



NEWSLETTER

CONSTRUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

WEDNESDAY, JULY 07 - 08, 2026

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NCR Has Tried Decongestion Before And Failed. Can Namoo Cities Deliver? Swarajya, July 08, 2026



Delhi is congested; it needs to outsource.

❖ *The RRTS has made the commute to Delhi quicker. Decongesting the NCR, though, needs economic activity itself to move out of Delhi.*

Dr Vinod Kumar Tyagi, an oncologist, lives in Meerut and uses the Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) to reach hospitals across the National Capital Region (NCR). Two days a week, he is at the Shri Jagannath Charitable Cancer Institute near Duhai, in Ghaziabad.

Earlier, he hired a driver to get him through the region's traffic. Now he rides his scooter to Begumpul station in Meerut, parks it, boards the RRTS, gets off at Duhai and walks 300 metres to reach his destination.

The students who travel from Modi Nagar to coaching classes in Delhi tell a version of the same story, as do office-goers such as Sudesh Goswami, who boards at Modi Nagar, and PK Sharma, who comes from Meerut.

RRTS has made life easier for people living on the north-eastern periphery of the NCR. Its need and success can be understood from the ridership numbers, which have been

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continuously increasing since the full 82-km Delhi–Meerut corridor was opened on 22 February 2026.

The Delhi–Ghaziabad–Meerut line averaged around 93,877 passengers a day in May 2026, and on 8 June it carried 1,25,550 in a single day, its highest yet.

Demand has been strong enough that the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) added 18 peak-hour trips to the corridor. NCRTC expects the full corridor to raise public transport's modal share on the route from 37 to 63 per cent.

However easy it may be, a commute is a commute. People travel from the periphery of the NCR towards its core because that is where the offices, educational institutes and hospitals are.

The National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) is trying to break this concentration, as four new semi-greenfield cities in NCR have been proposed, one each in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Haryana and Rajasthan.

Described as "Namo Cities", their locations are yet to be finalised. They will be identified through a competitive process among the participating states and funded through a performance-linked incentive of Rs 5,000 crore.

The need for such interventions arises out of NCR's population projections. It is estimated to rise from 7.86 crore now to 14.73 crore by 2041, close to seven crore more people in fifteen years. Moreover, this growth will be primarily urban as NCR is expected to have urban populations of about 57 per cent by 2031 and about 67 per cent by 2041.

But this is not the first time the NCR has tried to push its growth outward. The region was created in 1985 to do precisely that, and its Planning Board has written two regional plans toward the same goal.

The first Regional Plan-2001 (notified in January 1989) was laid to deflect 20 lakh people away from Delhi, settling most of them in a ring of designated priority towns.

Meerut, Hapur, the Bulandshahr-Khurja complex, Panipat, Rohtak, Palwal, the Dharuhera-Rewari-Bhiwadi complex and Alwar were among the designated priority towns and were expected to have a combined population of 49 lakh by 2001. The Census that year found only 28 lakh living in them.

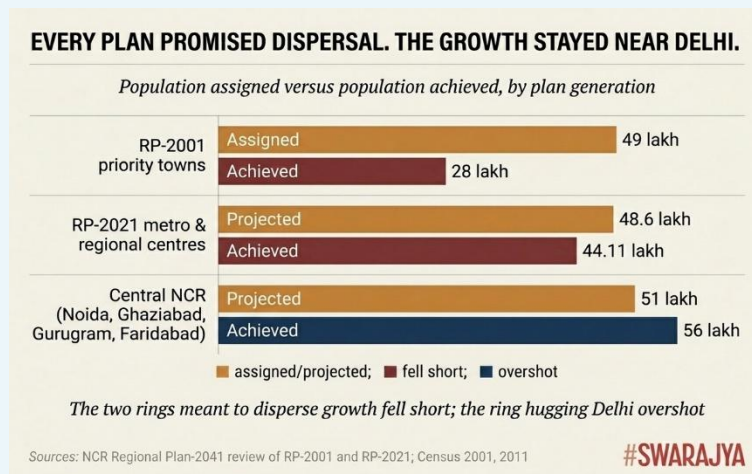
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The plan's own review recorded that they had grown at the slowest rate of any part of the region, showing, in its words, no inducement.

The second, Regional Plan-2021 (notified in 2005), tried again through 12 metro and regional centres across the rest of the NCR. These were projected to hold 48.60 lakh people by 2011; the Census found 44.11 lakh, about 91 per cent. The shortfall was smaller this time.

However, the growth was much more in the Central National Capital Region (CNCR). The inner ring of Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad, pressed against Delhi's edge, had been projected at 51 lakh and reached 56 lakh, overshooting while the towns further out fell behind. In both plans, the towns meant to pull people away got their population targets but not the offices, institutes and hospitals that would have given people a reason to live there.



How Delhi could not decongest across years.

The story is not much different today. While the RRTS lets people comfortably live in Meerut and Ghaziabad and reach the core, they must travel there for work or education, as Tyagi, Goswami and the coaching students do.

Earlier, they used to spend close to three hours on an Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) train. The RRTS now covers Meerut to Delhi in under an hour. They get to Delhi, finish work or class, and are home the same evening with hours to spare. "It's much better and much faster," says Goswami.

A faster train, though, still runs to the same place. The offices and coaching centres people travel to are still in the core, and that is why they keep travelling. The NCR covers 55,083 sq

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km across Delhi and 24 districts of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, yet its economic activity stays packed into a small part of it.

Without that shifting, every NCR plan that promises decongestion is likely to fail, like the 2001 and 2021 plans did. A Knight Frank analysis concluded that the gap between what was notified and what reached the ground has stayed wide.

The consultancy pointed out that Regional Plan-2021's highway corridor zones took years to enter state master plans, and Delhi's land-pooling policy stalled some eight years after it was notified.

The nine counter-magnet areas (CMA) across six states chosen to pull migrants away from the NCR altogether — Hisar and Ambala (Haryana), the Kanpur–Lucknow corridor and Bareilly (UP), Jaipur and Kota (Rajasthan), the Patiala–Rajpura corridor (Punjab), Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh) and Dehradun (Uttarakhand) — never became the alternative destinations the plan imagined.

The plan records that states put their efforts into adding more area to the NCR rather than building the CMAs that would have intercepted migration. Plans of Action were prepared only for Jaipur and Kota, and only five of the nine CMAs submitted projects to the NCRPB for funding.

On dispersal, the plan's own review records that several towns outside Delhi and the CNCR could not reach the populations the 2021 plan had assigned them. Gurugram and Noida are counted as the region's success stories, but they grew by absorbing Delhi's overflow of offices and services from across its boundary. They just extended the core rather than dispersing it.

The 2041 plan is ambitious in this regard. The earlier plans also tried to disperse growth through multiple instruments — priority towns, metro and regional centres, highway corridors, counter magnets — and they also asked, on paper, for jobs and infrastructure to follow.

But the 2041 plan sets itself apart with its specific details. Where the earlier plans named towns and handed them population targets, the 2041 plan specifies where and how densely to build.

The new plan has introduced the concept of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in Highway Corridor Zones (HCZ), one of the five policy zones of NCR. It aims to prevent unplanned development along major transport corridors.

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Regional Plan-2021 treated the highway corridors as zones for planned development, within 500 metres of the road. The 2041 plan raises the stakes by recommending dense, mixed-use construction within about a kilometre on either side of the connectivity lines, at floor-area ratios of 400 and above, with housing, offices, and commercial and institutional space built together rather than zoned apart.

THREE PLANS, ONE GOAL, FORTY YEARS

How each NCR plan tried to move growth out of Delhi

	RP-2001 (1989)	RP-2021 (2005)	RP-2041 (draft)
Main instrument	Priority towns	Metro & regional centres, counter magnets	Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) + greenfield townships
Where growth was directed	Ring of designated towns	12 centres + 9 counter-magnet areas	Along RRTS/expressway corridors + Golden Ring
Key tool	Deflect 20 lakh from Delhi	Highway Corridor Zones (500 m)	Dense mixed-use within ~1 km, FAR 400+
Economic base	Assumed jobs would follow	Left to states	'Productive economic impulses', left to states
Outcome	● 28 of 49 lakh achieved	● Dispersal towns short, core overshot	○ To be seen

● Burgundy = failed ● Amber = mixed ○ Navy outline = pending

Sources: NCR Regional Plan-2041; NCRPB; PIB

#SWARAJYA

How three regional plans differ.

The success of RRTS has shown how it works. Dr Tyagi rides his scooter, parks at the station, boards the RRTS and walks to his destination from another station. His commute revolves around RRTS transit. Facilitating such commutes further is TOD.

Built to plan, a TOD corridor would let a resident live, work and reach the wider region along the same transit spine.

The pull is already visible in the land around the Delhi-Meerut RRTS. "Duhai has seen so many new developments in real estate. Also in Ghaziabad, many projects are being taken up on its basis," a Ghaziabad resident, Vinayak Tyagi, told *Swarajya*.

Residential property values within two kilometres of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor's stations have risen 30 to 67 per cent in two years, led by Ghaziabad, according to the NCRPB and industry estimates.

The 2041 plan sets a target of "30-minute NCR," in which homes, workplaces and services are connected closely enough that people can move between them in about half an hour. On

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paper, this is the most complete answer the region has offered to the problem the priority towns and counter magnets could not solve.

But even as it dispatches residents to the corridor, the plan keeps Delhi as its economic centre of gravity. It states that NCT Delhi "shall continue to be the central economic hub."

The plan pushes growth at the ring closest to Delhi, calling the CNCR — the belt of Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad pressed against the capital — the "Golden Ring of Opportunity." The intent is to make this ring "a virtual extension of NCT Delhi zone."

That is the same ring that, under the last plan, overshot its population target while the towns beyond it fell short — 56 lakh against a projected 51. The 2041 plan disperses where people will live, out along the corridors, but concentrates where the work will be, in the belt that hugs Delhi.

Delhi is already the most crowded part of the NCR, at 11,320 persons per sq km in 2011, and it cannot spread — its area is fixed at 1,483 sq km. So, the plan suggests an upward expansion through higher floor-area ratios.

The ring the plan wants to load with industry and density, meanwhile, is among the region's most resource-stressed: the CNCR districts of Gurugram and Faridabad sit on severely over-exploited groundwater, and the belt's air is among the worst of any urban region in the country.

Among the key challenges, the plan names an "impending water crisis" — a falling water table, rising contamination, insufficient treatment and reuse. It concedes that water shortage has been the biggest barrier to intensive development in Delhi in the past. Air is the other ceiling: the plan lists high pollution, of air and water both, among the region's defining problems.

With water and air both running short in the core, the case for building fresh centres of work away from it, rather than piling on more, only grows stronger. That is the plan's other instrument. The plan proposes exploring five to eight greenfield townships in the Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan sub-regions.

They are to be built as self-contained and self-sufficient nodes on the transit corridors. The four Namoo Cities announced in June 2026 are the operational form this idea has taken, although fewer than the five to eight that the draft explored.

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FOUR NAMO CITIES, YET TO FIND THEIR GROUND

What the NCR Planning Board announced on 16 June 2026

WHERE	WHAT	FUNDING
<p>Locations not yet fixed – chosen by a competition among states</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Semi-greenfield cities ■ Mixed-use Transit-Oriented Development ■ Built at existing & proposed Namo Bharat RRTS stations 	<p>Rs 5,000 cr</p> <p>performance-linked incentive over 5 years – blend of grant, loan & guarantee</p> <p>includes Rs 1,000 cr grant</p> <p><i>Meant to 'catalyse' the nodes, not to build them</i></p>
<p>Source: PIB / Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, 42nd NCRPB meeting, 16 June 2026</p>		<p>#SWARAJYA</p>

Four Namo cities were announced by MoHUA.

But here the plan loses the precision it showed in the transit corridor. Where the TOD provisions fix a distance, a density and a floor-area ratio, the greenfield cities are mentioned as one of the salient features and as recommendations in population policies.

Its execution is mentioned in "Other Planning and Design Guidelines," suggesting it does not form the central part of the NCR policy. The plan says they should rest on "productive economic impulses" and be "self-sufficient," but leaves it to the respective states to do it.

We have seen how that turned out with states, in the case of CMAs, and the same can happen with the proposed Namo cities.

The promised Rs 5,000 crore is a performance-linked incentive, a blend of grant, loan and guarantee, of which Rs 1,000 crore is a grant. The Board itself says that the money is "to catalyse the growth nodes," not to build them. The far larger investment a semi-greenfield city needs has to come from the states and private capital the plan does not commit.

Moreover, new cities are easier to plan than to fill, and India has recent evidence of how the gap plays out. Naya Raipur, built as Chhattisgarh's new capital, has drawn far fewer residents than designed and depends heavily on government offices for its daytime population.

Andhra Pradesh's Amaravati, conceived as a greenfield capital, stalled for years amid funding and political churn and is still being built.

GIFT City, the country's most-cited greenfield project, took more than a decade to gain occupants and did so only once a specific financial-services mandate was steered into it.

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One thing that plays out in favour of Namo cities is that they are to be developed along the key transport corridors, existing or proposed expressways, orbital rail corridors, etc. The Delhi-Meerut RRTS has shown that it can work.

Moreover, the work on the Delhi–Gurugram–SNB–Alwar RRTS corridor is expected to begin in the next couple of months and be completed by the end of 2031. Another RRTS corridor, Delhi–Sonipat–Panipat–Karnal, has got the approval from the Haryana government, with Rs 7,242 crore sanctioned for it, and is awaiting the Union Cabinet nod.

The detailed project report for a new proposed corridor, Gurugram–Faridabad–Noida–Greater Noida Orbit, has been submitted by the NCRTC to the Haryana and UP governments. Even if the latest proposal doesn't go ahead, with the three RRTS corridors already moving, Delhi-Meerut, Delhi-Alwar, and Delhi-Panipat lines, the NCRTC envisions a seamless convergence with the Sarai Kale Khan mega-hub.

The 2041 plan's one concrete economic mandate focuses only on the CNCR, the ring already pressed against Delhi; for the new cities further out, it offers "productive economic impulses" and leaves the rest to the states.

That is the same gap that did not let the priority towns and the counter magnets flourish. A Namo City that is precisely zoned but economically unspecified can become another ineffective priority town.

Until the jobs move with it, it will keep carrying people in one direction in the morning and back in the evening. An RRTS can give a faster commute, but it can neither decongest the overburdened NCR nor fully fill the new Namo cities.

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Centre Approves Nationwide Rollout Of Rs 60,000 Crore PM-SETU Scheme Across 200 ITI Clusters, Clears Rs 1,237 Crore Industry-Led Investments
Swarajya,
July 08, 2026

The Centre has approved the nationwide expansion of the Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU) programme, paving the way for the modernisation of 200 Industrial Training Institute (ITI) clusters across the country.

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The decision also includes approval for strategic investment proposals worth Rs 1,237.58 crore.

The approvals were granted during the fourth meeting of the National Steering Committee (NSC), chaired by Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

As part of the latest phase, several industry-backed proposals have been cleared, including projects involving Jindal Naveen Avasar Limited in Odisha, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India in Gujarat, Apollo Medskills, and two additional ITI clusters in Telangana.

These initiatives are expected to drive the transformation of technical training institutes through stronger collaboration between industry and government.

The committee also authorised the transition of PM-SETU from its pilot stage to a full-scale national programme, enabling states and Union Territories to begin implementation based on local industrial demand and institutional preparedness.

The rollout is intended to ensure that training infrastructure is upgraded in line with evolving workforce requirements and emerging technologies.

Alongside the expansion, the committee approved measures to streamline project execution, simplify implementation procedures and encourage wider participation from private industry as well as public sector undertakings.

The objective is to create a more robust institutional framework capable of delivering industry-relevant skill development on a larger scale.

Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister Jayant Chaudhary called on businesses to play a more active role in strengthening India's vocational education ecosystem.

"I urge more industry leaders to come forward in transforming ITIs into world class institutions," the minister said in a post on X.

PM-SETU is among the Centre's flagship skill development initiatives, designed to upgrade ITIs through modern infrastructure, industry-aligned curricula, advanced training facilities and stronger employment linkages.

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Odisha Reform Panel Seeks Dedicated PMU, Land Acquisition Reforms, And Monthly Reviews To Fast-Track Infrastructure Projects: Report
PTI,
July 07, 2026



Odisha's capital outlay has more than doubled since 2021-22, with revised estimates exceeding Rs 60,000 crore in 2025-26 and a Budget allocation of Rs 72,100 crore for 2026-27.

A high-level governance reform panel has recommended sweeping changes to Odisha's infrastructure delivery framework, warning that persistent execution delays are undermining the state's investment-led growth strategy despite record capital expenditure on public projects.

According to a report by *Business Standard*, the three-member committee, chaired by former Odisha Chief Secretary Jugal Kishore Mohapatra, has proposed establishing a dedicated Project Management Unit (PMU) to support all government departments, alongside a series of administrative and digital reforms.

The panel, constituted by the state government last year, also includes former Karnataka Chief Secretary T Vijay Bhaskar and former IAS officer and public policy expert OP Agarwal.

In its first report, *Ensuring Timely Completion of Infrastructure Projects*, the committee highlighted that Odisha's rising infrastructure spending must be matched by stronger project governance to deliver economic benefits on time.

The report recommends adopting an integrated project management ecosystem by linking monitoring systems with e-procurement platforms and electronic measurement books, while

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also drawing inspiration from the Centre's PRAGATI model for regular interdepartmental reviews.

The recommendations come as Odisha continues to emerge among India's largest public infrastructure investors.

The state's capital outlay has more than doubled since 2021-22, with revised estimates exceeding Rs 60,000 crore in 2025-26 and a Budget allocation of Rs 72,100 crore for 2026-27. Roads, bridges, irrigation, flood control, water supply and sanitation account for a substantial share of this investment.

However, the committee's assessment found that execution remains a significant challenge.

Of the 139 infrastructure projects worth Rs 50 crore or more that were reviewed, only 35 were progressing according to schedule, while the remaining 104 had already exceeded their planned timelines.

Delays were found across multiple departments, indicating that the problem extends beyond individual sectors.

The panel also referred to judicial concern over prolonged delays in implementing a drinking water project in Cuttack district.

Land acquisition was identified as the most significant obstacle affecting the timely execution.

The committee recommended that projects exceeding Rs 200 crore should not be put out for tender until at least 80 per cent of the required revenue and forest land has been secured.

It also proposed transforming the existing Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Management System into a fully digital platform integrated with land records to reduce disputes and improve transparency.

Beyond land-related issues, the panel pointed to rehabilitation delays, slow environmental and forest clearances, procurement bottlenecks, contractual disputes and weak coordination between departments as recurring reasons for cost overruns and implementation setbacks.

To improve accountability, the committee recommended monthly reviews of projects valued above Rs 200 crore under the Chief Secretary through a mechanism similar to PRAGATI, with district-level monitoring for projects worth over Rs 50 crore.

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It also suggested that the proposed PMU could eventually evolve into a self-sustaining state-owned enterprise, funded through a small percentage of project costs while providing specialised project management expertise across government departments.

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Kerala Shuts Down Land Acquisition Offices For Kochi–Bengaluru Industrial Corridor; 240 Acres Yet To Be Acquired

The Hindu Business Line,
July 07, 2026

The Kerala government has decided to close two dedicated land acquisition offices established for the Kochi–Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (KBIC) project, even though land acquisition for the industrial corridor remains incomplete in Palakkad district.

The Revenue Department has ordered the closure of the KBIC Deputy Collector (Land Acquisition) office and the KBIC Special Tahsildar (Land Acquisition) office.

As part of the restructuring, 19 sanctioned posts across the two offices will be abolished, with officials being transferred to other departments.

However, the KINFRA Land Acquisition Office, which was created alongside the KBIC offices, will continue functioning and will oversee the remaining acquisition process.

According to the government, around 240 acres of land in Pudukkottai West are yet to be acquired. Officials have stated that the KINFRA office will complete the outstanding work within the prescribed timeframe.

The decision comes despite earlier delays in the acquisition programme. The original target was to complete the process by November last year, but the deadline was extended until February after progress fell behind schedule.

Since no further extension was granted, employees attached to the two offices have reportedly gone without salaries for the past four months. The government order announcing the closure does not address the issue of pending salary payments, creating uncertainty for affected staff.

The land acquisition exercise forms part of the Palakkad Industrial Smart City project under the Kochi–Bengaluru Industrial Corridor.

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Of the 1,620 acres required for the project, approximately 1,380 acres have already been acquired.

The corridor project is being coordinated by the Kerala Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (KICDC), a joint venture established by the National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT) and the Kerala government to oversee implementation of the strategic industrial corridor.

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