UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS Paper 1 Indian Society – Urbanisation – their problems and their remedies.

Mumbai's Urban Development Model Issues With Atal Setu

Mumbai's Recent Infrastructure Triumph: Atal Setu

In a recent milestone, the Atal Setu, part of the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, was inaugurated, signifying a significant stride in the city's infrastructure development. However, as the city celebrates this achievement, it's crucial to introspect and question the underlying development model, which the author argues is rooted in the outdated approaches of the 1960s.

Issues with Mumbai's Conventional Development Model:

1. **Traffic Congestion Woes:**
   The conventional approach, focused on concretisation and expansive infrastructure development, tends to encourage car transit, exacerbating the existing traffic congestion in Mumbai.
2. **Loss of Vital Green Spaces:**
   The relentless pursuit of roads, highways, and tunnels often results in the sacrifice of open spaces, wetlands, gardens, and playgrounds. These areas play a crucial role in climate mitigation and adaptation services, making their loss significant.
3. **Air Quality Concerns:**
   The increase in concretised structures and the surge in vehicular traffic contribute to heightened levels of toxic air quality, posing health risks to Mumbai's residents.
4. **Rainwater Runoff Issues:**
   The extensive concretisation contributes to increased rainwater runoff in the streets, hindering natural drainage systems and leading to flooding concerns during monsoons.
5. **Tree Depletion for Infrastructure:**
   Infrastructure projects often entail the felling of trees, impacting the city's green cover and biodiversity.

A Call for a Paradigm Shift:

1. **Sustainable Urban Ecology:**
   Mumbai needs to transition from the outdated development model and adopt a more sustainable approach that prioritises urban ecology. This involves comprehensive planning that considers the city's ecological balance, ensuring minimal disruption to natural ecosystems.
2. **Discouraging Car Transit:**
   To alleviate traffic congestion and promote sustainable urban mobility, the city should actively discourage excessive reliance on cars. Investing in robust public transportation, promoting walking and cycling infrastructure, and implementing policies to reduce private vehicle usage are essential steps.
3. **Mitigating Air Quality Crisis:**
   Urban planning must explicitly address the air quality crisis by integrating green spaces, promoting vertical gardens, and implementing measures to reduce pollution levels. A holistic approach involves balancing development with environmental sustainability.
4. **Preserving Open Spaces:**
   Recognising the importance of open spaces, intertidal regions, and mangroves is crucial. Preserving and enhancing these areas not only safeguards biodiversity but also contributes significantly to climate resilience.

Conclusion: Paving the Way for a Greener Mumbai

As Mumbai forges ahead with its development journey, it's imperative to embrace a progressive, eco-conscious paradigm. Rethinking urban planning, prioritising sustainability, and fostering a harmonious coexistence between development and the environment will pave the way for a greener, healthier, and more resilient Mumbai. In doing so, the city can set an inspiring example for the rest of the world in redefining progress in the 21st century.