



PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

PRAJATANTRA SAMVAAD 2025

EDITORIAL

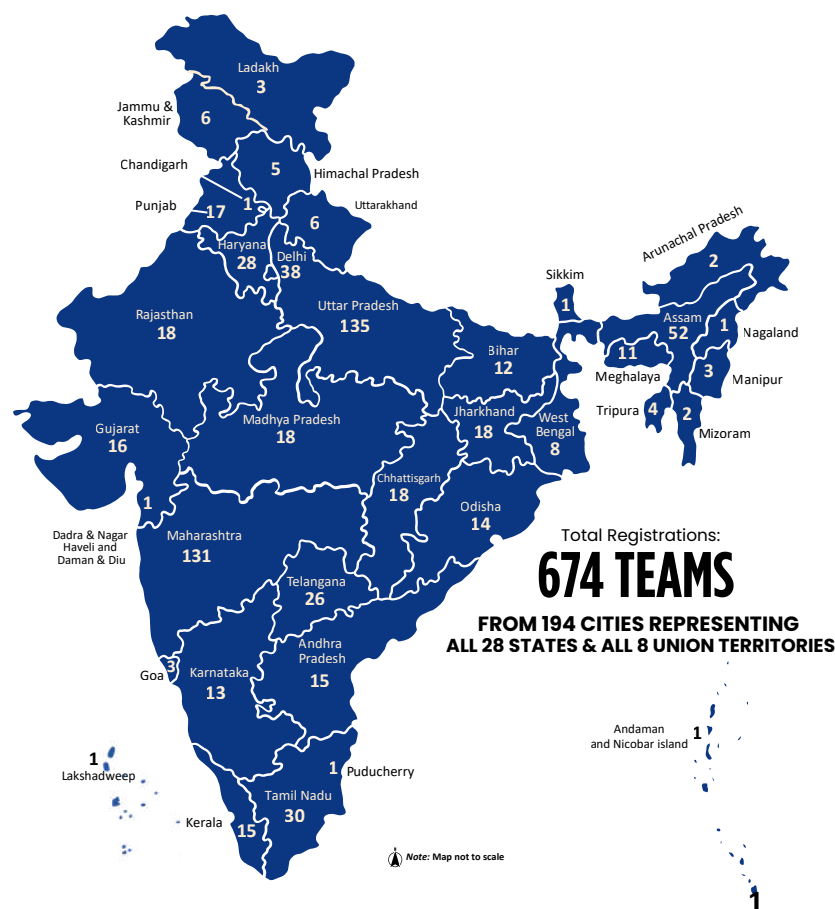
Greetings from the Prajatantra Team!

After months of spirited participation and thought-provoking discussions, Prajatantra 2025, the National Youth Festival, culminated in a spectacular Grand Finale in Mumbai on 1st and 2nd November 2025.

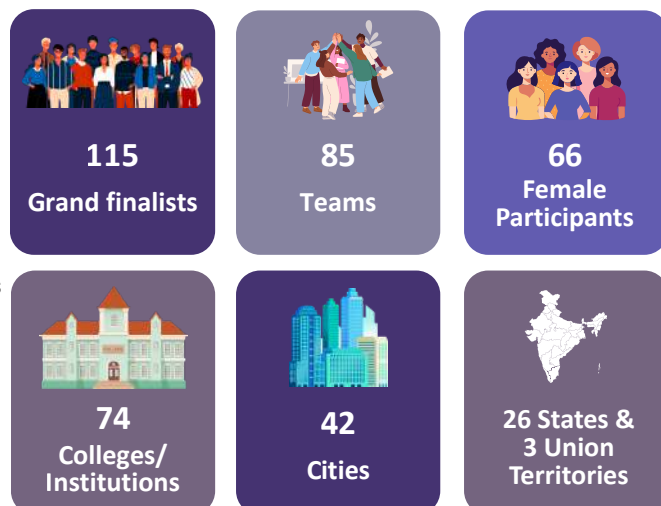
This year's theme, **“Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities,”** brought together young leaders exploring how technology can shape inclusive, efficient, and people-centric cities.

The Grand Finale celebrated India's youth from all **28 States and 8 Union Territories**, who showcased their vision for a smarter, sustainable urban future. From passionate speeches and policy innovation to creative storytelling and critical debates—the event reflected the depth and diversity of India's young civic leaders.

Participation Across India in Prajatantra 2025



Grand Finale—Key Numbers





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

Journey to the Grand Finale: Highlights from the Qualifying and Semi-Finale Rounds

The Prajatantra 2025 — National Youth Festival journey reached an inspiring milestone with the successful completion of the Qualifying and Semi-Finale Rounds, paving the way for the Grand Finale in Mumbai on 1st and 2nd November 2025.

The 7th edition of Prajatantra, co-organised by Praja Foundation, NIUA, and UN-Habitat India, with support from Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and the Madhu Mehta Foundation, and knowledge partner VJAL Institute, witnessed remarkable national participation — **over 3,800 youth from 674 teams, representing all 28 states and 8 union territories across 194 cities.**

The Qualifying and Semi-Finale Rounds together showcased the creativity, leadership, and civic imagination of India's youth through various competitions and discussions focused on AI-driven governance, citizen participation, and sustainable cities. Participants demonstrated their ideas through speeches, policy proposals, debates, and creative Op-Ed and reel submissions that reflected their vision for inclusive and data-driven urban development.

Knowledge sessions led by **P.D. Hari Prasad** and VJAL Institute deepened participants' understanding of municipal structures and the role of technology in governance.

As Prajatantra moved towards the Grand Finale, the passion, insight, and innovation displayed by India's youth continued to embody the festival's true spirit — building smarter, inclusive, and sustainable cities powered by informed citizen leadership.



Opening Ceremony



[Click here to watch](#)

Knowledge Session - VJAL



[Click here to watch](#)

Knowledge Session - P.D. Hari Prasad



[Click here to watch](#)



PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

GRAND FINALE & COMPENDIUM

LAUNCH

The Opening Ceremony of **Prajatantra 2025** commenced on **1st November 2025** in **Mumbai**, marking the culmination of a nationwide journey.

The opening ceremony was graced by an eminent panel of leaders in urban governance and public service, including **Manglesh Kumar Srivastava**, Mayor of Gorakhpur, **Shubha Raul**, Former Mayor of Mumbai, **Tikender Singh Panwar**, Former Deputy Mayor of Shimla, **Nitai Mehta**, Founder and Managing Trustee of Praja Foundation, and **Milind Mhaske**, CEO of Praja Foundation.

In their inaugural addresses, the speakers shared powerful reflections on the evolving role of cities in India's democratic framework. They emphasised the importance of local governance, citizen participation, and the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in public decision-making.



“ The youth today hold immense knowledge — Prajatantra brought them together and turned that knowledge into a force for building better cities

- Manglesh Kumar Srivastava, Mayor of Gorakhpur ”

MAYOR'S SPEECH

The Mayor's Speech Competition invited finalists to step into the role of newly elected city leaders and deliver their address to the Judges. Participants articulated ambitious visions for their cities, focusing on sustainability, participatory governance, and technology-driven service delivery.

The competition was judged by **Manglesh Kumar Srivastava**, Mayor of Gorakhpur, **Shubha Raul**, Former Mayor of Mumbai, and **Tikender Singh Panwar**, Former Deputy Mayor of Shimla.

The judges appreciated the confidence, leadership, and innovative thinking displayed by the participants, especially in linking AI-based solutions to real urban challenges such as waste management, mobility, and citizen engagement.





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

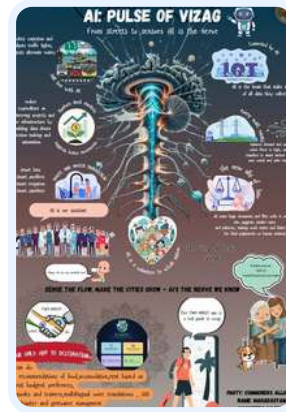
DIGITAL POSTER MAKING

The Digital Poster Making Competition brought together creativity and civic imagination as participants showcased visually engaging ideas on how Artificial Intelligence can transform cities into sustainable, efficient, and inclusive spaces.

The posters addressed key urban challenges such as **smart waste management, energy efficiency,** and participatory city planning. Each entry reflected the participants' innovative thinking and deep understanding of how technology can be used to make cities more people-centric and environmentally responsible.

The top entries were recognised for their originality, clarity, and strong connection with the central theme of **"Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Cities."**

The competition was judged by **Gayatri Doctor**, Program Chair & Senior Associate Professor at CEPT University, **Nitai Mehta**, Founder and Managing Trustee of Praja Foundation, and **Sumangli Gada**, Director, Adity Designs, who commended the participants for blending artistic expression with civic consciousness and futuristic vision.



POLICY PRESENTATION

We conducted two Policy Presentation competitions: the first on Municipal Finance and the second on Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance Municipal services.

Municipal Finance

Participants stepped into the role of city Finance Committee chairperson and proposed innovative ideas to strengthen municipal budgets and service delivery. Finalists presented practical solutions focused on revenue generation, transparency, and citizen participation in budgeting.

Many teams integrated artificial intelligence tools for data analysis, expenditure tracking, and financial planning. Judges appreciated the participants' analytical approach and their ability to balance fiscal discipline with citizen-centric priorities.

The competition was judged by **Yogesh Sagar**, Member of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Govt. of Maharashtra; **Sameer Unhale**, State Joint Commissioner, Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA), Maharashtra; and **Dr. Vikas Tripathi**, Associate Professor at Gauhati University, who commended the participants for their data-driven insights and innovative financial strategies.



“

Without sound local finance, there can be no effective local governance

- Omkar Pokale (Grand Finalist - Municipal Finance)

”



PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

Leveraging AI to Enhance Municipal Services

Participants proposed people-centric governance solutions using artificial intelligence.

Teams proposed innovative ideas such as AI-enabled grievance redressal systems, predictive waste management, and Traffic management to make city governance more efficient, transparent, and inclusive. Judges commended the participants for presenting forward-looking frameworks that aligned technology with democratic accountability and public welfare.

The competition was judged by **Siddharth Pandit**, CEO of U-CAN; **Aditya Somani**, Chairman of the Somani Family Office and Praja Board Member; and **Amit Singh**, Professor at JNU, who appreciated the participants for blending innovation with social responsibility and envisioning technology as a tool for inclusive urban transformation.



“

AI is not about machines taking over but it's about making our cities function more efficiently

- Parsha Das (Grand Finalist—Leveraging AI to Enhance Municipal Services)

”

POLICY DEBATE

The Policy Debate Competition provided participants with an engaging platform to critically analyse and deliberate on the role of artificial intelligence in sustainable urban governance. Finalists debated contemporary policy questions inspired by real-world challenges faced by Indian cities.

Participants demonstrated exceptional reasoning, teamwork, and communication skills while addressing the opportunities and risks associated with technological transformation in governance. The judges appreciated their analytical depth, balanced perspectives, and emphasis on ethical policymaking.

The competition was judged by **Makrand Narwekar**, Former Councillor, Mumbai; **Amita Bhide**, Professor, Centre for Urban Policy and Governance, School of Habitat Studies, TISS Mumbai; and **Iris Madeira**, Partner at Madhavi Desai Consulting Pvt. Ltd. and Praja Board member, who commended the participants for their clarity of thought, depth of analysis, and ability to propose balanced, actionable policy solutions.

“

AI may be fashionable, but our responsibility is not to fashion but to function.

-Archita Garg (Grand Finalist- Policy Debate)

”





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

REEL MAKING

The Reel Making Competition showcased the creativity and storytelling skills of participants, who produced short videos on the theme of “Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Cities.”

Through engaging visuals, participants highlighted ideas on smart governance, sustainability, and citizen participation. Judges appreciated the originality and clarity of the reels, which effectively demonstrated how digital storytelling can inspire civic awareness and action among youth.

The competition was judged by an esteemed panel comprising **Neha Singh**, Managing Partner, Enormous; **Jayesh Raut**, Executive Creative Director, Ogilvy; and **Jamal Mecklai**, Financial Advisor and Former RBI Committee Member.



“

Youth-led initiatives like this are powerful—they bring fresh energy and ideas to governance.

- **Jamal Mecklai (Reel Making Judge)**

”



QUIZ COMPETITION

The quiz competition brought together knowledge, quick thinking, and teamwork as finalists engaged in a high-energy contest on themes of democracy, urban governance, municipal finance, and Artificial Intelligence.

The atmosphere was vibrant and competitive, with participants showcasing impressive awareness and presence of mind. The event concluded with an appreciation of the finalists’ enthusiasm and depth of understanding, reflecting the true spirit of learning and civic engagement that Prajatantra aims to inspire.

The rounds were designed to encourage critical thinking and foster curiosity about India’s democratic and urban systems.

The competition was moderated by **Arvind Pande**, Assistant Professor at IIT Tirupati, who ensured an intellectually stimulating and enriching experience for all participants.





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

OP-ED WRITING

The Op-Ed Writing Competition offered participants a platform to express their perspectives on AI-driven urban innovation and governance through well-researched opinion pieces.

Participants explored diverse themes such as sustainable city planning, inclusive technology, and citizen participation in policymaking. The competition encouraged analytical thinking and helped young writers articulate their ideas with clarity, evidence, and empathy.

The best entries stood out for their originality, coherence, and ability to connect technological transformation with civic values. The competition not only celebrated writing skills but also strengthened participants' capacity to engage meaningfully with the challenges and opportunities of urban governance.

The competition was judged by **Arvind Pande**, Assistant Professor at IIT Tirupati; **Tanushree Venkat**, Senior Communications Manager at WRI India, and **Karthi Marshan**, Former Chief Marketing Officer at Kotak Mahindra Bank, who praised the participants for their articulate expression, research depth, and ability to blend analytical rigor with creative insight.



“Writing is like a muscle—the more you practice, the stronger it grows. Use AI to support, not replace, your own voice and soul.”

- Karthi Marshan (Op-Ed writing Judge)





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

SAMVAAD

The Samvaad sessions, designed as interactive dialogues between participants and elected representatives, were an engaging highlight of the Grand Finale. These sessions provided a unique opportunity for young participants to directly interact with policymakers and reflect on the future of governance, sustainability, and citizen engagement.

The sessions featured **Ashish Shelar, Minister for Information Technology and Cultural Affairs, Government of Maharashtra**; **Ameet Satam, Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and President of the Mumbai BJP**; and **Yogesh Sagar, Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly**, and **Aaditya Thackeray, Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly**.

Each leader shared valuable insights drawn from their public experience, focusing on the importance of ethical leadership, participatory governance, and youth-driven innovation in shaping the cities of tomorrow. They encouraged participants to take active ownership of civic issues and to use knowledge, technology, and creativity to bring about meaningful change in their communities.

The discussions inspired participants to view leadership as a shared responsibility and reaffirmed the belief that India's youth hold the power to build sustainable, inclusive, and future-ready cities through informed and active participation.



“ There is a dire need to reform our education system — to break walls and encourage learning beyond subjects.

- Aaditya Thackeray, Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly and Yuvsena President (UBT)

”

“ AI is to be celebrated, but not to be used as a dependency—it should be a forum to achieve creativity.

- Ashish Shelar, Minister for Information Technology and Cultural Affairs, Government of Maharashtra

”





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

CLOSING CEREMONY

The Closing Ceremony of Prajatantra 2025 marked a grand culmination of months of engaging discussions, innovative policy ideas, and spirited participation by youth from across the nation. The highlight of the evening was the presence of **Rahul Narwekar, Hon'ble Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly**, who graced the occasion to felicitate the winners and participants.

In his inspiring address, Rahul Narwekar lauded the participants for their dedication, creativity, and commitment to democratic values, emphasizing the vital role of youth in shaping India's governance and political future. His presence added immense prestige to the ceremony, which celebrated not just the achievements of the winners but the collective spirit of every participant who embodied the essence of Prajatantra



“By organising Prajatantra and many other such festivals, Praja Foundation is bringing the youth of the country together and giving them foresight into mainstream public life and politics.

- Rahul Narwekar, Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly”



PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

CULTURAL NIGHT

The Cultural Night brought together the vibrant spirit of India's diversity, celebrating art, music, and expression after an eventful day of competitions. Participants from **Himachal Pradesh, Assam, and Rajasthan** showcased captivating performances that reflected their rich cultural heritage and traditions.

The evening also featured poetry recitations, where participants shared heartfelt verses on themes of identity, community, and hope. The performances beautifully captured the essence of India's unity in diversity, highlighting how creativity and culture remain central to civic life.

The night concluded with an energetic group dance, where participants from across states came together in celebration — symbolising the harmony, enthusiasm, and shared purpose that define the spirit of Prajatantra.





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities

The Journey Comes Full Circle

As we conclude Prajatantra 2025, we celebrate a journey that began months ago, filled with ideas, passion, and purpose. From the **first round of registrations to the Grand Finale in Mumbai**, we have witnessed the incredible energy, creativity, and commitment of India's youth as they reimagined the future of urban governance.

Each stage of Prajatantra brought forth fresh perspectives and bold innovations through policy proposals, debates, creative storytelling, and leadership showcases. What began as a competition evolved into a collective mission to make cities smarter, more sustainable, and more citizen-centric through the power of artificial intelligence and informed governance.

Throughout this journey, participants have not only shared solutions but also learned, collaborated, and grown as changemakers. Their passion and perseverance have truly embodied the spirit of Prajatantra, where democracy meets dialogue and ideas turn into action.

As the curtains close on this edition, the vision and voices of these young leaders continue to inspire. This is not the end; it marks the beginning of a new chapter in their pursuit to create a more equitable, innovative, and sustainable urban India.

Best regards,

The Prajatantra Team





PRAJATANTRA 2025

NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Cities



Prajatantra 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.

Prajatantra 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.