IVth EDITION OF ICG-GOA UNIVERSITY ESSAY COMPETITION
(ENGLISH & KONKANI)
THE CHALLENGES OF URBANISATION IN GOA

Introduction

Urbanisation is an inevitable outcome of industrialisation, economic growth and prosperity. In 1800, 90% of the world lived in rural areas. Since then, the share of the urban population has increased steadily, globally and in individual countries. Today, 55% of the world's peoples live in urban areas. However, there is substantial variation in the *pace* and *timing* of urbanisation across different continents and countries. In many developing countries, the pace of urbanisation picked up only in the 20th century, even as late as the 1950s. Today, countries in North America and Latin America are the most urbanised with more than 80% of their peoples living in urban settlements, with Europe just behind with 75% of its population living in urban areas. In Asia, the level of urbanisation is much lower, at about 50%, and even lower in Africa where only 43% of the population lives in urban areas. Over the next two-three decades, urbanisation is going to become more widespread and there will be significant increases in the world's urban population. By 2050, the share of the urban population is projected to increase to 68%. Approximately 2.5 billion more people will live in urban areas, with 90% of that increase taking place in Asia and Africa. Three countries - India, China and Nigeria - will account for 35% of the projected growth in the world's urban population, of which India will have added 416 million urban dwellers.

Urbanisation in India

In 1901, only 10.8% of all Indians lived in urban areas. However, the pace of urbanisation picked up from the 1920s onwards and 31% of the Indian population is now urban. India will experience intense urbanisation in the coming decades. It is projected that 17 of the 20 fastest-growing cities in the world between 2019 and 2035 will be in India, with Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai leading the way. Delhi is expected to become the world's most populous city by 2028. More than 40% of India's urban population lives in cities with more than one million people. There are 53 such cities already and their numbers are projected to increase to 68 by 2021. As is true of cities in other parts of the world, Indian cities with million-plus people are regarded as 'engines of growth'.

Urbanisation usually brings about improvements in the quality of life of ordinary people. Cities and large urban centres are locations of high economic activity and offer opportunities for employment, higher incomes, better education and healthcare and other amenities. The top 780 worldwide are estimated to account for almost 60% of all economic activity globally. At the same time, urbanisation throws up a wide variety of challenges whether with respect to <u>housing</u>, <u>transport</u>, <u>infrastructure</u>, <u>energy</u>, <u>water</u>, <u>sanitation</u>, <u>law and order</u>, <u>environment</u>, <u>sustainability</u>, <u>governance</u> and other areas. Many cities in rich countries but especially those in the developing world, have come to represent and exhibit the best and worst aspects of our collective reality. For example, the worst of what could become of our urban future is well captured in Mike Davis' suggestively titled book *Planet of Slums.* Overall, India and Indians are undoubtedly experiencing the benefits, pains and challenges of urbanisation in nearly all its aspects.

Urbanisation in Goa

According to the Census of India, Goa is the most urbanised state in India with 62% of its population categorised as urban. Goa also represents a good example of 'rurbanization', or the gradual blurring of the sharp differences between rural and urban areas because of which many settlements show a mix of both rural and urban traits. Formerly rural areas have been transformed into urban ones due to physical proximity, better connectivity, rising literacy, adoption of urban lifestyles and an increase in non-agricultural activities. However, despite high levels of urbanisation, and partly due to its small size, Goa does not have a single city with million-plus people. Still, Goa's major cities – Vasco da Gama, Margao, Panjim, Mapusa and Ponda – and other large urban settlements are experiencing the same or similar challenges as larger cities in other parts of the country, whether it is transport, housing, pollution, garbage or others. As a relatively prosperous state, Goa is better positioned to address its urban challenges but this requires, above all, that emerging urban problems are widely acknowledged as such by elected and unelected officials. This is because well-intentioned and even influential civil society actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and business groups, cannot substitute for governmental action to address the state's urban challenges successfully.

Essay topic

This is the 4th Edition of *Ideas Unleashed*, an essay competition for college and university students in Goa, jointly organised by ICG and Goa University. The first was organized in 2014, the second in 2016, and the third in 2018. This edition's topic – "The challenges of urbanisation in Goa" – is of immediate relevance to Goa, to its residents, and all others who visit Goa. There are visible and less visible changes taking place across the state in the built environment, whether it is public infrastructure or housing; population flows/migration and growth; and growth and expansion of cities and suburbs. These changes will and are having both positive and negative consequences. Keeping that in mind, college students from across the state are invited to read, examine, and write on what they understand to be the main challenges of urbanisation and how these can be negotiated and addressed. They will, after all, along with other young people, live through the consequences of the ongoing processes of urbanisation. Students may choose to focus on one or more of the challenges that Goa's urbanisation has thrown up or deepened and how those are being addressed by the state/government, common people, civil society organisations and others. They may choose to write on whether and how specific social groups, as for example students themselves, business groups, migrants, or farmers, understand these challenges and their likely consequences for the lives of ordinary people. Given that the topic easily lends to a wide variety of specific themes, approaches and interpretations, it is hoped that students from across different disciplines will be encouraged to participate in the essay competition.

Select references

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