



PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

PRAJATANTRA SAMVAAD 2025

EDITORIAL

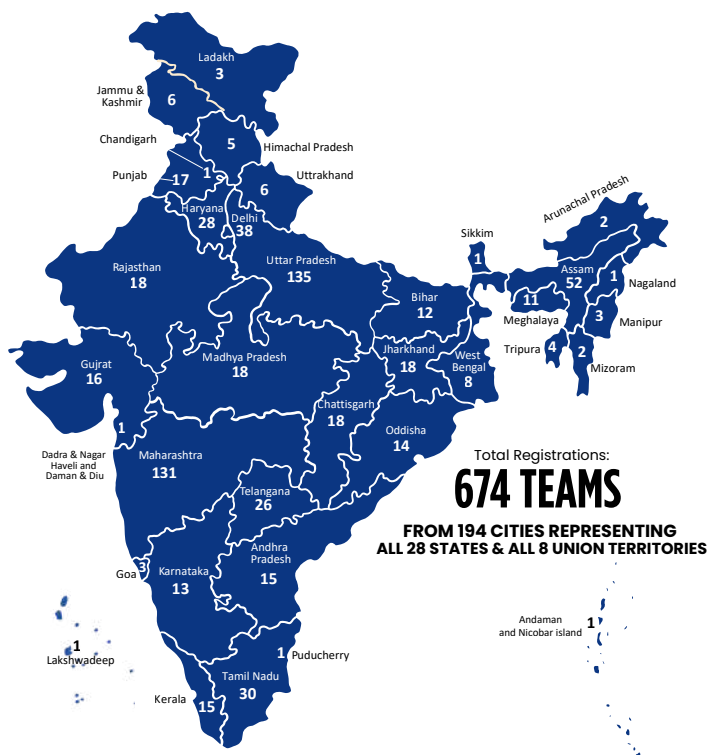
Greetings from the Prajatantra Team!

In the **7th edition of Prajatantra**, Praja Foundation's National Youth Festival, we witnessed remarkable growth in participation and a strong representation of young voices from across India. This year, Prajatantra received an overwhelming response with **3,800+ participants from 674 teams**, representing all **28 states** and **8 union territories**. Out of these, **203 teams qualified for the Semi-Finale Round**. The diverse and enthusiastic engagement of these participants truly embodies the spirit of India's youth and highlights their dedication to driving positive change.

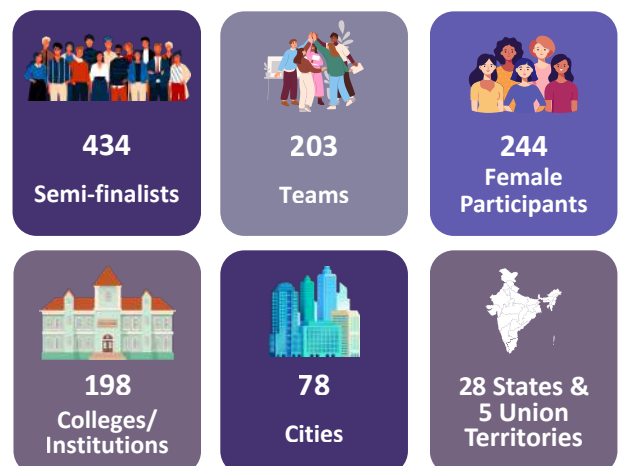
This edition of Prajatantra is being co-organised by Praja Foundation, the **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)**, and **UN-Habitat India**, with support from **Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies** and the **Madhu Mehta Foundation**, along with **VJAL Institute** as our Knowledge Partner. This year, we are celebrating the theme of **"Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Cities"**, inviting youth to imagine, debate, and design the cities of tomorrow—powered by technology and guided by the principles of equity, inclusion, and sustainability.

Participants are encouraged to collaborate and share their vision of a **Model City Government** through competitions such as the **Mayor's Speech, Policy Presentations, Debates, and Quiz**.

We are delighted to announce that the **Qualifying and Semi-Finale Rounds** of Prajatantra 2025 concluded successfully. The **Grand Finale** is set to take place in **Mumbai on 1st and 2nd November 2025**. Through this newsletter, we bring you highlights from the Qualifying and Semi-Finale Rounds of Prajatantra 2025.



Semi Finale - Key Numbers





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BOOTCAMP

Prajatantra 2025 kick-started with a **bootcamp** that played a pivotal role in preparing participating teams and colleges for the upcoming competitions. The session served as a comprehensive orientation, equipping attendees with a clear understanding of the events and competitions ahead.

During the orientation, participants gained valuable insights into the diverse and exciting activities planned for Prajatantra 2025. The session covered not only the event schedule but also the nature of the competitions, rules, and expectations. It provided a clear picture of what participants could anticipate and how they could best prepare for the challenges ahead. The orientation concluded with an extensive **Q&A session**, ensuring that all participant queries were addressed.



KNOWLEDGE SESSION

The Praja Team curated insightful Knowledge Sessions for participants featuring keynote speakers and experts from Artificial Intelligence and Urban Governance. This year we conducted the following knowledge sessions:



1. Knowledge Session on Artificial Intelligence by VJAL Institute:

As part of Prajatantra 2025, a five-day knowledge session was conducted by **VJAL Institute**, our **Knowledge Partner**, to strengthen participants' understanding of Artificial Intelligence and its role in shaping sustainable cities. The sessions spanned a wide range of themes—starting with the foundations of AI and generative tools, moving into AI in business and strategic thinking, followed by hands-on experience with AI tools. Critical issues such as ethical AI, data privacy, and responsible use were discussed and the session concluded with discussions on innovation, leadership, and final presentations.

These sessions equipped participants with practical insights and tools to envision and design people-centric, AI-powered sustainable cities of the future.

“

The coach was very kind, insightful and was able to clarify several concepts about AI. She debunked a lot of myths about generative AI. I and my team are grateful for her support.

- Malhar Dandage (Knowledge Session Participant), Department of Applied Psychology, Mumbai University

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[Click here to watch](#)



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2. Knowledge Session on Legislative Structure of City Government and Municipal Finance:

In this session, our expert speaker **P.D. Hari Prasad, former Deputy Controller of Accounts at the East Delhi Municipal Corporation**, guided participants through the functioning of municipal corporations, the significance of municipal acts, and the processes surrounding municipal elections. He also introduced participants to key aspects of municipal finance, including the fundamentals of city budgeting, revenue sources, and the importance of financial accountability in governance.

The session equipped participants with a strong foundation to understand how urban governance and finance intersect, preparing them for the competitions and discussions ahead in Prajatantra.



[Click here to watch](#)

OPENING CEREMONY

The Opening Ceremony of Prajatantra 2025, held on 5th September, set the tone for an engaging festival ahead. The event featured keynote speaker **Debolina Kundu, Director of the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)**, along with guest speakers **Parul Agarwala, Country Programme Manager at UN-Habitat India**, and **Nitai Mehta, Founder and Managing Trustee of Praja Foundation**.

The central theme of the discussions revolved around the importance of youth engagement in city governance and their role in shaping sustainable, people-centric urban futures. Speakers also highlighted how emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence can support inclusive decision-making and strengthen democratic governance.

The ceremony was followed by the Mayor's Speech Competition, where participants impressed the audience with thoughtful perspectives on the challenges facing their cities, while presenting innovative, future-ready solutions to address them.



OPENING CEREMONY
PRAJATANTRA 2025
National Youth Festival

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

			
DEBOLINA KUNDU DIRECTOR, NIUA	PARUL AGARWALA COUNTRY PROGRAMME MANAGER-INDIA, UN-HABITAT	NITAI MEHTA FOUNDER AND MANAGING TRUSTEE, PRAJA FOUNDATION	PRATIKSHA DEOLEKAR PROGRAM MANAGER, PRAJA FOUNDATION
SPEAKER	SPEAKER	SPEAKER	MODERATOR

05th September, 2025 02:00 PM - 03:00 PM LIVE ON Praja Foundation



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MAYORS'S SPEECH

The Mayor's Speech Competition saw participants step into the role of Mayors, delivering speeches as if at the first General Body Meeting of the Corporation following fresh elections. They outlined their five-year vision, key policy agendas, and innovative solutions to address pressing urban challenges.

This year, participants also explored how Artificial Intelligence can be integrated into governance to enhance citizen participation and service delivery. The judges were highly impressed with the creativity, leadership skills, and thoughtfulness displayed, noting the participants' strong commitment to building people-centric and future-ready cities. The competition not only fostered innovative civic leadership but also strengthened participants' public speaking abilities and deepened their understanding of municipal governance.



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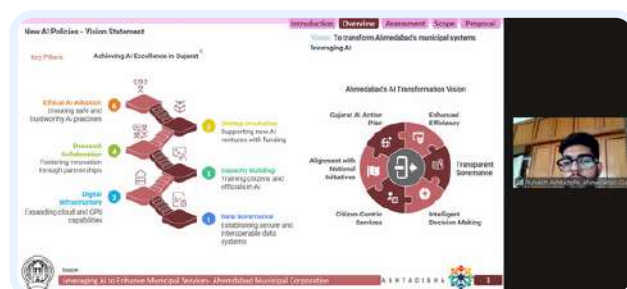
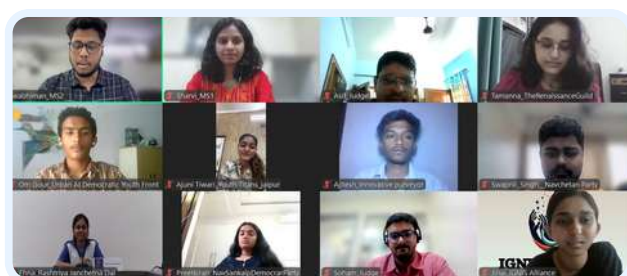
Thank you for organizing such a wonderful event. I truly appreciate the effort and dedication that went into making Prajatantra 2025 a success. It will be a memorable experience, and I look forward to be a part of any future editions as well.

- Srestha Mitra (Mayor's Speech Participant), Amity University Kolkata

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POLICY PRESENTATION

We conducted two Policy Presentation competitions: the first on Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Municipal Services, and the second on Municipal Finance.



Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Municipal Services

The Policy Presentation on Leveraging AI for Municipal Services encouraged participants to draft policies exploring how AI can transform everyday governance and service delivery. Acting as subject committees, participants proposed inclusive and ethical frameworks for integrating AI into urban systems to create smarter, people-centric cities.

Ideas put forward included AI-driven platforms for responsive grievance redressal, predictive systems for managing water and waste, and data-driven planning for equitable allocation of resources. The competition highlighted how AI can be used to make governance more transparent, citizen-centric, and efficient, while ensuring that technology remains rooted in inclusivity and accountability. Judges praised the participants for their forward-looking recommendations, which combined technological innovation with democratic values.



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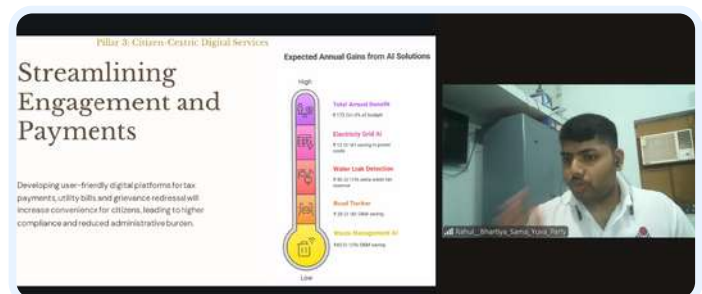
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Municipal Finance

The Policy Presentation on Municipal Finance provided a platform for participants to step into the shoes of a city's finance committee and present their vision for strengthening municipal budgets. Participants were tasked with identifying new revenue sources for municipal governments and suggesting ways these could be used to improve the delivery of essential services.

The presentations featured a range of innovative ideas leveraging Artificial Intelligence, including the use of municipal bonds for revenue generation, investments in public transport to reduce congestion and increase revenue, and user-based charges for solid waste management. Judges appreciated the participants' efforts to balance fiscal responsibility with citizen needs, noting that the exercise deepened their understanding of municipal budgeting and financial accountability.



“

Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of Prajatantra 2025 as a judge. I truly appreciated the enthusiasm and talent displayed by the participants, and your team's efforts in organizing such a well-structured event are commendable.

- Vaishnavi Mishra (Judge, Municipal Finance),
Ex-Fellow, Praja Foundation

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POLICY DEBATE

The Policy Debate Competition provided participants with a platform to critically analyze and deliberate on issues related to Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Cities. Following a format modeled on a Municipal Corporation's General Body Meeting, participants debated the following motion:

Motion 1: Should cities rely on traditional fixed-schedule traffic signals for managing traffic flow, **or** should they implement adaptive, AI-driven traffic signal systems for more efficient traffic management?

Motion 2: Should cities adopt AI-based platforms for managing citizen complaints to ensure faster resolution and greater accountability? **Or** Should cities maintain traditional complaint management methods to preserve personal accountability, fairness, and nuanced decision-making?

The debates encouraged solution-oriented thinking, with participants defending their positions, responding to questions, and exploring multiple perspectives on technology adoption, ethical considerations, and city development. This competition offered a valuable opportunity for youth to engage in constructive discussions, develop persuasive communication skills, and gain a deeper understanding of how AI can be applied in urban governance to create smarter, more sustainable, and citizen-centric cities.



“

It was a great opportunity to come forward and participate in Prajatantra's debate competition. It provided great exposure and knowledge. It gave the chance to know about views held by different people coming from different geographies.

- Bhumi Yadav (Policy Debate Participant), Sharda School of Humanities and Social Sciences

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QUIZ COMPETITION

The Quiz Competition tested participants' knowledge and understanding of urban governance through a series of challenging and engaging rounds. Covering themes such as municipal finance, constitutional provisions, democracy, and Artificial Intelligence, the competition encouraged participants to think critically, explore multiple perspectives, and deepen their grasp of city governance.

The event was highly competitive, fostering active engagement and a spirit of healthy learning among participants. Overall, the quiz offered an enjoyable and enriching experience, helping young leaders strengthen their knowledge, sharpen their critical thinking, and prepare to contribute to informed urban governance.



“

Playing the quiz master at Prajatantra 2025 was an exhilarating experience! The youth were super interactive, engaging deeply with topics on democracy, urban governance, and sustainability. The energy was electric, and it was amazing to see young minds connect and learn.

- Ruttu Gamre (Quiz Master), Program Officer, Praja Foundation

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OP-ED WRITING

The Op-Ed Writing Competition invited participants to share their perspectives on AI-driven urban innovation and city governance. Through research-based opinion pieces, they explored ways to contribute to sustainable development and smart urban governance. The best entries will be showcased and judged in the Grand Finale, offering participants an opportunity to communicate their ideas with clarity and impact.

DIGITAL POSTER MAKING

The Digital Poster Competition encouraged young minds to creatively visualize how Artificial Intelligence can drive sustainable urban solutions. Participants submitted posters on themes such as smart waste management, energy efficiency, and citizen-centric governance. The top entries from across the country will now advance to the Grand Finale, where winners will be selected based on creativity, relevance, and innovation.

REEL MAKING

The Reel Making Competition provided a platform for participants to engage with the theme “Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Cities” through short-form videos. The competition enabled youth to showcase their ideas on civic participation, urban governance, and citizen engagement in a visually compelling way. Selected entries will now feature in the Grand Finale, highlighting the power of digital storytelling to inspire positive urban change.

“

Creating the reel and designing the newspaper for the Op-Ed was a fun and enriching experience, where I discovered new ideas and learned a lot through the process. With my team's constructive feedback, I was able to improve my work. I value the learning and growth during the process.

- Ananya Pandey (Op-Ed and Reel Making Participant),
Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow

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It was really nice to see our Youth innovating in such wonderful manner. Appreciate this step by Praja of letting them innovate and share solutions via videos.

- Arpita Sharma (Judge, Reel Making), Founding
Member and Content Creator, SuperKalam (YC W23)

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THE JOURNEY HAS JUST BEGUN!

Over the past two months, we have witnessed the energy, creativity, and dedication of India's youth as they actively participated in all the events. It is inspiring to see participants proposing innovative, technology-driven solutions to address real challenges in urban governance. From registrations and promotions to the successful Qualifying and Semi-Finale rounds, our focus has been on making the Prajatantra experience seamless and enriching. During the Qualifying round, participants showed remarkable growth as they refined their ideas with the judges' feedback and presented stronger, more thoughtful solutions in the Semi-Finale. Their adaptability and commitment made this stage truly unforgettable.

At the heart of Prajatantra 2025 is this year's theme, *Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Cities*. Through every competition, participants have explored how AI can make cities smarter, greener, and more citizen-centric. Their ideas reflect the potential of technology to transform governance for a sustainable urban future. Winning or losing is part of the competition, but the true value lies in the awareness created, the learning gained, and the shared mission to improve the quality of cities and their governance.

We now look forward to the **Grand Finale in Mumbai**, where these ideas will take center stage. We wish all participants the very best and can't wait to celebrate their vision for urban India.

**Best Regards,
The Prajatantra Team**



Semi-Finale Closing Ceremony.





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Prajantra Steering Committee:

Debolina Kundu, Director (Additional Charge), National Institute of Urban Affairs; **Parul Agarwala**, Country Programme Manager, UN-Habitat India; **Nitai Mehta**, Founder and Managing Trustee, Praja Foundation; **Milind Mhaske**, CEO, Praja Foundation.

Prajantra Coordination Committee:

Dr Gayatri Doctor, Programme Chair and Senior Associate Professor, Faculty of Management, CEPT University, Ahmedabad; **Dr Amit Singh**, Associate Professor, Special Centre for National Security Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi; **Dr Geeta Kubsad**, Associate Professor, Pravin Gandhi College of Law, Mumbai; **Arvind Pandey**, Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Tirupati; **Dr Vikas Tripathi**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Assam; **Dr Gaurab Das Mahapatra**, Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture and Regional Planning, IIT Kharagpur; **Lovlesh Sharma**, Head, Urban Youth Unit (UYU), National Institute of Urban Affairs; **Arpita Banerjee**, Senior Research Fellow, National Institute of Urban Affairs; **Adishree Panda**, Project Officer-Urban, UN-Habitat India; **Priyanka Sharma**, Director Programmes, Praja Foundation; **Kunaljit Bhatta**, Manager, Praja Foundation; **Pratik Jagtap**, Program Officer, Praja Foundation.