2015 was 1.1% - the highest among the major economies, according to the UN WORLD URBANISATION PROSPECTS REPORT 2014, which has resulted to poorly planned expansion of the cities.

Most recent is the case of Mumbai floods. In Mumbai, which has amongst the priciest real estate in the world, mangroves & wetlands have been destroyed to build office towers, which also block the mouth Mithi River. On 29 August 2017, the city received nearly a month’s worth of rainfall in a single day. Most victims lived in slums, home to more than half the city’s 20 million population. More than 1200 people have died across India, Bangladesh & Nepal in the worst flooding to strike South Asia in years.

**Causes of Urban Sprawl:-**

1. *Lower Land Rates:* The circle rates in city centers are quite high to afford while, the farmlands, open spaces in suburbs are available at lower rates. Its lures people with moderate income who desire for bigger houses & lawns with almost null property tax.

2. *Lack of urban planning:* Since the settlements in suburbs have occurred naturally, it has led to cutting of trees, loss of green cover, long traffic jams, poor infrastructure & loss of wildlife. Moreover, the desire of people to live peace takes them to sprawl out to other sections of the town.

3. *Rise in population growth:* As number of people in a city grows beyond capacity, the local communities continue to spread farther & farther from city centers. It leads to the creations of lightly populated suburbs.

4. *Rise in standard of living:* With several improvements in India, standard of living of people is enhancing day by day. This means that people have the ability to travel and commute longer distances to work & back home.

**Effects of Urban Sprawl:-**

1. *Increased Costs for communitie*s *& taxpayers:* The low density residential patterns typically appearing as one of the effects of urban sprawl increase the demand for road building & the need for spending money on new schools, public services, utilities, waste disposal & water-sever infrastructure follow.

2. *Loss of Rural Heritage & Open space:* Rural living is a particular culture that not only provides food and corn for ethanol & soybeans but also a unique style of living. The ecological value of open space or farmland is important too. It absorbs air pollution & gives Mother Earth break from our chemical pollution.

3. *Transportation Cost:* Many people experience ugliness in the road dominance, incessant traffic & excessive accommodation for automobiles through protruding garages & huge mostly vacant parking lots. The cost in auto accidents is very high too. In turn, accident rates cause higher automobile insurance costs.

4. *Health Hazards:* The increased level of pollution in air makes breathing a challenge causing several diseases related to lungs & bronchi. Excessive use of automobiles leads to overweight & causes ailments such as high blood pressure & heart diseases. Due to lack of fresh air people become inactive & unhealthy.

**Smart** **Cities- A Smart Solution to Urban Sprawl:-**

Cities accommodate nearly 31% of India’s current population & contribute 63% of GDP (Census 2011). Urban areas are expected to house 40% of India’s population & contribute 75% of India’s GDP by 2030. This requires comprehensive development of physical, institutional, social & economic infrastructure. All are important in setting in motion a virtuous cycle of growth & development. Its major objectives are:

1. *Optimum Land Use:* It refers to planning for unplanned areas containing a range of compatible activities & land use close to one another in order to make land use more efficient.

2. *Reduce Congestion:* The prevailing air pollution & resource depletion causes congestion. That’s why, it aims to reduce congestion, boost local economy, provide interaction & ensure security.

3. *Preserve Nature:* It aims to preserve & develop open spaces, parks, playgrounds & recreational space in order to enhance quality of life of citizens.

4. *Promoting Varied Transportation:* In order to give pace to transportation system, varied means of transport such as Transit Oriented Development (TOD), public transport & last mile para- transport connectivity.

**Conclusion:-**

Urban Sprawling is not a new thing to deal with as it has been for quite some time. However, it causes cutting down of more trees & tears up the environment. It is inevitable but that doesn’t mean that it has to be rushed into & it should happen naturally. Smart city can be considered as an ideal solution to Urban Sprawl, as it aims to modernize Indian cities with high speed internet & efficient public transport which may evict slum dwellers leading to yet more concrete structures. It still requires proper education of people, social zeal & political action to make the mission successful. Moreover, it is necessary to make it accessible to larger part of India.

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| Team ID:INIT-111 |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Name | College | Student  No | Year/Branch | Contact | Email |
| Project Leader | Akshat  Mittal | AKGEC | 1713020 | I/CSE | 8279386202 | takshat251@  gmail.com |
| Member  1 | Aditya  Gupta | AKGEC | 1710078 | I/CSE | 9838605192 | adityaguptagkp  30@gmail.com |
| Member  2 | Ankit  Prabhakar | AKGEC | 1710172 | I/CSE | 8448606100 | ankitprabhakar66@gmail.com |