

# NEWSLETTER

## CONSTRUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATES

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2026

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Niti Aayog to support city growth plans: Rajiv Gauba  
The Financial Express,  
March 20, 2026

Niti Aayog announces support for integrated development plans across 20 city regions.

*Niti Aayog to Back Integrated Growth Plans for 20 City Regions to Fuel 2047 Vision*

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Niti Aayog will support the preparation of integrated development plans for 20 city regions, as India sharpens its focus on urban-led growth, its member Rajiv Gauba said on Wednesday.

Over the past decade, the Centre has significantly expanded its urban push through flagship programmes such as the Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban, and Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban.

Budgetary allocations for the urban sector have risen nearly tenfold, enabling the construction of around 10 million houses, with another 10 million already sanctioned, Gauba said at the Urban Conclave 2026 of Janaagraha.

Massive investments — estimated at Rs 3.5 lakh crore — have also been directed towards metro rail, bus rapid transit systems, and regional rapid rail networks. These efforts come at a time when India is undergoing a major demographic transition, with cities expected to play a decisive role in achieving the country's ambition of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

To unlock this potential, Niti Aayog launched the Growth Hub for City Regions initiative, encouraging states to adopt a regional and economically driven approach to urban planning.

“Surat, Mumbai, Varanasi, Visakhapatnam and Bhubaneswar have already prepared their plans under this initiative, and Niti would be supporting the development of such plans for 20 city regions,” Gauba said. This model can of course be replicated by other cities, by other states.

Complementing this is a Rs 1-lakh-crore Urban Challenge Fund aimed at incentivising reforms, alongside fresh budgetary support for city economic regions.

The success of these initiatives hinges on deeper governance reforms. Urban planning must move beyond administrative boundaries towards regional integration, focus on economic outcomes rather than just land use, and prioritise liveability and sustainability, Gauba said. Empowered city governments, stronger mayoral systems, timely elections, and enhanced municipal revenues — currently just about 1% of GDP — will be critical to transforming India's urban landscape into engines of long-term growth, he added.

“While the 74th constitutional amendment already provides a strong foundation for empowered urban governance, what we need now is renewed political will, institutional strengthening, and active citizen participation to translate this vision into reality,” said Anita Kumar, director – policy and insights, Janaagraha.

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Barabanki to Bahraich highway: Cabinet approves Rs 6,969 crore for four-lane access controlled road project in UP to boost connectivity

The Economic Times,  
March 20, 2026

### **Synopsis**

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*The Union Cabinet has approved a new 4-lane highway connecting Barabanki to Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh. This Rs 6,969 crore project will improve connectivity and reduce travel time. It aims to boost economic growth, create jobs, and enhance trade with Nepal. The highway will bypass populated areas, increasing safety and efficiency for commuters and goods.*

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the construction of a 4-lane access-controlled National Highway-927 from Barabanki to Bahraich in Uttar Pradesh at a cost of Rs 6,969.04 crore.

The 101.515 km project aims to provide seamless connectivity to key economic, social, and logistics hubs across Uttar Pradesh, according to an official statement.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the construction of the 4-lane Access-Controlled National Highway-927 from Barabanki to Bahraich on Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM) for Rs 6,969.04 crore, it said.

The project involves a civil cost of around Rs 3,485.49 crore and an additional Rs 1,574.85 crore for land acquisition.

The project would generate 36.54 lakhs person-days (direct) and 43.04 lakh person-days (indirect) new employment opportunities.

The proposed upgradation of the Barabanki-Bahraich section will address severe geometric deficiencies, sharp curves, and congestion in built-up areas across the Barabanki and Bahraich districts.

Designed as an access-controlled 4-lane highway with continuous service roads, the project will bypass major habitations, increase average travel speeds, reduce travel time to about one hour, and improve overall road safety, fuel efficiency, and vehicle operating costs, thereby enhancing regional mobility and socio-economic development.

The project provides seamless connectivity to key economic, social, and logistics nodes across Uttar Pradesh.

Additionally, the upgraded corridor will enhance multi-modal integration by connecting with three economic Nodes, two social nodes and 12 logistic nodes, providing enhanced multimodality with Rupaidiha Land Port and Airports, thereby facilitating faster movement of goods and passengers across the region.

Upon completion, the project will strategically establish a vital cross-border trade and transit corridor between India and Nepal via the Nepalganj border, significantly improving access to the Rupaidiha Land Port.

It will enhance connectivity to remote districts such as the Bahraich district and the Shravasti district, support PM GatiShakti economic and logistics nodes, and stimulate agri-trade, tourism, cross-border commerce, and regional investment.

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## Centre auctions record 200 mineral blocks in FY26, highest ever

The Economic Times,  
March 20, 2026

### **Synopsis**

*A record 200 mineral blocks will be sold in 2025-26. This is the highest ever in a single year. Tamil Nadu is conducting auctions for the first time. Uttarakhand is also entering the framework with its first magnesite block. Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu are leading the auctions. This initiative strengthens the national auction ecosystem.*

The Centre on Thursday said it has sold a record 200 mineral blocks in 2025-26, the highest ever in a single year, with Tamil Nadu conducting auctions for the first time and Uttarakhand entering the fray by selling its maiden magnesite block.

Out of the 200 auctioned blocks, 123 are mining lease blocks and 77 are composite licence blocks, indicating a balanced mix of operational and exploration-focused opportunities.

Additionally, notices inviting tenders (NITs) for 70 mineral blocks -- 38 mining leases (ML) and 32 composite licences (CL) -- are currently underway which is likely to further boost the total number of successful auctions in the financial year.

Gujarat led with 32 blocks, followed by Rajasthan with 30 blocks, and Tamil Nadu with 22 blocks, emerging as the top contributors, the Mines Ministry said in a statement.

Their efforts in timely block preparation, data management, and procedural efficiency have strengthened the national auction ecosystem.

Notably, Tamil Nadu has successfully conducted mineral block auctions for the first time, marking an important milestone. Uttarakhand has also entered the mineral auction framework with the successful auction of its first magnesite block, the ministry said.

The ministry further said that in this year, 22 critical mineral blocks were auctioned, reflecting the increasing focus on minerals of strategic importance for long-term resource security. Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, and Maharashtra played a major role in offering these blocks, contributing five, four, four, three and two blocks respectively.

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## Developers turn cautious, seek RERA extensions

The Financial Express,  
March 20, 2026

Infrastructure and environmental approval bottlenecks in Pune, PCMC, and PMRDA have led to a 16% drop in new project launches.

Several projects in Pune, Pimpri-Chinchwad, and the Pune Metropolitan region are delayed because developers have not received timely environmental clearances. The ANAROCK Group views this as a strategic market pause, with developers focusing on existing projects rather than launching new ones. As a result, many have sought extensions from RERA.

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Last year, the approval process for environmental clearances in the Pune Municipal Corporation, Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, and the Pune Metropolitan Regional Development Authority was temporarily stalled. This included delays in demarcation approvals, which contributed to a reduction in new project launches in Pune.

Several projects within a 5 km radius of PCMC experienced delays of over a year due to the temporary suspension of Environmental Clearances following the Bhopal Bhopal NGT order. This situation affected both new project approvals and those needing revised or extended clearances. Some developers may have sought RERA extensions as a result. Manish Jain, president of CREDAI Pune, said that seeking timeline extensions under RERA due to approval or operational delays is a standard and compliant practice within the regulatory framework.

### **NHSRCL to develop multi-modal integration facilities at Bullet Train stations**

However, Anuj Puri, chairman of ANAROCK, said there were signs of stress in the market, as real estate stocks dropped in early 2026 and new launches fell by 16% year-on-year in mid-2025. This cautious approach is a response to changes in market dynamics. “The earlier bull run has turned into a period of recalibration, where financial discipline and timely project delivery are more important than ever,” he said.

### **Market Recalibration**

According to ANAROCK data, by the end of 2025, the top seven cities saw a 4% increase in unsold units, totalling approximately 5,77,000, as new supply grew by 2%, slightly outpacing actual demand. Average property prices rose by 9-11% year-on-year, with the NCR region experiencing a 27% increase. “This added price pressure strains homebuyers and further impacts demand. Developers are increasingly focusing on high-end luxury housing, which now constitutes 38% of new supply, to protect their margins from rising input costs,” Puri explained.

Kapil Gandhi, managing director of Sigma One Universal, said from a developer’s perspective, seeking a project extension is not an ideal solution. It delays possession timelines for homebuyers and imposes additional financial burdens on the project through increased interest costs and overheads.

Unlike the pre-RERA era, today’s developers operate with much greater discipline. Project timelines are meticulously planned, cash flows are closely monitored, and launches are aligned with regulatory approvals. Consequently, extensions are typically sought only under exceptional circumstances, primarily due to factors outside a developer’s control, such as approval bottlenecks or disruptions in the supply of essential construction materials, Gandhi noted.

### **Geopolitical Pressures**

Evolving geopolitical tensions in the Middle East are beginning to impact input costs, particularly for crude-linked materials such as steel and aluminium. “If this volatility continues, it could create a cascading effect on project timelines across markets, potentially leading to further extension requests unless stabilising measures are implemented,” Jain said.

CREDAI members are calling for the entire approval ecosystem to be integrated into a more cohesive and time-bound regulatory framework. “As MahaRERA has developed into an

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efficient and robust mechanism, with disposal rates now exceeding the number of fresh complaints in many cases, expanding its scope could further enhance transparency and efficiency in project execution,” Gandhi suggested.

Despite these short-term supply challenges, Pune district continues to lead the country in regulatory activity, boasting the highest number of MahaRERA-registered projects and agents. The district has consistently recorded over 1,000 new project registrations annually since 2021, demonstrating sustained developer confidence in the market.

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## NTPC Renewable Commissions 165 MW At Khavda-II Solar Project, Takes Total Capacity To 810 MW At Mega Gujarat Solar Park

Swarajya,  
March 20, 2026



*Solar Panels At Khavda RE Park (Representative Image)*

NTPC Renewable Energy has declared commercial operation of the fourth phase of its 1,200 MW Khavda-II solar project in Gujarat today, adding 165 MW of capacity to India's renewable energy infrastructure.

The state-owned developer's latest commissioning brings the total operational capacity at Khavda-II to 810 MW, representing steady progress on one of the country's largest solar developments.

The newly activated capacity became commercially operational at midnight today (19 March) through NTPC Renewable Energy Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of NTPC Green Energy.

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