

Findings on Urban Development by ASICS

Why in news?

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5th edition of Annual Survey of Indian City Systems (ASICS) has been released.

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What is the survey about?

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- ASICS is a health diagnostic of Indian cities, the better a city scores, the better it stands to provide its citizens high quality of life in the medium to long term.

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- It evaluates India's city-systems - The complex, mostly-invisible factors (such as laws, policies, institutions, institutional processes) that underpin urban governance and strongly influence the quality of life in India's cities.

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- ASICS aims to provide a common frame of reference for political and administrative leaders, business and academia, media and civil society, in different cities to converge on their agenda for transformative reforms.

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- Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy a non-profit organisation conducts ASICS and releases its results.

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What are the findings of the survey?

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- The ASICS score (on a scale of 0 to 10) gives a measure of the health of a city's governance and ability to deliver on quality of life.

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- The scores for Indian cities come in the 3.0 to 5.1 range, whereas both London and New York score 8.8, and Johannesburg 7.6.

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- Pune, Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram, which appear in that order, occupied the top three positions in 2016.
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- Pune has undertaken some AMRUT reforms and has improved the share of its own revenue in total expenditure and raised the average per capita capital expenditure for the last three years.
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- Mumbai has gone down the pecking order, to 9th position in 2017 from its 2nd position in 2015.
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- Chandigarh occupies the second lowest rank of 22 and Bengaluru is at the bottom of the list it has declined from rank 12 in 2015 to 23 in 2017, where Chennai has gone from rank eight to 19.
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What are the challenges faced by urban cities?

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- **Pune** - Even though pune has secured 1st position it lacks a sanitation and mobility plan and the other administrative reforms.
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- **Mumbai** - The city's average per capita capital expenditure for the last three years has gone down despite its robust revenue stream, being the only city whose own revenue exceeds its total expenditure.
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- Despite carrying a gargantuan commuter load, it has no comprehensive mobility plan and it has not carried out many of the urban reforms envisaged in AMRUT.
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- **Chennai** - It lacks resilience and sanitation plans and a land titling law.
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- Proper titles for property owners create an incentive to pay property taxes, raising revenue.
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- Expectedly, the share of its own revenue in its total expenditure has gone down.
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- **Chandigarh** - The city has hardly any urban local government worth the name and the share of its own revenue in its total expenditure is next to zero.
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- **Bengaluru** - The city is rapidly running out of water and has some of the worst traffic jams imaginable.

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What are the concerns with the survey results?

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- The survey notes that a large part of the missing policy initiative to set things right must come from State governments.

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- Due to the result of in-migration by the day urban landscapes gets bigger, in the last three years (2015-17) 20-odd leading Indian cities have progressed at a snail's pace in improving their level of governance.

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- Thus urban local government has to be empowered, professionally run and have a mechanism whereby an involved citizenry can claim ownership and demand answers.

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Source: Business Line

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