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## The State of Urban Planning in India

### Why in news?

The pictures of adverse weather phenomena in cities are becoming increasingly common in India, with the urban authorities finding themselves unprepared every time a new disaster hits.

### How about the picture of urban floods in India?

- The urban floods in Delhi (2013, 2021), [Mumbai](#) (2005, 2017), [Chennai](#) (2015, 2021), Hyderabad (2020) and [Bengaluru](#) (2022) caused extensive losses to property and life.
- In terms of damages, Mumbai reportedly lost Rs. 14,000 crore between 2005 and 2015 while the figure for Chennai was an estimated Rs. 15,000 crore in 2015 alone.
- The social and human costs disproportionately affect the poorer sections of society as they tend to live in the more environmentally vulnerable areas.

### What efforts were taken in this regard?

- **General measures-** Measures such as river/drain cleanup, anti-encroachment drives, and stormwater network projects were proposed by the administrators.
- **Karnataka-** A Rs. 900 crore project was announced in 2021 by the Karnataka government after 2021 flooding Bengaluru.
- Now, after the recent floods, the municipality has ordered an anti-encroachment drive.
- **Delhi-** After 1976, a new Drainage Master Plan for Delhi is being implemented now.
- City administrations such as Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Nagpur have begun adopting climate action plans.
- **Mumbai-** The Mumbai plan covers all aspects of the city's environment from flooding to air pollution and aligns itself with the larger national goal of net-zero emissions.

### What are the current issues?

*Across India, 65% of urban settlements do not have a master plan.*

- **Master plans-** The powers to prepare master plans remain with State governments, but they lack the capacity to undertake this exercise as per the NITI Aayog report 2021.
- Even if master plan exists, they usually do not address issues of environmental protection or climate change mitigation.

- **Authority of city governments-** Some city governments lack much authority while some city administrations have developed flood mitigation plans without statutory backing.
- Bengaluru has not had a master plan to control its development since 2015.
- **Issues in Bengaluru plan-** In the case of Bengaluru, the drainage lines, as per the 2015 Master Plan, vary significantly from the drains mapped by the municipality.
- The responsibility of maintaining these and the lakes are split among at least 12 agencies at the State and city level which lacks co-ordination.
- **Issues in Mumbai plan-** The Mumbai plan lacks any statutory backing and does not prescribe any regulatory controls.
- It comes across as a series of recommended measures rendering it toothless.
- These plans are usually an expert-driven, without the critical element of public participation, thus reducing the plan's credibility.
- This in turn results in a greater focus on proposals such as the removal of encroachments instead of a focus on other mitigation measures.
- **Issues in Delhi plan-** The drainage master plan prepared by Indian Institute of Technology Delhi was found to be generic.
- A committee headed by the Public Works Department (PWD) is working on it.

### What lies ahead?

- **Comprehensive climate action plan-** A comprehensive climate action plan needs to be created for all key Indian cities with statutory backing within the ambit of the city's master plan.
- This would institutionalise processes such as public consultations within the plan preparation process.
- **Role of environmental protection agency-** There is a need for an environmental protection agency to proactively tackle issues related to climate change.
- This agency would need to be devised as an overarching body along the lines of the unified transportation authority formed by different cities for coordinated action.

*The great cities of Moscow and Paris pride themselves on addressing one-in-a-hundred-years flooding by building massive stormwater drainage systems that have successfully prevented flooding.*

### References

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