



Co-organised by



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# PRAJATANTRA 2026

## NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

HOUSING THE FUTURE: BUILDING CITIES FOR ALL

CONCEPT NOTE



## OVERVIEW

India is the largest democracy in the world, with over half of its population under the age of 30. Young citizens bring unique perspectives, ideas, and the potential for transformation. They can shape our cities through innovation and diversity. By empowering youth and giving them a platform to share their ideas, we can harness their potential to build a better future.

In shaping the cities of tomorrow, accessible, affordable, and inclusive housing is essential for building stronger communities. Housing is more than just shelter; it provides security, dignity, and opportunities for individuals and families to thrive.

As cities continue to grow, innovative solutions and active citizen participation are crucial for ensuring sustainable and accessible housing for all. Sustainable Development Goal 11, adopted by the United Nations, is dedicated to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and sustainable.

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), a housing scheme launched and implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), addresses urban housing shortages among the Economically Weaker Section (EWS)/Low Income Group (LIG) and Middle-Income Group (MIG) categories and aims to provide housing for all in urban areas.

Despite these efforts, housing shortages continue to be a challenge in Indian cities. By combining the ideas of youth with the vision of inclusive urban development, we can create cities where everyone has a place to call home.

Prajatantra 2026, co-organised by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), UN-Habitat India, and Praja Foundation supported by Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and the Madhu Mehta Foundation, is a celebration of participatory city governance. This festival is designed for youth to advocate for their vision and ideas and to participate in debates and discussions on city governance actively.

Through Prajatantra, our goal is to empower Indian youth, increase citizen participation in local decision-making, and create sustainable cities for everyone.





## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE

A team of four (4) to eight (8) members can participate. Prajatantra celebrates diversity among participants with respect to class, caste, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion. Everyone is welcome to share their vision on this platform.

Participating teams are encouraged to choose a name and design a symbol for themselves, similar to a real political party. While participants should exercise creativity and originality, the use of a name or symbol associated with any existing political party is strictly prohibited. Plagiarism is not permitted.

Teams will be eligible for the 'Best Team Award' based on their overall performance across all competitions. Participating teams are encouraged to take part in all events, as this will give them a competitive edge. Each competition will have one Individual Winner and two Runners-Up. All participants will receive a Certificate of Participation.

A participant may engage in multiple events but must adhere to the following participation guidelines:

- The same participant cannot participate in both the Mayor's Speech and the Policy on Municipal Finance or Policy on Housing the Future: Building Cities for All.
- There must be two (2) different participants for the two Policy Presentation events from each team. This reflects the reality that municipal committees in a city government are chaired by different people.

## TEAM DETAILS

COMPETITION	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
MAYOR'S SPEECH	1
POLICY ON HOUSING FINANCE	1
POLICY ON HOUSING	1
POLICY DEBATE	1
QUIZ COMPETITION	2
OP-ED WRITING	1
MODEL MAKING COMPETITION	1
REEL MAKING	1



## REGISTRATION DATES



**Last Day to Register:** 16th August 2026

**Boot Camp:** 14th, 15th & 16th August 2026

## KNOWLEDGE SESSIONS

**Session 1:** 21st August 2026 (Friday), 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

**Session 2:** 22nd August 2026 (Saturday), 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

**Session 3:** 28th August 2026 (Friday), 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

**Session 4:** 29th August 2026 (Saturday), 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM



## TIMELINE FOR PRAJATANTRA 2026

**Qualifying Round (Virtual):**  
4th, 5th & 6th September 2026

**Semi-Final (Virtual):**  
19th & 20th September 2026

**Grand Finale (In-Person):**  
24th & 25th October 2026







## 1. MAYOR'S SPEECH

The Mayor is the first citizen of the city and presides over the Municipal Corporation. The Mayor is elected either directly by citizens or by councillors, depending on the respective state legislation.

In the Mayor's Speech competition, participants are required to present a speech as the Mayor at the first General Body Meeting of the Corporation following a fresh election. The focus of the speech will be on introducing new housing policies for the city. The Mayor will present the policy framework of the city government for their current term, highlighting planned improvements in the livability of the city. This competition aims to enhance participants' leadership skills and provide them with insight into the preparation of a comprehensive development vision for a city.

### Objectives:

- To encourage innovative solutions: By challenging participants to think creatively about local issues, the Mayor's Speech competition encourages fresh and actionable ideas.
- To build leadership qualities: By stepping into the mayoral role, participants must analyse problems faced by citizens, envision practical and impactful strategies, and articulate these ideas effectively.
- To develop communication skills: Participants develop the critical skills needed to communicate effectively and persuasively by preparing and delivering speeches on topics of municipal importance. This experience allows them to practice organising their thoughts and engaging with an audience.

*Note: Kindly refer to the By-Laws document for event guidelines and rules and regulations.*





## 2. POLICY ON HOUSING FINANCE

The subject committee will be responsible for drafting and presenting policies that explore how cities can introduce effective housing frameworks. This will focus on creating inclusive, sustainable, and people-centered approaches to address urban housing challenges at the city level. By empowering city governments to formulate housing policies, the responsibility of developing inclusive and environmentally sustainable housing systems can be effectively devolved to the local level.

The subject committee aims to promote equitable housing opportunities, improve service delivery, and enhance the quality of life for all residents. Participants will explore solutions for affordable housing, area improvement, transparent allocation systems, efficient grievance redressal, and better management of urban housing infrastructure, ensuring that every citizen has access to safe living conditions.

### Objectives:

- To encourage participants to familiarise themselves with budgetary procedures and understand the science behind creating a city budget, including detailed aspects of financial planning, management, and implementation.
- To provide participants with an opportunity to simulate the work of a municipal budgeting committee by presenting policy briefs and recommendations based on their research.

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## 3. POLICY ON HOUSING

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### Objectives:

- To motivate participants to craft innovative housing policies that ensure inclusive, accessible, and sustainable housing for all citizens, while strengthening the efficiency and transparency of municipal housing services.
- To encourage the development of citizen-centric solutions that improve housing allocation, grievance redressal, area improvement, and access to essential amenities, thereby promoting dignity and quality of life for residents.
- To foster integrated approaches that link housing with land-use planning, infrastructure provision, mobility, and environmental sustainability, to create resilient and livable cities.

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## 4. POLICY DEBATE

The Policy Debate focuses on urban governance and policies through formal and structured discussions. It provides a platform for participants to critically analyse and discuss current events and topics that are socially, culturally, politically, and economically relevant. The competition is structured as a formal debate in which teams advocate for and against a resolution calling for a change in governmental policy.

### Objectives:

- To promote critical analysis of proposed policies and their potential impact on urban governance.
- To encourage participants to develop persuasive arguments in favor of or against proposed policies.
- To enable participants to assume the role of municipal councillors in the city government's legislative body, fostering a realistic and immersive experience.
- Topics for the Policy Debate will be provided during the Prajatantra 2026 Boot Camp.
- The competition follows a specific format replicating a General Body Meeting of a city government, and participants will be given a set of instructions accordingly.
- The motion for the debate will be decided on the day of the competition, and participants will be assigned a side: government or opposition, on the spot.
- Participants may raise questions for their opposing participants during the Q&A session.
- Overall, the competition provides an opportunity for participants to engage in constructive debates, simulate the roles of policymakers, and develop critical thinking skills on urban governance and policy.

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## 5. QUIZ COMPETITION

The Quiz Competition tests participants' knowledge and understanding of urban governance. It aims to promote healthy competition, a deeper understanding of governance, and an enriched learning experience. The competition serves as a platform to assess participants' knowledge and skills related to the theme, while stimulating their political and constitutional awareness. This will also improve fast decision-making and spontaneous rational thinking among participants.

### Objectives:

- To assess participants' knowledge and understanding of city governance.
- To stimulate participants' political and constitutional knowledge.

### Categories in the Quiz Competition:

- Constitution of India
- Urban Governance
- Democracy (history, concepts, theory, and housing)

The Qualifying Round and Semi-Final of the Quiz Competition will be conducted on an online quiz platform across multiple rounds. The Grand Finale, on the other hand, will be held in person and will feature various rounds such as a rapid-fire round, an audio-visual round, and others. All questions will be prepared based on the above themes.

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## 6. OP-ED WRITING

### Topic: Housing the Future – Building Cities for All

An Opinion-Editorial (Op-Ed) is a platform where individuals can express their views on a particular issue. It is generally featured on the editorial page of a newspaper. This competition focuses on inclusive and sustainable housing solutions in cities and aims to celebrate the skill of writing and the talent required to produce well-researched articles on this important topic. Participants will have the opportunity to delve into various aspects of urban governance and convey their thoughts and opinions through informative Op-Eds.

By engaging in this competition, participants will enhance their knowledge, deepen their understanding of urban governance issues, and improve their communication skills, empowering them to effectively advocate for and contribute to the development of better, citizen-centric governance practices in the future.

### Objectives:

- The Op-Ed competition contributes to public discourse by sparking discussions and debates on important topics. Participants are encouraged to engage critically with different perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of complex issues and promoting a diversity of viewpoints.
- The Op-Ed competition allows participants to articulate their viewpoints on various topics ranging from politics and social issues to culture and economics. It provides a space for individuals to share their perspectives and insights based on their expertise, experiences, or research.

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## 7. MODEL MAKING COMPETITION

### Theme: Climate-Responsive Housing with Neighborhood Planning

Prajatantra 2026 recognises the importance of innovative thinking and practical solutions in addressing emerging urban and environmental challenges. This competition encourages participants to develop and present innovative ideas for climate-responsive, sustainable, inclusive, and future-ready housing.

Participants are invited to explore housing solutions that respond to local climatic conditions, affordability, resource efficiency, resilience, and community needs, while considering how such ideas can contribute to broader housing and urban development policies.

Ideas should be presented through a physical model. The model should effectively communicate the concept, its key features, and its potential impact on creating sustainable and resilient communities.

### Objectives:

- To encourage participants to conceptualise and create innovative housing models that address challenges such as accessibility, sustainability, and efficient land use in urban areas.
- To promote creative and practical thinking by enabling participants to translate policy ideas and urban planning concepts into tangible housing solutions through model-making.
- To foster awareness of inclusive and sustainable urban development, encouraging participants to design housing systems that cater to diverse communities, including vulnerable and marginalised groups.

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## 8. REEL MAKING

### Theme: Housing the Future – Building Cities for All

Social media platforms have become powerful tools for civic expression and youth engagement. The Reel Making Competition invites participants to create short, impactful videos (reels) on themes related to governance and civic issues. Participants are encouraged to use creativity, storytelling, and digital skills to craft content that can inspire, educate, and mobilise citizens especially youth towards active civic participation. The competition aligns with the spirit of Prajatantra by enabling young voices in the democratic process.

#### Objectives:

- Participants will learn to express complex ideas in a concise, visual, and creatively engaging manner, improving their storytelling, design, and public awareness skills.
- The event provides a platform for young individuals to highlight pressing social and political issues, empowering them to become changemakers within their communities.
- Through content creation, participants will explore the impactful use of social media to influence public opinion constructively and positively.

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## FIELD ENGAGEMENT

Following the declaration of the Semi-Final results, only the finalists of Prajatantra 2026 will participate in field engagement activities. This phase will span approximately two weeks and will focus on the theme of 'Housing the Future: Building Cities for All.'

### Objectives:

- To enhance participants' awareness of urban governance and enable them to actively engage with it through first-hand field experience.
- To enable participants to gain hands-on experience of city governance and develop a deeper understanding of the components and functions of existing plans and missions.

### Activities:

- Finalists will conduct a literature review of policies in their respective cities and subsequently meet with local administration to validate their findings, assessing the implementation status of relevant policies.
- Finalists will conduct qualitative research in the field by surveying local communities including street vendors, self-help groups, elected representatives, and citizens to analyse the implementation of urban governance policies and the service delivery of the respective municipal corporation.
- They will evaluate the impact of policies on citizens and present their findings and experiences to a panel of experts during the Grand Finale.



## DISCLAIMER

The views and opinions expressed by students, teachers, and other participants during or after the event are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of Praja Foundation or its supporting organisations.

## PARTICIPANTS DISCLAIMER

By participating in Prajatantra 2026, you agree to the following terms:

- The use of inappropriate language or references to real-life political parties or ideologies will result in immediate disqualification.
- Any form of cheating or dishonest behavior during the competitions will result in immediate disqualification and a ban from future events.
- Colleges and institutions will be responsible for their students. It is mandatory for participants to have their cameras switched on during certain events, such as the Quiz Competition.
- By participating, you consent to and authorise Praja Foundation to use and publish any photographs, videos, recordings, or other records of the event, including the full names of participants, for promotional purposes, media reporting, and publication on the organisation's website or blog.
- Participants will not be entitled to any compensation for the use of their name, image, or video by Praja Foundation.
- Praja Foundation reserves the right to exclude any individual from the competition at any time, with appropriate reasoning provided to the relevant college or institution authorities.



SCAN TO REGISTER



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