1. Critically discuss urban development programmes initiated by the Government of India since independence.

Ans: Presently, 31 per cent of India’s population is living in urban areas, which rose by 3.35 per cent between 2001 and 2011 and 2.10 per cent between 1991 and 2001. By next 20 years, this population is projected to rise by over 200 million bringing up challenges related to land-use and expanding infrastructure development to new cities and metropolises. With India’s growing population, the issue of increasing urban poor and providing basic amenities like sanitation, water supply, affordable housing and public transport remains a huge challenge in urban areas.

Urban economy now contributes up to 63% to the nation’s GDP, while this figure was 30% in 1960. In the last 50 years, all over the world cities has risen to become hubs of economic activity and certainly future growth is going to come from our cities. But unfortunately, the growth and expansion of Indian cities has been unplanned and disorganized. Our cities today face challenges in meeting the demands of infrastructure and resources. The demand for clean water exceeds the supply by about 30%. Waste management systems are almost non-existent, and if they are there, heavily over-stressed with over 40% waste going uncollected. Eco-friendly waste disposal methods are only a dream and even government agencies and engineers are totally unaware about their technicalities. Around 22% of urban population lives in slums and around 25% are below the poverty line. Traffic congestion and pollution has increased like never before.

As urban sector is largely a state subject, the role of Government of India is to provide assistance to the State Government in taking up the projects for improving the delivery of urban amenities. The Government allocates resources to the State Governments through various Centrally Sponsored schemes, provides finances through national financial institutions and supports various external assistance programmes for urban development in the country as a whole.

MAJOR INITIATIVES:

1. NATIONAL URBAN LIVELIHOODS MISSION (NULM): With the rural urban migration set to rise, unless the urban poor are skilled to be gainfully employed either through self-employment or through wage employment, the rural poverty would get converted to urban poverty. The plan has recommended launching of National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) for skilling of the urban poor. The NULM aims to lessen poverty of urban poor households by offering them avenues for self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities. Besides, it recommends two more sub-components, the first being provision of assistance to States for creation of shelter for homeless, migrants etc. and the second being a scheme to assist the street vendors. The Plan also encourages the State Governments to adopt a no-eviction policy and bring about suitable legislative inclusion of the urban poor. Another strategy of reduction of urban poverty is to ensure that poor have access to basic services, especially housing as the plan lays emphasis on rehabilitation of slums. Under the programme, City Livelihood Centers will be established in mission cities to provide a platform to the urban poor to market their services and access information on self-employment, skill training and other benefits. The NULM will target all cities with a population of one lakh or more and districts headquarter towns with a population of less than one lakh as per Census 2011.

Government has extended the NULM to all the 4,041 statutory urban local bodies in the country. NULM is now renamed as ‘Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-NULM’. DAY-NULM will benefit urban poor in 1,505 new towns in the North, 991 towns in the South, 375 in the West, 249 in the East and 130 more towns in the North-East. Under ‘Employment through Skill Training and Placement’ component of DAY-NULM, an expenditure of Rs.15000 per person is allowed on training of urban poor which is Rs.18000 in North-East and Jammu and Kashmir. Under ‘Social Mobilisation and Institution Development’ through formation of Self-Help Groups for training members and hand holding, an initial support of Rs.10,000 is given for each group. For Registered Area Level Federations of such groups, assistance of Rs.50000 is provided. Urban poor are also assisted with interest subsidy of 5-7 per cent for setting up individual micro-enterprises with a loan of up to Rs.2 lakh and for group enterprises with a loan limit of up to Rs.10 lakhs. Cost of construction of shelters for urban homeless is fully funded under the scheme with each such shelter accommodating at least 50 homeless. Other means of helping the urban poor is through setting up infrastructure for street vendors and innovative and special projects for rag pickers, differently abled etc.

It has been observed that main conception of National Urban Livelihoods Mission is that the poor are entrepreneurial and have innate desire to come out of poverty. The challenge is to uncheck their capabilities to generate meaningful and sustainable livelihoods. The first step in this process is motivating the urban poor to form their own institutions. They and their institutions need to be provided sufficient capacity so that they can manage the external environment, access finance, expand their skills, enterprises and assets. This requires continuous and carefully designed handholding support. An external, dedicated and sensitive support structure, from the national level to the city and community levels, is required to induce social mobilization, institution building and livelihoods promotion.

2. ATAL MISSION FOR REJUVENATION AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION (AMRUT)

Providing basic services to households and build amenities in cities which will improve the quality of life for all, especially the poor and the disadvantaged is a national priority. Learning’s from the earlier Mission have shown that infrastructure creation should have a direct impact on the real needs of people, such as providing taps and toilet connections to all households. This means that the focus should be on infrastructure creation that has a direct link to provision of better services to people.

Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) along with smart cities were jointly planned and launched by the government to transform urban living conditions through infrastructure upgradation. AMRUT is aimed at transforming 500 cities and towns into efficient urban living spaces over a period of five years. AMRUT has a wider reach in terms of the number of cities covered and therefore the funds available for each city would be proportionately less. The mission takes a project approach in working towards improving existing basic infrastructure services like extending clean drinking water supply, improving sewerage networks,