

CENTRE LAUNCHES 'NURTURING NEIGHBORHOODS CHALLENGE'

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NEW DELHI: To ensure development of common spaces along with creation of data banks for better planning in smart cities, union minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Wednesday launched the 'nurturing neighborhoods challenge'.

Puri also launched Data Maturity Assessment Framework to evaluate data ecosystems of cities, and an on-line training programme for city data officers of smart cities.

This comes at a time when 40% of India's population is expected to live in urban areas by 2030. To cater to this growth, India will have to build 600-800 million square meters of urban space each year, according to estimates.

The 'nurturing neighborhoods challenge' is a three-year initiative through which selected cities will receive technical assistance and capacity-building to re-imagine parks and open spaces; improve access to early childhood facilities; adapt public spaces with early childhood-oriented amenities; and create accessible, safe, walkable streets for young children and families. The challenge will be open to all smart cities, cities with more than five lakh population, and capital cities of states and union territories.

The Data Maturity Assessment Framework will support cities in the creation of 'culture of data'. The government aims to enable cities to assess their own data maturity with respect to a standardized framework covering aspects of enabling policies, governance structures, data management, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement at the city level.

"Part of our Prime Minister's Digital India Campaign is to ensure the government's services are made available to citizens more efficiently by leveraging data and digital technologies. The DataSmart Cities Initiative launched by the Smart Cities Mission is a step in that direction. By harnessing the combinatorial powers of data and technology, the initiative aims to foster evidence-based planning and institutionalize a robust mechanism for performance management," Puri, minister for housing and urban affairs, said.

For a city to be responsive to all people, it needs to consciously address the needs of the most vulnerable groups," Durga Shankar Mishra, secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, said.

Incorporating an early childhood lens in city planning will support more holistic, people-oriented urban development, Mishra added

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