

## ACADEMICS

### From Research to Impact: DRP Students Address Critical Planning Topics (Batch 2023-25)

In Semester 4, students of the Faculty of Planning will undertake Directed Research Projects (DRP), exploring a diverse range of pressing topics under the mentorship of expert faculty. These projects offer an opportunity to critically analyse real-world challenges in areas such as climate resilience, urban mobility, sustainable infrastructure, housing policies, environmental planning and socio-economic development. Through rigorous research and field studies, students will develop a deeper understanding of complex planning issues and propose innovative solutions. The DRP initiative is designed to enhance analytical thinking, research skills, and problem-solving abilities, preparing students for future professional and academic pursuits. By engaging with contemporary urban and environmental concerns, students will gain valuable insights and hands-on experience, contributing to meaningful discourse in the field of planning. This research-driven approach empowers them to become informed planners, ready to shape sustainable and inclusive communities.



1st Review of MUP students (Batch 2023-25)  
Source: Outreach Team

### MUH (Batch 2024-26)

In the second semester Urban Housing studio, students began their study of Surat by dividing into five groups. Over the first two weeks, they analyzed the Development Plan, DCR/CGDCR, the effectiveness of Town Planning Schemes, and the micro markets of three asset classes—Retail, Commercial, and Residential.

In the third week, students studied Affordable Housing and Slum Redevelopment Policies, conducting four case studies in Ahmedabad: Slum Networking Policy, In-situ Slum Redevelopment, Public Housing Redevelopment, and Homeless Shelters. These studies provided critical insights into urban housing challenges and solutions.

### MUP (Batch 2024-26)

The Master of Urban Planning (MUP) students have been divided into five groups based on the cities assigned to them: Surat, Rajkot, Bhopal, Ahmedabad, and Delhi. Their first site visit outside Ahmedabad is scheduled from January 30th to February 2nd or 3rd. Each city has been allocated a dedicated tutor and teaching assistant (TA). Surat will be guided by Tutor Arjun Joshi and TA Leena Joshi, while Ahmedabad will be overseen by Tutor Harshvardhan Bhasin and TA Nimisha Samadhiya. Bhopal's team will work under the supervision of Tutor Rutul Joshi and TA Sajal Tiwari, whereas Rajkot will be led by Tutor Utkarsh Patel and TA Anshi Kikani. Lastly, the Delhi group will be mentored by Tutor Arun K Puri and TA Kajal Rai.

### MUTS (Batch 2024-26)

In the Urban Transport system studio, students analyzed comprehensive development plans from Indian and international cities to understand transport planning frameworks, policies, and their impacts. They also studied key Indian policies like the Motor Vehicles Act, interoperability in urban transport, and the FAME initiative. Focusing on Surat, they examined regional policies like the Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act. They also delved into Surat's context, analyzing its economy, demographics, spatial growth, transport networks, public transport systems, and vehicle registration trends.

## ACADEMICS

### MUI (Batch 2024-26)

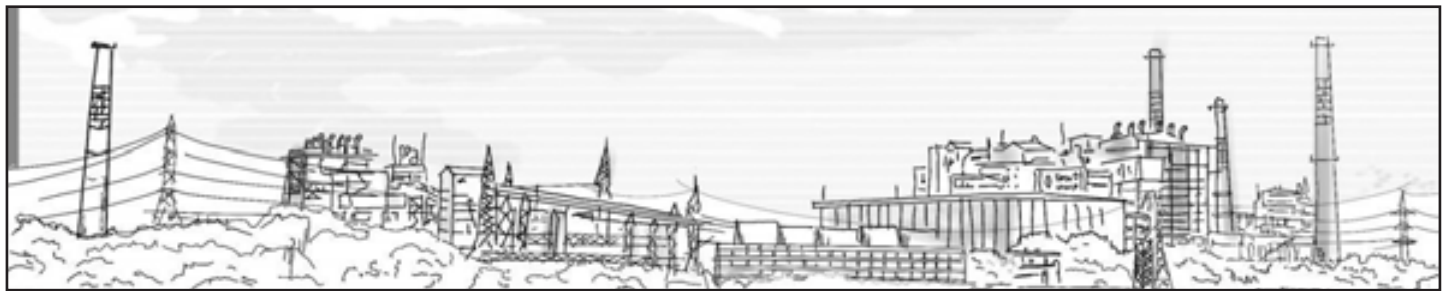
In the MUI studio's second semester, students explored urban infrastructure through thematic groups, analyzing governance and financing frameworks in various cities. Five cities Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Delhi, Chennai, and Naya Raipur were examined, followed by an in-depth profile of Surat, covering demographics, governance, finance, economy, climate, and spatial development. This comprehensive study fostered a deeper understanding of urban infrastructure complexities.

### MUD (Batch 2023-25)

The urban transformation studio of MUD 2023-25 revolves around two cities, Ahmedabad and Surat. Each unit focusses on different approaches such as integration of urban villages, heritage city transformation and institution integration guided by Umesh Shurpali, Purvi Chhadva, Vaani and Ishank respectively. Students will work on the projects that are emerging out of these initiatives defined by their studio tutors. Through their design projects, students will explore the methods of integration of physical design with the regulatory frameworks (TPS, LAP) in creating liveable, functional, memorable, safe and sustainable urban areas. The projects will have a strong design focus on physical setting, however issues of private ownership and social equity, land economics, planning models, project finance, and implementation strategies will also be addressed.

### MUD (Batch 2024-26)

The Elements of Urban Design studio for MUD 2024-26 at CEPT University, led by Assistant Professors Sophia Islam, Shashank Trivedi, and Nishi Shah, began with an in-depth study of active design streets across various national and international cities. The studio has now progressed to the Street Design phase, where students have been assigned 12 sites for detailed analysis. This phase will begin with initial site assessments and impressions, which will inform the design process. The objective is to develop context-sensitive street designs that enhance safety, accessibility, and overall pedestrian experience. By addressing existing challenges and integrating strategic urban design principles, students aim to create well-functioning, inclusive public spaces.



Students sketch showing the landscape of Ahmedabad  
Source: Shritej Dharkar MUP batch- 2024-26

## PEDAGOGY

### Jitendra N. Bajpai: Infrastructure of Tomorrow

The "Infrastructure of Tomorrow" session by Jitendra N. Bajpai on January 13, 2025 explored sustainable infrastructure through governance, economic growth, environmental concerns, and community equity. It addressed conflicts in resource allocation, property rights, and development while introducing emerging design principles such as co-located and interdependent infrastructure. The discussion emphasized balancing competing interests to create resilient, inclusive, and efficient urban systems. It underscored the need for innovative planning approaches that integrate sustainability with technological advancements, ensuring long-term infrastructure viability. The session highlighted the evolving role of infrastructure in shaping future cities through sustainable and adaptive strategies.



Lecture by Jitendra N. Bajpai - "Infrastructure of Tomorrow"  
Source: MUH Outreach Team

## Ajay Shah: Public Finance Inputs for an Indian Urban Renaissance

Ajay Shah, a distinguished economist and co-founder of XKDR Forum, has held key positions at institutions like CMIE, IGIDR, the Ministry of Finance and NIPFP. With a background in economics, law, and public administration, he has contributed significantly to policy research in India. An alumnus of IIT Bombay and USC, Los Angeles, Shah's expertise spans economic reforms and governance. In his lecture, Shah emphasizes that making Indian cities better requires a fundamental rethinking of urban governance and public finance. He argues that rather than viewing public finance as merely a tool for resource mobilization, it should be structured to create the right incentives for local governments to function effectively. By designing financial systems that encourage efficiency, accountability and innovation, cities can improve infrastructure, service delivery, and governance. Shah's insights highlight the need for reform-driven urban policies that empower city administrations and foster sustainable urban development.



Lecture by Mr. Ajay Shah - Economist and co-founder of XKDR Forum  
Source: FP Outreach Team

## Expert talk by Hetal Patel

The Masters in Housing students gained valuable insights into international housing markets through an Expert Lecture by Hetal Patel, a Property Valuator and Foreclosure Expert in the UK.

Using three of his works as case studies, he provided a deep dive into the behind-the-scenes mechanisms of advanced real estate mechanisms and how investors leverage them. As a CEPT alumnus and an Auction Agent at Sheldon Bosley Knight, Stratford, Hetal Patel inspired students, broadening their perspectives on real estate strategy and global market practices.



MUH Batch 2024-26 with Mr. Hetal Patel and Prof. Sejal Patel  
Source: MUH Outreach Team



### Convocation

The FPPG Convocation 2025, held on 18th January, was a memorable event that brought together faculty, students, and distinguished guests. The event was brought to life by the enthusiastic participation of all students, who showcased their creativity through stunning installations and vibrant floral decorations across the campus.

CCBA introduced the Christopher Benninger Gold Medal Award for Academic Excellence in the Faculty of Planning in the memory of Late Prof. Christopher Benninger, honoring his legacy and contributions to architecture and planning. Niket Dalal was the first recipient of this award. Apart from the Gold medal, outstanding achievers were honored with the Best Academic Excellence Awards and Distinguished Students Awards. Dilip P (MUD), Rohith Bala V (MUH), Vandana Vijay (MUP), Niket Dalal (MUI), and Shreya Bajaj (MUT) received the Best Academic Excellence Award. Meanwhile, Anwesha Bishnu (MUD), Pruthviraj Chaudhari (MUH), Tahreem Khan (MUP), Pranay Kaushik (MUI), and Shreya Bajaj (MUT) were recognized with the Distinguished Students Award. These awards celebrate the students' dedication, innovation, hard work and professional excellence.

Adding to the festive spirit, the student volunteers organized a lively cultural program featuring captivating dance and musical performances, adding a touch of fun and nostalgia to the graduates' celebration. The blend of academic achievements and cultural expressions created an atmosphere of pride and joy, leaving everyone with cherished memories of this remarkable day.



Convocation 2025 held at FP  
Source: Outreach Team



Current and former council members of FPPG  
Source: Outreach Team





Memory Tree of FP alumni 2025  
Source: Outreach Team

## Culturals And Sport Elect Elections

The past two General Body Meetings (GBMs) have been in a race to elect the next Cultural and Sports Secretaries. With tough competition for both posts, candidates campaigned rigorously through social media and on-campus outreach.

For Sports Secretary-Elect, the contesting candidates are Anoop Gowda A S, Gauri Bhujbal, and Tejal Jawale. Competing for Cultural Secretary-Elect are Varshitha D R, Shubhika Singhal, Khushi Vyas, and Divyang Kumar.

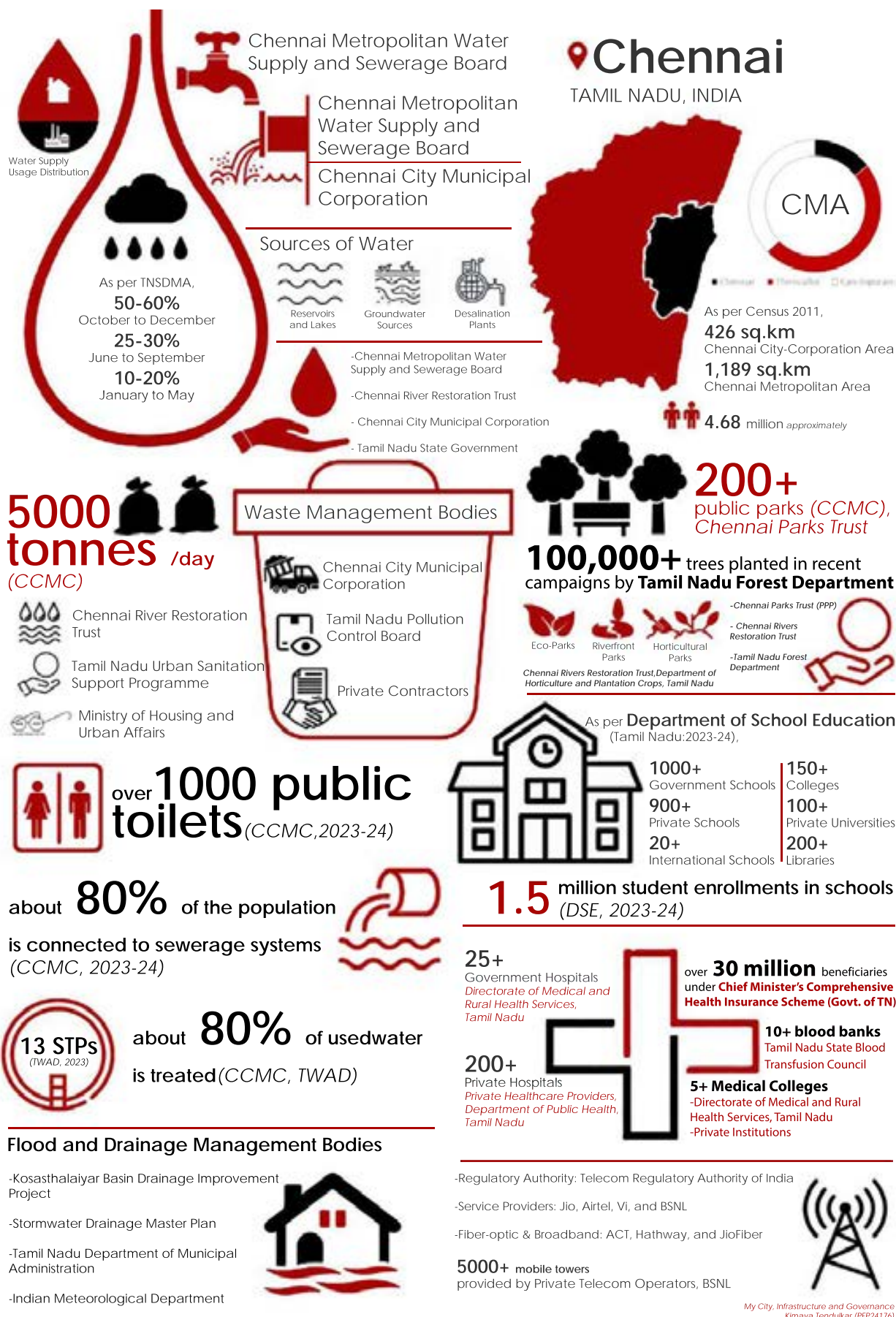
The manifesto readings of the candidates included remarkable performances from the candidates followed by rigorous discussions. The campaign ended at on 2nd February at midnight, and votes for the election will be cast on 4th February.



Cultural Secretaries Candidates: Divyang Kumar, Shubhika Singhal, Khushi Vyas and Varshitha D R (left to right)  
Source: Outreach Team



Sport Secretaries Candidates: Gauri Bhujbal, Anoop Gowda A S and Tejal Jawale (left to right)  
Source: Outreach Team





### Dr. Ajay Shah

Dr. Ajay Shah is a renowned economist specializing in public finance, financial markets, and economic policy in India. With extensive experience in research, policy advisory, and academia, he has contributed significantly to shaping India's financial and economic landscape. His work spans key areas such as capital markets, macroeconomics, and infrastructure financing.

For more insights into his research and publications, visit <http://www.mayin.org/ajayshah>

**Gauree:** Could you share your journey from being a student at IIT Bombay and USC to cofounding XKDR Forum? What key experiences shaped your path?

**Ajay Shah:** My curiosity and interest in the world shaped my journey. Learning doesn't stop after college; you must stay open to learning throughout life. For instance, I never studied Urban Economics or Public Finance formally but picked them up along the way because they were interesting and useful. The key is to keep learning new things and remain adaptable.

**Gauree Ghawalkar:** India aspires to become a \$10 trillion economy. Which sectors hold us back, and how can we progress?

**Ajay Shah:** Development is slow and challenging, and we must recognize that transformation takes time. Look at the UK: in 1215, they established the Rule of Law with the Magna Carta; in 1642, Newton made his discoveries; and by 1747, they won the Battle of Plassey. That's centuries of progress. Instead of rushing, we should focus on building knowledge, culture, and community. Innovation and energy will emerge from this foundation, as they did with India's unexpected software boom 30 years ago. The key challenge is the inefficiency of the Indian government. To improve, citizens must stop acting like subjects and start taking ownership. By questioning authority, voting responsibly, and demanding accountability, we can create a better state that works for its people.

**Gauree Ghawalkar:** How can an interdisciplinary approach address urban challenges more effectively, given the siloed functioning of departments like housing and infrastructure?

**Ajay Shah:** Public policy ultimately aims to create human flourishing—creativity, community, and culture. To achieve this, interdisciplinarity is essential. For instance, solving urban challenges requires understanding not just economics but also civilization, culture, gender emancipation, and societal dynamics.

At XKDR Forum, interdisciplinarity is a core value. My own background reflects this: I studied engineering as an undergraduate and economics for my PhD, yet we don't call XKDR an economics institute. We focus on solving real-world problems, whether it's climate change or urban finance, by learning whatever is needed to be useful. The world is deeply interconnected. Specialization often limits perspective, while interdisciplinary thinking enables a broader, richer understanding of problems.

**Gauree Ghawalkar:** You mentioned the importance of per capita spending data. How can we capture such data, and how can it help?

**Ajay Shah:** To understand city-level spending, we need accurate accounting data at all levels of government. For example, in Rajkot, we know the municipality's spending but lack data on state and union government expenditures there. Governments should disclose spending by city, enabling comparisons like: "Am I spending more per capita in Bhuj than in Rajkot? Am I getting better outcomes in Pune for the same spending?" This data allows us to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness, sparking discussions about resource allocation and outcomes.



Dr. Ajay Shah

Gauree: Can this transparency eliminate corruption?

Ajay Shah: Transparency won't eliminate corruption entirely, but it's a vital first step. When citizens have information, they can hold governments accountable. Think of it like hiring a contractor to paint your house: you wouldn't let them work without knowing how much they're spending and on what. Similarly, citizens must monitor government spending to ensure their tax money is used effectively.

Gauree Ghawalkar: What initiatives has XKDR Forum undertaken to address urban challenges?

Ajay Shah: At XKDR Forum, we focus on urban public finance. For example, we're constructing datasets on city-level spending across India and examining the functioning of State Finance Commissions. These efforts inform policies like city-specific GST implementation and spending patterns, helping to address urban challenges with better data and analysis.

Gauree Ghawalkar: What advice do you have for young professionals entering urban finance or planning?

Ajay Shah: Aspire to greatness—don't settle for mediocrity. Understand your city deeply and focus on creating conditions for human flourishing. For example, whether a city has a jazz bar or a software industry should be determined by the people, not planners. Planners' job is to create the conditions for such choices. Urban planning spans beyond technical design—it includes finance, governance, and public policy. Your education is just the foundation; be open to learning and exploring other fields. For instance, you could venture into urban infrastructure, public finance, or even climate policy. Remember, the world will change, and you will need to reinvent yourself multiple times. I started as an aeronautical engineer from IIT Bombay but eventually found my path in economics and public policy. Stay curious, read widely, and explore new opportunities. Ultimately, you are the protagonist of your own life, and the possibilities are endless if you remain open-minded and adaptable.



CEPT Campus  
Source: Nidhi Yadav



## NEWSLETTER TEAM

The CEPT University FP Newsletter is a dynamic student led initiative dedicated to capturing the vibrant spectrum of events at the Faculty of Planning, CEPT University. From academic endeavors to extracurricular activities, the newsletter serves as a comprehensive chronicle of the university's bustling landscape. With a keen eye for detail, the team curates content that not only highlights noteworthy events but also showcases the diverse and innovative work of the students. Through engaging narratives and insightful features, the newsletter celebrates the achievements of the Faculty of Planning.



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