



## Towards smart cities

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**(GS Mains 2 : Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential)**

### Context:

- The importance of effective governance and service delivery by city governments becomes important as Indians start to live in 'smart cities'.
- In smart cities digital systems enable the use of data to continuously improve the functioning of cities.

### The smart city:

- Smart City is a city that works for its people and makes the city more agile to move from one level to the next, guided by principles of making most from limited resources, taking everyone along, quickly adapting to changes.
- Smart cities are resilient in the face of stresses or shocks at each stage, and use technology mindfully at every step of the way to reach scale and speed.
- The purpose of the Smart Cities is to drive economic growth and improve the quality of life of people by enabling local area development and harnessing technology, especially technology that leads to Smart outcomes.

### Required smart system:

- For a smart city to function properly it requires good data for informed decision-making.
- To get good data needs to design 'smart systems' that generate such data by default.

### Cohesive approach:

- Indian cities functioning is complex where various entities are involved in their governance.
- Thus governance needs to approach one step at a time by ensuring one function at a time, then one department at a time, finally building up to the city as a whole.
- In this approach of governance a department refers to a specific administrative entity having a mandate to deliver a defined set of services and resources for delivery.
- A smart city is a network of smart functions and departments where the function is a set of services along with delivering people.

### **Digitisation in cities:**

- The e-governance of the smart cities has been based on the ability to apply digital technologies across domains of processes, human resources, and citizen-centricity.
- The e-governance systems basically stand on the foundation of a simple behavioural change.
- The first step in the e-governance journey is to ensure local government employees use tools and techniques instead of pen and paper for regular works.
- However in most local government offices in India records are kept on paper which creates scope for errors and manipulation.

### **Role of leaders:**

- Expectation-setting and incentives are the tools which city leaders must use a combination to ensure digitisation.
- Leaders can demonstrate the time saved and ease of work gained after adoption of digital tools.
- leaders can also set phased targets for adoption of the new tools, and ensure adequate technical support and education for employees during the transition.
- These changes are reflected in the 'process' and 'human resources' levers of the framework.

### **Citizen centricity:**

- For better service delivery, administrators need to ensure that e-governance is not reduced to an exercise in performance management alone.
- The framework of e-governance incorporates a 'citizen centricity' lever to emphasise that urban local bodies are service delivery organisations.
- Thus to make changes it is required that internal reforms reflect better experience and empowerment for citizens.

### **Adoption of system:**

- All e-governance provides ease of interaction, the gains in efficiency through both performance management and process reform and it ensures the potential for data-driven preventive maintenance of infrastructure.

- But all these benefits of e- governance hinge upon adoption of the system by local government employees and citizens themselves.
- Adoption leads to richer datasets which bring various government departments and non-governmental partners to cooperate effectively
- This in turn creates a virtuous cycle of co-creation, learning, and efficiency.

**Conclusion:**

- Smart cities should emerge, not from the top down, but from organic collaboration between departments, employees, and citizens.
- This makes the system self operable and efficient by time where stakeholders are looking to do their own jobs more effectively.