Mains Practice Question

Q. What are smart cities? Examine their relevance in urban development of India and enlist the challenges faced by them. (250 words)

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Approach

- Write about the concept of 'smart cities'.
- Examine their relevance in urban development of India.
- List down the challenges faced by smart city.
- Give a way forward for the sustainable smart city

Introduction

- A Smart City would be the one which plans judiciously to meet its aspirations and challenges in a sustainable manner while fostering principles of good governance. These are achieved in a Smart City by utilising the enhanced power of technology, engaging with a more aware and informed citizenry and creating a more competent and capacitated set of people working within an accountable framework.
- In a smart city, economic development and activity is sustainable and rationally incremental by virtue of being based on success-oriented market drivers such as supply and demand. They benefit everybody, including citizens, businesses, the government and the environment.

Body

Relevance of smart cities in sustainable urban development:

- **Engines of inclusive economic growth:** Of the 121 crore Indians, 83.3 crore live in rural areas while 37.7 crore stay in urban areas, i.e approx 32 % of the population.
- **Rapid and haphazard urbanization:** Mass movement of people from villages to cities in search of a better life, drawn by the lure of riches and money has resulted in the haphazard urbanisation with increasing slum population.
- **Traffic:** With overcrowding in the cities, traffic congestion becomes a problem, increasing the time it takes to commute over even small distances.
- **Share in GDP:** Cities contribute to 63 % of Indian GDP. The increasing population has caused extreme stress of urban amenities.
- **Health problems:** The concentration of a large population living in squalor in slums in the urban sprawl makes it a haven for the spread of diseases.
- **Environmental concern:** Vulnerability to risk posed by the increasing man-made and natural disaster is increasing.

Smart cities have vital role to play in tackling the above urban problems in India and create a sustainable and inclusive urban space. It does so by focusing on following aspects:

- Establishing an Efficient Urban Management Systems
- Minimising Conflicts in the Urban Environment

- Creating Enabling Conditions for Inclusive and Equitable Urbanisation

Challenges faced by smart cities:

- Finding The Right Model for Smart Cities in India's Socio-Political Context.
- Lack of Convergence with Other Urban Sector Programmes.
- Lack of funding for Smart Cities.
- Lack of IT infrastructure (e.g. solar based electrical systems, cloud computing) and capabilities of artificial intelligence (e.g. intelligent transport system, smart communities, e-health, smart grids, smart energy solutions etc.).
- Lack of citizens' participation in realising how exactly the smart cities could possibly look like in their experience is reflected. The citizens should be encouraged to submit and evaluate ideas for innovation in smart city design.
- The planners and policymakers of smart cities development lack enabling or transformative technological knowledge that may be needed for smart cities development.
- Inability of shifting cities toward low carbon trajectory and emission reduction actions.
- Defining a Roadmap, Process and Scale of the Smart Cities Mission

Way Forward

- Create a catalogued platform for Smart City knowledge resources
- Ensure mechanisms for convergence of programme and projects
- There is no 'one size fits all' model for smart cities that can be adopted in India
- There is a critical need for contextualising various aspects of smart city development, which is an opportunity for India to chart its own path towards smart city development.