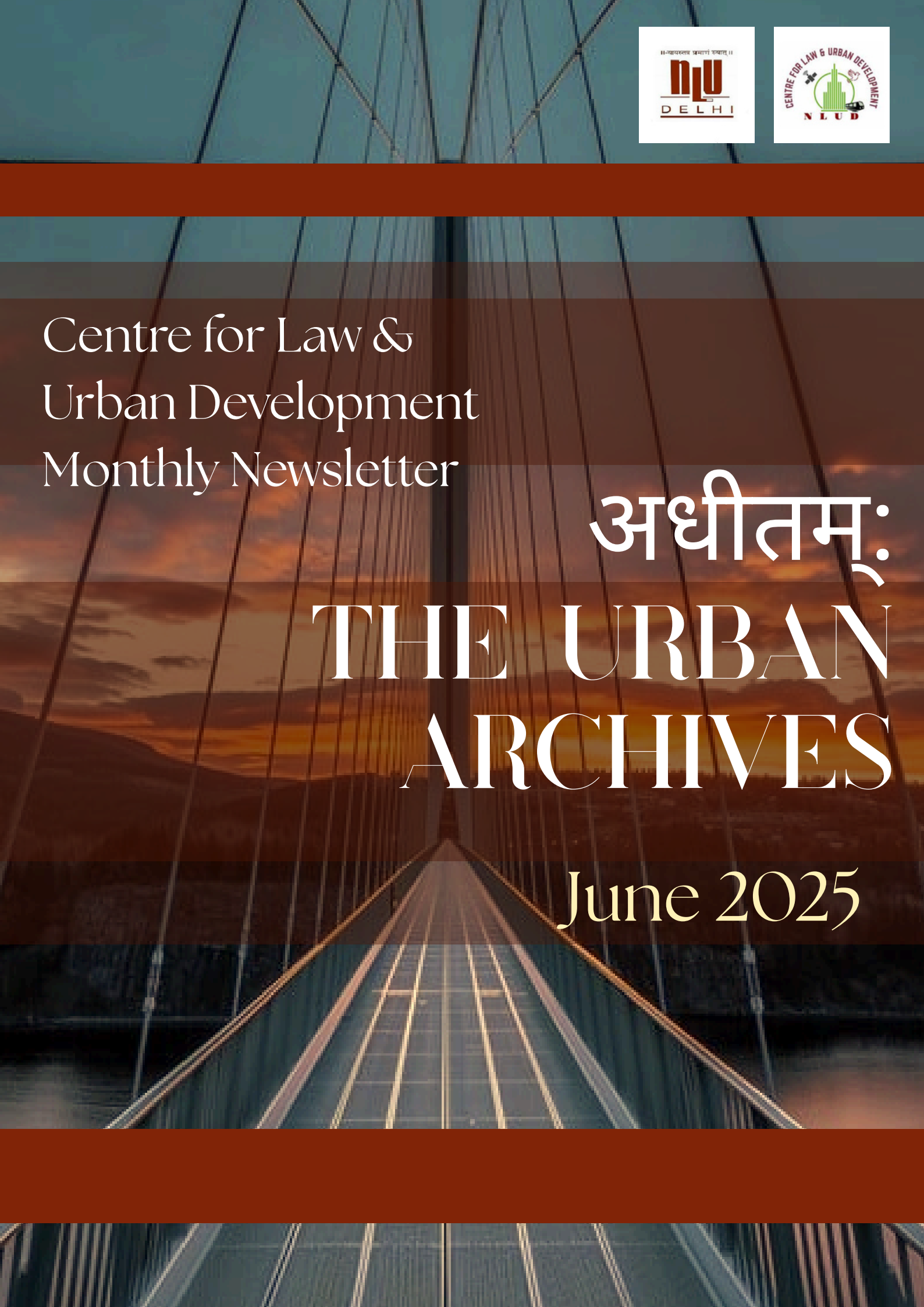
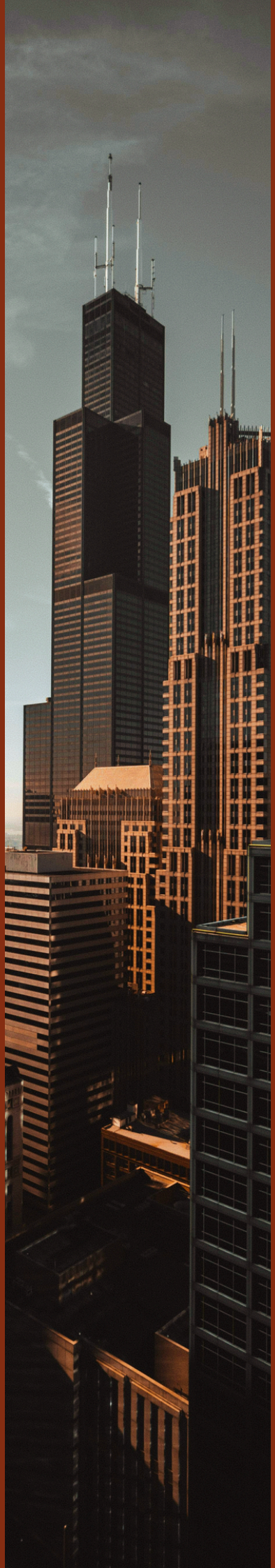


Centre for Law &
Urban Development
Monthly Newsletter

अधीतम्:
THE URBAN ARCHIVES

June 2025



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About CLUD

The primary objective of the Centre is to evolve and impart comprehensive and interdisciplinary research involving land laws, property laws and working towards a sustainable legal education that is socially relevant. We aim to promote legal and ethical values and foster the rule of law and the objectives enshrined in the Constitution of India. Furthermore, the Centre works toward dissemination of legal knowledge and its role in national development, so that the ability to analyse and present contemporary issues of public concern and their legal implications for the benefit of public are improved. These processes strive to promote legal awareness in the community and to achieve political, social and economic justice.

Many believe that the path of liberalisation we embarked upon in the early 90s unleashed India's potential. Undoubtedly the country has undergone vast changes in all spheres and we see a more confident India asserting itself on the global stage. However, this progress has come with very significant challenges to the country. India's various social classes are yet to be assimilated; their participation in the process of governance remains fractured. Cumulative progress needs to be fair and equitable and integral to that is a legal system that empowers the marginalised.

Our sincere endeavour is to make legal education an instrument of social, political and economic change. Each individual who is part of this institution must be remembered for the promotion of social justice. Our students will not only be shaped as change agents as the country achieves its social and developmental goals, but will also be equipped to address the imperatives of the new millennium and uphold the Constitution of India.

EDITOR'S Note

-Ananya Anand

The June issue of the newsletter arrives at a moment when the intersections among law, governance, and urban life are constantly being tested and redefined. This volume traces a broad sweep of trends – from the transformation of India's property registration regime to the exercise of rights in housing and tenancy, from health and environmental crises to the resilience of city-led reform. Every piece of news assembled here captures an aspect of metropolitan law: the challenge of translating legislative will into fair application.

The legal landscape this month has seen tremendous resets. The draft Registration Bill, 2025 is one of the most ambitious reforms in Indian property law, promising digitisation, transparency, and consistency across jurisdictions. Yet, as courtrooms nationwide – from Tamil Nadu to Himachal – revisit the limits of administrative discretion, they remind us that reform must not only modernise but also democratise. In land and real estate disputes, questions of ownership, compensation, and accountability continue to reveal the tension between state authority and individual rights.

Urban mobility and housing have also emerged as critical concerns. The establishment of Delhi's Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (UMTA) and debates around the Karnataka bike-taxi ban reveal the competing imperatives of regulation, livelihood, and sustainability. The global housing crisis – whether in European cities facing affordability gaps or in India's efforts to secure "Housing for All" – shows that urban planning today is inseparable from social justice.This edition situates India's progress within the global legal and policy discourse. From the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Diamond Alternative Energy v. EPA, which reshapes environmental standing, to the EU's appeal for locally driven climate action, we see the growing role of courts and cities in advancing the sustainability agenda. These developments echo India's own trajectory – where local governance, judicial innovation, and legislative reform must work together to deliver equitable development.

Health and environmental conservation receive new emphasis. The WHO's warnings of a global health financing crisis, contrasted with Mizoram's achievement in solar-powered rural health, illustrate the dual realities of vulnerability and innovation. As India confronts the challenges of access and sustainability, these narratives remind us that success must be measured not by policy intent but by its impact on the most marginalised. Through these accounts, this edition of The Urban Archives underscores the Centre's dedication to documenting law as it evolves within and responds to urban transformation. As India's urban narrative continues to unfold, we hope this edition provokes reflection on a key question: what does it mean to make law serve development that is not only smart, but also just, sustainable, and humane?

REAL ESTATE

1. Government Proposes Registration Bill, 2025 in a Major Legislative Overhaul

The property sector has been plagued by archaic registration, opacity, and uneven practice patterns at the state level. In order to overcome these issues, the government has introduced the Registration Bill, 2025 to supersede the hundred-year-old Registration Act, 1908. The far-reaching reform seeks to digitise the process of registration, improve transparency, and establish a unified, citizen-friendly system of registration of property and documents for all States and Union Territories. Here are some key features of the Bill.

Under the current law, documents that require compulsory registration include, instruments of gift of immovable property, non-testamentary instruments that creates, declares, limits or extinguishes any right or interest in immovable property, leases for term exceeding one year, instruments transferring any decree, order or award of a Court which affects immovable property, etc. However, the proposed bill expands the list of documents requiring compulsory registration. These include Power of Attorney for transfer of immovable property, sale certificates under Central or State Acts, and instruments relating to corporate restructuring, mergers, demergers.

Another broad overhaul is brought in by Section 32 of the Bill, which provides enabling provisions for facilitating online registration through electronic presentation and acceptance of documents, issue of electronic registration certificates, and electronic preservation of records. Electronic record-keeping has also been made mandatory to boost the efficiency as well as the integrity of information flows. Aadhar-based online authentication has been proposed to enable identity verification. The government is also empowered to notify documents that should be registered only online.

Given the archaic nature of the 1908 enactment, section 86 of the Bill seeks to amend the definitions under Sections 54 & 59 of the Transfer of Property Act, 1882, which defines ‘sale’ and ‘mortgage’ respectively. It seeks to do away with the part of the provision which provides that the transfer of tangible immoveable property of a value less than INR 100, could be made either by a registered instrument or by delivery of the property. For mortgages, other than those by deposit of title-deeds, a registered instrument signed by the mortgagor and attested by two witnesses will be required. The prior minimum value threshold of INR 100 has been removed.

REGISTRAR CANNOT REFUSE REGISTRATION ON GROUNDS OF TITLE: SC IN K. GOPI V. SUB-REGISTRAR & ORS. (2025 INSC 462)

In K. Gopi v. Sub-Registrar, the Supreme Court of India addressed the legality of Rule 55A(i) of the Tamil Nadu Registration Rules, which were made under the Registration Act, 1908. The problem arose when the Sub-Registrar refused to register the sale deed executed in favour of the applicant, insisting on proof of the vendor's title. Afterward, a series of Writ Petitions were filed before the Madras High Court, which upheld the refusal of the Registrar to register the deed of sale based on Rule 55A which entitled the registering officer to ask for proof of title.

The appellant argued before the Supreme Court that the Sub-Registrar had no authority to inquire into or adjudicate upon the title of the person executing the document. Section 69 of the Registration Act gives the Inspector General power to make regulations consistent with the Act, but regulations requiring an applicant to provide proof of title before she would be permitted to register are prohibited. The appellant argued that Rule 55A(i) went beyond what the Act allowed.

On the other hand, the State argued that Rule 55A as a mechanism to prevent fraudulent transactions, claiming that it was framed within the powers conferred by Section 69, and in accordance with Sections 22-A and 22-B (Tamil Nadu modifications), which permit registration refusal in specific circumstances. The Court examined Rule 55A(i), which forbears registration unless a recent encumbrance certificate and the prior deed proving the executant's title are presented. The Court noted that the consequence of that rule was to oblige the registering officer to examine the title, which is outside the ambit of his authority. Referring to Sections 22-A and 22-B, the Court noted that refusal of registration is only permissible in a select few appropriate instances, such as transfers of government property or property of religious trusts without sanction, forged documents, or transactions prohibited by law. The aforementioned provisions don't authorise refusal on grounds of failure to prove a valid title. As per the scheme of the Act, once procedural formalities are complied with, the document must be registered. Accordingly, the registrar's role is administrative, not adjudicatory.

The Court held Rule 55A(i) to be ultra vires with the Registration Act, 1908. Accordingly, the judgment passed by the Madras High Court was set aside, and the appellant was permitted to re-lodge the sale deed, which the Sub-Registrar was directed to register upon compliance with procedural requirements.

Delhi RERA Issues Directions to Strengthen Compliance in Real Estate Sector

Delhi RERA has issued new directions in order to increase regulation in the real estate industry in the National Capital Territory. These directions will be effective from June 4, 2025, and will bolster supervision of current and future developments in the National Capital Territory to secure better protection for homebuyers. Key elements of the directions include: 1) Improved disclosure regime: 2) Increased financial responsibility; 3) Renewed registration norms; 4) Timely completion of projects.

In a bid to promote transparency, promoters will now be required to provide details and up-to-date information on project status, approvals, financial progress, and delivery timeframes. All of this information must be uploaded to the Delhi RERA portal, allowing buyers to be better informed and track the progress of their investments.

To increase financial responsibility, developers will have to open a separate account for their development and ensure that money received from allottees is only used for the development. The Directions resolve the long-standing dilemma of the appropriation of development funds by also establishing an independent audit and certification process.

Renewed registration norms have been introduced, requiring adherence to ethical practices and transparent dealings. Real estate agents are required to publicize their registration numbers in all project communications and advertisements, in order to limit the scope of deceptive promotions. Finally, to eliminate delayed projects and ensure the timely commission of projects, the Authority has decided to impose penalties on delayed projects, cancel registration, or even blacklist developers. This is expected to promote more accountability and discipline amongst developers while improving consumer confidence.

These Directions also align with legislation's objective under the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, while addressing local conditions specific to the Delhi real estate market. The Directions promote consumer protection by requiring the industry to function under more stringent demands of integrity and accountability.

DEVELOPERS NOT LIABLE TO PAY INTEREST ON PERSONAL LOANS TAKEN BY BUYERS: SC IN GREATER MOHALI AREA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (GMADA) V. ANUPAM GARG (2025) INSC 808

6.

In Greater Mohali Area Development Authority v. Anupam Garg, the Supreme Court examined if a development authority could be mandated to reimburse homebuyers for the interest they paid on bank loans to finance the purchase of flats in the event the possession of the flats was delayed.

In 2011, GMADA launched an ambitious scheme called “Purab Premium Apartments,” which required allottees to make a substantial payment. Several buyers, including the respondent, obtained loans to facilitate their payments to GMADA for the purchase of a flat. The Letter of Intent promised possession within 36 months, failing which allottees could withdraw and obtain a refund with 8% compounded annual interest. Thereafter, GMADA failed to deliver possession on time, leading the aggrieved persons to seek refunds from the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. The State Commission directed GMADA to refund the deposit amount with an interest of 8% along with litigation costs and additionally, reimbursement of the interest paid by the buyers on their housing loans. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) affirmed this order.

Before the Supreme Court, GMADA contested only the award of loan interest. It contended that accountability for the financial decisions of buyers could not be extended to a developer whose obligations are limited to the contractual and statutory obligations. The respondents argued in support of the compensation by emphasizing the commission's broad powers to award just compensation.

In this regard, the Court reviewed past cases including Bangalore Development Authority v. Syndicate Bank and GDA v. Balbir Singh, which established that compensation could include delay, or mental anguish or loss of rent as part of compensation, although it should reflect the actual deficiency in service. The Court indicated that while loan interest may be a relevant consideration when calculating compensation, they could not reasonably impose this entire amount to developers without reasons which are special or extraordinary. It clarified that the buyer’s mode of financing is immaterial to the developer.

Accordingly, the Court ruled that the repayment of the principal amount along with an interest of 8%, as stipulated in the original scheme, would sufficiently compensate buyers for deprivation of their investment. GMADA’s liability to repay bank loan interest was set aside.

LAND CONFLICT

Mahnoor Fatima Imran v. M/s Visweswara Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd., 2025 INSC 646

The division bench of the Supreme Court of India, comprising of Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia and Justice K Vinod Chandra, held that an unregistered sale deed does not provide any protection from dispossession as such an instrument does not confer a title or any right in the property.

The dispute arose as the respondents claimed the possession of a land admeasuring 53 acres based on a registered sale deed from Bhavana Co-operative Housing Ltd. Bhavana Society's claim to the land was based on an unregistered sale agreement which was executed by a General power of attorney holder of the land.

The Supreme Court was faced with the issue of whether an unregistered sale agreement can confer a valid title to the immovable property when a subsequent instrument based on it is registered.

The Supreme Court held that when the original sale agreement was unregistered, it cannot result in a valid title being provided merely on the ground that a subsequent transaction based on the unregistered sale deed was registered.

The Court refused to grant protection sought by the petitioner against dispossession by the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Ltd. (TSIIC) by observing that an unregistered sale agreement does not confer a valid title upon the person.

Justice KV Chandran relied on the findings of the Court in the case of Suraj Lamp & Industries Pvt. Ltd. v. State of Haryana, (2012) 1 SCC 656, in which the Court had held that an unregistered agreement does not confer a valid title.

Basing its judgment on the same, the Court held that since the 1982 agreement was not registered, the Respondent cannot be said to have conferred with a good title over the property, barring any protection from the Court.

Keshav Ram v. State of Himachal Pradesh, 2025:HHC:15408

The division bench of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, consisting of Justice Tarlok Singh Chauhan and Justice Sushil Kukreja, while setting the multiplier for rural land acquisitions at two, held that the State cannot treat all land owners alike as it would deny the right to fair compensation to the poor rural land owners.The dispute arose when the land was to be acquired in the rural area of Himachal Pradesh for the construction of roads as a part of the Sunni Dam Hydro Electric Project and the process for the same was initiated as per the provisions of Right to Fair Compensation and transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

A notification issued under the Section 30(2) of the Act provides for a multiple factor of 1.00 for all rural areas in the state. Section 30(2) provides for award of solatium, which is the amount payable to the person in addition to the compensation payable to the person whose land is being acquired.

The core issue before the Court was whether the multiplier factor of 1.00 for determining the compensation was legally valid or not.

The Court, placing its reliance on the first schedule of the Act, observed that the multiplier must range between 1.00 and 2.00 depending upon the distance from an urban centre. A factor of two is intended for the most remote areas, scaling down to one for areas closest to urban centres. By fixing a flat multiplier of one for all rural areas, the State's Notification negated this legislative scheme, treating all rural landowners identically and denying fair compensation to those in remote villages.

The High Court noted that the notification fixing the multiplier at 1.00 was legally invalid under the Act. It held that the executive instructions cannot contradict the provisions of the Act.

TENANCY & MIGRATION

Vinu Koshy Abraham v. Corporation of Cochin, 2025:KER:34192

The division bench of the Kerala High Court, comprising of Justice A.K. Jayasankaran Nambiar and Justice P.M. Manoj held that absence of a formal demand notice for property tax during the pendency of the litigation does not absolve the assessee's obligation to pay the same.

The dispute arose over a property belonging to the appellant which was allegedly constructed without any authorisation from the authorities. The appellant did not pay the property tax for the period the litigation lasted. When the respondent corporation demanded the property tax of the past 13 assessment years, the appellant challenged these notices as being time-barred.

The main contention of the assessee was mainly that the Single Judge erred in confirming the demand of property tax that was made through notices, that had been issued in violation of the statutory periods prescribed under Section 539 of the Kerala Municipality Act, which provides for limitation for recovery of dues.

The central issue before the Kerala High Court was whether the appellant could be absolved of his liability to pay the property tax for the impugned property simply because the Corporation did not issue any formal demand notice on account of a pending litigation with the appellant.

The Court noted that the Corporation's failure to issue demand notices was a direct consequence of the ongoing litigation between the parties. The Court reasoned that the appellant's liability to pay tax arose from his continued occupancy and use of the premises. Permitting him to avoid paying tax for a period of over a decade while simultaneously occupying the property would be inequitable.

UN Experts observed that India must halt arbitrary demolitions which target minorities and marginalised communities.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published an expert committee's report on 23 June 2025 which held that India must halt arbitrary demolition of constructions which target the minorities or the marginalised communities. The experts involved in the committee included Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Nazila Ghanea, Nicolas Levrat and Gehad Madi.

The experts highlighted the gravity of the human rights violation that was taking place owing to the unilateral actions of the Indian government to practice arbitrary demolitions which affected the low-income households, the minorities and the migrants.

Recognizing the right to shelter of these individuals, the experts noted that such demolitions lead to homelessness and displacement, leading to egregious violations of the human rights of these individuals.

The experts further reviewed the religious angle of the demolitions taking place as the victims largely belonged to the Muslim communities. The experts pointed out that the uncanny trend of targeting Muslim, particularly after religious violence needs to be stopped. Demolition in the garb of an anti-encroachment campaign is not justified as the basis of such claims are not investigated into.

In a recent instance, the Delhi High Court, in the case of Mangolpuri Muhammadi Jama Masjid And Madarsa Anwarul Uloom Welfare Association v. Shri Ashwani Kumar, (CONT.CAS(C) 925/2025), on the 25th of June issued a notice to the MCD to file a reply on why arbitrary demolitions were carried out in the Mangolpuri Masjid area in Delhi without any demarcation of the encroached area.

The experts cited the illustration of a demolition drive carried out in the Chandola Lake area of Gujarat in which over 10,000 structures were demolished which left thousands of people on the streets, destroying their livelihood and residential quarters.

While the experts lauded the Supreme Court's ruling in the case of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind v. Union of India as it established the procedural safeguards against arbitrary demolitions, it noted that such practices still persist as can be viewed from the above examples.

The experts said that it must be ensured by India that urban development is pursued in such a way that it is consistent with the domestic guarantees as well as the International Human Rights standard.

Centre for Justice and Peace stresses the requirement for India to revisit the approach on refugee law and aligning it with the international standards

11.

An article recently published on the website of Centre for Justice and Peace vouched for a more streamlined approach towards the refugees. The article emphasised that even after 75 years of being a Republic, India lacked a domestic law in alignment with the international standards established by the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The Article stressed on the approach followed by the Supreme Court as the recent judicial pronouncements signalled a tightening in the policy towards the refugees. Subaskaran, a Sri Lankan refugee was denied refuge in India as the Court pondered over whether India should act like a 'dharamshala' for the stranded.

In a similar situation, the Court declined interim relief to Mohammad Ismail from future deportation of the Rohingyas from India. India refused to provide refuge to the Rohingyas despite their being recognised as refugees seeking protection by the UNHCR and the ICJ. This case directly tests India's adherence to the principle of non-refoulement – the customary international law principle prohibiting the return of refugees to territories where their lives or freedom would be threatened.

The author argued that Articles 14 and 21 and the notion of dignity in the Constitution provide the basis for refugee protection. The author highlighted the judicial trend of prioritising national security, population/resource constraints, and sovereignty concerns.

It points out India's historical tradition of sheltering displaced persons; how that legacy contrasts with recent rhetoric and legal decisions. The concern is that using "dharamshala" metaphor or referencing burden implicitly paints refugees as liabilities, masking humanitarian obligations.

The Author argued for a more principled path which created a balance between national interests as well as international humanitarian obligations. The author highlighted the need to have a more liberal approach in an increasingly interconnected world where refugee crises are often transboundary phenomena demanding collective responsibility. It was argued that a balanced policy can be viewed not just as a moral duty but as a strategic asset, enhancing soft power and building goodwill.

The Article stressed for a balanced approach and articulated certain suggestions which could put India in a comfortable position. These suggestions, as the author puts it, will help India in achieving its aspirations of attaining global leadership in the form of 'Vishwa guru'.

Case Study: The MSC ELSA 3 Shipwreck and India's Legal Response

1.

On May 25, 2025, the Liberian-flagged container vessel MSC ELSA 3 sank 14.6 nautical miles off Kochi while en route from Vizhinjam. The ship carried 640 containers, including 13 of hazardous cargo and 12 filled with calcium carbide, alongside 450 tonnes of fuel oil. The incident quickly escalated into an environmental crisis, with fears of oil slicks, chemical reactions producing explosive acetylene gas, and microplastic nurdles washing up on Kerala's beaches.

The human cost was indirect but acute: Kerala's fisherfolk, numbering over 10 lakh, faced a ban on fishing within 20 nautical miles of the site. Markets emptied, livelihoods were lost, and compensation announced by the state was deemed inadequate by fishworkers' unions.

From a legal perspective, the wreck fell within India's Exclusive Economic Zone, giving jurisdiction under the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976. The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Act, 2017 empowers High Courts to arrest sister ships for environmental damage claims, while the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 authorises preventive measures in cases of oil pollution.

Following public pressure, the Fort Kochi Coastal Police registered an FIR against MSC, its captain, and crew under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for rash navigation and negligent handling of hazardous substances. Meanwhile, the Kerala High Court has emphasised that cleanup costs must be recovered from the shipowner or insurer, not taxpayers, and has even ordered the arrest of sister vessels to secure claims.

Policy Recommendations: This case highlights the urgent need for (i) stronger international enforcement against flag-of-convenience registries that dilute accountability, (ii) the creation of a dedicated compensation fund for fisherfolk affected by maritime accidents, and (iii) stricter pre-voyage inspections of ageing vessels carrying hazardous cargo.

2.

Bike taxi ban in Karnataka and what comes next

From June 16, 2025, app-based bike-taxi services in Karnataka were banned pursuant to the High Court refusal to stay a single judge's order to that effect. Operators complied and apps removed bike options. The rationale was based on the State's insistence that the absence of a regulatory framework made commercial two-wheeler operations unlawful.

The arguments proceeded with on one hand, the state telling the division bench that it had taken a conscious policy decision not to frame rules permitting bike taxis, and on the other hand the industry stressing livelihoods. The number of affected riders could very well be in the lakhs, and thus, the ban risks substantial income loss and wider disruption to last-mile mobility.

Individual bike owners and commuter groups told the court the suspension had already caused hardship, while the state defended its position on safety and traffic management. Judges inquired whether a blanket prohibition is constitutionally sustainable where other states regulate bike taxis and whether restrictions meet the test of reasonableness under Articles 14 and 19(1)(g).

The June 24 proceedings left open whether the court will force the state to regulate or uphold its policy of non-regulation. The outcome will matter not only for platform workers but also for how courts calibrate constitutional trade rights against public safety and urban planning.

3.

Delhi to Establish Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority

The Delhi government has approved the formation of a Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (UMTA) to address the city's fragmented transport planning. The authority will coordinate the work of multiple agencies, including the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, Delhi Transport Corporation, the Rapid Regional Transport System, traffic police, and the Delhi Pollution Control Board.

Currently, agencies plan and operate independently, resulting in overlapping routes, weak last-mile connectivity, and congestion around transit hubs. UMTA's mandate is to streamline project implementation, promote better inter-agency communication, and integrate ticketing through the National Common Mobility Card. It will also focus on easing traffic congestion and prioritising public transport over private vehicles.

Officials have indicated that UMTA will not require fresh cabinet approval, as the government has already committed to moving forward. A task force of representatives from state and central departments will be set up to guide the authority in its early stages.

If implemented effectively, UMTA could become a turning point in Delhi's urban mobility and a blueprint for other Indian metros where transport remains fragmented.

4.

Connecting the Valley: India's Highest Rail Bridge Ushers in All-Weather Connectivity to Kashmir

On June 6, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Udhampur–Srinagar–Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL), completing India's first all-weather railway connection to the Kashmir Valley. The 272-kilometre line, constructed at a cost of around ₹43,780 crore, now provides seamless connectivity between the valley and the rest of the country.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated two of India's most remarkable engineering achievements: the Chenab Bridge and the Anji Khad Bridge. The Chenab Bridge, which rises 359 metres above the riverbed, is the highest railway arch bridge in the world. The Anji Khad Bridge, meanwhile, is India's first cable-stayed rail bridge built in one of the country's most geologically complex zones. Together, they enable the new Vande Bharat Express service between Katra and Srinagar, reducing travel time from six hours to just under three.

The USBRL line includes 36 tunnels covering 119 kilometres and 943 bridges spread across the Himalayan terrain. The Vande Bharat trains operating on the route are equipped for extreme weather and seismic conditions, ensuring safety and reliability for passengers year-round.

The project represents more than an engineering success. It reflects the vision of the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, which seeks to integrate rail, road, and logistics networks through coordinated planning. By linking Kashmir to major markets and tourism hubs, the corridor is expected to boost economic inclusion and regional stability.

Policy Reflection: The completion of the Kashmir rail link turns long-standing aspirations of connectivity into reality, showing how integrated planning and resilient infrastructure can bridge geography, economy, and governance.

China's Urban Planning Revolution: A People-Centric, Eco-Conscious Approach

The present case was heard by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC), which acts as the final court of appeal for the United Kingdom and some Commonwealth countries. The case arose out of a contract between Dipcon Engineering and the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (Udecott), a state-owned urban development corporation. The Main Issue before the JCPC was whether or not an additional payment to a contractor was payable under a housing-development contract on completion of the work.

On project completion in 2006, the Appellants lodged a claim for extra payment for higher material and labour costs. On three years of extended negotiations, the Appellants agreed on an accepted sum as complete settlement, pending reassessment of its additional claim. In subsequent correspondence, the Appellants attempted to preserve its right to seek additional sums, but the matter failed to obtain approval from UDeCOTT's Board, which was required under its internal structure.

Aggrieved by the order, the Appellants moved the High Court. But Dipcon's claim was rejected by the High Court, which ruled that any binding commitment to pay the Additional Claim would have to be approved by the Board, which did not happen. This ruling was upheld by the Court of Appeal, which ruled that the negotiations to revalue the Additional Claim were distinct from FIDIC's contractually defined procedures and hence had to be approved by the Board.

Before the JCPC, two main arguments were made by Dipcon. Firstly, the Additional Claim is liable to be enforced under FIDIC's Clause 70.1 (price fluctuation clause). Secondly, the claim is payable by virtue of the course of dealing of the parties, having regard to the fact that reassessment and direct dealings serve the fallback route under FIDIC's Clause 53.4. Clause 53.4 allows additional payment in the case of non-compliance with prior notification procedures by the contractor, enabling the employer to assess claims.

The Judicial Committee held that under Clause 53.4, an employer's decision to re-assess a contractor's claim, but this must be authorised by its Board. The Appellants were unable to show such authorisation. The mere fact that UDeCOTT employees carried out re-assessment was not sufficient to make it an "act of the employer" in absence of the Board approval.

The Council also observed that the evidence supported findings by the courts below that Dipcon knew board approval was essential and that it had not been granted. The “course of dealings” further demonstrated that both parties knew that Board approval was essential. Accordingly, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council dismissed the appeal, ruling that Dipcon was not entitled to the Additional Claim.

The judgment in Dipconn reinforces the principle that formal contractual obligations form the foundation of dispute resolution in construction projects. Further, internal approvals are imperative when there are deviations from original contractual obligations. Given that Construction Law is still in its nascent stages in India, this judgment of the JCPC can have a persuasive role on how Indian courts interpret informal agreements, implied approvals and deviation from contractual terms.

Fuel Producers May Challenge California EV Rules on Grounds of Economic Harm: US Supreme Court in Diamond Alternative Energy LLC v. Environmental Protection Agency

In the present case, the U.S. The Supreme Court considered whether fuel producers had Article III (which vests power of judicial review in courts to handle controversies arising under federal law) standing to challenge the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) approval of California's vehicle emissions program. California's laws require automobile manufacturers to increase the production of Electric Vehicles (EVs) and reduce greenhouse emissions from their fleets. Fuel producers contended that this would significantly reduce the demand for gasoline and ethanol, resulting in significant financial damages estimated at more than $1 billion beginning in 2020 and over $10 billion by 2030.

The Court of Appeals dismissed the case citing the Appellant's lack of standing. The appellate court concluded that the Appellants failed to prove that vacating EPA's approval would lead automakers to build more gasoline-powered cars and thereby restore demand for liquid fuels. It was further held that the causal link between the EPA action and the alleged injury was too speculative.

However, the Supreme Court disagreed with the above view. The majority was of the opinion that the producers had established all three elements of Article III standing: injury, causation, and redressability. There was a clear reduced demand for liquid fuels due to California's regulations. Further, Causation was also satisfied as EPA's approval of the regulations enabled the stricter standards that suppressed demand. On the element of redressability, the Court was of the opinion that mere "likelihood" that the relief would mitigate harm was sufficient to satisfy the standard. The majority was of the opinion that invalidating EPA's approval would remove California's authority to impose those requirements, likely leading automakers to have more flexibility in vehicle production, which in turn could alleviate some of the economic loss to the producers.

The Court categorically rejected the argument for high redressability standard as demanding a proof of how every market actor might respond would set the bar for standing too high and undermine judicial review of regulatory decisions. Accordingly, the Supreme Court overturned the D.C. Circuit's decision and held that the fuel producers do have standing to challenge EPA's approval of California's rules.

New York City's FARE Act Targets Fairer Rentals with New Broker Fee Rules

The New York City Council has instituted the Fairness in Apartment Rental Expenses (FARE) Act, a law designed to change the ways broker commissions are handled in residential rental situations. The Act identifies several key goals including 1) shift of fee burden; 2) decreased move-in costs for tenants; 3) transparency in pricing and; 4) fairer market practice.

The Act requires the Party who hires the services of a broker to pay the broker fee. Traditionally, tenants were forced to pay hefty broker commissions even when they had not engaged the broker themselves. This ensures that payment obligations are aligned with the actual beneficiary of the broker's services. Further, renting apartments requires tenants to pay several months' rent in advance, in addition to security deposit payments and any broker fees. The Act alleviates any unforeseen broker expenses, greatly reducing the immediate financial burden when moving, while also making it more affordable to rent housing.

The Act furthers the goal of transparency by mandating landlords to disclose all tenant-facing fees up front and also not to charge hidden commissions shortly before tenants move into an apartment. With initial disclosure of expected pricing to rent a unit, tenants can make more informed and prudent rental decisions while also planning for more definitive moving cost calculations.

Lastly, the Act achieves its overarching goal of ensuring fair market practices by creating a level playing field between tenants and landlords in one of America's most expensive markets. Further, the law limits predatory practices by designating who pays for brokerage services, and provides standardisation in the rental process. It is expected that this will encourage better ethics for brokers, reduce predatory behaviour, and strengthen the rental ecosystem.

The Act received immediate pushback from real estate groups. Brokers and the New York Real Estate Board sought legal relief to block the ban. However, the District Court for the Southern District of New York allowed the city to implement enforcement measures under agencies such as the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP), which aims to protect and improve the daily economic lives of New York residents.

Furthermore, emerging reports suggest that initial market signals have been mixed. Several landlords and brokers have attempted to create loopholes by offering “off-platform shadow deals”, or quoting dual prices depending on a tenant’s willingness to pay the broker fee. Reports have also flagged a sharp spike in advertised rents as landlords recalibrated pricing to absorb broker commissions.

Propagators of the Act contend that it promotes fairness because it shifts the payment responsibility to the party who actually hires the agent and saves tenants substantial move-in-costs as a result. Critics, however, argue that landlords will just incorporate commissions into monthly rents, thereby reversing tenant savings, and possibly speeding rent inflation. Accordingly, it will be up to regulatory enforcement and local market participants' conduct to determine whether the Act is successful. beha.

Case Study: The European Housing Crisis

Affordable housing is increasingly becoming a concern in Europe as younger generations find themselves often unable to own homes. As per European Parliament data, in 2024, housing costs in the EU exceeded 40% of the disposable income for 9.8% of households in EU cities and 6.3% of households in rural areas. The problem is more acute in urban areas where skyrocketing prices keep homes out of reach.

A survey conducted by Eurocities Pulse Mayors recently revealed that the urban housing crisis in Europe has, after climate action, become the second most pressing concern for mayors across nations. Only an alarming 14% of mayors believe that housing is affordable in their respective cities. Nearly half of all mayors surveyed believed that affordable housing remains a “serious risk”. This is because of a variety of factors including rising urban demand, escalating construction costs and limited supply of land as a finite resource.

Mayors across Europe have been calling for a European Affordable Housing Plan, along with support for public-private partnerships and incentives for sustainable building solutions. Their primary contention is that EU level action is required including a fast-tracked EU fund due to growing inequalities which threaten urban stability. Budgetary restrictions in particular have forced several mayors across cities to cut back on critical investments in housing, infrastructure and climate adaptation.

The survey therefore even underscores how urban governance tends to get compromised dur to shrinking resources. Despite the same, as per the survey, 64% of mayors are optimistic about their city's economy, while only 31% express confidence in national economies. With respect to the demand for increased involvement by the EU, 33% of mayors found EU funds easier to access as compared to regional or national financing.

The survey indicates in general a much wider tension in urban law and development in Europe. The primary problem is that while cities are on the frontline of social crises, they still lack fiscal autonomy and regulatory authority to respond and deal with the same effectively. Since urban housing crises have differential impact across classes, it also becomes a question of social inclusion alongside urban planning and democracy. A growing tendency towards centralisation as against local decision-making has also been criticised by several mayors.

The crux revealed by the survey ultimately is that when faced with the problem of urban housing, mayors across Europe are placing lesser trust in their national governments and more optimistic about the role that EU can play in reducing bureaucracy and empowering cities directly.

Affordable housing in India also reflects similar challenges as are being seen in Europe now. The pace of urbanisation in India has increased exponentially and presents a particular challenge of provisioning affordable housing to middle and low-income groups. Unlike the issues of aging housing stock in some European cities, the Indian challenge is rooted in scarcity and high land costs, pushing property prices in metropolitan hubs like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore beyond the reach of the common citizen. This further leads to problems such as low and middle-income groups having to live in the outskirts of urban centres and bearing the cost of a long commute as well as the cropping up of more and more illegal settlements.The government has launched ambitious schemes, such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), aimed at achieving "Housing for All," yet the implementation faces hurdles including funding shortages, slow approvals, and issues with land acquisition.

URBAN GOVERNANCE AND THE NEED FOR LOCALLY-LED CLIMATE ACTION PLANS

Urban development needs to work hand in hand with climate goals and this has been the highlight of a demand put forth by a coalition of European mayors which urges the European Commission to adopt a binding target of 90% domestic emissions reduction by 2040. A joint letter was sent to the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and other senior officials of the Commission by leaders from Milan, Oslo, Copenhagen, among other cities which represent networks like C40, CEMR, ICLEI Europe and Eurocities. The letter emphasised climate neutrality as a "strategic imperative".

Similarly, a report created by Local Alliance, a coalition of European urban networks, has warned that Social Climate Plans are being drafted while sidelining local authorities, the consequence of which could be undermining of the vast EU Social Climate Fund. The fund's endeavour is to minimise the social ramifications of decarbonisation policies, particularly the Emissions Trading System (ETS2). It aims to achieve the same by supporting energy efficiency, sustainable mobility and protecting vulnerable households.

European cities have been efficient in giving effect to aims stated under the Paris Agreement and yet they lack the supportive frameworks and resources from national as well as EU institutions. The mayors have thus argued that a science-based 2040 oriented framework could assist in providing long term certainty for business and accelerate innovation while simultaneously keeping in mind green goals. Another insistence has been with regards to the inclusion of decarbonisation in the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework. The Local Alliance report also found widespread failures which highlighted that even small-scale superficial online surveys were conducted without consultation with local authorities. It is pertinent to note here that this could reflect similar mistakes as were made in the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility, where limited local involvement led to poor or non-resolution of territory specific issues.

The central issue with respect to these developments is with regards to governance. Essentially, the regulations of the EU Social Climate Fund mandate consultation with local and regional authorities but it does not translate into practice. The report, also similarly, emphasised the need for a structured and formal collaboration at all stages including planning, implementation and monitoring as well as a direct funding stream to municipalities. This would also call for an alignment of Social Climate Fund measures with local plans such as Sustainable Urban Mobility plans and Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans.

This discourse in Europe also resonates with policy formulation rationales in India where urban climate policies are increasingly local and which indicate a move towards recognising the significance of city-specific programmes. These include Indore's solid waste management reforms and Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan. The latter in particular has been successful in reducing heatwave induced deaths by adopting multifarious measures to resolve problems that are specific and unique to the city. Projects such as the Smart Cities Mission and the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation 2.0 also underscore India's city-led schemes initiatives.

The takeaway across jurisdictions in Europe and India therefore appears to be that for effective urban policies combatting climate change, the deliberation and implementation of the policies needs to be locally driven rather than following a top-down approach.

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The European Mayors' Letter for Binding 2040 Climate Targets

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The letter brings to light a structural paradox. While cities are the primary source of emissions, they can also lead in green initiatives but these remain restricted by top-down national policies and limited funding. City mayors insist on a multi-level governance structure with focus on city-led initiatives recognising cities as an important part of the solution and not merely the source of the problem.

Similar initiatives have been undertaken in India which indicate a move towards recognising the significance of city-specific and locally led programmes. These include Indore's solid waste management reforms and Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan. The latter in particular has been successful in reducing heatwave induced deaths by adopting multifarious measures to resolve problems that are specific and unique to the city.

Across the jurisdictions of India and Europe, a similar dilemma is evident with respect to climate change related initiatives which is whether to centralise policies' implementation or to empower locally driven action. The European mayors' letter then is not merely about EU's climate change targets but also about urban governance laws and how the same ought to be structured and implemented.

Alarm Over an International Health Financing Crisis.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has raised a red flag over the so-called health financing emergency, which underscores the impending threats of health systems in the world due to drastic funding reductions by the richer countries.

In a press conference in Geneva, WHO Director of Health Financing and Economics, Dr. Kalipso Chalkidou, already cautioned that decisions by the United States, many governments in Europe and the European Union agencies to freeze or cut aid are already destabilizing international and domestic healthcare programmes. WHO projections indicate a 40 percent decrease in health spending worldwide this year -to 15 billion Down to less than 25 billion in 2023-the lowest in one decade.

The funding gap is especially threatening to developing countries particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where foreign aid tends to surpass domestic health expenditure. In some nations such as Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, US-funded programmes comprise as much as 30 per cent of national health funding. As the debt burdens continue to skyrocket as many states spend more on debt servicing than health, it is not possible to reallocate resources. The crisis is already being experienced through large-scale interruptions in vital health services and WHO reports service failures on a scale not experienced since the peak of the COVID-19 disease.

The effects of reduction in aid are immense. Decline in external funding poses a threat to immunisation efforts, maternal health programs and the struggle against infectious diseases, putting the gains of global health in hard-earned reversal. WHO warns that this may reverse the gains made in the quest to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) and increase disparities between the rich and the poor countries.

WHO is in turn, promoting a transition to non-dependence on aid. It advises on enhancing domestic revenue mobilisation by enacting taxation changes, especially the implementation of health taxes on tobacco and alcohol, and liaising with multilateral banks to lend at low interest rates to make investments in the cost-effective healthcare sector. Also, it is anticipated that the forthcoming International Conference on Financing the Development in Seville will act as a platform that will encourage new international commitments to prevent this pending crisis.

Case Study: Gaps in Rural Healthcare -The Struggle of Indian Sub-Centres.

Introduction

The rural system of healthcare in India is built around sub-centres (SCs) that in many cases are the initial contact point of the community. Nevertheless, a recent survey undertaken by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 19 districts in seven states has revealed severe weaknesses in their response to common non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like hypertension and diabetes.

What is this Development?

Findings published in Indian journal of medical research (IJMR) revealed that only 40 percent of the 105 SCs surveyed were prepared to work with these conditions. Worryingly, medicines were often out of stock: almost a third of centres experienced stock-outs of metformin, and a quarter of centres stocked out of amlodipine, with stock-outs taking between one and seven months. Although tertiary facilities like government medical colleges were better supplied, rural populations still lack adequate healthcare with Community Health Centres (CHCs) also being underprovided because of physician shortages (82%), surgeon shortages (83%) as were noted in the 2020321 rural health statistics.

Relevance of the Development

The ICMR-INDIAB study highlights the increasing infiltration of NCDs into India rural which was considered a rapidly urban problem. Lifestyle, bad eating habits and lack of awareness have popularized diabetes and hypertension in villages. The number of adults with diabetes is already the second highest in the world in India, and hypertension is also increasing. Being unable to receive early-stage diagnosis and treatment at SCs, patients are in danger of serious complications that might have been avoided with ease. Impact of the Development

The results point to an organizational disparity in the process of Universal Health Care (UHC) in India. Although the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Programme aims to enhance Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC), there are still challenges that are experienced at the grassroots. Shortages of medicine and human resources are a threat to health equity, increasing the urban-rural gap. The positive facet of the study is a clear roadmap: strengthening SCs with sufficient drug resources, training paramedical personnel, and providing specialists at higher-level plants.

Conclusion

As described in this case study, the occurrence of systemic bottlenecks at the smallest level of healthcare delivery can undermine national health objectives. The need to make SCs stronger is not just a logistical need, but the crux of the business of safeguarding millions of people against the ripple impacts of untreated NCDs as well as guaranteeing that India is devoted to providing affordable, accessible healthcare to all its population.

AI in Healthcare: New Global Ethical Principle.

On 26 June 2025, the first of six major global patient, physician, nurse, pharmacist, hospital and pharmaceutical industry leading international health organizations endorsed the first joint principle on the responsible use of health data and technology, including artificial intelligence (AI).

This principle is made the fifth pillar of the International Consensus Framework of Ethical Collaboration (ICF), which was developed in 2014 with the aim to facilitate ethical, transparent, and accountable collaboration throughout the global health ecosystem. ICF already focuses on patient-first, ethical research and innovation, autonomy in decision-making, and transparency.

The digital health and AI role are on the rise, which is reflected in the new principle. It focuses on independence, data stewardship and collective responsibility, so innovation in healthcare continues to be based on trust, compassion, and dignity.

The principle was an achievement to global leaders. Ronald Lavater, the CEO of the International Hospital Federation, observed that individual hospitals and interested parties cannot be left to grapple with fast-changing developments in the health technology and joint action is crucial. According to Howard Catton, the CEO of the International Council of Nurses, data and technology has the potential to revolutionize care, but ethical concerns must regulate the implementation and beneficiators of this trend.

The groups of patients were central in the development of the principle. Dani Mothci, who is the CEO of the International Alliance of Patients Organizations, emphasized that it protects the rights of the patients in the digital era and urged the patient organizations across the world to join hands and make efforts to implement it.

The introduction of this principle highlights one of the global unanimities: with AI and health data becoming more central to care provision, ethical collaboration should follow suit. The ICF strives to make sure that ultimately, technology can serve patients first by combining technology with accountability and compassion.

Dark Clinics to Solar-powered Care: how Mizoram transformed healthcare.

In Mizoram, power cuts had previously been life threatening in rural healthcare. Patient stories of deaths caused by a power shortage of oxygen concentrators or spoiled vaccines in lengthy blackouts were widespread, particularly in remote and hilly regions where landslides and storms tended to disrupt the grid.

To deal with this, the Mizoram government collaborated with the SELCO Foundation in its Energy for Health (E4H) programme in 2023 with the assistance of the IKEA Foundation, and others. The goal of the initiative was to have blanket solar electrification of health centres in the state. Since, more than 300 out of 443 Mizoram sub-centres are now solar-powered, with an aim of covering the remaining by 2025, so that rural healthcare will be nearly 100 per cent renewable.

The programme implements the Decentralised Renewable Energy (DRE) systems i.e. solar panels, batteries and controllers which are to deliver autonomy to last several days even in harsh conditions. The 443 centres have also trained health workers who can operate and maintain the systems and local electricians, youth have been hired to offer first-response services forming a community-owned maintenance model.

These findings have been revolutionizing. In border towns such as Hnahlan and Ajasora, Primary Health Centres (PHCs) have continuous services, such as oxygen supply and safe childbirth with the help of solar-powered lights, warmers, and vaccine storage. Patients who previously had to live without the use of candles have been blessed with dependable, weather-proof energy sources.

According to state officials, it is not just solarisation. It is a transition to the resilient and decentralised systems of public health that are sensitive to the needs of vulnerable populations. By enabling health centres to have renewable energy Mizoram is not only lowering its reliance on unstable grids but also making history in offering sustainable delivery of healthcare services to the most remote areas in India.

ENERGY WATCH

CERC's Recent Order in HPX Case Highlights Governance Dilemmas in the Power Exchange Market

A recent order of the CERC brings to fore a critical conundrum with respect to India's evolving power market which concerns the interplay of regulatory compliance with enabling new power exchanges to stabilise operations. In the issue before the authority, Hindustan Power Exchange (HPX) had sought multiple extensions to ensure compliance with Regulation 17 of the Power Market Regulations, 2021 (PMR 2021) which deals with the appointment of a Managing Director and Independent Directors.

The core dilemma in this case was about PMR 2021 regulations which seek to balance shareholder and independent oversight in order to safeguard transparency and neutrality. HPX, unable to comply, cited several reasons for non-compliance, particularly in its capacity as a new entrant in the market, such as market infancy, board-level fluctuations and difficulty in employing senior professionals. CERC expressed concern and disappointment that despite interim relaxations having been granted, there was still considerable delay by HPX in ensuring compliance.

Ultimately, HPX informed the Commission that it had finalized the appointment of Mr. Harish Saran—a veteran of NTPC, PTC India, and Power Grid Corporation—as its Managing Director, with joining scheduled by June 2025. The authority accorded approval to HPX's proposal for the appointment of the Managing Director in terms of Regulation 17(3) of the PMR 2021. It also mandated that power exchanges must have a Managing Director who is part of the Board of Directors, along with Independent Directors who are at least equal in number to the Shareholder Directors with the Managing Director counted as Shareholder Director for this purpose.

This case underscores the dilemma facing regulatory authorities, particularly in the energy sector, about aligning compliance with market realities. The energy sector in India is especially dynamic with consistent emergence of new innovation and new entrants. Rigorous and stringent regulatory compliance can then become a veritable entry barrier to the market. This case reveals that a delicate balance needs to be ensured between stringent regulatory governance structures and appreciating the dynamic, evolving, and innovative nature of the energy sector.

India's Energy Transition Story

The energy sector in India is metamorphosing at a rapid pace and a recent background note issued by the Press Information Bureau highlights achievements as well as challenges in this growth story. The pivotal issue which persists is that while there has been considerable improvement by leaps and bounds in eliminating power shortages and increasing renewable energy, the dependence on thermal power has remained constant. It is primarily coal which still is the source of more than half of the installed capacity.

With respect to installed capacity, it rose from 305 GW to 476 GW between 2014 and 2025. Simultaneously during this time renewable energy nearly tripled to 226.9GW. The primary reason for this has been an increase in solar and wind energy resources. Solar energy alone has crossed 110 GW. The impetus behind this change has also been government schemes such as PM-Surya Ghar (which provides rooftop solar mechanisms for households), PM-KUSUM (a scheme which assists farmers by providing them with solar pumps), and the Solar Parks Scheme. Further, India has also launched initiatives such as the National Green Hydrogen Mission, increased hydropower, bioenergy and nuclear capacity – all of which endeavour to cement India's position as a global clean-energy hub.

India's global relevance in the energy sector is also emphasised by the press note. India ranks fourth in renewable energy installed capacity and third in solar. However, it is the structural overdependence on coal which continues to strain India's ventures towards shaping a renewable energy-focused future. There have been coal reforms which have reduced imports, but the burden of emissions and the consequent environmental harms remain a critical concern.

Other than the coal issue, equitable access is another important aspect of the growing energy sector in India. The government has sought to increase inclusive access. Over 2.8 crore households have been given electricity connections and per capita consumption has risen by approximately 46%. There are also initiatives such as PM JANMAN which aim to bring renewable access to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

Ultimately, it is evident that India's energy sector is growing and improving rapidly, in terms of capacity, clean energy, as well as equitable access. Nonetheless, central dependence on coal is a problem which necessitates greater reforms which could push India closer to its 2030 targets of 500 GW non-fossil capacity and net-zero emissions.

Punjab's Land Pooling Policy 2025

On 4 June, 2025, Punjab government notified the Punjab Land Pooling Policy, 2025 to promote planned and sustainable development. Under the policy, farmers can voluntarily offer their land development in return for a residential plot and commercial site in lieu of one acre of land. The policy aims to get rid of exploitation of farmers and to provide them with absolute choice as to whether to give their land to the government or keep it. It also minimizes the role of private developers as the land will be given to the government directly and the process could only proceed with the written consent of the concerned farmer.

The government after receiving the land will develop it at its expense and return a share to the farmers, depending on the quantum of contribution, with complete amenities, increasing the value of the land significantly. The policy envisages a return of a 1,000 square yard residential plot, and a 200 square yard commercial plot of fully developed land in lieu of one acre of land, among other benefits. Though the policy is not entirely new, having been introduced under the previous Akali-BJP administration in Mohali, the new policy retains the structure of returns and expands its reach significantly, initially covering 27 cities and towns.

However, environmental concerns have been flagged in the policy's introduced changes. One of the major concerns is the unregulated pace of urbanization when the already existing infrastructure in urban cities falls short of adequate standards. With Punjab facing persisting issues like groundwater depletion, waste-management failures, overflowing landfills and untreated sewage alongside other ecological vulnerabilities, the unchecked urbanization of fertile farm lands is deemed to be ill-conceived.

Moreover, the policy has been flagged for lack of provisions for environmental clearance, on cap on land conversion per district, on timeline of assessment and on adequate grievance redressal mechanisms. It remains to be seen how the policy will be implemented and what consequences its notification will bring about.

Guidelines for tree-felling in the national capital by the Delhi High Court

Delhi High Court issued directions in its order in June 2025, relating to tree felling. The court was deciding on a contempt plea for non-compliance of judicial orders by tree officials of directions issued by the court on 8 April 2022 which required them to clearly spell out reasons for permitting the felling of trees, inspection of the concerned trees along with photographs of each tree.

While deciding on the plea, the court issued various directions to ensure the effective implementation of the standard operating procedure (SOP) on felling or transplantations of trees. Heading the single-judge bench, Justice Jasmeet Singh ordered strict compliance with the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994 and added another layer of tree protection to the same.

It was directed that the Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF) or tree officer must be involved at the planning stage of the project itself which involved tree felling or transplantation in the national capital. The applicant seeking such felling or transplantation would file an affidavit undertaking to take care of the compensatory planted trees for 5 years including watering, maintenance and general upkeep. The trees must not be less than 6 feet in height, have a nursery life of 5 years and a collar girth of not less than 10 cms, and should not be pruned heavily.

The authorities, including the tree officer, should consider the total number of applications made by the proponent of the particular project and the total footfall of the project on the environment and not just the site in question besides the availability of alternative sites. The officer must also account for the overall impact of the project on the green cover in the neighborhood, the age of trees and the ecosystem supported by them and the possibility of tree(s) surviving transplantation.

The court held it to be an issue of the rights of Delhi citizens under Article 21 of the Constitution to live in a clean and pollution free environment.

Finally, Justice Jasmeet Singh also confirmed a previous order by him in Decembe 2024 that the permission granted by the DCF for felling of 50 or more trees must be approved by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

Thus, the order further strengthened the procedure for felling of trees both by reiteration of previous directions and issuing new ones.

Urban Green Policy approved by Lucknow Cabinet

On 20 June 2025, the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approved the urban green policy for the state to promote sustainable and eco-friendly urban development and growth by facilitating setting up of parks and gardens. The policy was proposed by the Urban Development Department of the state government and aims to reduce the impact of climate change in urban areas by the development of vertical gardens, rooftop gardens, and Miyawaki forests – selective tree planting. At the city level, dense mini-forests will be created for growth of green spaces and at the building level, new constructions will be mandated to meet green building standards, using eco-friendly materials, energy-saving technologies and green roofs.

At the same time, green fairs would be organized to boost green initiatives, develop green belts, sponge parks and low emission zones.

The policy will be implemented in three phases. In the first phase (2025-2027) the focus will be on smart cities and major metro areas. In the second phase (2027-2030), focus will be on cities with a population of over one lakh and in the third phase (after 2030), it will cover all municipalities and nagar panchayats.

Financial assistance has also been provided for by coordination between the centre and the state government. It may be procured from Amrut 20.0, national clean air programme and finance commissions. Moreover, a green city monitoring framework will be set up for ranking the state's cities as 'green +', 'green ++', 'green +++' on the basis of green initiatives, with awards for cities with high ranks.

Read more about the urban green policy here.

Guwahati Smart City Project: Harnessing Digital Infrastructure for Sustainable Growth

Introduction

Being the capital of Assam, Guwahati is an ancient city that has gradually developed into a prominent administrative and commercial centre of Northeast India. With its strategic location by the Brahmaputra River facing the Meghalaya foothills, much urban expansion has been seen especially after the capital of Assam moved from Shillong to Dispur in 1972. The development of the city is also significant in connecting and facilitating the economic advancement of the entire region as it is a vital gateway to Northeast India and a possible corridor to Southeast Asia. The city has also identified itself as a major treasure trove into Southeast Asia in alignment with India's Act East Policy.

Guwahati Smart City Limited (GSCL) is implementing the required digital infrastructure and smart city initiatives to improve urban living and connectivity. The entire project in Guwahati gets direction from national policy imperatives like the Digital India Initiative and National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP), which are critical to Guwahati's metamorphosis into a smart city. This blog highlights the GSCL role, key challenges in urban development, and recommendations for laying improved infrastructure toward building an efficient and sustainable city.

The Guwahati Smart City Project (GSCL)

As Guwahati is getting urbanized, the Guwahati Smart City project, launched in 2016 by Guwahati Smart City Limited (GSCL) is focused on planning, implementing and monitoring projects which incorporates technology to infrastructure, services and overall liveability. The project aims to modernize the city through digital infrastructure, e-governance, intelligent traffic management and sustainable urban development. Area-based development including retrofitting, redevelopment and greenfield development is the core of this initiative addressing population density, land allotment and stakeholder management. With focus on sustainable urban growth, the Smart Cities Mission envisions Guwahati as an inclusive, economically vibrant and technologically advanced city catering to the needs of its diverse and growing population.

The smart city development in Guwahati has three levels of feasibility: very high, high and average.

Very high feasible areas are Northern and Central areas. Northern Region located along Brahmaputra River is well developed with strong infrastructure including water supply, sanitation, flood management and efficient traffic system. Commercial hubs like Pan Bazar and Fancy Bazar are the main areas here. Central Region which is housing the capital of Assam, Dispur is a planned area with government offices, residential areas and markets like Beltola is very important part of the city's development.

High feasible areas are in Eastern and Western parts of the city. Eastern Region is home to Bamunimaidan industrial belt and Gauhati Refinery and faces challenges like flash floods and landslides but has potential due to industrial base. Western Region is expanding especially in education with institutions like Gauhati University and Assam Engineering College. This area is developing fast due to open spaces and suburban character.

Average feasible areas are in Southern part of the city. These areas though faces issues like landslides, water scarcity and poor connectivity are growing due to strategic infrastructure projects like new bus terminals and trade centres aimed at decongesting the city's core. Though these areas faces more challenges, they have potential for smart city expansion with proper investment and planning.

Challenges in the Smart City Project

Soaring goals set against significant hurdles to its success, as the NITI Aayog Report in 2022 indicated, of the ₹3.96 billion allocated for Smart City development in Guwahati, a substantial amount was still lying unspent until 2022. Of this, a total outlay of ₹22.56 billion a five-year budget, required contributions of the Central and State governments of ₹5 billion each, urban local bodies, and external sources. On the other hand, Guwahati is falling behind in the race to meet the Smart City objectives owing to delays in use of funds and execution of projects.

Drainage and Flooding Issues

The key barrier to the metamorphosis of Guwahati is its insufficient drainage infrastructure. Poor drainage planning and encroachment of natural wetlands have aggravated waterlogging and flash floods in the city, especially during monsoons.

The situation has further deteriorated with rapid urbanization as natural flood plains and water bodies such as the Deepor Beel have been encroached upon for construction. The Sisalko Beel restoration project was proposed and implemented in mitigating the floods, however more investments are required for complete and comprehensive flood control.

Traffic Bottlenecks and Mobility Limitations

Another chronic challenge is traffic congestion. Launched in 2022, the Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS) applies automated signals, surveillance cameras and violation detection systems to regulate traffic at 45 key junctions. However, the execution was thwarted by mismanagement. Technosys Security System Private Limited, which was blacklisted in Madhya Pradesh and terminated in Ghaziabad for installing Chinese-manufactured cameras and overcharging for the project, was awarded the contract. Malfunctions in the project after midnight have further entangled traffic management, causing dissatisfaction among the public ,notes the report.

Moreover, factors like illegal roadside parking and ineffective public transport networks as well as poorly-designed road networks create congestion. With 40% of vehicles parked on the road, congesting Guwahati, studies have time and again pointed out that the traffic crisis is at an all-time high. To solve mobility issues, experts do recommend having underground parking facilities at spaces, an efficient city bus service, bicycle lanes and metro connectivity for these concerns.

Administrative Structure and Governance

There are various administrative bodies involved in the governance and implementation of smart city initiatives in Guwahati. Guwahati is served by two key organizations focused on urban governance: the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) and the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA). Together they shape the city's infrastructure, urban planning and service delivery, but also face challenges from the division of responsibilities and coordination between different agencies.

Guwahati Municipal Corporation is formed under Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act 1971.

As defined in Section 6 of the Gauhati Municipal Corporation Act, 1971, its work involves the urban civic management, including services such as waste disposal, street maintenance, tax collection etc. It is a help for making services convenient and easier for the citizens to access the essential civic amenities. GMC, however, still struggles with a lack of trained personnel that impacts its function.

The GMDA was constituted under the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority Act, 1985, which provides a relatively wide jurisdiction on urban planning including infrastructure, water supply, drainage and housing. GMDA is also the nodal agency for executing the city's Master Plan as per the provisions of Chapter 3 of Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority Act, 1985 for controlled urban expansion. But sometimes the overlap of duties among GMC and GMDA leads to delays and inefficiencies. The GDD is created to coordinate these two agencies and assist the efforts of other state/ central government supported schemes such as the Basic Services to Urban Poor (BSUP) and Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)

Other than these agencies, the execution of Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS) by the Assam government is a major step towards improving urban traffic management using technology. It planned to utilize an Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS), initially for intersection automated control at 20 out of a total of 344 junctions before the model shifted to a total of 45 junctions in 2016. However, widespread scepticism over its efficacy indicates that even more work needs to be done in order to reach successful implementation.

Recommendations

To realise its Smart City vision, Guwahati requires a set of strategic reforms:

·Integrated Urban Planning — A consolidated urban transport policy covering GMC, GMDA, the Transport Department and Traffic Police at the stage of urban planning can be provided to avoid steps in urban infrastructure development which are not coordinated.

·Better Drainage System – Restoration of wetland areas such as Deepor Beel, post-monsoon drain cleaning and eco-friendly urban planning improve flooding risks in Guwahati.
·Smart Mobility Solutions – The development of metro rail system, dedicated bus corridors and non-motorised transport (NMT) options like bicycle lanes, pedestrian-friendly zones can help decongest roads.
·Increased Public Participation — E-governance platforms and local governance mechanisms facilitate citizen engagement and enhance the effectiveness and transparency of policies.
·Sustainable Waste Management – Innovations in waste-to-energy plants and scientific landfill management could revolutionise urban waste handling.

Conclusion

Guwahati Smart City Project aims to develop the city into a tech smart, sustainable and liveable urban center. There are, however, ubiquitous challenges: drainage, traffic, urban finances, inter-agency collaboration, etc. Through the integration of digital solutions, public engagement, and long-term urban planning, Guwahati can become the model Smart City in Northeast India. Programmatic areas that will take precedence within this domain include governance and localized financial accountability, as well as infrastructure development that can support sustainable expansion and a better life for city residents.

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