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# PRAJATANTRA 2022-23

## COMPENDIUM



# ABOUT PRAJATANTRA

Prajatantra was conceptualised as a platform for Indian youth to understand, examine and express urban governance. This National Youth Festival is designed to give participants an immersive experience of city governance where they get to role-play different wings of a Municipal Corporation. Prajatantra especially encourages youth to critically analyse local issues and present their vision for the 'Model City Governance'.

Initially, Prajatantra began its journey four years ago. Back then it was more of a local event with participation from Mumbai-based colleges. Over the years, Prajatantra has evolved as the forum where youth can engage with experts to get insights into various subjects under urban governance such as Municipal Finance, and e-Governance in our thematic Knowledge Sessions. And competitive events based on the functioning of Municipal Corporation procedures e.g. Mayor speech, Policy debate, and Policy Presentation facilitate participants to think, examine and impart their considerations and insights on issues of urban governance and form and deliberate on policies.

Prajatantra 2022-23 is the fourth edition of the festival and was organised by Praja Foundation in association with NIUA. Truly a national event, 216 teams comprising 1385 participants enrolled for Prajatantra 2022-23. Collectively they represented 23 States, 5 Union Territories and 79 Indian cities. The Quarter Finale and Semi Finale of Prajatantra were successfully organised in August 2022 and September 2022. 75 National Youth Champions will present their vision for the 'Model City Government' in the Grand Finale of Prajatantra 2022-23 which is featured in the National Youth Conclave organised jointly by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports under G20 forum.

This milestone reaffirms the significance and potential of this forum to mobilise young minds across India and help them to understand the importance of the functioning of urban local governments. Equipped with the right knowledge and tools will increase youth's capacity to actively participate in governance and engage with cities as the leaders of the future.

# Message by Hardeep Singh Puri

हरदीप एस पुरी  
HARDEEP S PURI



Message

आवासन और शहरी कार्य मंत्री  
पेट्रोलियम एवं प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्री  
भारत सरकार  
Minister of  
Housing and Urban Affairs; and  
Petroleum and Natural Gas  
Government of India

I note the passion and commitment of many young participants who took up the challenge of finding innovative solutions to contemporary urban challenges across 74 cities under the National Youth Festival organised by the Praja Foundation and National Institute of Urban Affairs. Your fresh perspective, creativity and energy hold great promise for the future. I congratulate everyone who participated in this event. I am certain that your ideas will re-energise conversations around urban development.

As India continues to rapidly urbanise, we need the Indian youth to come forward with creative solutions and a spirit of enterprise to ensure equitable and sustainable urban development. This is urgently needed as our cities will not only house more than 50% of the country's population by 2050, but also be responsible for more than 75% of its economic output.

The dynamic engagement of Indian youth in various fields such as academia, sports, innovation, and entrepreneurship continues to make India proud every day. In this period of 'Amrit Kaal', the youth will have a crucial role in the India's development journey.

I commend Praja Foundation and National Institute of Urban Affairs for establishing this participatory forum for youth across India. I am confident that this will continue to encourage younger generations to learn and engage in the governance of their cities.

New Delhi  
28.02.2023

  
(Hardeep S Puri)

It makes me extremely happy to introduce this book, a comprehensive collection of testimonials and articles on Indian democracy and government, written by our future leaders, the youth of this country. This document is put together by the Praja Foundation and National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), as a part of Prajatantra 2022-23, with the aim of providing a platform for diverse voices and perspectives on these important issues.

Democracy and governance are essential to the operation of every society, including India. When it comes to democracy and governance, India has a unique set of issues as a country with a vast and rich past. It is, nevertheless, a country with enormous potential and the ability to overcome these obstacles.

Democracy and governance are essential to the operation of every society, including India. When it comes to democracy and governance, India has a unique set of issues as a country with a vast and rich past. It is, nevertheless, a country with enormous potential and the ability to overcome these obstacles.

This document includes contributions from all 75 of our finalist candidates, each with their own distinct thoughts and opinions on India's democracy and government. The relevance of public engagement in government, the problems of urban governance in India, and the need of developing democratic institutions are among the primary subjects discussed here.

We, at NIUA, think it is critical to offer forums for communication and debate on critical subjects such as democracy and governance. We think that materials like these will be useful in motivating more young citizens to participate actively in governance-related decisions.

I would like to congratulate all 75 young champions for their participation in Prajatantra and for beautifully communicating their ideas in this text for posterity. I would also want to thank the editorial team for their efforts in compiling this book.

Finally, I hope you will find this an interesting and thought-provoking read.

**Hitesh Vaidya**  
Director-NIUA



In recent years, we have seen a growing public aspiration for a better life. Cities have become magnets for youth who seek better educational and economic opportunities.

The rapid pace of urbanisation has only intensified the flow of migration from rural regions to urban areas. It is therefore essential that we harness this force of urbanisation to create resilient and inclusive cities where youth can fulfil their dreams.

Prajatantra is creating a process for students and colleges across India to understand city governance and take a step to participate in it. Praja Foundation believes that at the heart of urban transformation lies the need for youth to engage with the workings of local government more actively.

Over the long term, we would like to promote more youth leadership in local governance. Local governments play a crucial role in shaping the day-to-day lives of citizens. By participating in local governance, the young generation can take greater control of their lives and aspirations and contribute to the strengthening of grassroots democracy.

As we move forward, I am optimistic that the learnings from Prajatantra will continue to inspire young participants to engage with the government in a variety of ways. Whether through participation in electoral politics, preparing for civil services, consulting government agencies, or simply being more active citizens, there are countless ways in which youth can make a meaningful impact in shaping the future of their cities and communities.

This compendium is going to be a repository that documents the vision of 'The Model City Government' shared by the finalists. I encourage all finalists to take an active role in achieving the vision they have presented.

**Nitai Mehta**  
Founder and Managing Trustee, Praja Foundation



# PRAJATANTRA AT A GLANCE

## QUARTER FINALE PARTICIPATION

1385 participants from 216 teams registered, representing 79 cities, 23 states and 5 Union Territories.

## SEMI FINALE PARTICIPATION

347 participants, representing 42 cities from 13 states and 4 UTS

## GRAND FINALE PARTICIPATION

75 National Youth Champions (Grand Finalists) representing, 20 cities from 16 states and 2 Union territories.

“It has been a pleasure to judge the Municipal Finance competition of Prajatantra 2022-23. I was surprised and happy to see Heavy number of participants in this national level Youth Festival. All the participants put good efforts in presenting their Municipal Finance Presentation although this topic is a little tricky to understand”.

**Sarika Nair, Consultatnt, Hasiru Dala (Judge) for Policy Presentation for Municipal Finance)**

“ Prajatantra is doing a good job of involving the curious, ambitious, intelligent and innovative youth in participating in governing and managing. I am privileged to be a part of it ”.

**Lubna Malik, Lecturer at Holy Cross Convent Junior College**

# Acknowledgement:

The success and growth of Prajatantra 2022-23 were only possible due to the sheer commitment of our stakeholders. As we conclude Prajatantra 2022-23, we would like to take the opportunity to express our gratitude towards every hand that has contributed to organising it.

First, we would like to thank the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs for believing in the vision of Prajatantra and guiding us to expand its scope at the national level. We would like to thank our panel of advisors. Their support and encouragement throughout the journey helped us to develop the vision for Prajatantra and work actively to achieve it.

Also extending our sincere thanks to Government Leaders, Political Leaders, and Experts from Civil Society and Academia who participated as the panellists for Knowledge Sessions and the event judges. Their engagement and expert feedback were crucial to provide knowledge-based support to Prajatantra and enhancing the capacity of participants to further engage in city governance

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the donors of the event, namely the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, ATE Chandra Foundation and Madhu Mehta Foundation whose generous support made it possible for us to organise this National Youth Festival.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the participants who participated in the festival and faculty coordinators who acted as a bridge between participants and the organising team. Participants are at the heart of this youth festival. Enthusiasm, energy, and creativity from participants strengthened the spirit of Prajatantra 2022-23

We want to express our appreciation to the Coordination Committee, all the Volunteers, Interns as well as Fellows from Praja’s Mumbai ER Fellowship 2022-23 (Cohort 4) & Srinagar Municipal Fellowship 2022-23 (Cohort-1) for their tireless commitment to ensuring that every aspect of the festival organisation was precise and excellent. Lastly, we would like to thank Praja’s Board of Trustees & Advisors and Staff who are the driving force behind the successful organisation and growth of Prajatantra 2022-23.

Last but not the least we would like to thank Somdyuti Datta Ray and Kiran Shaila Ramesh who helped in the creation of this Compendium. Once again, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of the Prajatantra Festival. Your support and dedication have made a lasting impact, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration in the years to come.

**Note: The contents of this publication are authored by the finalists of Prajatantra 2022-23. In no way, they can be taken to reflect the views of the Praja Foundation, NIUA, respective Ministries and other funders.**



# Hrishikesh Dahale

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“The way a city is run can have a significant impact on the quality of life for its citizens, hence it is crucial that local government adopt a comprehensive, futuristic approach to running the city. To keep a city dynamic and prosperous, it is essential to adopt new solutions and to comprehend the demands of all stakeholders.”

Hrishikesh Dahale is a student at Karve Institute of Social Service, Pune, Maharashtra, with a focus on urban and rural community development, slum beautification, and livelihood creation. He is well-versed in the fundamentals of community development, project management, and values-based social work practices. He recently received appreciation from the Ministry of Social Justice Empowerment for Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan 2022. In 2018 he was awarded the social media Maha-Mitra by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. In 2016, he established his own NGO, Love Care Share Foundation, Pune.

If elected as the mayor of my city, my top priority will be to serve my citizens with honesty and integrity, ensuring that the city prospers under my leadership. The role of the mayor is critical in overseeing the smooth and effective functioning of vital services in the city. I will work tirelessly to ensure that essential services such as waste management, transportation, and public safety are running efficiently.

As a mayor, I believe it is crucial to establish a clear vision for the city's future and motivate residents to collaborate in realizing it. I will work closely with other city officials to identify and prioritize community-specific issues such as recreation, public safety, and transportation. Effective communication will be key to my success as a leader, whether speaking in front of an audience or engaging with residents one-on-one.

As the mayor, I will also be responsible for overseeing urban development and civic participation. Prudent budget management will be one of my top priorities, ensuring that the city's resources are allocated efficiently and transparently. I will also represent the people's interests in agreements with other levels of government, ensuring that their voices are heard and their concerns addressed.

Given the intensifying environmental crises we face today, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, I believe it is my responsibility as a mayor to prioritize environmental and socio-economic issues in my city. I will work to establish sustainable practices that reduce our environmental footprint and ensure that our city remains a healthy and vibrant place to live.

Furthermore, I believe that good governance is the cornerstone of effective leadership. I will strive to ensure that the municipal corporation operates with transparency and accountability, engaging with residents and community organizations to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are met.

In conclusion, it will be an honour to lead this city, and I look forward to working with all the bodies in the municipal corporation and sharing our best practices towards the betterment of the city. As a mayor, I will work tirelessly to serve my citizens with honesty and integrity, ensuring that the city prospers under my leadership.



# Kamuni Vennela

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“A city’s progression shall be revolutionary when its institution of government strives to administer the prime conceivable services in accordance with the necessities of citizens combined with their resolute participation at every stage.”

Kamuni Vennela is a student at St. Francis College for Women Hyderabad, Telangana, pursuing her Public Administration, Economics, and Political Science. She is a research enthusiast with interest in the field of music, reading, public speaking, and taekwondo. Being a good orator, she has won many prizes in elocution and extempore competitions including winning the second prize in the elocution competition organized by Raj Bhavan, Telangana on the topic of ‘Hyderabad Liberation Movement – Struggles and Sacrifices’ in 2022. She is also a part of two Guinness World Records in the field of Taekwondo achieved in 2014.

“A mayor is a symbol and a public face of what a city bureaucracy provides its citizens” – John Hickenlooper

A mayor is the first citizen of the city and plays a vital role in the municipal corporation. The experience I gained by being a part of Prajatantra 2022-2023 enabled me to get a comprehensive understanding of not only this fundamental position but also my city, Hyderabad, its current scenario, and the steps that I can adopt to enhance its infrastructure and the services delivered to the citizens by Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC).

As one of the fastest-growing economies, Hyderabad is a prospering metropolitan city in India. Nevertheless, just like any other developing city, it has its own challenges such as pollution, traffic and solid waste management. For this reason, there is a pressing necessity of bringing a new set of policies to triumph over the current challenges and magnify the prospects of making it a much worthier place.

To achieve this, firstly, the spirit of sustainable development can be ingrained in the steps taken by the municipal corporation. Promoting the use of CNG and electric vehicles as well as creating conducive road conditions for cycling can be very beneficial to the city.

Besides that, effective methods for solid waste management and rainwater harvesting will enable the citizens to have better living conditions.

Proper use of e-Governance and advancing it from time to time facilitates the efficient delivery of services by the municipalities. It makes the process simpler and faster. It can be an effective tool to build an advanced grievance redressal mechanism for citizens. This will eventually lead to refining the city into a vibrant civil society.

The need for the upgradation of the infrastructure of Hyderabad should be focused upon. Measures can be adopted to improve the conditions of government hospitals and educational institutions. The rehabilitation of the drainage system can prevent the problem of flooding and solar-powered water filtration technology will facilitate the purification of contaminated water.

Most importantly, there can be institutional reforms initiated to solve the complicated problems the city is facing and also accommodate its dynamic necessities.

A city is a place where new changes constantly take place. Hence, it would be the responsibility of the leaders in power to modify their approach and measures whenever the situation demands and deliver the best to the citizens.



# Linet Christina Thomas

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“I believe that effective city government should combine mayoral leadership with citizen participation. If not, the gap between the people and the leader will never be closed.”

Linet Christina Thomas is a student at Lords Universal College of Law, Mumbai, Maharashtra. She holds the position of Moot Court Committee Treasurer for her college. She is also the recipient of multiple awards in parliamentary debates, elocution competitions, and national moot court competitions. At the Hon'ble Justice D.R. Dhenuka 1st National Moot Court Competition, she was awarded 'Best Speaker' and Team Runners-Up. She also represented Mumbai at the 16th National Youth Parliament, sponsored by the Department of Student Development and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.

India is the largest democracy in the world; however, there are discrepancies in how democracy is practised at the grassroots level when it comes to city governance in certain cities. While democratic principles dictate that every citizen should have a say in how their city is run, the reality is different.

In Mumbai, for example, the mayor is simply a ceremonial head with no authority except for presiding over Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) meetings. This form of governance deprives citizens of a proper form of democracy. When citizens cannot elect their mayor, they may not be aware of who is in charge of their city. This lack of knowledge can have a significant impact on city governance. A mayor should be someone who possesses the qualities of a good leader and a listener who understands the needs of the people while being able to present tangible solutions. They should be capable of leading by example and motivating others.

A mayor with the authority to make decisions for the city and implement them is crucial. They should be able to bridge the gap between the people and the government, ensuring that the needs of the citizens are met. The mayor should be someone who is well-respected and can inspire confidence in the people. This is essential for building a stronger democracy at the grassroots level.

To address this democracy deficit in Indian cities, reforms are needed to give citizens more power in city governance. This could be done by allowing citizens to elect their mayors directly, giving them the power to make decisions for their city. It is also important to ensure that the mayor is held accountable for their actions, and citizens have the ability to voice their concerns.

In conclusion, a proper form of democracy is crucial for the effective governance of Indian cities. Mayors should have the authority to make decisions for their city, and citizens should have the power to elect their mayor. This will not only ensure that the needs of the citizens are met but also build a stronger democracy at the grassroots level.



# Madhumathi

M V

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“Building and maintaining a city is one of the most complex yet natural motivations for man. City governance to me is the basic strata of any society’s infrastructure and decides what the city can or cannot accommodate.”

Madhumathi M V. is a student at Women’s Christian College and History Department, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. She serves as the NSS President and editor of the college magazine and is part of the Literary, Debate and Histrionics club. Her interests include reading, journaling and public speaking. She has participated in many literary and oratory competitions organized by institutions such as The Asian Youth Centre, Tamil Development Department - Government of Tamil Nādu, The Australian Consulate, Indian Oil Corporation Limited etc. She has also worked as an intern with Teach for India and the Greater Chennai Corporation Chennai.

Cities are the engines of economic growth and development in India, and the key to their success lies in proper governance and planning. Mayors play a critical role in the functioning of civic bodies and have the responsibility of overseeing all aspects of city infrastructure, including waste collection and disposal, drainage systems, rainwater harvesting, road maintenance, and construction activities. The decisions made in civic body meetings have a significant impact on the fate of cities for years to come.

Cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata are among the top contributors to the Indian economy and have experienced rapid growth in the past few decades. However, their success has also led to problems such as mountain-like waste accumulation, poor drainage systems, unclear city planning, and people’s negligence. Civic bodies need to be proactive in addressing these issues to ensure sustainable development.

One of the biggest challenges faced by civic bodies is the lack of continuity in planning and implementation due to changes in government. Plans introduced by one government may not always be followed through by the opposition when they come to power. Additionally, budgetary constraints and lack of public cooperation can make it challenging to implement long-term plans.

Despite these challenges, civic bodies strive to strike a balance between maintaining existing infrastructure and building new entities for the future. In cities like Chennai, which have a rich history of development, mayors play a crucial role in maintaining and preserving infrastructure built during the colonial era, such as lakes, water tanks, and bunds, which continue to serve the city’s water needs.

In conclusion, the role of mayors in city governance cannot be overstated. They have the responsibility of ensuring that cities are well-planned, have robust infrastructure, and are sustainable in the long run. However, achieving these goals requires cooperation and coordination between civic bodies, governments, and the public. It is only through collective efforts that we can build cities that are not just economically prosperous but also livable and sustainable for future generations.



# Monis Rizwan

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“A city can never be governed by just a politician, it needs a sincere citizen, themselves having experienced the challenges faced by the city every day.”



Monis Rizwan is a student at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Belagavi, Karnataka. He is a member of the literary committee and a founding member of the college literary club. He also joined the college drama club - Masque Theatre Society, to pursue script writing but was encouraged to take up acting and improve his public speaking skills. He has also been associated with the Medical Students Association of India, a student run body affiliated to IMFSA, dedicated towards holistic learning and development of medical students.

The role of a mayor in a city is of utmost importance, as they are often referred to as the first citizen of the city. The responsibilities that come with this title are immense, and a mayor should not only govern the city but also identify and understand the hardships faced by citizens and the needs of the city as a whole. City governance gives an opportunity for representatives to interact with and listen to the members of their constituencies almost daily.

In my opinion, the ideal mayor should not see themselves as a leader, but as a facilitator for the upkeep of the city and its citizens. They should have knowledge of how to solve the city's governance issues, identify the city's resources, and employ them for the betterment of the region. One way to achieve this can be the promotion of public-private partnerships at a local level, especially in healthcare, sanitation, and transport.

It is crucial that the mayor is easily available to listen to the grievances of the citizens and provide regular feedback and public gatherings to reassure them. Before commissioning new projects, there needs to be an in-depth analysis of the city's infrastructure and utilization of public property to ensure that any problems pertaining to the pre-existing blueprint do not reoccur. A mayor should have an analytical and critical approach to the city government's revenue and expenditure and find new ways to increase revenue to be used in developmental schemes.

The mayor should be the overall link between the public and the governance. They must facilitate and promote communication between citizens and higher levels of the government. A mayor who can connect with the citizens and find practical solutions to the city's problems can make a significant difference in the lives of the people.

In conclusion, a mayor should be a facilitator who strives to connect the citizens and higher levels of government. They should have a critical and analytical approach to governance issues and employ the city's resources to address the needs of the people. They should be available to listen to the grievances of the citizens and provide regular feedback and public gatherings to reassure them. By promoting public-private partnerships and finding new ways to increase revenue, a mayor can improve the city's infrastructure and the overall well-being of its citizens.

# Ritika Singh

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“The True Democratic governance is doing what your people want not just what you want for your people”



Ritika Singh is a student at SGTB Khalsa College, University of Delhi, Delhi. Having travelled to various cities across India, she is curious about people, society, and religion and has a keen interest in Ethics, Philosophy, Human Psychology and Psephology. She has participated in many debates and believes the Prajatantra competition gave her the stage to sharpen her skills and knowledge on “how to run a city”.

I have come across various facts and ideas about managing a city while participating in the Mayor’s Speech Competition. To my understanding, the mayor is more than just the head of the municipal corporation. They must possess the ability to lead and work for the general good. While there are multiple reasons for India’s urban woes, appropriate changes in the mayor’s election policy could be the first reform.

The role of the mayor in urban governance is crucial, as they have the power to shape policies and make decisions that impact the lives of citizens. The mayor should possess not only the technical skills but also the leadership qualities required to lead and work for the general good. They should be vigilant, culturally aware, and committed to bringing incremental developments in urban city governance.

In the case of New Delhi, while the city has made progress in terms of governance and services imparted, there is a need for more pollution control and road safety policies. The city suffers from high levels of air pollution, which has a detrimental impact on public health. Road safety is also a major concern, with many citizens not adhering to traffic signals and speeding vehicles causing accidents and injuries. Therefore, strict control and enforcement of traffic rules are required.

Education and awareness-raising are also important in addressing socio-political issues. Citizens need to be aware of their civil rights and the impact of their actions on the community. Organizations like Praja can play a vital role in educating citizens on governance, socio-political problems, and solutions to these issues. Attending webinars and debates on these topics can help citizens to become more informed and engaged in the political process.

In conclusion, improving urban governance in India requires a multifaceted approach, with the mayor playing a central role in shaping policies and making decisions that benefit the community. Along with strict enforcement of traffic rules, education and awareness-raising on socio-political issues are essential to creating a more engaged and informed citizenry. By working together, citizens and policymakers can create a more livable and sustainable city.



# Samridhi

## Bharadwaj

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“A unit of governance which defines democracy in its truest form: of the people, for the people and by the people. An urban and modern form of Gandhian idea.”

Samridhi Bharadwaj is a student at the Tata Institute of Social Science, Guwahati, Assam. She considers herself to be an extrovert yet sensitive; successful while embracing kindness. She has grown up playing all kinds of sports like kabaddi, judo and karate at the state and national levels. She enjoys debating and occasionally writes to express herself. She is curious and has a penchant to learn as much as she can.

Cities are the engines of economic growth and development, and their success depends on good governance. The mayor plays a crucial role in overseeing the core functions of municipalities, such as water supply, sewerage, sanitation, and maintenance of roads, as well as the betterment of the city. In addition to the traditional core functions, the mayor also needs to focus on the development functions that aim to improve the quality of life for residents. This essay discusses the role of mayors in developing Indian cities and the challenges they face in fulfilling their responsibilities.

One of the primary responsibilities of mayors is to provide basic amenities to the residents of their cities. This includes the regular collection of waste to prevent garbage piles across the city, proper placement of dustbins, and construction of public toilets. These basic amenities are crucial to maintaining the health and hygiene of the residents and improving their overall quality of life.

In addition to the basic amenities, mayors also need to focus on the development functions of the city. The development of the city includes several aspects, such as urban planning, infrastructure development, and environmental protection. One of the most pressing issues facing cities today is environmental protection. Mayors need to adopt a preventive approach to tackle environmental problems and take measures to mitigate their impact on the residents.

However, city governance is often limited due to financial dependence. Despite having several ideas and plans, the city government must wait for financial support from the state or the centre. This can cause delays in the implementation of development plans, leading to a negative impact on the city and its residents.

Furthermore, city governance is an important form of political engagement for regular people, which we are mostly unaware of. The mayor is responsible for the development and satisfaction of the people living in their city. The decisions made by the mayor have a direct impact on the lives of residents, and they need to ensure that their decisions are in the best interest of the people.

In conclusion, the role of mayors in developing Indian cities is crucial, and they face several challenges in fulfilling their responsibilities. The development of a city requires a multi-faceted approach that involves addressing the core functions of municipalities, as well as focusing on the development functions to improve the quality of life for residents. Mayors need to adopt a preventive approach to tackle environmental problems and take measures to mitigate their impact on the residents. They also need to ensure that their decisions are in the best interest of the people and that the city government works towards the development and satisfaction of the people living in their city.



# Shounak Bannerjee

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“Transparency, accountability, and cultural awareness are crucial for effective urban governance. They build trust, foster understanding, and ensure diverse perspectives are heard.”

Shounak Bannerjee is a law student from Amity University, Kolkata, West Bengal. He enjoys an exchange of ideas, having participated in numerous youth parliaments and debates, relishing the opportunity to articulate his thoughts on a variety of topics. He is also a cricket fan, enjoying both watching and playing the sport. Fascinated by various languages and the cultures they represent, he spends his time reading, travelling, and exploring new cultures.

Being born and brought up in Kolkata, I have witnessed the city’s journey throughout my life and I am convinced that the mayor of the city must be the vanguard in ushering in the city’s development. I was always captivated by the city’s rich history and cultural legacy. The history of leadership in Kolkata is filled with luminaries, ranging from the revolutionary leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to the visionary guidance of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. I think it is paramount that we carry on this tradition of inspiring leadership.

The problems faced by the city are myriad, thus the challenges faced by the mayor multiply as well. Being the only megacity in the Eastern zone, it was and still is the destination for millions of migrants who come to this city in the hope of a better life. This has hastened a haphazard growth in the city which has been already sheltering millions of refugees from across the border, including my family as well.

This rapid population has caused horizontal and vertical growth in the city as its boundaries started growing, while the density of the population in the core of the city reached dizzying heights. Slums popped up everywhere and public resources were stretched thin. The condition of heritage buildings in Kolkata, which once defined the city, is dismal. The city’s natural ecosystem too has suffered severe damage and finds itself facing a multitude of problems. About 75% of the city’s groundwater is now fully or partly brackish and its air quality has fallen drastically.

The mayor of the city can facilitate the reformation process by regularly holding outreach programs and feedback channels. To solve the issue of the growing geographic distance between housing and jobs for the working class, affordable and quick transportation should be made available to everyone. Above all, the mayor must be a symbol of unity for all the citizens and should be attuned to the plight of the disadvantaged and vulnerable and strive to promote accessibility and affordability for all.



# Shrishti Chansoriya

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“As an umbrella to rescue against downpour, so is good governance to its people. Functioning adequately by division of power and uniting wellness of citizens in a secular as well as adhesive environment.”

Shrishti Chansoriya is a student of physics, chemistry, biology and psychology at the Deepak Memorial Academy, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. She aspires to pursue a career in Psychology and Neurology. Currently preparing for the NEET examination with the aim of becoming a doctor and serving people. Her interests lie in web technology and animation; reading self-help books and novels. Her other interests are poetry writing and singing. She runs a poetry channel “Poetry In Veins” on Telegram.

In India, the role of a city mayor is crucial in ensuring that the urban areas are developed, managed and maintained in an effective manner. The mayor is the head of the municipal corporation, responsible for the overall functioning of the city and its accountability. In Sagar, like many other cities, people tend to blame the mayor and councillors when the functioning of the city does not go well. However, it is important to understand that the mayor is not solely responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the city, but acts as an interface between the citizens and higher government authorities.

It is imperative that the citizens of a city take an active role in the democratic process and contribute towards the development and growth of their city. The city belongs to its natives and it is important that they take responsibility for the welfare and progress of their city. The mayor cannot bring about a change alone, and the active participation of the citizens is crucial in making the city more effective.

In India, the urban local government system has been mandated as a constitutional entity by the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. This framework provides for the decentralisation of obligations and duties to the municipal bodies at different levels of a state. However, there exist many barriers between citizens and the government system that impede transparency and awareness regarding their roles in a municipal corporate area. Therefore, it is important for citizens to be aware of their responsibilities and work alongside the political bodies to make the city more effective and efficient.

Youngsters, in particular, have a vital role to play in the development and growth of their city. They can be the driving force behind initiatives that promote sustainability, inclusivity and innovation. The mayor, councillors and citizens need to work together towards creating a better city for everyone.

In conclusion, the role of the mayor in India is significant, but it is important to understand that they cannot bring about change alone. The citizens need to take an active role in the democratic process and contribute towards the development of their city. By working together, the mayor, councillors and citizens can create a better and more effective city.



# Viddhula

K

Finalist for Mayor Speech Competition

“City Governance is the bridge that connects all the people to the state and holistically to the centre. Good city governance acts as the base for any democratic country. India holds a big star in this aspect.”

Viddhula is a student at Kumaraguru College of Liberal Arts, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Her interests are reading books, writing poems, ideating for new initiatives, doing radio shows and performing on stage. She was awarded the “Sentamil Serpi” by the Government of Tamil Nādu for her various work in Tamil. She is also the state Oratory champion in Tamil and holds the post of President in her college.

The mayor of a city is an important figure who plays a crucial role in uniting talented people to run the city effectively. The mayor also has the responsibility of allocating the city budget to areas such as public transportation, local businesses, COVID-19 relief, and more. However, it is essential that the mayor focuses on the well-being of citizens by always aspiring for better social-economic and cultural modernization of their domain.

In my opinion, the mayor should prioritize healthcare and education and work closely with the government to ensure employment security for the people. By standing by the people and looking out for the development and growth of the local population, the mayor can ensure the good functioning of government at the grassroots level. The small changes from the local level of governance can make significant changes in the central level of governance. Therefore, the mayor should concentrate on modernizing cities and adapting to the upgradation of technologies while also working towards solutions for public grievances and basic problems of the population.

The growth of the urban population leads to the congestion of cities, putting stress on civic amenities like water, transport, electricity, and health services. The pollution of air and water is the starting point of many diseases, which is why the mayor should focus on promoting sustainable development practices that prioritize the health of the citizens and the environment.

In Coimbatore, the city government and municipalities have been working on enriching the cultural aspects of the land while also adopting modernization concepts along with new technologies. It is important that the mayor leads businesses and community groups to support innovative projects that will make the local government vibrant and healthy.

Platforms like Prajatantra provide a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge and understand the functions, rules, and responsibilities of city governments. It is also interesting to hear about the new initiatives of other states during discussions. Learning from different intellectuals creates an in-depth understanding of city governance and its functioning.

In conclusion, the mayor plays a vital role in ensuring the well-being and growth of the citizens of a city. By prioritizing healthcare and education, promoting sustainable development practices, and supporting innovative projects, the mayor can lead the city towards progress and prosperity.



# Arushi Choudhary

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“A city can be governed well only when the gap between the administration is bridged, resulting in transparency, accountability and better implementation of policies. e-Governance and active citizen participation are an integral part of that goal.”

Arushi Choudhary is a student at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Belagavi, Karnataka. Given her interests in reading, writing and public speaking she participated in the Horlicks Wiz-kids interschool competition for essay writing, Gizmo Geeks for robotics where she stood second. Her other interests are in dance, music and art. She is a trained classical dancer and won the title of Miss. Freshers. She is also a part of the college's literary club and has won a few intercollegiate competitions in essay writing.

The last few years have seen an increase in digitalisation in every sector of the world, including public administration. This form of governance is called e-governance which aims at making all government services accessible to the common man in their locality through common service delivery outlets and ensuring efficiency, transparency, reliability and affordability.

One of the major challenges faced during its implementation is the digital divide that exists in the city. This gap exists due to the disparity between the people who have access to digital services and those who do not. Therefore, our main aim is to make e-government services accessible to all in such a manner that using these facilities becomes a hassle-free and proactive choice. This can be achieved in a phased manner as follows:

- Setting a standard format: This shall ease accessibility to these platforms and make it easier to design additional services when provided. A standard working of e-portals across all cities shall also maintain uniformity.
- Co-operation between public and private sectors: Being a developing nation, our resources cannot be funded by one department alone. I strongly believe that a public-private partnership will help in better infrastructure development and also better outreach for e-services.
- Ensuring affordable broadband access: One of the reasons why a digital gap exists is because the low socio-economic class of the urban population cannot afford basic broadband and internet connections. If these foundations are not laid, e-services will never be able to reach these areas of our city.
- Skilled staff: A policy as complex as e-governance can work well only when the personnel are highly trained to not only create the portals but also fix technological issues, address grievances, provide efficient customer service and keep the software up to date.
- Interlinking of departments: The G2B, G2C, G2E and G2G departments, and all services provided under them should be well interlinked to ensure smooth accessibility.
- Protocols to ensure safety and privacy: An efficient security protocol is the need of the hour to prevent cyber-crimes, leaking of personal data, and loss of data due to malfunctioning portals, all the while ensuring privacy to make the citizens comfortable with the idea of e-governance.

I believe that efficient policy implementation is possible only with active citizen participation and engagement, and e-governance is no different. One way to do this would be to create an interactive online platform where the citizens can share their views on the policies being implemented and their ideas of good governance, and can collaborate on key ideas of development with the city government. This will help us to regulate our policies in order to provide a competent and accountable administration.

# Bhavya Oberoi

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“We cannot be merely consumers of city governance; we must be participants and co-creators, because democracy has never worked well in the absence of significant local self-government.”



Bhavya Oberoi is pursuing Political Science Honors at SGTB Khalsa College, University of Delhi. She has always been fascinated by how society functions, which led her deeper to study politics. She shares a deep commitment towards social change and empowerment for less privileged communities, children, and women. Bhavya actively participates in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. She is a member of NSS and Enactus at her college. Apart from academics, she also likes to understand theology and feminist works. In her leisure time, she prefers to listen to music and try her hand at baking.

Policy targeting e-governance and citizen participation are key components of a city's growth and development and a key function of the city government. They are effective tools for disseminating public information and engaging citizens in interactive communication in order to share values and opinions among the actors involved in the participatory process with municipalities. By creating a new space for political communication and participation, both contribute to increasing municipal transparency and revitalizing local democracy. Essentially, the interaction between local governments and society is enhanced.

As policymakers, there is also a need to pay attention to the capabilities of e-government tools to better facilitate the e-participation process and provide the necessary channels to get citizens' feedback. Initiatives like streaming council meetings will ensure that people are aware of the work and issues raised by their representatives for them, ensuring greater accountability and transparency. This will ensure that citizens are aware of who actually raises relevant issues and voices their opinions, and will also lead to more effective programmes and policies. Additionally, this will raise awareness and knowledge about city governance. Further, there is a need for a platform for feedback to increase citizen participation in grassroots democracy and decision-making. A new platform can be created where citizens can provide feedback on how councillors are performing and where they can improve.

However, analysing current circumstances, there is a huge potential that is untapped due to a lack of a proper platform for the implementation of participatory processes and communications channels through the website, as well as a lack of funds and investment. Thus, there is a need for intervention, because, with appropriate government and private sector intervention, Delhi has the potential to become one of the top global start-up cities, which we aim to achieve through our e-governance policy.

In the context of urban challenges, the proper disposal of waste and major landfills has been unresolved for quite some time. Issues such as pollution, efficient housing, and public restroom maintenance, as well as road safety, require attention. More control and policies are urgently needed in Delhi right now, especially the ones that make Delhi a safer city. Gender empowerment is also lacking in lower strata of society, and rising gender and human rights crimes and false information spread must also be addressed at the city government level.





# S Ishwarya

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“Governance in Indian cities shall be envisioned to create resilient communities by empowering citizens, civil society members and local public authorities to participate in all the decision-making process. Technology shall be an effective tool to integrate the spectrum of ideas and execute the decisions effectively.”

S. Ishwarya is a student at CEPT University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Exploring cities has been one of her greatest joys since childhood. As an architect, travelling across cities and having conversation with natives, she developed an intimate understanding of several social issues that were potential by products of poor urban planning decisions. This collective knowledge along with her professional experience inspired her to pursue Urban Planning and strive to promote safe, vibrant and sustainable communities.

Ahmedabad has been one of the frontline cities in the implementation of e-governance policies and projects in India. Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has adopted innovative policies for the promotion of e-governance in the state. Although the quality of information availability and service delivery is high in comparison to other cities in India, the city lacks in terms of citizen involvement in the process and last-mile connectivity of services.

In order to achieve efficient government through citizen-centric governance, technology can be an effective tool at the local level. The objectives to be focused on in Ahmedabad are as follows:

1. Sustainable growth of the city by enabling a two-way participatory approach in all the decision-making processes.
2. Create an efficient and effective service delivery system that facilitates ease of access to government as well as citizens.
3. Encourage local communities, schools and institutions to actively take part in the development of the city.
4. Institutional capacity of the city should be strengthened so that the mechanism can continue over a long period of time.

These policies are designed to cover various facets of governance responsibilities which fall under the purview of municipal corporations.

1. e-Service: Using electronic technology to fasten the speed of service delivery from the government to citizens.
2. e-Engagement: Using electronic technology to interact with the citizens in a meaningful way for the purpose of bettering governance and the city.
3. e-Awareness: Using electronic and digital mediums to reach out to the beneficiaries of various government schemes.
4. e-Data repository: Using information and digital technology to develop a rich and robust database which contains useful public information that can be used for future policy formulations.

All policies, programs and plans must be surfaced on digital portals for gauging public opinions. There are three ways to achieve this: polling, open-ended questions and organising competitions for urban projects and policy presentations.

These opinions will be further processed and given certain weightage while decision making. This methodology will vary across departments and services. The ward-level opinions will be used to make small-scale decisions which will play a major role.

# Milen Anugraha Paul

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance & Citizen Participation Competition

“Good governance is the transition of plans into actions - my city, my responsibility!”



Milen Anugraha Paul is a student at Maharaja Agrasen College, Delhi. She has a keen interest in Political Philosophy and International Relations, and working for Child Rights. Politics and poetry drive her motive. Passion and purpose serves her profit.

E-Governance is the usage of information and communication technology in the process of governance. Good governance should be focused on the quality of living of its citizens. Hence, governments across the world are focusing on the latest technology to upgrade e-governance facilities and cater to the needs of the citizens in an efficient and timely manner.

In 2006, the Government of India approved the National e-Governance Plan, comprising various projects and components. However, India has a long way to go in achieving digital literacy which directly affects citizen involvement in e-governance. Delhi is among the top cities that adopted e-governance in its early stages but, the data still shows a huge digital gap that needs to be bridged. The facilities provided by the government should reach the needy and the most vulnerable section of society.

Through my interaction with the informal settlers and other vulnerable groups in Delhi, I realised that one of the challenges of digital literacy was the lack of awareness and assistance required to be acquainted with the latest technology. The elderly and the differently-abled, the digitally marginalised and the illiterate section of society should be included in the process with utmost care. The last man standing in the line should be able to avail the facilities of the government. Only an inclusive approach can meet this need.

At the grassroots level, there are various areas that need upgradation when it comes to e-governance. A shift from the office attendance sheet to a biometric attendance system; a duty record to excel sheets; confidentiality to partial transparency – the employees in the system are also a part of this change. Proper training sessions, capacity building and re-engineering of the system need to be done. Innovative ideas should be welcomed and a public-private partnership can fasten the process.

Development and preservation need to go hand in hand, and the ideas and innovations of the public should be entertained.

The involvement of the citizens in the plans of the government is necessary for good governance. Citizens are making an effort to use the online portal and put their trust in the online system. They need to be incentivised to use the e-facilities and the hurdles faced by them should be tackled remotely by officers in a timely manner. The majority of the users do not include the youth due to a lack of incentivisation – and the population above sixty years are often unfamiliar with newer technology.

As such, special attention needs to be paid to the digital divide. A system where the government acts as a facilitator for growth will benefit the citizens rather than a regulatory system.



# Joe Mammen John

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“City governance is the delicate balance formed between the government and the people of a city, maintained only through the harmonious collaboration.

Such harmony, can only be attained through people’s active participation and support.”

Joe Mammen John is a student at Loyola College, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, pursuing Masters in English Literature. He is passionate about reading Shakespeare and Charles Dickens and coding websites in various programming languages such as HTML, JavaScript, PHP, Python. As a postgraduate student, his main interest pivoted to Subaltern Literature and Post-colonial Literature as they gave voice to people whose voices have been suppressed over centuries and continue to remain so even in the present day.

The world keeps changing at a pace that we never thought was possible. Innovations, ideas and technologies are rising on the horizon each day. The government has to rise to the occasion to meet the needs of the people.

As a person passionate about creating websites and blogs, e-governance fascinated me with the limitless opportunities that it presented to people at the touch of a button. With the introduction of forums, e-forms and chat systems, people are empowered to have their say in the decisions that would affect the city in which they live. Through e-governance, the government can ensure that every citizen has awareness as well as access to the services and policies that are available to them, which in turn allows them to become informed citizens of the country. It could also encourage them to actively participate in the democratic process.

I hope that this initiative would slowly proliferate into rural areas as well which could negate the digital divide that presently exists between the city and the rural areas. Furthermore, I envision a future where e-governance and smart systems co-exist in public-private places in a way that connects each citizen, making them the decision-makers of tomorrow.

In India, cities are thriving and growing at a rapid pace. Development has become the main headline and more and more people are heading to the cities. In this mad race for development, we often forget the impact it has on our health and environment.

In my city, Chennai, transportation services from one place to another are robust and efficient. The roads are constructed and maintained well. The metro and the local train services reduce the time taken to travel within the city. These services are affordable to the point where local train ticket prices range from Rs 5 and Rs 20 while the metro prices range from Rs 30 and Rs 50. The educational institutions are well-equipped and focused on academics. Many of the institutions in Chennai are top-ranking institutions in the country according to NIRF rankings.

However, my city faces many challenges as well. Chennai suffers greatly during the summers due to a lack of good drinking water. The tap water that is often found in cities is hard water which isn’t fit for drinking. Another problem that Chennai faces is waste disposal and management. Many rivers in Chennai are choking from the waste that is dumped into them. Such improper management of waste poses serious health risks to people and even affects the quality of the drinking water in the area.



# Neerajha Ramesh

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“City Environment is built with the  
Social, Political and Economical  
Stones which are cemented  
together by City Governance”

Neerajha Ramesh is a political science student at Kumaraguru College of Liberal Arts and Science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Apart from academics her interests are to play badminton, volunteer for events and public speaking. She has won the District Championship for Badminton, Mahatma Gandhi Scholarship Awardee for two consecutive years and is a member of KCLAS Leadership Council “President of KCLAS Clubs and Forums” in her college.

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is an essential lifeline for many low-income families in India. However, for senior citizens, accessing the PDS can be a challenging task. One of the reasons is the requirement to scan thumbprints during the distribution of products, which can be a hurdle for the elderly due to their age. To address this issue, I propose the Easy Ration for Senior Citizens (ERSC) policy.

The ERSC policy aims to make it easy for the elderly to get their supplies from the PDS. Under this policy, senior citizens would be exempted from the thumbprint scanning requirement. Instead, they would need to provide their Aadhaar card and an additional document to verify their identity. This would not only make it easier for the elderly to access essential supplies but also reduce the burden on the PDS staff.

Developing a mobile application named COVAI PDS

In today’s digital era, it is crucial to bring the Public Distribution System (PDS) up to speed with modern technology. To achieve this, I propose the development of a mobile application named COVAI PDS. This application would allow citizens to pre-book a slot for purchasing products in PDS shops. The COVAI PDS app would have a simple and user-friendly interface that would enable citizens to view available products, place orders, and pay for them online. By pre-booking a slot, citizens could avoid crowding near ration shops, reducing the risk of the spread of diseases. The app would also be a step towards making the PDS system more efficient and transparent.

Online Affliction

The Public Distribution System (PDS) is an important social welfare program that aims to provide essential commodities to the poor and needy. However, malpractices such as the diversion of food grains, hoarding, and black-marketing continue to plague the PDS system. To address these issues, I propose the Online Affliction policy.

Under this policy, citizens would be able to lodge complaints about malpractices in the PDS system through an online portal. The portal would have a simple and user-friendly interface that would enable citizens to report incidents of malpractice quickly and easily. The complaints would then be reviewed by a dedicated team and necessary actions would be taken against the offenders.

In conclusion, the policies proposed for the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Coimbatore aim to make the system more efficient, transparent, and citizen-friendly. By exempting senior citizens from thumbprint scanning, introducing a mobile application for pre-booking slots, and creating an online portal for reporting malpractices, we can ensure that the PDS system is serving its intended purpose of providing essential commodities to the poor and needy. These policies are a step towards building a more inclusive and equitable society for all.



# Tejashri Kasar

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“The mark of a great city isn’t  
how it treats its special places –  
everybody does that right – but how  
it treats its ordinary ones.”

Tejashri Kasar is a student at Teri School of Advanced Studies, Delhi. She is an environmentalist who is passionate about environmental conservation and protection. Her UPSC journey has played a crucial role in shaping her understanding of various issues of rapid urbanization, and intends to utilize her passion, learnings, and vision of making an impact in the social sector.

The city government is made up of a variety of players who serve in different capacities and carry out various duties. Actors in city government may be categorised into two main categories: elected and administrative. Although administrative staff members have a variety of roles within their own departments, they are distinct from elected officials in that they are not chosen by the general public to serve in that capacity.

The vision for the e-governance policy is to make government services available online by the year 2025, from anywhere, including nearby common delivery services channels, mobile platforms and handheld devices. This will allow citizens to easily access all government services, improving accountability and efficiency in service delivery. The MCD has decided to make use of ICT to offer Delhi residents municipal services that are effective, economical and transparent. Technologies for information and communication are now so prevalent in our daily lives that it is no longer feasible to disregard their potential positive impact on municipal governance. MCD decided to implement e-governance in light of this. To offer transparency and better services to its citizens, the information technology department is continuously working to computerise all departments. The primary goal of the IT department is to automate numerous departmental processes and activities to increase productivity and responsiveness. MCD has already created a website for the dissemination of information and online service delivery to its citizens. Effective service delivery helps in achieving economic and social development and strategic information systems.

Citizens are one of the important pillars of e-governance. By acknowledging and expressing the needs and interests of all participants, including decision-makers, public involvement encourages sustainable decisions. Citizens can guarantee that their needs and interests are taken into account in decision-making processes that have an impact on their lives at both the local and national levels by engaging in policy-making. Public participation also strengthens the political position of vulnerable or marginalised groups, such as minorities, young people, and women, who are frequently ignored.

According to Traunmüller and Lenk, e-governance is the most recent paradigm in public management and a current global phenomenon. Public administration might become responsive and efficient thanks to the speed and openness of e-governance. As the e-governance development makes it past the process of pilot projects, it becomes evident that it will rely on an adequate institutional structure that will facilitate good governance to manage the rising number of technical and organisational changes at the different levels of government.

# Uday Sen Bharadwaj

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“City Governance can be defined by splitting it into city and governance, where the city includes each individual stakeholder occupying the space, and governance is how well that space can be utilized for the benefit of that stakeholder.”

Uday Sen Bharadwaj is a student of IIM, Sambalpur, Odisha, pursuing his MBA. He is a graduate of Sardar Vallabhbhai National Institute of Technology, Electronics and Communications and was awarded the 1st prize in the “Internet of Things” competition. He owns a personal library with over 500 physical and e-books across various genres. He enjoys exploring different genres, especially history, philosophy, and self-help and is an avid reader.

E-governance is the application of information and communication technology (ICT) by the government to reach out to the citizens and solve their issues. This creates a SMART governance: simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent.

There are four types of e-governance: G2C or Government to Citizen; G2G or Government to Government; G2B or Government to Business; and G2E or Government to Employee.

Citizens’ participation signifies the involvement of people in the government’s policy-making. Citizen participation happens when the residents are involved in making the city better by participating in policymaking along with the government. Some examples include campaigning and taking care of their individual societies.

We can increase e-governance and ensure citizen participation by building systems based on the latest technology to update the software and hardware and having training centres to update their knowledge.

Also, it is important that the focus be increased on public health. This could be done by segregating wastes at the source of generation, cleaning roads, night cleaning on busy and essential roads and market areas, transporting debris from different regions up to the selected disposal site, collecting wastes from a particular area at a fixed time with wheelbarrows or pedal bicycles, and non-retention of debris at a specific place for more than 24 hours.

It would be helpful to install high masts at all the major traffic junctions, provide decorative luminaires and poles wherever necessary for discussions in the night, and energy management to cut down on the operation and maintenance expenses on electricity.

For e-initiatives, an e-locker system can protect people’s money and pilot tests in varied areas to make empowered digital citizens. For this to happen, it is vital to train the people to make them digitally literate.



# Urmi Sinha

Finalist for Policy Presentation on e-Governance  
& Citizen Participation Competition

“The strength of democracy  
in the country depends on the  
effectiveness of city government, its  
inclusivity, dynamism, adaptability,  
and its attractiveness in the eyes  
of the politicians as well as the  
people.”

Urmi Sinha is a student at St. Xavier's (Autonomous) College, Kolkata, West Bengal. She has been a part of the editorial board of *Politique 2023*, the annual journal of the Department of Political Science of her college. Besides her love and fascination for Indian politics, she is also interested in cricket and cinema. She has participated in several intra-school and inter-school debates, including the West Bengal Youth Parliament Competition Scheme in Educational Institutions 2022-23, organized by the Department of Parliamentary Affairs, Government of West Bengal.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICT) have heralded a new chapter in the history of governance worldwide. Leveraging emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, big data analytics, blockchain, cloud computing and internet of things can prove immensely beneficial for improving the quality and effectiveness of municipal governance as well as strengthening citizens' participation in the development of their cities.

In my city, Kolkata, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) needs to take strides towards bridging the gap between the people and the powers-that-be, in order to form a system that is efficient and interactive. Given the deep penetration of smartphones among the Indian population, an interactive mobile application can be launched to provide a platform for the citizens of Kolkata – especially the vibrant youth – to engage them in an active process of interaction and deliberation amongst themselves and propose people-centric policies that may then be utilised by the policymakers after due consideration.

The government can only expect meaningful policy proposals from the citizens when the latter have sufficient credible information at their disposal. In view of this, the proposed app could be integrated with an efficient geographic information system (GIS) and remote sensing software which shall analyse and display geographically referenced information. It will transform raw data into useful, comprehensible and interactive information. GIS mapping will not only enable better planning and effective monitoring of projects and coordination among different departments but also place real-time information about the progress of various infrastructure projects pertaining to drainage systems, water supply, maintenance of roads, tax data, property records, sales information and more.

GIS mapping can be integrated with the grievance redressal mechanism. Citizens will then be able to share photographs or videos of problems such as illegal parking, potholes and other issues on the app and automatically register their grievance to the concerned department, using the phone's GPS to mark the location. This will facilitate efficient and speedy redressal of public grievances. These initiatives shall usher in an innovative, bottom-up approach to governance and shift the energies of the citizens from merely criticising the state to becoming participants with a say in the governance of the city. Moreover, this may also act as a remedy for the malady of alienation widespread among the urban city-dwellers and inculcate a strong sense of civic responsibility among them.

Digital literacy and digital empowerment of the citizens, as well as the municipal staff, is a sine qua non of effective implementation of e-governance initiatives. The KMC can kick-start its digital literacy movement by developing mobile digital learning centres which will travel around the city, focusing on the underprivileged regions. It should also take urgent steps towards setting up permanent digital literacy centres in KMC-run schools, NGOs and other suitable locations.

# G. Isha

## Sant Lal Veena

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“ Good governance is about what is  
felt by the citizens than what is seen  
- a key to a nation’s progress. ”



Gahalyan Isha Sant Lal Veena is a student at Thakur Ramnarayan College of Law, Mumbai, Maharashtra. She has volunteered Teach For India, and also been a national - level basketball player. She is a firm believer of Kaizen - continuous improvement based on small, ongoing positive changes. Her interests are dancing, baking and mountain climbing and has a strong inclination toward the performing arts.

Municipal finance plays a critical role in the financial management of cities in India. The local government is responsible for managing the finances of the city, including revenue collection, expense management, and the delivery of public services. Mumbai is no exception, as it is one of India’s largest cities and requires efficient financial management to sustain its growth and development.

Mumbai’s municipal finance is funded through a combination of property taxes, rent from municipal properties, fees for services such as water and sewerage, and grants from higher levels of government. To fund long-term projects, the municipality also turns to borrowing through the issuance of bonds, which are repaid over time with interest. However, borrowing must be managed effectively to ensure financial stability.

To ensure that municipal finance is properly managed, municipalities must have a budget in place outlining expected revenues and expenses for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget process often involves input from community members, local businesses, and government officials. In Mumbai, the municipality has implemented initiatives to increase revenues, implement cost-cutting measures, and improve overall financial management. Additionally, the municipality has implemented a debt management plan to reduce its debt through various measures, such as debt restructuring and refinancing.

Despite these efforts, the financial management of Mumbai’s municipality remains a complex and challenging task. The local government must balance the needs and priorities of its constituents with the constraints of limited resources. Therefore, it is important for them to be transparent and accountable in their financial management practices. They must use taxpayer money wisely and efficiently to ensure the delivery of quality public services to its citizens.

In conclusion, municipal finance is a critical aspect of managing the financial health of Indian cities. Mumbai’s municipality has implemented several initiatives to increase revenues, reduce debt, and improve overall financial management. While challenges remain, the city is working towards improving its financial health and ensuring the delivery of quality public services to its citizens. By focusing on transparency, accountability, and efficient use of resources, the municipality can continue to sustain the growth and development of the city.





# Harsha Burnwal

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“Good Governance is all about  
putting people in the centre of any  
decision-making process”

Harsha Burnwal is a graduate from School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi and is currently pursuing Masters in Urban Development Management from TERI School of Advance Studies, Delhi. During her academic years she has worked on Redevelopment Policy (Delhi Development Authority), Layout Approvals (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) and Environmental Threat on Taj Mahal (SPA-D). She is deeply interested with travel and art. She also run 'Effecmon', an Instagram handle showcasing her artworks. Taking her interest further, she has also been the Secretary of Media and Arts Club at TERISAS.

As per Oxford Economics (2018), 17 of the 20 fastest-growing cities in the world between 2019 and 2035 are expected to be from India. India's rapid urbanisation presents considerable challenges to the current structure of urban governance. Cities, being an engine of economic growth and employment opportunity attracting talent from across the country, need proper administrative structures with a quantum of spending in various sectors.

The 74th Amendment Act of 1992 delegated 18 functions to be performed by urban local bodies (ULBs) but has not provided for its financing structure, leaving it at the discretion of the state government (Section 243Y). This had led to various issues such as over-dependency on state government and central government, recurring financing due to function duplicity, and low credit rating.

To overcome such issues, it is important to strengthen urban local governance by financially empowering them in order to effectively implement public policy intervention at the grassroots level.

Strategies to empower the ULBs financially may include increasing its revenue base, a participatory approach towards the budgetary process and increasing the existing tax net. Increasing revenue base can be achieved through innovative financing methods such as asset management and carbon debits. Participatory approach towards budgetary process can be achieved via the involvement of ward and mohalla committees. Increasing the tax net for property tax can be done through GIS-based tax mapping as well as the usage of online modes for property tax payment.

With an increase in revenue base, it is also important to look at the expenditure of the government. Types of expenditure include revenue expenditure (administrative, O&M expenses) and capital expenditure. These expenditures must be oriented towards the vision of the city. The revenue budget (taxes, charges and fees) must be spent towards revenue and administrative expenditure, whereas, grants and loans must be spent towards capital expenditure. Other income that is incurred through innovative self-financing methods can be spent towards incentivising citizens for their efforts towards the vision of the city.

Also, accountability channels must be maintained properly for the proper transfer of data regarding ULBs' income and expenditures. This data can further be utilised for performance measurement of the local government.

# Ishita Pandey

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“City governance is not just administration; it is the government agencies with the engagement of active public participation for the efficient delivery of essential services and development to the citizens.”



Ishita Pandey is a student at Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, Delhi. She is interested in international affairs with special reference to developing world and Afro-Asian countries. She enjoys studying public administration as a discipline, with a focus on decentralisation and local governance. She has contributed to the political science association “Republica” of her college in various programmes like Annual Fest Poliforum. In her spare time she enjoys running, journaling, and meditation.

Cities and towns play a prominent role in the development of a nation as a whole. If democracy in the country is to remain strong and stable, its roots must reach towns and the cities where the people live. What we usually find in India is a reality of problems of necessities like water, electricity, education, garbage and so on. The solution lies only in drastic reforms. In 1992, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments institutionalised the structure of local governance in India.

The ULBs, under the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, are entrusted to perform various functions such as urban planning, construction of buildings, planning for economic and social development, and making provisions for urban amenities which require a lot of funds.

But the municipalities are financially weak with limited sources and with heavy dependence on transfers and grants from central and state governments. The powers of local elected officials remain curtailed by state governments and local bureaucrats thereby diluting the spirit of the constitutional amendments aimed at local empowerment. ULBs are expected to adopt sound and transparent accounting practices with proper monitoring and documentation of various receipts and expenditure items.

In India, the revenues of municipal corporations are dominated by property tax collections and the devolution of taxes and grants from upper tiers of government. This results in a lack of financial autonomy. Many efforts can be undertaken to mitigate this menace, like the generation of new taxes in sectors where extra effort is required, for instance, sanitation and drainage under their source of revenue and market borrowings, particularly municipal bonds.

Local governments can also tap the capital market by issuing municipal bonds. These debt securities or loans that investors make to local governments are used to fund public works such as parks, libraries, bridges and roads, and other infrastructure. Already practised by cities such as Varanasi, Vadodara, Lucknow, Pune, and Bhopal, this may be encouraged by the urban local governments to expand and diversify municipal revenue sources, thus reducing the dependency on property tax and enhancing the financial autonomy of ULBs.

The municipalities and municipal corporations shall also spend a significant amount of their budget to grant salaries instead of annual allowance to the municipal councillors as they put in a lot of effort to run the city government. Salaries will act as an incentive for the councillors to work more for the advancement of the city.

Moreover, the ULBs can also generate a feedback form for the citizens to rate their performance at the end of every month as per the quality of services delivered and suggest improvements, if required.

# Kartik Banthiya

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“ Good governance is more about citizen participation. The responsibility and accountability of a city shouldn't lie solely with the governing body but also with the citizens. I am hopeful since the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.”



Kartik Banthiya is a student of urban management at CEPT University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. He is deeply interested in sustainable mobility, municipal finance, and public service delivery. Due to his commerce background he sees public service in terms of its economical cost and social value-add. He is interested in understanding how technological innovations can mould cities and citizens interaction with them. Apart from governance, he is also a sports enthusiast who loves playing football and badminton and watching all major sports events.

Municipal finance is how a city or town's municipal government manages its finances. The 74th Amendment to the Indian Constitution, 1992, which grants urban local governments financial authority and accountability, regulates municipal finance. Urban Local Bodies (ULB) are in charge of raising their own funds and providing inhabitants with essential services like water supply, sanitisation, solid waste management and road maintenance.

Property taxes are the primary source of income for most ULBs in India. Other revenue sources include service charges, grants from the state and central governments, and borrowings.

In India, a key component of municipal finance is citizen engagement. Through ward committees, citizen charters and grievance redressal systems, among other avenues, citizens have the right to participate in the planning and decision-making processes of local ULBs.

However, adequate municipal financing and citizen participation face several obstacles. The inability of ULBs to manage their money and provide services is a prominent concern. Many ULBs lack the technical know-how or do not possess the necessary infrastructure to manage their funds efficiently leading to an inefficient system.

Another issue is the inadequate transfer of financial authority and accountability to ULBs. The financial resources of ULBs are frequently under the state and central governments' jurisdiction, resulting in a lack of autonomy and responsibility.

There are also issues with the quality and coverage of essential services provided by ULBs. Many citizens, particularly in low-income areas, do not have access to essential services such as water and sanitation. This is often due to a lack of funding or inadequate infrastructure.



# Manav Gupta

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“Just like roots hold the structures  
strong, city governance is the root  
of democracy and thus must be  
strong enough to support all levels  
of governance”

Manav Gupta is a student at Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College, Delhi. He has always been interested in the domain of policymaking like correct estimation, appropriation of problems, it's budgeting and better ways of implementation. His interests lie in modelling solutions, delving deeper into data concerning multiple topics and finding relevant implications and innovating.

Municipal finance is an essential aspect of city governance in India. The development and management of a city require adequate funding or revenue, and financing involves a wide range of activities from estimating expenditures to projecting revenues, reducing liabilities, increasing assets, and managing revenue and capital accounts with stock management. Effective municipal finance plays a crucial role in the implementation of every policy designed by the corporation. However, wasteful expenditure can lead to ineffective utilization of funds and further hurdles in policy implementation. In such cases, transparency through regular updates needs to be maintained.

In India, the bigger cities are effectively governed by municipal corporations, while smaller cities and towns are governed by municipal councils. All cities have an elected mayor and commissioner at the topmost level of city governance. Municipal finance is about the revenue and expenditure decisions of municipal governments, and it includes the management of revenue collected by municipal governments through taxes (property, income, sales, and excise taxes), user fees, and intergovernmental transfers.

The municipal finance situation in Delhi is a matter of concern. The corporation faces a great liability, including the digitization of records and the establishment of street lights. To ensure the availability of the laid-out budget to the concerned general public, financial transparency needs to be improved. In this context, Prajatantra's municipal finance policy presentation competition helped gain new insights into how minutely the budget for the city is made and what approach is to be followed while formulating the financial aspects of the policies in the discussion.

In my opinion, the major areas in which the corporation can effectively monitor its finance policy include the assessment of wasteful expenditure, digitization of records to increase transparency, collecting revenues from solid waste management, and focusing on e-governance to connect better with the citizens. Moreover, there is a need for more frequent ground-level committee meetings to get to know the needs of the people and connect with the root of the problem.

To conclude, effective municipal finance is critical for the development and management of cities in India. Municipal governments must ensure transparency and accountability in their revenue and expenditure decisions to avoid wasteful expenditure and effectively implement policies for the betterment of the citizens. By focusing on the areas mentioned above and adopting a participatory approach, municipal corporations can efficiently manage their finances and achieve their goals of making the cities more livable and sustainable.



# Mehvish Wani

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“ City governance is the bridge between the citizens and social welfare. To ensure good governance, there has to be a conscious effort from all the stakeholders.”

Mehvish Wani is a student at the National Institute of Technology, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, pursuing Masters in Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurial Management. She believes that innovation is the way to grow and create major impact. She is an ardent public speaker and enjoys participating in debates, speech and elocution competitions. Leadership interests her and she enjoys taking on roles where she has to lead and manage teams.

With Prajatantra, I had the opportunity to participate in the policy presentation on municipal finance. I was able to understand the functioning of a city and the key aspects associated with a city budget. I had to challenge myself to think of innovative solutions that can help to improve the functioning of a city with respect to municipal finance.

Finance is the key to the sustenance and proper functioning of any sector, and this is true for Urban Local Bodies (ULB) as well. Municipal finance can be broadly classified into two categories: municipal revenue and municipal expenditure. The goal should be to maximise the former and aim to minimise the latter.

The majority of the policies that I presented revolved around increasing municipal revenue which can be done by increasing the sources of income. This is an extremely crucial component because the sources of revenue will help the ULBs to function properly, sustain and ensure that work is being done on the ground level to achieve the set goals.

To generate income, the ULBs have to ensure value is generated for the public through the services offered. Innovative means to raise assets, expanding the parking system, solid waste management, outsourcing bill distribution and judicious use of technology are some methods that need to be incorporated.

For example, solid waste management is a great tool to achieve the waste-to-value objective. Various plants can be set up to generate low-emission fuels and fertilisers can be commercialised on a city level. Another strategy to generate more income could be raising assets like malls, marriage halls, and public parks which can be put on lease or can have an entry fee.

For any governance to ensure efficient results, accountability plays a major role. Since the municipal body relies mostly on taxes from the citizens, it is extremely important to ensure that the body is functioning and producing results for the welfare of society.

There are several services provided in Srinagar including water, sewerage, community halls, sanitation, poultry waste management and progress monitoring. All these services can be availed in one go through an online website.

One of the admirable services is the city's waste management and sanitation. Imagine a single day when the waste is not collected and disposed of appropriately – that's when we realise how important this service is.



# Navaneeth Joshi

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“ An ideal model of ‘good urban governance’ involves city governments and administrations using transparent and participatory processes based on the principles of inclusive citizenry, accountability, processuality and effective executory process.”

Navaneeth Joshi is a student at Ramaiah College of Law, Bengaluru, Karnataka. He is an ardent follower of the politics of myriad cities and considers himself to be a proponent of Kautilyan realism. He also thinks that policymaking is an instrument to see through and lenses of social engineering that will take the nation to its grandeur.

Bengaluru, one of India’s largest metropolitan cities, has been on a path of rapid growth and development in recent years. The city is known for its vibrant IT sector, which coexists with other small and medium industries. Bengaluru’s strategic location and well-connected infrastructure make it a hub for businesses, and its pleasant climate and numerous gardens and lakes add to its appeal.

To ensure that the city’s growth is sustainable, Tender S.U.R.E (Specifications for Urban Road Execution, 2011) was introduced. This set of road execution and redevelopment guidelines is responsible for maintaining Bengaluru’s 12 high-density corridors. Tender SURE has become the de facto standard for footpaths across the city, making it a model for other cities in India.

In 2017, Bengaluru was granted the designation of ‘Smart City,’ after six years of implementation. However, despite this recognition, the city’s governing structure has remained largely static and moribund, failing to keep pace with the city’s growth and change. To address this, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Act, 2020 was passed, but its impact has been limited.

The BBMP Act aims to reform the political, administrative, planning, financial, and technological institutions of the city, taking into account the decentralisation spirit envisioned in the 74th Amendment to the Constitution. However, major basic amenities agencies like the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) are still under the control of parastatal entities. This decentralisation of power has not been implemented as envisioned, leading to corruption and inefficiency within city agencies.

Addressing corruption in city agencies is arguably the most challenging problem ahead for Bengaluru. Corruption not only impacts the functioning of city agencies but also costs the public immensely. To achieve sustainable and equitable growth, Bengaluru needs a more comprehensive approach to governance that includes citizen participation and transparent decision-making processes.

In conclusion, Bengaluru has made significant progress in terms of infrastructure and economic growth. However, to sustain this growth, the city needs a more effective and transparent governance structure. The BBMP Act is a step in the right direction, but more needs to be done to ensure that the city’s institutions are transformed to meet the challenges of a rapidly growing metropolitan area. Only then can Bengaluru continue to be a model for other cities in India.



# Prakriti Boral

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“Voting helps form a proper  
City Government, but for it to  
prosper, responsibilities need to be  
shouldered by both -those elected  
and those who did elect them- the  
people ”

Prakriti Boral is a student at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Belagavi, Karnataka. She enjoys the joy and chaos of her hometown Kolkata that fills her with enthusiasm to innovate. She is good at public speaking, especially debating, and also enjoys reading fiction.

Municipal finance is a critical aspect of urban governance in India. It refers to the study of the economic behaviour of urban local governments, considering the relationship between various social needs, scarce resources, and the overall well-being of the community. Municipal finance comprises two essential components: municipal revenue and municipal expenditure.

Municipal revenue includes all the income generated by the municipal corporation, such as taxes, user fees, and grants received from the state and central government. On the other hand, municipal expenditure refers to the allocation of these funds towards various functions, including planning for the city and its surroundings, improving the city's economic and social status, and providing essential services such as water supply, solid waste management, public health, and sanitation services.

In recent years, the Government of India has introduced various reforms to improve municipal finance management in the country. One such reform is the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), which has led to greater revenue generation for municipal corporations. Additionally, the government has launched the Smart Cities Mission, which aims to promote sustainable urban development and improve the quality of life for urban residents.

However, despite these reforms, several challenges remain in effectively managing municipal finance in India. One significant challenge is the low collection of property tax, which is a primary source of revenue for municipal corporations. The low collection of property tax is due to several factors, including inadequate data systems and weak enforcement mechanisms.

Another challenge is the limited financial autonomy of municipal corporations. Municipal corporations are heavily reliant on grants from the state and central government, which limits their ability to generate revenue and allocate resources effectively. To address this issue, there is a need to strengthen the financial autonomy of municipal corporations and encourage them to generate more revenue through innovative financing mechanisms such as municipal bonds.

In conclusion, effective municipal finance management is crucial for promoting sustainable urban development and improving the quality of life for urban residents in India. While there have been several reforms to improve municipal finance management in the country, there is a need for continued efforts to address the challenges and ensure that municipal corporations have the necessary resources to meet the city's needs.



# Swastik Madake

Finalist for Policy Presentation on Municipal  
Finance Competition

“ The soul of democracy resides  
in the self-governance by the  
people. The city governance is  
the most crucial link in ensuring  
strengthening of the grassroots  
democracy. City governance must  
be our collective priority as active  
citizens. ”

Swastik Madake is a student of DES Shri Navalmal Firodia Law College, Pune, Maharashtra. He has participated and succeeded in several debating, essay writing and elocution competitions and participated in panel discussions on data protection, human trafficking and surveillance laws. He is an obsessive reader, a compulsive writer, with amateur violin skills and a secret love for astrophysics, art and history.

The engines of growth and development run on the fuel of economic strength and the financial well-being of institutions. Hence, it is imperative that municipal finance must be looked into as a mechanism that enables true development and needs to be revitalised with innovative, local and adaptive, citizen-centric doable solutions that emanate not just from the bureaucratic quarters but also people themselves so that the ideals of a good, accountable governance are achieved.

While studying municipal governance in the post-GST reforms paradigm, I found that the most fundamental and critical issue is the availability of funds to the city governments to achieve the goal of enabling civic amenities, undertaking development activities and maintenance of the institutions. The funds received as grants and generated from own sources are highly inadequate to meet the meteoric rise in urbanisation. Hence, it is necessary that new sources of revenue must be sought and a balance must be stricken by not becoming an excessively taxing government. Thus, the solutions that I framed entail property tax reforms and innovation, revenue-generating public asset creation, reimagined resource mobilisation from bonds and instruments, remodelled public-private partnerships and monetisation, and innovative local financing tools.

While revenue generation remains a structural challenge, the modalities of expenditure must be rethought as well to ensure that effective public service delivery is carried out without negligence towards developmental goals, and includes due attention to issues of gender and marginalised communities. Technical fallacies that exist in auditing and accounting must be resolved to adopt the standard practices mentioned in my policy document to further expand the tax base and augment resources.

The prime demands of this century – migration, ensuring disaster resilience and climate change adaptation during budgeting processes – also need to be taken into account during budgeting processes, so that long-term vision is embedded in our present actions.

Most importantly, municipal finance must be brought to people, for that is the ultimate goal of local self-government. Good governance initiatives that create citizen-centric approaches in policy formulation and implementation must be adopted. Let's embody this spirit of financial propriety in our unending and relentless endeavour for the visionary growth of democracy in our cities.





# Akanksha Tiwari

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ The accelerated rate of urbanization taking place in India demands better planning and governance. In this regard, the role of urban governance is of utmost importance to cater to the essential needs of citizens, especially in India.”

Akanksha Tiwari is a political science student at Loreto College, Kolkata, West Bengal. She is passionate about politics, international relations and diplomacy and has authored several published research papers and articles for the Centre for Studies in International Relations and Development (CSIRD), Asia in Global Affairs and Global Policy Consortium. She has also served as the Dialogue Facilitator for ‘Reflections Research Advocacy,’ a network of South and Southeast Asian Women who have come together to craft a new narrative of cultural empowerment of women. She is a trained Bharatnatyam dancer and classical singer.

Urban Local Bodies (ULB) in India lack adequate infrastructure and face various strategic and institutional weaknesses such as poor institutional capacity and financial constraints. While many Indian ULBs do receive government assistance, almost all of them continue to be financially fragile.

“It is estimated that only 75–80% of the total municipal waste gets collected and only 22-28% of this is processed and treated”. Waste management is a complex process and requires the collective responsibility of citizens as it is largely the by-product of their lifestyle and actions. This complex process is not only difficult to execute but also expensive.

Waste collection and transportation are essential elements of solid waste management. The country’s informal sector plays a huge role in waste management. The lack of incentives for waste-pickers and the lack of recognition of the economic value of their recycling work is a result of the shortage of funds allocated to the urban local bodies. The key aspect of efficient solid waste management is waste segregation. It requires the deposition of waste in colour-coded bins to ensure proper recovery, reuse and recycling.

However, in most states, it remains a serious problem due to a lack of motivation of people and the shortage of capital to provide for multiple dustbins. Moreover, waste collection efficiency is low in India due to non-uniformity and inadequacy in the collection and funding system. Waste collection efficiency is 100% only in those areas where private contractors and non-governmental organisations are actively involved.

Thiruvananthapuram is the latest city to introduce a slab-wise charge system for waste management. The civic body announced three slabs of Rs 200, Rs 400 and Rs 800 for different waste management procedures. As discussed before, there are several advantages associated with levying a charge, the most important being the wages of waste management workers that can be paid out of the collected cess. Payment of adequate wages has been a recurring problem for all civic bodies from Delhi to Bengaluru, resulting in frequent strikes and stalling of work.

Thus, urban local bodies should levy user charges for solid waste management during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic city governance system.

# Anshi Pandey

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ City Governance is the microscope where we see multiple social sciences interwork and studying the intricacies of how political power, popular choice and economic welfare construct the cities we live in, should be accorded greater significance across nations.”



Anshi Pandey is a student of politics and economics at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, Maharashtra. She runs her own blog which centres around the application of economics. She also volunteers at an organization called Data for Citizens, where the attempt is to simplify the budget of Pune city and make it comprehensible for those interested in understanding how Pune is operating.

Efficient waste disposal and management have emerged as one of the major challenges faced by cities in India. Waste management in urban areas is a complex issue and demands a range of solutions. On the platform provided by Prajatantra, we recently debated whether a city should adopt a system of user charges for social waste management (SWM) services from citizens or attempt to generate revenue through efficient social waste management methods.

In my opinion, waste management should not be treated as a binary choice between user charges and generating revenue through SWM. A cost-benefit analysis, both short and long-term, is essential to identify why this is not a viable solution for waste management systems.

Ideally, the first priority of every city should be to generate as little waste as possible. This effort must start at the household level. By placing reasonable user charges throughout localised city areas, we can encourage people to curtail their waste generation, albeit to a small extent.

On the other hand, setting up SWM methods that generate money is going to utilize the waste in a sustainable fashion. This will also reduce the load on the country's overall waste production and grant autonomy to the service providers. However, setting up such mechanisms takes time, and not every city can rapidly adopt them.

Therefore, I believe that a cumulative effort utilising both approaches can stabilize waste production and generate revenue to increase the capacity of a city to develop self-financing SWM units. This approach requires a balance between short and long-term goals and could be an effective way forward.

In conclusion, cities in India need to adopt a nuanced approach to waste management, considering the unique challenges faced by each city. The focus should be on reducing waste generation, as well as developing sustainable SWM methods that generate revenue, and are self-financing. The adoption of such an approach will not only ensure better waste management but also lead to the overall betterment of the urban environment.



# Anushka Shrivastava

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ For me governance is efficient if it involves common citizens directly or indirectly in the whole process of governing them. Moreover it should be transparent, user-friendly and environment friendly.”

Anushka Shrivastava is a political science student at Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi, Delhi. She served as the Joint Secretary of the political science department and also as Chairperson of India-Mexico Youth Forum. She is also a part of “Girl Up Meera” which is a UN Initiative for empowering women. Her other interests include public speaking, sketching, traveling in less sought-out places and reading self-help books.

I had presented a policy on e-governance which is one of the most looked-after propositions by the city government. Countries across the world have embraced e-governance. E-governance is now crucial in an economy that is booming swiftly, like in the case of India. Due to the growing expansion of automation, many governments around the world have begun to implement and integrate technology into their operations. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to deliver and expedite public services, information exchange, communication transactions, and integration of numerous stand-alone systems and services is known as e-governance. The four types of e-governance are G2C (Government to Citizen), G2G (Government to Government), G2B (Government to Business), and G2E (Government to Employee).

The highlights of the policy that I presented include the following:

- Education: We will create an educational platform named Padho aur Padhao, which would be accessible to all students and teachers in Delhi. It will have comprehensive information regarding schools (their admission), subjects (their syllabus), teachers (their specialisation), educational videos and the flexibility to study, ask doubts and teach.
- Healthcare: We will develop an application called Health is Wealth, wherein citizens of Delhi will be able to consult and make appointments with doctors online, get medicines delivered at home and order lab tests at home.
- Disaster Management: A toll-free number 876 will be established for immediate response to all climate-related issues, natural disaster management, accidents and other major issues.
- Planning: A platform named Digitised Planning Setup will be created to incorporate all the various stakeholders and citizens in the process of planning.
- Establishing DIC: Under this policy, we aim to establish the Delhi Informatics Centre, which would strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism.

Certain challenges associated with this regard are lack of essential infrastructure like internet and electricity. Secondly, the cost of the e-governance initiatives is expensive and calls for significant public funding. Then comes privacy and security because the public’s confidence in e-governance has been undermined by a recent spike in data breach instances; and finally, a huge disparity between e-government service users and non-users.

# Augen Joe

Finalist for Debate Competition

“The best form of city governance is not democratic, it goes beyond democracy. It must, an effort by communities to come up with a consensus solution.”



Augen Joe is a student at the Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara, Kerala. He is a seminarian for the archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, Syro Malabar Church. He has participated in the Youth Climate Conclave 2022 and various international MUNs organized by Harvard University and the United Nations. He is also an ardent cyclist and a parkour enthusiast.

According to the 12th Schedule of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, solid waste management (SWM) is one of the 18 responsibilities of urban local bodies (ULBs). However, financial constraints hinder them from executing this duty. Despite the assistance received by the ULBs from central and state governments, almost all of them continue to be financially fragile.

Most ULBs are struggling to make ends meet, unable to pay their employees and repay loans, and desperately need money. It is in this scenario that we contemplate the necessity of levying user charges for solid waste management. Two decades since the amendment, we have realised that the lack of adequate resources and the financial constraints faced by ULBs result in improper SWM. This realisation has led to the new SWM rules of 2016 insisting that waste generators should pay a user fee to the waste collectors. These charges act as an incentive for the waste collectors to collect the waste regularly. If the waste collection becomes better, people will be encouraged to dispose of their waste more responsibly, thus improving overall SWM.

Dr. Sirajuddin Ahmed, in his review on MSWM in India, argued that it is not the user fees collected by the municipality that is the reason for the failure of municipal SWM, but the lack of awareness, inadequate funding, and ineffective implementation of laws and policies. It is also asserted that private participation in SWM must be encouraged to ease the burden on public coffers. With multiple studies pointing at lack of finances as the major cause for improper SWM in India, it is only reasonable that the public lends their hand to support the ULBs to manage the waste that they created in the first place. When the public is not charged for waste collection, the people may take for granted that it is the government's duty to clean up after them. There must be a sharing of responsibilities between the citizens and local bodies. It is the fundamental duty of every citizen to protect the environment and therefore, a certain responsibility must be taken for the waste generated by each household. If municipalities do not charge the public for the waste they generate, everyone will be affected. The reduced income will impact waste management, which will in turn affect the quality of the environment, paving way for health hazards and ultimately, deterioration of living standards. And, if a small user fee can help prevent this situation, I believe that that is sufficient reason to insist on this approach.

What I love the most about Kochi is how functional it is. Institutions like Centre for Heritage, Environment and Development (C-HED), Cochin Smart Mission Limited (CSML) and Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) that work under the city corporation have launched multiple initiatives, revamped many parts of the city, and upgraded several public parks, footpaths, cycling tracks, and more. Fitness drives are regularly organised by the government and NGOs.

# Jomilin John

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ City governance for me is inclusive governance where the government prioritize to meet the basic needs and rights of all citizens of the concerned city and creates a welfare environment”



Jomilin John is a student at University of Delhi, Delhi. She is a changemaker, climate advocate, and the founder of the youth organization named CANIOP – “Creating a New India of Possibilities” which aims to work in line with the UN SDGs. She has a keen interest in international relations and diplomacy and has even represented India as a delegate in various youth and climate conferences such as the 17th United Nations Conference of Youth, G-STIC, Conference of India 2022 to draft policy recommendations ahead of COP 27, Dialogue on Adaptation Action - Glasgow Climate Pact, Emerging Leader’s Conference.

It was a great learning opportunity to have participated in the debate competition where we had a healthy discussion and debate over the election of the mayor. Many commendable arguments were presented by both teams who were speaking for or against the topic. Some argued that in a democracy, executive power should lie with a person or a democratically accountable body.

As a responsible citizen of India, I believe that our current system requires reforms. India is a rapidly urbanizing country, and the demand for basic amenities and services in cities has been increasing at an unprecedented rate. Only if mayoral reforms are accompanied by other measures that empower urban local governments, will there be any meaningful change in city governance. This would require changes in the allocation of resources, political will, and citizen participation in decision-making processes. If we want responsive and accountable urban governance, we need to create a system that ensures it. Therefore, we need to strive for reforms that enable mayors to have the necessary powers to act and be held accountable for the outcomes.

However, our current system of local self-government has not kept pace with the changing needs of urban areas. In this context, the election of a mayor has been a topic of debate, with some arguing for a directly elected mayor as a way to achieve better urban governance. The mayor, as the elected head of the municipal corporation, can play a vital role in addressing these issues.

In conclusion, while the election of a mayor has been a topic of debate, it is clear that our current system of local self-government requires reforms. If we want responsive and accountable urban governance, we need to create a system that ensures it. Whether or not a directly elected mayor is the answer remains a matter of debate, but it is crucial that reforms empower local self-government and ensure better urban governance. We need to strive for reforms that enable mayors to have the necessary powers to act and be held accountable for the outcomes. This would require changes in the allocation of resources, political will, and citizen participation in decision-making processes. As responsible citizens, we must continue to advocate for reforms that promote good governance and contribute to the development of our cities.

# Neha Sen

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ A good city governance is one that remains true to the ideals of democracy and works towards equity. Citizens of all strata of society should be benefited-progress should always be intersectional.”



Neha is a student of Loreto College, Kolkata, West Bengal. She is the President of the Debating Society in college, and debating has remained a primary curricular of hers since her school days. Her interests are literature and journalism. She has participated in debating competitions at national and international levels, like the Jefferson Debate and several debates organised by the Calcutta Debating Circle. She also has an interest in travelling and gaining insight into the fascinating history of various locations.

Urbanisation has led to several challenges, including waste management, which has become a pressing issue for policymakers. In recent times, waste management has gained importance, and the Standing Committee on Urban Development has highlighted the need to introduce effective policies to address this challenge. My vision for waste management involves introducing policies of levying user charges, which has shown positive results in certain municipalities.

Tiruchirappalli City Municipal Corporation is a good example of a municipality that has introduced solid waste management charges, which has led to improved waste management. The charges start at Rs 30 half-yearly or Rs 5 per month for a tax assessment of Rs 500. However, it varies according to the rates of property tax for residential buildings. For instance, if a resident has to pay a property tax of Rs 1,000 for their house, the fee is Rs 60 per half-yearly. The fee is levied to meet at least a part of the expenditure on sanitation, and it has been successful in improving waste management in the city.

To achieve this vision, it is essential to involve more manpower and resources in waste management. The informal sector should also be involved, as they play a significant role in waste collection and recycling. Incentives and severe penalties should be imposed to ensure the proper implementation of regulations.

Introducing user charges for waste management is an effective way to reduce the burden on the municipality and encourage residents to be more mindful of their waste. It is important to note that waste management is not just the responsibility of the municipality but also of the residents. Therefore, it is essential to educate residents on the importance of waste management and the need to segregate waste at source.

In conclusion, waste management is a crucial issue in urban areas and needs to be addressed with urgency. My vision for waste management involves introducing policies of levying user charges, involving more manpower and resources, and including the informal sector. Incentives and severe penalties should be imposed to ensure the proper implementation of regulations. With the support of residents, policymakers, and municipalities, we can create cleaner and greener cities for the future.

# Saanj Chougule

Finalist for Debate Competition

“Efficient Governance is all about transparency and active citizen participation.”



Saanj Chougule is a student at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, Maharashtra, pursuing Economics. She is passionate about public speaking and finance. She stood first in the District Youth Parliament 2022. She is an NSS volunteer and in the past has volunteered at the Global Nagari Foundation.

Solid waste management (SWM) is an issue that has been plaguing urban areas in India for years. With the increasing amount of waste generated by growing populations, efficient and sustainable SWM is becoming more and more critical. The debate on whether to levy user charges for SWM services from citizens or generate revenue through efficient SWM is an important one.

In my opinion, charging user fees for SWM services is a reasonable and practical approach. By charging fees, waste collectors and management companies can get a fixed source of income, which can help enhance the lifestyle of people engaged in this sector and improve the existing waste management and recycling industry in India. Moreover, efficient waste management can also help reduce waste generation, leading to a cleaner and healthier environment.

Efficient SWM involves the collection, segregation, transportation, and disposal of waste sustainably. With the help of the latest technologies and the emerging private sector, this can be done in a self-sustainable industry. Various methods, such as resource extraction from waste and recycling, can be used to prevent environmental pollution and health hazards caused by waste. Waste of certain calorific content can be used for producing thermal energy or may be converted to electricity.

By charging fees, waste collectors can get a fixed source of income, which will help enhance the lifestyle of people currently engaged in this sector.

The government of India, through its local bodies, is taking initiatives to spread awareness of the importance of handling and managing waste. Moreover, it is encouraging citizens to come up with better solutions and products to manage waste by organizing various competitions. Therefore, it is essential for the citizens of India, especially the youth, to participate in this movement and provide support to convert waste into wealth.

In conclusion, efficient and sustainable SWM is crucial for the well-being of citizens and the environment. By charging fees for waste management and through an efficient waste management system, we can create a self-sustainable industry, contribute towards the well-being of citizens, and promote a cleaner and healthier environment.

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# Samiksha Gheradi

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ City Governance is the instrument which envisions the the prosperity in all spheres of public life and it advances harmony in the society.

Along with this, it is a platform for augmentation of ground level welfare.”

Samiksha Omprakash Gheradi is a student at D.E.S. Shri Navalmal Firodia Law College, Pune, Maharashtra. She has always been drawn toward litigation, justice dispensation, fighting for a cause etc. Her interests are reading, researching and assimilation of different cultures across the country, Her achievements include awards in inter-college and intra-college speech contests. She has played various regional level basketball matches.

Solid waste management is a critical issue that has been a challenge for India for a long time. However, recent years have seen a growing awareness of the untapped potential of solid waste management and its potential for revenue generation.

During a debate contest, I was tasked with developing revenue-generation strategies for solid waste management. This challenge made me realize the vast potential of this area, which has remained unexplored and underutilized for a long time. Recycling metals, for example, can produce raw materials for the manufacturing of smartphones, which serves the dual purpose of recycling and revenue generation.

In recent years, we have also witnessed the rise of micro-units and groups for women’s empowerment. These groups can be involved in textile waste management, creating blankets adorned with unique designs and drawings, which can then be sold to generate revenue.

The idea of waste-to-wealth is gaining momentum in India. The government’s flagship program, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, has been successful in raising awareness of the importance of solid waste management, and various initiatives have been taken to promote this idea.

One such initiative is the introduction of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework, which places the onus of proper disposal of waste on the producer of the product.

This has led to an increased focus on the efficient and sustainable management of solid waste, including the recycling of e-waste, plastic, and other materials.

The potential for revenue generation from solid waste management is immense. For instance, the Indian waste management industry is estimated to grow to \$13.62 billion by 2025. Recycling, composting, and waste-to-energy initiatives can create a host of employment opportunities and contribute to India’s economic growth.

In conclusion, solid waste management is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed effectively, and waste-to-wealth initiatives have immense potential to generate revenue, create employment opportunities, and contribute to India’s sustainable development. With the right policies and initiatives, India can emerge as a leader in the field of sustainable waste management and reap the benefits of this untapped potential.





# Swetha

## Siva Subramanya Iyer

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ Timely delivery of the essential services to the people by the ER’s who work for the society by considering themselves as one among the people will make Good Governance. It involves Transparency, efficiency, accessibility along with innovation.”

Swetha Siva Subramanya Iyer is a student of zoology at the Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara, Kerala. She is a Bharatanatyam dance and recently started doodling and doing mandala art. She enjoys photography and recently received the second prize for an intercollegiate nature photography competition.

Solid wastes are any materials that have been disposed of from industries, commercial users, mining, and through agricultural, household or community activities. Environmental hygiene and public health are the biggest reasons why solid management is so necessary today. To control the harmful effects of solid waste on the environment, effective SWM is an important step.

One of the 18 duties assigned to urban local governments is the management of solid waste, as stated in the 12th Schedule of the 74th Constitution Amendment Act of 1992. Ineffective SWM is caused by the ULBs’ lack of sufficient resources and financial restrictions. The waste generators are required to pay a user fee to the trash collectors under the 2016 SWM regulations. Local authorities must create bylaws to enforce fines for littering and non-compliance as well as user fees and charges under the SWM rules 2016 that were mandated. This can help cities become more financially independent. The need to reduce waste collection and transportation costs must be stressed more than ever. Infrastructure for transportation and processing and safe disposal of waste would call for a certain level of investment which the municipalities are in no position to make. Given their financial limitations, ULBs will have to develop more economic and sustainable methods for effective SWM and expect to be supported by capital subsidies whenever necessary. Levying user charges will help to a great extent. These charges act as an incentive for waste collectors to collect the waste regularly.

Cleanliness is a collective responsibility and levying charges on urban residents to facilitate solid waste management is a practice gradually finding favour among urban local bodies. The major problem is that most citizens are reluctant to pay these charges despite civic bodies promising that the collected amount will be used for solving the city’s civic problems. While the collection of user charges is an effective way to ensure that civic bodies always have some funds for SWM, there is absolutely no point in collecting them if it remains underutilised. The differential charging based on financial stability will solve the problem of burdening the different sections of society. Door-to-door garbage collection, segregation as well as on-site composting, and other initiatives are being implemented in various cities. The user charges collected can be spent on maintenance and cleanliness activities in order to provide a better hygienic environment for us.



# Urja Mishra

Finalist for Debate Competition

“Good Governance is the coalescence of vociferous vision, meticulous mission, profound plan and policies with a sustainable development goal affirmed by integrous implementation of efficacious government machinery.”

Urja Mishra is student from D.E.S. Shri Navalmal Firodia Law College, Pune having interests in law and journalism. She has been a university topper and an eloquent debater, having won many National Level Debates, Article Writing and Research Competitions along with being invited as an adjudicator in quite a few of them. She has interned with the National Human Rights Commission and Niti Manthan and worked on diverse government policies and collaborated on curating innovative development schemes. She is trained in Kathak and speaks/understands french owing to her interest in art and culture.

Solid waste management is an exacerbating universal problem that is impacting cities not only in developing countries but also in several developed countries. The primary cause behind it is the imbalance between the increasing generation of solid waste and the burden posed on the limited municipal budget. Furthermore, along with the high costs of SWM, the lack of understanding of different factors related to SWM techniques adversely affects the health of citizens and the environment.

Hence the question of whether ULBs should levy user charges for SWM services or whether they should generate revenue through down-the-line income streams from SWM becomes relevant. Levying user charges for SWM service ensures that the civic body has a financial provision for expenses such as payment to sanitation workers. Moreover, user charges have a deterrent impact on the minds of the citizens to judiciously use the resources, thereby breaking down the vicious cycle of waste generation and generating minimum waste. Additionally, this system also runs parallel to the benefit principle, which implies that people should pay for goods or services in accordance with the benefit that they receive.

However, we cannot turn a blind eye towards the other side of the coin. It is very apparent that additional user charges for SWM services would serve as an additional burden on the citizens, as they are already paying property tax, professional tax and water charges along with underground drainage maintenance charges so that the ULB can discharge its duties. The foremost duty of the ULB is to keep the city clean by clearing garbage, ensuring sanitation by constructing and maintaining drains, disposing of sewage and road maintenance. The ULB gets special funds from the state government and also has the provision of receiving deficit funds for special projects. Hence, levying charges for SWM separately is an unfair practice which is not only unjust in law but also goes against the morals and ethics of good governance. Moreover, there is a constant fear that if such charges are allowed now, then in future the ULB may levy separate charges for cleaning the streets, maintaining drains and paying salaries to staff.

Revenue generation through effective SWM, that is, recycling, reusing and composting, is a puissant tool. It has been rightly said that “When you refuse to reuse, it’s the Earth you abuse.” Recycling and reusing save energy, reduce pollution and conserve resources while composting improves soil conditions. These techniques have also adequately contributed to the empowering of various sectors and agencies involved in SWM thereby generating a sustainable source of income.

Thus, there is a compelling need to strike a balance and formulate a profound policy which caters to both ends simultaneously.

# Raghav Bhatia

Finalist for Debate Competition

“To not question is to submit.”



Raghav Bhatia is a student at the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Belagavi, Karnataka. He is fond of reading and writing. He is also a fan of cinema.

A mayor, by definition, is the head of a municipal council. Henceforth the councillors should be the ones to determine who presides over their meetings. They have to be comfortable enough with the mayor to put forth their views in front of him and object to his views when they disagree. Conversely, the mayor will feel highly answerable to them, knowing that any and every one of his decisions is going to be questioned extensively.

If the citizens elect the mayor by a direct cast of votes, deny it or not, a subconscious bias will always exist. A businessman will tend to vote for a candidate who improves upon the tax policies; whereas a farmer will tend to vote for a candidate who enhances their revenue.

Councillors, on the other hand, have their lives submerged knee-deep in politics. They have to arrive at a unanimous decision as to which candidate, based on their personal and political history, will be best suited with regard to the spectrum of issues in the local body.

Councillors casting the vote also leave room for innovation. For instance, in 2020, 21-year-old Arya Rajendran was announced as the youngest mayor in India for Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram. This bridges the gap between the ideologies of the experienced and the ideas of the youth.

Citizens themselves would not have been quite so open to such a young individual. Moreover, they often hanker to vote for the party, and not the candidate. Furthermore, when councillors appoint the mayor, re-election becomes easier. For example, a no-confidence motion was passed against Mayor Ruby Tiwari and Deputy Mayor Pushpa Kushwaha in 2021. As we know, mayors in India are elected by councillors in all states but nine. This is for a reason: because it is working for us.

Slowly but steadily we are moving towards a better India. The House of Lokprabhutva understands that democracy is of the people, for the people, and by the people. And councillors represent democracy on a smaller and more efficient scale.

To paraphrase Sir George Orwell from his famous political novel 1984: War is not peace, Freedom is not slavery. And democratic ignorance is NEVER strength!

*(Raghav and Roxanne have co-authored the article)*

# Roxanne Kanga

Finalist for Debate Competition

“An empowered citizen is not just one who gets to choose his/her government, but one who gets to empower the body of experience that deserves to choose the government”

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Roxanne Kanga, is a first year MBBS student studying at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Belagavi, Karnataka. She enjoys painting, discussions and debates. In her spare time she likes to read, bake and practice yoga to keep her grounded.



# Harithapriya Vijaye

Finalist for Debate Competition

“ A dysfunctional authority of governance is a merge of inaccurate laws, immoral leaders and feckless citizens; it can only be upgraded by steady and spoken public”

Harithapriya Vijaye is a student at the Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. She is a budding feminist and an aspiring writer. She has won prizes in poetry and creative writing at both national and state levels. She is currently serving as Co-coordinator of Quizzers' Club MANIT, Quizzing society of MANIT, Bhopal and Social Media Secretary in IEEE MSB, a technical society in MANIT.

Waste management is a necessary step toward sustainable development and the need of the hour for creating liveable cities with a green ambience to ensure a healthy planet for future generations.

In several ways, levying taxes for solid waste management is unwise. There are many unemployed and impoverished people, and the majority of the working population struggles to meet the necessities of a sustainable life and maintain a decent standard of living. It is not pragmatic to levy taxes on them for solid waste management in the midst of prevailing economic hardships in the course of securing the future and facing existing taxes. Revenue generated through efficient waste management will not only relieve citizens of taxation burdens but will also create jobs while treating the ailing planet.

Revenue generated from efficient waste management, when used for SWM, will solve a problem in the waste management unit's house, promoting self-reliance by meeting its own needs without shifting focus to tax collection. Along with creating raw materials from recycling for future production without burdening citizens and only benefiting them, strong governance is achieved.

- India generates a whopping 62 million tonnes of garbage each year.
- A staggering 43 million tonnes of waste is collected annually, of which only 11.9 million tonnes, or 22-28%, is treated, leaving approximately 31 million tonnes of waste untreated and dumped at landfill sites.

Recycling, reusing and composting can generate a significant amount of revenue that can be used to manage solid waste. Instead of dumping waste in landfills, composting can make the soil fertile, and promote organic farming.

Cost management is a difficult task for civic bodies because the current situation has several flaws in the process of solid waste management, ranging from a lack of waste treatment infrastructure to insufficient funds. The revenue generated through efficient waste management could further support infrastructural development and raise the standards of solid waste management through research and development.

Citizens would be hesitant to pay these taxes. As a result, citizens can take a stand against new taxation, citing the unsatisfactory performance of civic bodies. Focusing on revenue generation for solid waste management would also improve government accountability for waste management efficiency and profit.

*(Harithapriya and Vaibhav have co-authored the essay)*



# Vaibhav Rajori

Finalist for Debate Competition

“Good Governance breaths when citizens become begetters. Acting upon the root cause of anguishes without compromising the inextricable hallmarks of democracy make the utopian good governance a reality.”

Vaibhav Rajoria is a student at Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, pursuing urban planning. He also works at NGO “Aaroha” which helps underprivileged students to pursue education and unlocks his potential as a responsible citizen and satisfies his moral conscience toward the society.

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# Pranav M Pramod

Finalist for Debate Competition

“Government must always start from the core when shaping a country. As a result of city governance, the government can respond to the needs of specific areas while respecting its demographics; this is the essence of democracy.”

Pranav M Pramod is a student at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Ernakulam, Kerala. Playing sports and reading literature are his interests.

Effective waste management is a pressing concern for individuals in developing nations, and India is no exception. While waste management is a vital aspect of sustainable urban development, there has long been a disagreement over whether Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) should charge residents for their solid waste management (SWM) services or whether ULBs should make money through effective SWM methods. In this essay, we will explore how a balance can be struck between sustainability and affordability in waste management.

Finances are always necessary for any area of public service, and waste management is no exception. While ULBs must charge residents for their SWM services, the cost must be affordable and acceptable to all. This can be achieved by maintaining a small fee for SWM while allowing residents to examine any errors in the work done by the ULBs through routine cleanliness checks. Such a fee will not only ensure the financial sustainability of waste management but also create a sense of ownership among the residents towards the cleanliness of their surroundings.

Engagement of the public is a given, and coordination and cooperation between the people and the agencies are essential to the success of the entire process. Effective communication and awareness campaigns can help ULBs build trust and foster a positive relationship with the public. The ULBs can leverage social media and other digital platforms to keep citizens informed about the latest developments in waste management and seek their feedback. Public participation in waste segregation, composting, and other such activities can significantly reduce the burden on the ULBs and ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for all.

In conclusion, effective waste management requires a balanced approach that takes into account both sustainability and affordability. The ULBs must invest in modern infrastructure and innovative technologies to ensure the safe and secure disposal of solid waste. At the same time, a small, acceptable cost for SWM can help ensure the financial sustainability of waste management while fostering a sense of ownership among residents. Effective communication and public participation can help build trust and cooperation between ULBs and the public, ensuring a cleaner and healthier environment for all.

*(Pranav and Vishnu have co-authored this article)*



# Vishnu Sharan Ramadas

Finalist for Debate Competition

“Governance is when the government acts for the people and not for itself. The point of difference is what had to be focused upon”

Vishnu Sharan is a second year B.Com student from Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Ernakulam, Kerala. He loves the outdoors and plays all kind of sport. Even though he enjoys the company of family and friends, he believes solitude is bliss.

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*(Pranav and Vishnu have co-authored this article)*



# Abdul Basit

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“The first step towards good governance is self governance and self discipline.”



Abdul Basit, is a student at the AAAM Degree College (part of the Cluster University), Srinagar, jammu and Kashmir, pursuing B.A Honours in Political Science. He belongs to Drass, a small town in the Kargil district of Ladakh, known to be the world’s second coldest inhabited place in the world. He aspires to become a Civil Servant (IAS). In the past he has served as the Secretary of his school for two consecutive years. His interests include Badminton, Volleyball and Camping.

Being a part of Prajatantra was an amazing experience that provided valuable insights into city governance and developmental works. Through the sessions conducted by Prajatantra, we learnt about the functioning of various municipalities and agencies, town planning, road construction, and more. Based on my experience, here are some suggestions to improve city governance and its services in Kargil.

Firstly, the educational system in Kargil needs to be improved and made a top priority. As Chinese philosopher, Confucius said, “If your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years, plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years, educate children.” Therefore, educational systems and institutions need to be reformed to provide good quality education to the students in Kargil. A lack of quality education has forced many students, including myself, to move away from their homes and families to study in other cities.

Secondly, the urban authorities should take steps to improve the water supply facilities in Kargil. Many residents face water scarcity and receive water beyond a fixed time. The urban authorities should focus on improving the water supply facilities to ensure that all residents have access to safe and clean drinking water.

I would like to suggest the urban authorities improve the water supply facilities in Kargil so that residents that avail of water beyond a fixed time only. Lastly, I would urge the urban authorities to take steps to keep the area cleaner than what it is presently; for instance, areas around the Suru River are polluted. To summarise, my vision is to make Kargil the cleanest city.

Lastly, the urban authorities should take steps to keep the city clean and pollution-free. Areas around the Suru River are polluted, and steps should be taken to clean and maintain the area. Keeping the city clean will not only improve the quality of life for the residents but also attract tourists, thereby boosting the local economy.

In summary, my vision is to make Kargil the cleanest city. To achieve this, the educational system needs to be reformed, the water supply facilities need to be improved, and steps should be taken to keep the city clean and pollution-free. By implementing these measures, Kargil can become a model city for others to emulate.

# Amar Malode

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“Good city governance is the foundation of a healthy and prosperous city where all citizens have access to opportunities and can live a high quality of life.”



Amar Malode is a graduate from BKPS College of Architecture, Pune and currently a student of urban and regional planning from the MIT School of Architecture, Pune, Maharashtra. He has been a part of various prestigious projects in the fields of spatial planning, building design, and urban design, and has also been working on various government sector projects under the Smart City Mission for cities like Pune, Solapur, and Bhubaneshwar for the last 5 years. He is a film enthusiast and also enjoys exploring the great outdoors through trekking.

Effective city governance requires the proper use of these resources to provide quality public services, such as infrastructure development, public safety, health and sanitation, and education. It also requires transparency and accountability in the management of municipal finances. This includes the creation of a budget that is based on realistic revenue projections and the allocation of resources in an equitable manner.

However, major Indian cities are facing several challenges in terms of municipal finance. One of the main is the increasing demand for services due to the rapid population growth in the city. People from villages and towns are shifting to big cities for better employment opportunities, education and amenities. This migration is adding a burden on the existing infrastructure and on the municipal corporations to increase its revenue sources in order to meet the needs of the growing population. The municipal corporation often faces competition from private sector service providers, which makes it difficult to attract investment and generate revenue.

To address these issues, the government needs to implement policies and programs for improving local transportation services and discourage the use of private vehicles. Implementing pragmatic environmental regulations, governance awareness programs, slum redevelopment, EWS housing, PMAY and inclusive planning approach are other solutions.

While dealing with financial issues, urban local bodies should ensure that all citizens and businesses pay their fair share of taxes. The government should optimise and encourage the use of digital platforms for tax collection in order to improve financial management, reduce the risk of fraud and corruption, and expand its revenue base.

In addition, city governance must involve active citizen participation and involvement in the decision-making process. This includes offering opportunities for citizens to provide feedback on city services and to participate in budget consultations. Such participation can help ensure that the allocation of resources reflects the priorities of the community.

To conclude, effective city governance requires a sound financial management system, transparent use of public funds, active citizen participation, and integration of technology. By adopting these principles, cities can provide quality services to their citizens, promote economic development, and improve the quality of life for all.

# Anjali Shukla

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“ Urban governance according to me also refers to how government and stakeholders decide how to plan, finance and manage policies of urban areas. ”



Anjali Shukla is a student at Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj University, Kanpur, pursuing sociology. She achieved first position in a general knowledge quiz competition while at school and later achieved fifth position at the district level. Her interests lie in singing and reading books.

Participating in the Prajatantra competition has been an enlightening experience for me, as I learned a great deal about city governance, municipalities, e-governance, and climate change. One of the most significant takeaways for me was understanding how city governance works, and how municipalities play a vital role in maintaining hygiene and cleanliness in the city by collecting garbage and creating awareness among citizens about their duties towards the city's maintenance.

The concept of e-governance was new to me, but I quickly realized how it has been instrumental in delivering government services through electronic means, such as the Aarogya Setu app. Learning about e-governance opened my eyes to the potential of technology in making governance more accessible, efficient, and transparent.

One of the most critical issues we discussed in the knowledge session on climate change was how it affects people's lives and its impact on cities. Living in a city that emphasizes cleanliness and hygiene, I am aware of the challenges posed by pollution and traffic. There are several factories in my city that release harmful chemical effluents, posing a threat to both the environment and people's health. To overcome these challenges, it is essential for people to participate actively, as the government alone cannot tackle these issues.

Prajatantra has taught me about the functions, roles, and activities of municipalities and how policies are formulated for the welfare of people and cities. I also gained insight into the budgeting process, which plays a crucial role in providing necessary resources for various developmental activities.

In my opinion, imposing fines on those who pollute, whether it is spitting in public places or throwing garbage, is a necessary step towards maintaining cleanliness and hygiene in the city. Additionally, authorities should actively engage with citizens to understand their needs and grievances, working together to tackle these issues effectively.

Overall, Prajatantra has been an excellent learning opportunity for me, and I am grateful for the knowledge I gained on city governance, e-governance, and climate change. I hope to use this knowledge to make a positive impact in my community and contribute towards building a better future for all.

# Dhruva Kansagara

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“While transparency reduces corruption, good governance goes beyond transparency in achieving openness. Building sustainable cities - and a sustainable future - will need open dialogue among all branches of national, state and local government”



Dhruva Kansagara, is an urban planner, pursuing her Master's in Urban and Regional Planning from the MIT School of Architecture, Pune, Maharashtra. She is an avid sketcher, traveller, and urban explorer. She is fascinated by urban planning and discovering new cities and particularly traveling in Pune and its suburbs. She believes that planning is about people, and hence it's important to study human behaviour and psychology to create better communities.

India, being one of the largest countries democratically, demographically and geographically faces a huge challenge in the application of e-governance to empower its citizens and for overall economic development, more specifically in the rural areas. The four pillars of e-government are people, process, technology and resources. e-Governance is expected to maximise citizen satisfaction by not just improving the responsiveness of public service delivery mechanisms but also by augmenting citizens' participation in governance mechanisms. e-Governance needs to transform all levels of the government but the focus should be on local governments since it is the closest to citizens and constitutes, for many, the main interface with government.

Government should be responsible for ensuring the optimal performance of an urban area. Governance, though always changing with time, plays a major role in the management of economic sustainability, the provision of resources and infrastructure, the delivery of basic services and the protection of the marginalised and vulnerable in society. Additionally, urban governance affects the ability of residents to access their local authorities and participate in the decision-making process, as well as the extent to which local authorities are accountable to their citizens and responsive to their needs.

We know that climate change is already occurring, and that additional warming is unavoidable. If we hope to limit the negative impacts of climate change, we must prepare by identifying the vulnerabilities and by planning accordingly. Climate change affects every aspect of the natural environment. Climate change planning includes the mitigation of future climate change, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to existing and projected environmental changes, and disaster risk reduction measures. Climate change-informed planning must balance multiple – and sometimes competing – considerations. A number of local governments have found assessing vulnerability across the broad range of government services as an effective approach to anticipate, plan for, and adapt to a changing climate. The comprehensive approach can be an effective way to increase awareness and build momentum.

By stating in advance how work is to be done, planning provides direction for action. Planning ensures that goals and objectives are clearly defined so that, they act as a guide for deciding what action should be taken and in which direction.



# Kiran Yadav

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“ Governance is decision- making and implementing them but good governance is citizen’s active participation in making the government accountable and demanding transparency in the system.”

Kiran Yadav is a student at the SVKM Pravin Gandhi College of Law, Mumbai, Maharashtra. She has interned at Agami for Agami Prize 2022 which celebrates ideas in transforming the field of law and justice. She is fond of travelling, likes to solve problems with a willingness to learn new skills.

Today’s society is moving towards a digital one, and this trend has become more pronounced after the Covid-19 pandemic. Everything has gone digital, from businesses to online classrooms, and we were able to effectively utilise technology during the crisis, demonstrating its strength. e-Governance simply means the functioning of the government in assistance with technology. This includes direct involvement and participation of citizens and the private sector in the delivery of public services. It would lead to improving relations between the public authorities and civil society. Some of the well-known e-governance projects include Smart Gov, Khajane Project, e-Panchayats, digilocker, e-Mitra project (Rajasthan), e-Seva project (Andhra Pradesh), and e-Kranti project.

I learned about the four pillars of e-governance—people, process, technology, and resources—and how they contribute to good governance during the Praja Foundation’s knowledge workshops. The key to good governance is involving the public in the decision-making process and providing them with the necessary tools and resources. While e-governance has begun to take shape in India, there are still obstacles to overcome; including the digital divide, lack of public awareness, breaches of data shared online, low computer literacy, and accessibility. These obstacles to the implementation of e-governance can be overcome through effective government actions like providing information to citizens in their local language so that they can comprehend and participate in the process.

As much as digitalisation and technology are helping us, they are also having an adverse effect on climate. According to the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), urban areas have only recently been recognised as increasingly at risk from climate change impacts. The effect of climate change can be seen in our daily lives so there is a need to raise awareness about these activities to raise the social acceptance of the need for adaptation.

In addition, the government, local climate activists, and NGOs should work together to develop policies addressing climate change. Cities naturally experience significant effects of climate change events because of their large population densities. The majority of the world’s large cities are located close to the shore, making the sea level rise. Therefore, in order to achieve good governance, cities must collaborate with local government, citizen organisations, and technology to adapt to climate change more effectively.

For better execution of either the e-governance system or climate change policy, the government must be transparent and accountable, and it must engage the public and take into consideration their ideas.



# Mansi Saraiya

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“ To talk about city governance, it’s not an easy task. India being such a big country with over 1.3 Billion people living even at city level it’s difficult to manage. I feel that more proactive measures can be taken in sanitation and roads department.”

Mansi Saraiya is a second year law student at the SVKM Pravin Gandhi College of Law, Mumbai, Maharashtra. She completed her schooling from Bombay Cambridge International School from IGCSE board. Her non-academic interests include singing, dancing and reading (both fiction as well as non-fiction).

The role of city governments in India is critical, as they are responsible for providing basic necessities, offering access to government programmes, and addressing regional issues. City governments have various administrative divisions or departments that are responsible for carrying out specific tasks. The heads of these departments are deputised by state governments and are responsible for the smooth functioning of their respective departments.

The municipal commissioner is the chief executive officer of the city government and is responsible for running the administrative branch of the city government. Municipal commissioners are typically members of the Indian Administrative Services, while in some smaller local administrations, they come from the state civil services. In Kerala, they are recognized as secretaries.

Local governments are on the state list of the Constitution, and they are governed by state laws and regulations. The State Municipal Acts grant city governments various powers and functions to provide basic utilities and services. The 74th Amendment Act of the Constitution further guides these powers and has made all statutory towns subject to the Act.

Under the Act, local administrations are required to perform 18 broad duties, which include poverty reduction programs and the provision of utilities such as water delivery, cesspool cleaning, and the construction of roads and bridges. However, the actual devolution of these responsibilities varies from state to state and occasionally even within a single state, leaving the discretion to the state governments.

In conclusion, city governments in India have various administrative divisions or departments that are responsible for carrying out specific tasks, headed by department heads deputized by state governments. The municipal commissioner is the chief executive officer of the city government, responsible for running the administrative branch of the city government. The State Municipal Acts grant city governments various powers and functions to provide basic utilities and services. The local governments are on the state list of the Constitution, and they are governed by state laws and regulations. The actual devolution of responsibilities varies from state to state and is left up to the discretion of state governments.



# Mariette Rose George

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“ Effective city governance is essential for the well-being and prosperity of a city and its residents.”

Mariette Rose George is a student pursuing Bachelors of Planning from Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. She is keenly interested in quizzing and has been participating in various competitions for the past 7 years. She currently serves as the Quizzing Head of Quizzers' Club MANIT. Mariette's goal is to achieve happiness and peace in all the upcoming areas of life and to contribute to society and the people around her.

City governance plays a vital role in promoting economic growth and development within a city. A well-functioning city government can attract and retain businesses, support the growth of local entrepreneurs, and promote the overall prosperity of the city's residents. To achieve this, city governments must prioritize policies and programs that foster economic growth and development.

An important aspect of city governance is maintaining and improving the infrastructure of the city. This can include everything from roads and bridges to public transportation, water and sewage systems, and parks and recreational facilities. By investing in infrastructure, city governments can create a more livable and sustainable environment that is attractive to businesses and residents alike.

City governance must also prioritize protecting the environment and promoting sustainable practices. This includes initiatives such as energy-efficient buildings, green transportation, and waste management. By promoting sustainable practices, city governments can ensure that the city is a healthy and livable place for current and future generations.

In addition, city governance must be inclusive and equitable and address the needs of all residents, regardless of their background or circumstances. This can involve policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, and promoting affordable housing, education, and healthcare. By promoting inclusivity and equity, city governments can create a more vibrant and prosperous city for everyone.

Furthermore, effective city governance requires transparency and accountability. This means open communication, clear decision-making processes, and the availability of information. City governments should involve and engage the community by providing opportunities for public input, fostering civic participation, and encouraging community-based problem-solving. By promoting transparency and accountability, city governments can ensure that policies and programs are implemented in an efficient and effective manner.

Finally, city governance must be innovative and adaptable to changing circumstances. The ability to think creatively and take calculated risks to address challenges and seize new opportunities is important. By promoting innovation and adaptability, city governments can stay ahead of the curve and create a more prosperous and sustainable future for all residents.

In conclusion, city governance is a complex and multifaceted field that requires strong leadership, active engagement with citizens and other stakeholders, and a focus on promoting economic growth and development, safety and security, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, inclusivity and equity, transparency and accountability, and innovation and adaptability. By prioritizing these aspects of city governance, city governments can create a more vibrant, prosperous, and sustainable city for everyone.



# Prateek R Gowda

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“A good city governance enables the citizens to avail services easily and ensure accountability, transparency and efficiency. This can be achieved by way of active citizen participation and proper functioning of the local government.”

Prateek R Gowda, is a student at Ramaiah College of Law, Bangalore, Karnataka, pursuing his 5th Year B.Com., LL.B and aspires to pursue a career in Judiciary. Hi interests are watching news and reading the newspapers. He also plays professional cricket and football and is a pet lover.

E-governance, which involves the application of information technology to the process of government functioning, is transforming the way governments interact with citizens. E-governance aims to bring about smart, moral, accountable, responsive, and transparent governance. The four pillars of e-governance are people, process, technology, and resources. However, e-governance faces several challenges that are categorised into economical, technical, and social aspects. Effective citizen engagement is key to successful e-governance.

The government’s focus on radical digitalisation through initiatives such as Digital India, Make In India, and Skill India has empowered citizens with social, environmental, and economic values. E-governance has enabled access to information and integrated various systems and services between government and citizens, thereby transforming citizen services. Led by technology, e-governance is creating a positive impact on society by enabling efficient and effective government functioning.

The advent of Industry 4.0, powered by new-age technologies like the internet of things, artificial intelligence, and robotics, has further increased digitalisation. In addition to already digitised sectors and activities, India is nurturing new emerging digital ecosystems in sectors such as agriculture, education, energy, financial services, and healthcare. The government is working with stakeholders to scale up the digital economy, creating huge economic value and empowering people across India.

In addition to technology-driven solutions, mobile-based voice or text services and web presence also serve as additional channels for information sharing. Meetings with citizens, elected representatives, local civil society groups, and other stakeholders should be undertaken at different stages of the project cycle at regular intervals. Effective citizen engagement is necessary to ensure that e-governance initiatives are responsive to citizens’ needs and requirements.

In conclusion, e-governance is transforming the way governments interact with citizens by enabling smart, accountable, and responsive governance. The government’s focus on radical digitalisation through initiatives such as Digital India, Make In India, and Skill India has empowered citizens with social, environmental, and economic values. Effective citizen engagement is critical to successful e-governance. By leveraging new-age technologies, India is poised to scale up the digital economy, creating huge economic value and empowering people across India.





# Ranu Duhan

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“Good Governance allows a transparent, responsive, inclusive and participatory approach to democratize resource distribution and services among its various stakeholders.”

Ranu Duhan, is an architect, currently studying at TISS School of Habitat Studies, Mumbai, Maharashtra. Her technical knowledge in architecture, planning and spatial designs allowed her to critically evaluate long term consequences of her designs on inhabitants, environment as well as the communities, which led to her interest in understanding the larger policy and governance domain. One of her achievements includes a national level award-winning entry on “Sustainable Water-Infrastructure in Rural Rajasthan”, envisioning villages of India in 2047. Her personal interests include creative arts, heritage, traveling and photography.

I am deeply appreciative of the enriching and interactive knowledge sessions that took place during Prajatantra 2023. The conference provided a wealth of information and opportunities for learning, but one session, in particular, stood out to me. The ‘City Governance’ session led by Dr Ravikant Joshi was especially illuminating, as it helped me to understand the crucial role that local governance plays in our daily lives.

Dr Joshi made it clear that the foundation for realising a city’s needs starts at the local governance level, whether it be in the areas of waste management, transportation, water, or housing facilities. In order to effectively address these needs, there must be open and active communication between the citizens and their elected representatives. The session emphasised the importance of being knowledgeable about urban governance in order to facilitate this communication.

Furthermore, Prof. Debolina Kundu’s views on the role of inclusivity and participatory planning in urban development broadened my understanding of spatial designs as an architect. Such an approach not only addresses the needs of different user groups but also takes into account the challenges posed by climate change. By including a wide range of stakeholders in the planning process, we can ensure that the final plans are representative of the needs and concerns of the entire community and probable disaster risks.

In addition to the ‘City Governance’ session, I also found the session on ‘Pillars of e-Governance’ by Kunal Kumar to be extremely valuable. This session served as a reminder that technology should not be the focus, but rather a tool to bridge the gap between the people and their government. By using technology as a means to facilitate communication and access to information, we can improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of local governance.

Finally, the discussion on municipal finance provided me with a deeper understanding of the financial standing of the city. Often, financial constraints become a barrier to providing necessary services to citizens. The session highlighted the importance of decentralising funds and developing alternative fundraising mechanisms in order to ensure that the local government has the resources it needs to meet the needs of its citizens.

In conclusion, the sessions at Prajatantra 2023 provided me with a wealth of information and insights into the world of local governance. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from experts in the field and I am confident that the knowledge I gained will serve me well as I continue my journey towards becoming an informed and active citizen.

# Rijhul Ladha

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“ An empowered, accountable, and participatory city government is essential to build an empowered nation for an urbanized world.”



Rijhul Ladha is an engineer-turned public policy enthusiast eager to understand the intersections of society and policy. He completed his under graduation in Electrical engineering from Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur and is currently pursuing masters in Urban Policy and Governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, Maharashtra. He has worked as a maintenance engineer in the upcoming petrochemical project at HMEL, Bathinda and volunteered for the National Service Scheme while in college years.

City governments are still quite dependent on the state and union governments for funds, functions and functionaries. An empowered city government is key to achieving sustainable urban growth in India.

The knowledge sessions conducted by Praja Foundation and NIUA were helpful in understanding the various challenges faced by the city governments and the policy intervention opportunities to improve governance at the most citizen-visible level. I learned about the decreasing revenue sources for city governments and subsequently, increased dependence on state and union government grants through the session on municipal finance.

In such a scenario, reforms in augmenting revenue including fixing floor rates for property taxes, cost recovery for services, and accessing capital markets to raise funds are being taken by different city governments. There is also a need, in my opinion, to diversify revenue sources beyond property tax to reduce risk and enhance revenue collection. The reforms in the auditing and accounting system are also a step in the right direction which will improve the transparency and accountability of city budgets.

I believe that the e-governance initiatives in city government functions like property registration and business license renewal have improved access to government services. But the challenge lies in converting the entire process flow to an online mode, thus, moving towards a citizen-centric government. I have experienced delays and hassles due to the hybrid nature of such service processes where certain steps still require an office visit. Moreover, the city governments lack citizen-to-government communication channels which are crucial for grievance redressal.

The initiative of participatory budgeting is adopted only in a few cities in India. This model needs to be scaled through collaboration with civil society organisations. The government-to-citizen channels provide information to some extent but need significant improvement in terms of user-friendliness and regular updation of relevant information for citizens. The city governments are beginning to tread the reform path through regulatory enhancements in financial management and data transparency to access the XV Finance Commission's grants for undertaking development works in urban services infrastructure.

But, the non-million plus cities (NMPCs) or urban local bodies (ULBs) in the <100 thousand population category still need some hand-holding in capacity building, financial resources management, and infrastructure investment. Therefore, a conducive environment for decentralisation and support for ULBs especially in small towns and cities is the way forward to strengthen governance in India for public welfare and growth.

# Saqib Hamid

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“Good governance is taking those tough decisions by a government which can sometimes be unpopular and those decisions which are taken with a view of goodness for the people”



Saqib Hamid is a student at Abdul Azad Memorial Degree College, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, pursuing a B.A Honours in Political Science. He is keen to become a researcher in the field of political science. His interests are playing cricket, badminton, reading books and traveling.

City governance plays a crucial role in managing the local affairs and needs of people, as well as ensuring that the mayor's functions are carried out effectively. However, the implementation of city governance can be a complex and challenging process. This is where e-governance can come into play. I particularly was intrigued by 2 themes from Praja's knowledge Session; e-Governance and Climate Change.

E-Governance refers to the application of information and communication technology to provide different governmental services, and exchange information and transactions. It has four main pillars - people, technology, resources, and process. The people involved in e-governance include government officials, citizens, and other stakeholders. The technology used for e-governance includes various hardware and software tools, including computers, smartphones, and internet connectivity. Resources refer to the financial and human resources required for implementing e-governance, while process refers to the procedures and guidelines used for implementing e-governance.

The implementation of e-governance can have several benefits. For instance, it can help in improving transparency and accountability, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of government services, and enhancing citizen participation in decision-making processes. E-governance can also help in making city government more responsive to the needs and aspirations of citizens, and ensure that policies and programs are implemented in a more inclusive and participatory manner.

From the sessions conducted by Prajatantra, we learnt that we have to act individually as well as socially to reduce the impact of climate change. As individuals, we can take steps such as reducing our carbon footprint, conserving energy, and using public transportation. We can also shift towards energy sources that emit fewer greenhouse gases, such as solar and wind energy. Socially, we have to make people realize the impacts of climate change, and encourage them to adopt sustainable practices.

In India, there are several initiatives that aim to address climate change. Several states in India have also launched their own initiatives, such as the Solar Policy of Karnataka, which aims to increase the share of solar power in the state's energy mix.

However, there is still a long way to go in addressing climate change in India. There is a need for more public awareness and education on the issue, as well as more policy measures that incentivize sustainable practices. There is also a need for greater international cooperation and support to address the global nature of climate change.



# Shantanu Fadnis

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“Instead of doing limited work in unlimited area do unlimited work in limited area.” In cities where good governance is limited, citizens should participate and make good governance unlimited.”

Shantanu Fadnis is a student at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune, Maharashtra. He believes that the local self-government body of a city does the job of preserving democracy, and people freely ask questions to the representative of the city government system, as they consider the representative as their own and good governance of the municipal corporation in the city is transparently communicated to the public.

City governance plays a critical role in managing a city’s economic and social resources for development. It involves the exercise of power to promote efficiency and inclusivity while ensuring accountability, transparency, and responsibility towards the needs of the people. To achieve functioning city governance, it is important to adopt a bottom-up approach that involves citizens in decision-making processes.

One of the key elements of city governance is democratisation, which requires a proactive rather than a reactive approach. The government should be open to listening to the needs of the people and taking necessary steps to address them. This further promotes accountability and transparency in administration, which is essential for building trust and promoting good governance.

To promote city governance in India, several digital initiatives have been launched by the government, such as the Pragati initiative and Digital India. These schemes have helped improve the efficiency of various government processes and services, making them more accessible to citizens. Additionally, programs such as the Aspirational Districts Programme by NITI Aayog have been introduced to address the specific developmental needs of districts that have traditionally lagged behind in terms of economic and social development.

Furthermore, the Good Governance Index published by the government can be used to assess the performance of different cities in terms of various governance parameters. This index can help identify areas that need improvement and facilitate the sharing of best practices between different cities.

In conclusion, efficient and inclusive city governance is crucial for the sustainable development of cities in India. By adopting a bottom-up approach and promoting democratisation, accountability, and transparency, the government can create an enabling environment for citizen participation and promote good governance. Initiatives such as the Pragati initiative and Digital India, along with programs like the Aspirational Districts Programme, can further strengthen city governance and promote overall development. The Good Governance Index can also be used to benchmark performance and identify areas for improvement, leading to more effective policies and better outcomes for citizens.

# Sneha Vyas

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“Governance is a machinery that needs transparency, inclusivity & accountability as fuel to ensure its smooth functioning further it needs consensus & grass-root level participation by the society and its citizens to increase its output.”



Sneha Vyas is a student of architecture and planning from the Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. She considers herself a hard-working and driven individual who isn't afraid to face a challenge. During the pandemic she participated in various international conferences and published articles on topics like 'planning' during the post pandemic era and documentation of vernacular architecture. She recently participated and won in the Jal Dharovar Sanrakshan hosted by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs along with Ministry of Education.

As a participant in the Prajatantra program, I found my journey to be incredibly enriching and informative. The knowledge sessions were interactive and informative, providing me with a deeper understanding of the aspects and challenges of governance. These sessions also made me aware of the issues faced by various cities in their governance, highlighting the importance of citizen participation in the governance of any place.

In today's digital era, the smooth implementation of policies and performance of functions is impossible without technology and governance working hand in hand. This is where e-governance becomes crucial, as it helps make current governance more efficient, effective, and transparent. The use of technology in governance can lead to better service delivery, increased accountability, and improved citizen engagement.

In addition to technology, urban local bodies must also focus on addressing the issue of climate change, which is organized around three pillars: mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation. The impacts of climate change are felt most acutely in cities, where urban residents are vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather events, water scarcity, and air pollution. Therefore, it is essential for urban local bodies to prioritize climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in their governance policies.

My takeaway from these knowledge sessions was that effective governance requires not only the diligent functioning of its officials but also active participation and interest from residents. Governance must be sensitive to the needs of society, the environment, and the city's ecosystem while also bridging the gap between the state and the people. With this in mind, citizens must play an active role in shaping the policies and decision-making processes that affect their daily lives.

In conclusion, the Prajatantra program helped me to form my own opinions about the important factors that play a significant role in governance. I believe that by prioritizing citizen participation, the use of technology, and addressing climate change, urban local bodies can make their governance policies more effective, efficient, and responsive to the needs of their communities.



# Sruti Tiwari

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“Governance is a machinery that needs transparency, inclusivity & accountability as fuel to ensure its smooth functioning.”

Sruti Tiwari is a student at Chhatrapati Shahuji Maharaj University, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, pursuing her bachelorette degree in Sociology Honours and is keenly focused on academics. Her non-academic interests include reading books, acting, travelling and exploring new things. Over the years she has won many competitions in singing, essay writing and quizzing. In her leisure time, Sruti is fond of listening to and enjoy playing different type of games with her friends.

Through these sessions, I learnt about city governance, the functions of a municipal corporation, and the importance of local government in the development of a country and its citizens. I also learnt about the roles and responsibilities of municipalities to meet the needs of the public. According to me, it is not only the government’s responsibility to work for the betterment of our city but ours too, as citizens, to be responsible in our acts. I have come to know how the concept of local self-government emerged in India. One of the main motives for its establishment was to facilitate greater direct participation of citizens in governance for their development.

Climate change, another important subject, was covered in the knowledge sessions organised by Prajatantra. I am now more aware of the impacts of climate change that are affecting the lives of people in my city and country. Some of these are the consequences of our own actions, which majorly includes burning fossil fuels in large amount and deforestation due to the growing population. We need to put our efforts into collectively resolving these issues.

A service that I appreciate about my city is the management of solid waste. Recently, in my city, a campaign was organised by the municipal corporation to get rid of garbage. The purpose was to additionally beautify the environment with the help of citizens’ participation. Places that were earlier occupied by garbage have now been replaced with shelter homes for dogs; tree plantations and hanging gardens; selfie points; painted walls with messages; clothes distribution points for needy people. In some places, spit bins were also installed to keep the environment clean; and free medical camps were organised for citizens’ health. Chairs made with plastic waste are also installed at some locations.

The rapid construction of the metro in my city also gained my attention. Citizens are witnessing a reduction in crime in the past few years. Some tourist attractions have been inaugurated in recent times like the Kanpur Boat Club. Many parks have been renovated with better facilities and open gyms have been installed in some of them.

Some of the urban challenges which I notice in my city are traffic, air and water pollution, and less citizen participation in governance.



# Avdhesh Pal

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“ In order to make City Governance successful, government should have to create a proper channel of communication between concerned authorities and citizens. Lack of information and knowledge often leads to gap.”

Avdhesh Pal is a student at RJ College (Autonomous), Mumbai, Maharashtra, pursuing a degree in Political Science. He has participated in various sports and quizzing competitions, including the NCC cultural event where he received an NCC junior level “A” certificate and a gold medal. Additionally, he also holds certificates from participating in state-level drawing competitions. He enjoys playing cricket and listening to songs from the 80s and 90s.

The knowledge session on city governance organised by Praja Foundation and NIUA shed light on the governance structure of our cities. The session helped me understand that while the Mayor is not an executive head, they play a vital role in governance, and commissioners are responsible for the implementation of decisions. This insight will help me better understand the governance of my city.

One of the key discussion points during the session was e-governance, which focused on making online portals more user-friendly, increasing digital literacy in society, and improving access to online services. As India’s population continues to grow, our technology must keep pace to create a user-friendly digital ecosystem.

Another important topic covered during the session was climate change and disaster management. I learned about the challenges of floods in the city without monsoon and low ground-level water, and how to tackle these problems. For instance, the case of Bengaluru was presented, where the city faces floods outside of the rainy season or when water overflows on roads. The root cause of this problem goes back to the failure in planning and implementation, including poor sewage management and insufficient drainage infrastructure. To prevent such disasters, there is a need to ensure good sewage management and keep its level lower than the average road level.

The session also shed light on deforestation in cities like Mumbai, which could have a significant impact on future generations. Tropical forests play a crucial role in storing and actively removing carbon from the air, and without their critical function, we will not be able to prevent climate change from worsening. Therefore, it is crucial to protect these forests and promote afforestation in urban areas.

Overall, the session organised by Praja Foundation and NIUA provided valuable insights into the governance and management of cities, including e-governance, climate change, and disaster management. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn and increase my understanding of these critical issues.

*(Avdhesh and Rahul have co-authored this essay)*

# Rahul Kumar Jaiswal

Finalist for Quiz Competition

“ E-governance is the only way.  
To move from good governance  
to proactive pro- people good  
governance.”



Rahul Kumar Jaiswal is a Political Science student from RJ College, Mumbai, Maharashtra. He is pursuing his education in law for the society's larger good. His non-academic interests are listening to music, travelling and exploration.

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*(Avdhesh and Rahul have co-authored this essay)*



# Ananya Dubey

Finalist for Op-Ed writing Competition

“Good governance is a collaborative effort. It cannot be achieved without active citizen participation.”



Ananya Dubey is a student of Economics at Hindu College, University of Delhi, and a Senior Editor of the Editorial Board of Department of Economics. She has authored a book “The Masterpiece” about finding oneself and is keenly interested in classic English literature and poetry. She has also volunteered with Interact Club and Unmesh Myra, an NGO. She is an avid reader, plays the guitar and ukulele and performs as a part of Aria: The western music society of her college. She is also a member of Masque: The English Theatre Society of her college.

Climate change is an important issue plaguing the whole world today: the consequences of negligence which will be faced by our future generations. I believe that India’s promotion of green hydrogen is one step forward in tackling the issue, and how it could be a silver lining.

The Union Cabinet recently announced a Rs 19,744 crore National Green Hydrogen Mission that would make India a global hub for producing, using and exporting green hydrogen. Many developing nations today rely heavily on industrialisation for their economic growth. Hydrogen is a key fuel used by industries of these countries for steel refineries and producing electricity. The kinds of hydrogen being used today are black, brown, blue and grey which have high carbon emissions and severe environmental costs.

When we talk about green hydrogen, we refer to hydrogen that is produced through the scientific process of electrolysis. Though green hydrogen is comparatively expensive to produce, it has great benefits if commercialised properly. It would lead to the decarbonisation of several major industries across the globe. As per the goals of the Paris Agreement, India aims to reduce its emissions by 45% by 2030. This is one step in that direction.

This mission consists of two major sub-missions. The first is named SIGHT: Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Program, which aims to fund the domestic manufacturing of green hydrogen. The second is to promote pilot projects in emerging end-use sectors and production pathways. A plus point is that several major industrial businesses have already agreed to switch but there need to be further technological developments to reduce production costs and make it more profitable.

The major question is, how can the youth contribute to the success of this mission? Firstly, students from STEM backgrounds can be motivated to indulge in research to come up with better and more efficient technology regarding the production and utilisation of green hydrogen. Secondly, students from economics and commerce streams can be incentivised to set up incubation labs for entrepreneurial ideas on green hydrogen. This would capitalise and bring more revenue that would further aid the development of the economy. Students from anthropology, sociology and other social sciences can help identify the societal impacts. This would be a great interdisciplinary opportunity. I believe that this mission has a lot of potential and green hydrogen could be the fuel for the future.

# Divya Mohan

Finalist for Op-Ed writing Competition

“ City governance is best if it is one that stems from the people themselves. I believe that the way forward is one where people are more involved in the decisions taken for the city. With such a bottom-up approach, a city can function transparently for all of its citizens. ”



Divya Mohan is an aspiring urbanist from CEPT University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, who wants to promote the healthy development of cities. She believes that a city's development is strongly linked to the transparent governance of its different city systems. She previously worked as an intern for IIHS in a state-wide sanitation program where focus was on the community and government officials to implement gender inclusion for women and the urban poor in city infrastructure. Her non-academic interests are reading, writing, and graphics.

As per the United Nations Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, the world is expected to face at least 560 disasters every year by 2030. In this context, India's position as the 7th most vulnerable country in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021 by Germanwatch is a cause for concern. Such reports have gained more attention, especially over the last two years after COVID-19 revealed the magnitude of systemic problems in India.

To effectively sustain a community model long-term, people should be involved right from the beginning. This approach has several benefits, such as building a knowledge base of traditional disaster-resilient techniques. In Ahmedabad, for example, there is a local administration system known as Panch led by an elderly citizen and four other prominent residents as members who take charge of the management. Such traditional institutions can be empowered to undertake disaster mitigation and recovery action.

However, these processes should be backed by a flexible framework. The objectives of a resilient government are twofold. Firstly, to equip the community network to help themselves, and secondly, to integrate them within an existing institutional framework. For instance, in the case of the Kobe earthquake of 1995, it was the local communities and neighbours who helped 98% of the survivors, and the rest 2% were rescued by the formal rescue operation. After the Kobe earthquake, Japan's focus was to make networks of local governments in the form of alliances to help each other in times of disaster.

Additional local techniques for disaster mitigation can also be followed, such as crop diversification and tree planting to mitigate the chances of drought. Participatory and inter-community monitoring systems can be adapted to strengthen the knowledge database within the network.

With the shift from reactive emergency management to disaster risk reduction, it is essential to change the perspective from individual to collective. It is my opinion that the bottom-up approach described in this article should be grounded in different contexts to withstand the test of time. This approach involves empowering local communities and leveraging traditional knowledge, backed by a flexible framework and additional local techniques for disaster mitigation. Through this approach, we can help build resilience in communities and ensure a sustainable future.



# Karthik H.

Finalist for Op-Ed writing Competition

“ When you are in local government, you are on the ground, looking into the eyes and hearts of the people , ready to serve. It teaches you to listen; to be expansive in the people with whom you talk to, and I think that engagement gives you political judgment.”

Karthik H is pursuing Ayurveda at the SDM Institute of Ayurveda and Hospital, Bengaluru, Karnataka. He was initially drawn to IIT and civil services, but his passion for writing and Indology was sparked by an English assignment in 9th grade. He has co-authored 4 published books, is a decorated scout and holds the position of co-convenor and media-in-charge for the welfare of Ayush students in an organization called JIGNASA. He believes writing is the key to revolution and that leadership is his calling.

India, a country of diversity and development, boasts of the world's most youthful population and skilled labour. However, it also faces a significant problem that it has failed to address over the years, and that is disaster management. Natural disasters such as geophysical, hydrological, meteorological, climatological or biological have caused severe economic and human losses over the last 20 years, and the government has taken various measures to control them. However, despite these efforts, the country continues to struggle with disaster management, with a focus only on post-disaster rescue by National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), ignoring the other aspects of disaster management.

The reasons for this failure are multifaceted. One reason is the focus on industrialisation, which tends to ignore environmental laws and regulations. The lack of proper data management is another issue, with many local authorities lacking data from previous disasters. Additionally, there is a lack of knowledge at the ground level and corruption at all levels, with a lack of coordination between departments.

To address this problem, it is essential to involve communities in disaster mitigation and management. In case of any disaster or emergency, it is the community that has to respond immediately, making it vital to create proper awareness, especially among the poor and vulnerable sections of society. Empowering them by providing necessary resources and education will enable them to be self-sufficient in times of need, increasing their sense of ownership and accountability.

Community involvement can take various forms, such as organising training sessions and workshops, creating community-led disaster management plans, and establishing a system of communication between local authorities and communities. The government can also collaborate with non-governmental organisations and private entities to create a network of volunteers who can assist in disaster management.

In conclusion, disaster management is a crucial issue that India needs to address to ensure a safer and more resilient future. The government has taken steps to control disasters through various laws and regulations, but there is a need to involve communities in the disaster management process. Empowering communities by providing them with necessary resources and education will enable them to be self-sufficient in times of need, increasing their sense of ownership and accountability. By taking steps towards community involvement, India can ensure a more effective disaster management system and create a safer future for its citizens.



# Roshni Agarwal

Finalist for Op-Ed writing Competition

“ I believe every individual’s selfless efforts and shared responsiveness can make a city a better place to live.”

Roshni Agarwal is a third year student pursuing BA LLB (Hons) from Amity Law School, Noida, Uttar Pradesh. She is passionate to further pursue her career in criminology. She is an enthusiastic budding lawyer, determined to provide free legal aid to needy people. Roshni loves to explore new facets of law and shows deep interest in politics and human rights. She has worked with various NGOs and firms, educating children from underprivileged backgrounds.

Climate change affects all aspects of life and no country in the world is unblemished by its impacts. However, certain communities or classes of people are amongst the worst sufferers, like marginalised communities and the youth. Oppressions in relation to economic resources, opportunities, political voice and participation, and, in some cases, outright marginalisation leave a significant number of individuals and communities exposed and vulnerable to hazardous climate situations.

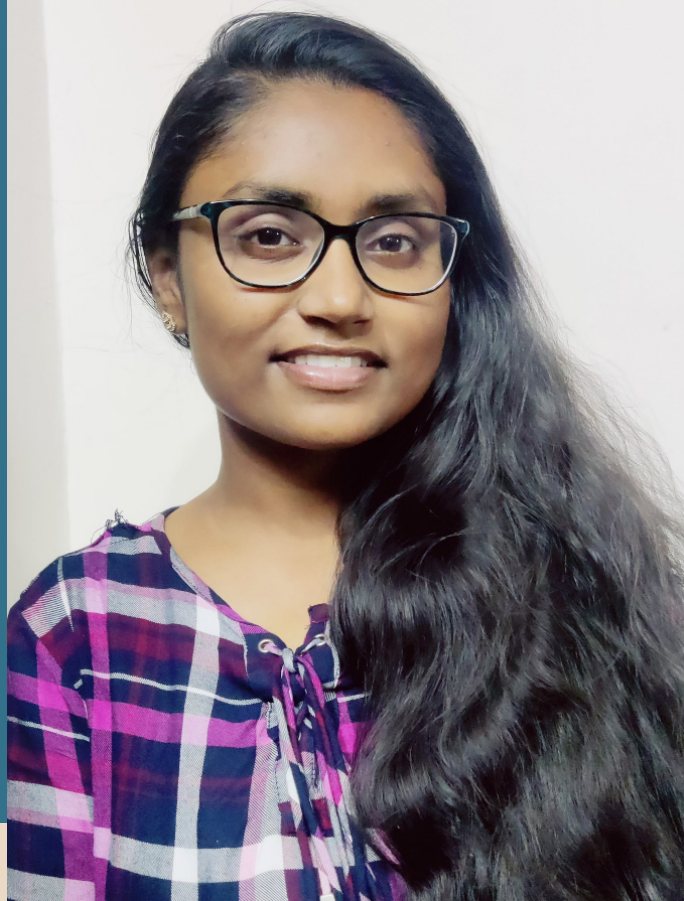
Vulnerable communities show a low degree of robustness, or the ability to absorb and adapt to the consequences of climate change. Climate change exacerbates the dangers for youth and causes a domino effect of abnormal developmental changes. It exposes youth to psychological vulnerabilities. People exposed to extreme weather events such as cyclones and wildfires have an increased risk of PTSD, anxiety, depression, and suicide. Children, pregnant women, the elderly, and people with chronic diseases are more vulnerable to air pollution, heat strokes, precipitation changes, and other climatic events. People living along the coast are more susceptible to rising sea levels, changes in temperature, cyclones, and floods.

A 2018 Harvard Kennedy School Faculty Research Working Paper Series found, “Without air conditioning, each 1°F increase in school year temperature reduces the amount learned that year by one percent” in the US.

Cities provide a potential field of action for decisive local initiatives to address sustainability challenges, particularly in terms of policy and societal actions. This inspires specific projects that could be translated into more systematic programs at higher levels of governance, and youth can play an important role in increasing awareness and protecting communities affected by climate change.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development urges transformative policies to accomplish our collective commitment to making life more dignified for all on a cleaner, greener planet. Implementation of innovative approaches, such as converting plastic waste into construction materials. Bricks made primarily of plastic waste are relatively affordable, long-lasting, and easy to assemble.

Alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power cannot completely prevent climate change, but they can contribute to its reduction. Youth participation in climate action can be improved by providing aid to initiatives started by youth. Every young person should actively work towards the achievement of sustainable development goals. Taking small steps and adhering to small habits can make the world a better place to live.



# Yashaswini Inala

Finalist for Op-Ed writing Competition

“The integrity of governance lies in the hands of those who enforce it and those who are affected by it.”

Yashaswini Inala is a B.Tech. Electrical Engineering undergraduate from NIT Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. She is a multilingual tech geek and skilled writer who is idiosyncratically in love with poetry and basketball. She is a part of the content writing team of various clubs in college and has always been an active participant in various debates, public speaking forums and creative writing competitions.

For Prajatantra, I wrote an op-ed on ‘Disaster Mitigation and Management through Community Participation and Available Local Traditional Knowledge in City.’ India has seen various natural disasters. They strike when least expected and leave behind devastating casualties. The government has implemented various acts and schemes to help disaster-prone areas of the country. In the unfortunate event of a calamity, there are different methods that have been put forward to reduce the tragedy to the minimum. Efforts have also been taken to train the citizens to be equipped for any oncoming disaster.

Prevention is another aspect to be considered about calamities. Many disasters occur because a region is vulnerable. If effective measures are not taken to prevent hazards in such places, the occurrence of a hazard may result in the onset of a disaster.

I believe that the people themselves have to understand the importance of being prepared for any calamity. The exchange of ideas, implementation and evaluation of plans, and active participation in problem-solving among proactive citizens can ensure effective mitigation of disasters.

One must, however, keep in mind that it is these citizens, who have been residents of a region from time immemorial, who know best how to save themselves and protect their own. As I read numerous case studies, I realised that the locals of our country have been exposed, unknowingly, to various methods of escaping any calamity. Hidden in stories and old sayings, these processes have been passed down through generations by word of mouth. A very good example is the Lepcha tribal people of Sikkim. It is said that they have developed an elaborate understanding of the nature and causes of disasters. One story recalls a flood in Sikkim, underlining the importance of providing the common people with the knowledge and resources to fend for themselves in the face of calamity.

The government should be more open to taking ideas from these locals and involving their practices in making better rescue operations.

City governance is not an easy palace to build. The groundwork has been laid over many years, and now is the time to plan, implement, take feedback, and act towards improving it. Encouraging citizens’ participation in activities related to the government, educating them about the policies and making them understand the power that they hold in the political landscape is key to making a fool-proof algorithm for governance.

# Prajatantra Knowledge Sessions

- **City Governance: Legal and Institutional Framework**  
**Tikender Singh Panwar**, *Former Deputy Mayor of Shimla Municipal Corporation*  
**Prof. Debolina Kundu**, *Associate Professor at the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)*
- **Municipal Finance**  
**Debarpita Roy**, *Research Fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), New Delhi*  
**Ravikant Joshi**, *Former Chief Accountant of Vadodara Municipal Corporation Infrastructure Development at Administrative Staff College of India*
- **Creating youth forums for citizen participation in city governance**  
**Ajay Suri**, *Senior Adviser, National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)*  
**Roshni Nuggehalli**, *Executive Director, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA)*  
**Nitai Mehta**, *Founder & Trustee, Praja Foundation*
- **Pillars of e-Governance**  
**Kunal Kumar**, *Joint Secretary & Mission Director (Smart Cities Mission) Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs , Government of India*  
**Manpreet Singh**, *Chief Programme Officer for the National Urban Digital Mission at the National Institute of Urban Affairs*
- **Climate change and challenges in cities**  
**Rajiv Mishra**, *Former Director General at National Mission for Clean Ganga*  
**Sayali Mankikar**, *Head City, Climate Alliance, National Institute of Urban Affairs*
- **Introduction to Right To Information with Shailesh Gandhi**, *Former Central Information Commissioner*
- **Citizen Participation in City Governance with Blue Ribbon Movement**
- **Inclusive Cities with Red Dot Foundation (Safecity)**

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