



Chintan
Research
Foundation



INDIAN
SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC
POLICY

THE DILLI DIALOGUE

Policies for a Future-Ready India

11-12 October 2026

**PANEL PROBLEM STATEMENT
& POLICY PROPOSAL
SUBMISSION TEMPLATE**

ABOUT CHINTAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) is an independent think tank committed to shaping policy through rigorous research and thought leadership. With a strong focus on fostering collaboration between policymakers and industry, CRF integrates practical insights into its research and advocacy efforts. By publishing research papers, thought pieces, articles, and op-eds, CRF seeks to address key challenges in India and the Global South, fostering diverse perspectives and contributing to impactful policy advocacy. CRF supports informed decision making and engages with stakeholders through discussions, events, and publications. CRF's research is focused on three core areas – Climate Change & Energy Transition, Economy & Trade, and Geopolitics & Strategic Studies

For further information about CRF, please visit: crfindia.org

ABOUT INDIAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

The Indian School of Public Policy (ISPP), founded in 2018 and incubated by the Centre for Civil Society (CCS), pioneers advanced public policy education in India through its flagship one-year postgraduate program in Policy, Design, and Management. As conference hosts, ISPP leverages its Delhi-based ecosystem, surrounded by government, think tanks, and global partners, to convene diverse stakeholders, nurture next-generation policy leaders, and channel innovative ideas towards addressing national priorities.

For further information about Indian School of Public Policy, please visit: www.ispp.org.in

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CONTENTS

- Background Note 1
- Objectives of the Conference 1
- Proposed Theme and Policy Tracks 2
- Conference Format and Structure 2
- Event Agenda 3
- Envisioned Outcomes 3
- Panel Problem Statement..... 4
 - Panel 1 on Economy and Trade 4
 - Panel 2 on Urbanisation..... 5
 - Panel 3 on Climate Change and Energy Transition 6
 - Panel 4 on Health 7
- Policy Proposal Submission Template 8

Background Note

India stands at a decisive moment in its development trajectory. As the economy expands, urbanises, and integrates more deeply with global markets, the demands placed on public institutions and policy frameworks are growing in scale, complexity, and urgency. Decisions taken today on regulation, employment, public finance, health systems, climate resilience and urban development will shape the country's economic resilience and social outcomes for decades to come. These challenges cannot be addressed through isolated interventions or short-term fixes. They require carefully designed, evidence-based policies informed by high-quality research and sustained engagement among policymakers, academic institutions, and practitioners working on the front lines of implementation. Equally important is the creation of credible platforms where such engagement can take place in a structured, rigorous, and non-partisan manner.

While India hosts several conferences and policy forums, most are either sector-specific, closed-door gatherings, or advocacy-oriented platforms. There is a relative absence of a national, research-led conference that integrates multiple policy domains, systematically engages policymakers and scholars, and meaningfully includes students and early-career policy professionals.

The Dilli Dialogue proposes to address this gap by instituting a national Public Policy Conference - a flagship annual conference focused on applied policy research, reform-oriented dialogue, and youth participation in public policy.

Objectives of the Conference

Through the conference, we seek to achieve the following objectives:

1. Create a National Platform for Policy Research Dialogue

To establish a credible and recurring forum where policymakers, researchers, think tanks, and practitioners engage on pressing public policy challenges using evidence and applied research.

2. Close the Policy-Research-Praxis Gap

To enable structured interactions between academic research and real-world policymaking, ensuring that research insights inform governance and reform processes.

3. Mainstream Youth Engagement in Public Policy

To actively include students and early-career researchers in national policy conversations through dedicated tracks and moderated interactions with senior policymakers.

4. Advance Thematic Policy Conversations Aligned with National Priorities.

To focus on critical policy areas that are central to India's development trajectory and reform agenda. Leveraging ISPP and CRF research centres on Universal Health Assurance (CUHA), Urban Transition (ICUT), Climate Change and Energy Transition (CCET), and Economy and Trade (CET) as thematic anchors.

Proposed Theme and Policy Tracks

The overarching theme for the conference shall be “Bridging the gap between Policy and Praxis”. Under this theme, the conference will address the following policy tracks:

1. **Public Health and Universal Health Assurance**
Health financing, insurance frameworks, service delivery, and strengthening public health systems.
2. **Urban Transition and Mobility**
Sustainable urbanisation, transport systems, infrastructure financing, and climate-resilient cities.
3. **Economy and Trade**
Macroeconomic policies, impact of digitalisation on industries, trade connectivity and competitiveness, emerging global trends.
4. **Climate Change and Sustainability**
Climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, climate finance, energy transition, and the integration of climate considerations into economic planning, urban development, and public policy decision-making.

We wish to bring in the policy tracks through careful curation of expert panels and presentations from young policy professionals.

Conference Format and Structure

Duration: 2 days in October 2026

Format:

1. **Inaugural Plenary with Senior Policymakers:** The inaugural plenary convenes high-level senior policymakers, including ministers and senior bureaucrats, as keynote speakers, to set the conference’s strategic tone. Focusing on enabling a future-ready India, this session establishes the overarching theme of forward-looking governance, innovation, and policy agility.
2. **Policy Consultation Panels:** The panels are meant to anchor the conference in a substantive multi-stakeholder consultation. Bridging gaps in the Indian policy discourse by facilitating a policy-research-praxis continuum.
 - The panel will feature a balanced and curated participant mix of experts, researchers, young professionals (mainstreaming the next-gen policy makers), and leading grassroots policy advocates to deliberate on a focused problem statement. The outcome of which shall be actionable policy recommendations to tackle the issue.
 - A series of pre-conference workshops and activities will identify ideal participants, shortlist policy proposals for deliberation on conference day, and build the momentum of discourse that the conference will bring to its culmination.
 - The problem statement shall align with a priority policy challenge facing the country, with the panels not merely advocating for a solution but setting the path forward towards implementation.
3. **Youth Forum:** Today, Young Professionals across ministries, government departments, and across the social sector are shaping policy outcomes and getting a seat at the decision-making tables. This first-of-its-kind convening gathers policy practitioners and students under the age of 35 to engage

in candid, peer-driven dialogue on the complexities of designing and delivering policy. The structure for the session would be a mix of presentations, discussions, and hands-on workshops to build policy artefacts. More than a knowledge exchange, the Forum is an investment in a new generation of leaders who are already building India's future.

The conference will have a research and consultation-first orientation, encouraging both informed debate and practice-based discussions.

Event Agenda

Day 1 – Venue: ISPP		Day 2 – Venue: C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium, IIC	
Time	Session	Time	Session
9:30-10:00	Registration and Tea	09:00-09:30	Registration and Tea
10:00-10:45	Inaugural Session	09:30-10:00	Inaugural Session
10:50-13:00	Youth Policy Forum	10:00-11:30	Panel 1
13:00-14:00	Lunch	11:30-13:00	Panel 2
14:00-16:30	Youth Policy Forum	13:00-13:45	Lunch
16:30-17:00	Tea and Snacks	13:45-15:15	Panel 3
17:00-18:30	ISPP Alumni Talk	15:15-16:45	Panel 4
18:30	Closing Remarks	16:45-16:50	Closing remarks
		16:50 onwards	High Tea

Envisioned Outcomes

1. Establishment of a flagship annual national public policy thought leadership platform
2. Strengthened policy-research-practice institutional channels.
3. Mainstreaming youth participation in the national policy discourse and building a pipeline for future policymaking and discourse.
4. Creation of long-term collaborations between policymakers, academia, and practitioners.

Our proposed conference offers us an opportunity to create a serious, credible space for sustained policy engagement in India. Our vision is to convene policymakers, researchers, and students around shared policy challenges, and through the conference, we aim to strengthen the quality of policy conversations and ensure that research and implementation experience inform one another. This initiative can develop into a national forum that supports learning, reflection, and capacity-building over time. More than a single event, this conference is intended as a step towards building stronger linkages across institutions and contributing to the development of public policy leadership in India.

Panel Problem Statement

Panel 1 on Economy and Trade: Industry and Digitilisation in India

Background

India's Digital Economy was poised to contribute around 20% of GDP in 2026 (government target from 2023). More recent 2026 data (PIB) put the digital economy at closer to 13% of GDP, and the target of 20% has now been reassigned to 2030 (NASSCOM Global Confluence). UPI has enabled the nation to account for 49% of the global real-time payments transactions (ACI Worldwide). AI is spreading fast through the nearly \$300 billion IT industry (Nasscom), India's largest single export earner, and is beginning to reach manufacturing, BFSI and retail. At the same time, Production Linked Incentive schemes and the global 'China+1' shift are pulling fresh manufacturing investment into electronics, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, positioning India as an alternative industrial base.

The Problem: Why it Matters

These gains are not yet spreading the way trade-led growth needs. IT services, the industry behind decades of high-value exports, is shifting to AI-augmented delivery over fresh hiring. This led to gross hiring falling by roughly a quarter in FY2025-26 (Economic Times), even as AI-linked revenue hit record highs (NASSCOM); India's largest IT firms saw one of the sharpest net headcount contractions in years. Manufacturing, meant to be the next engine of exports and mass employment, has not scaled fast enough to absorb this labour, remains a stagnant share of GDP, and lags competitor economies on AI adoption, logistics costs and productivity. Most AI gains are concentrated in firms with AI integration resources and metro hubs. MSMEs, which generate roughly 48.55% of India's exports (merchandise), have barely begun to adopt AI-enabled tools and have often cited multiple challenges on this front. Globally in industries most exposed to AI, productivity growth has roughly tripled since generative AI went mainstream, and workers with in-demand AI skills now command a wage premium that has only increased over the year (PwC). Yet a striking number of firms are opting to displace their labour as they invest heavily in AI, and many organisations still cannot convert that investment into measurable economic productivity gains. The gap runs within industries as much as between them. Senior professionals in organisations with mature digital practices capture most of the upside, while smaller firms, routine task workers, and sectors where the need for AI-enabled capacity is most acute lag in adoption. Left unaddressed, these risks could decouple India's digital and trade success story from its ability to create the productive jobs its growth model depends on.

What Needs to be Addressed?

It is in this context that participants may address one or more of the following questions:

1. India's IT export model, once built on mass hiring, is shifting to AI-augmented delivery with far fewer entry-level roles. How can this sector protect export value in its next growth phase without abandoning its role as India's largest formal sector employer?
2. Export-oriented manufacturing, especially MSMEs feeding PLI and China+1 supply chains, has barely adopted AI, robotics, or digital quality control. What would it take to digitise this base fast enough to compete globally on cost and quality, not tariffs alone?

3. MSMEs generate a large share of India's exports and most non-farm jobs, yet lack the capital, data and skills to adopt AI at the pace large firms are. How can affordable, shared AI infrastructure close this gap before it turns into a trade competitiveness problem?
4. India's DPI is a global public goods success, but was built for consumer payments and governance, not industrial data exchange or export compliance. Should India build an 'Industrial DPI', and what should it prioritise first?
5. How can industries in India, especially smaller ones without large technology budgets, close the AI adoption gap and turn digital investment into shared productivity and wage gains?

Panel 2 on Urbanisation:

Small Cities Lead Economic Development

Background

India seeks to become a \$30 Trillion economy by 2047. Given that it is currently a little over \$4 trillion, a target of \$30 trillion by 2047 entails an annual growth of around 9% per year. Cities will be fundamental to this, as a large share of the growth will have to be in the manufacturing and services sectors.

Recent mega programs of the Government have largely focused on a small subset of the cities and more on the bigger ones. For example, the JNNURM program, launched in Dec 2005, had focussed on 67 cities and its associated UIDSMT program had focussed on 500 cities. More recently, the Smart Cities mission, launched in June 2015, had focused on 100 cities and its associated AMRUT program had focused on 500 cities. However, the country has nearly 8000 cities.

The Problem: Why it Matters

India's next phase of urbanisation is unlikely to be driven solely by further concentration in a handful of metropolitan centres. Rising land and housing costs, infrastructure congestion, environmental pressures and the outward expansion of economic activity are increasingly reshaping India's urban geography, with growth occurring in peripheral areas, satellite towns and smaller urban centres. This shift raises important questions about whether these emerging urban centres can become engines of economic transformation and what policy, governance and institutional changes would be required to enable them to play that role.

What Needs to be Addressed?

It is in this context that participants may address one or more of the following questions as to the role that smaller cities can play in contributing to India's development objectives.

1. Can the smaller cities contribute to India's ambition of becoming a \$30 trillion economy?
2. If so, in what way can they contribute?
3. What needs to be done, or happen, to enable them to do so?

Panel 3 on Climate Change and Energy Transition: Climate-Proofing India's Energy Transition: Building Resilient Energy Infrastructure in an Era of Extreme Weather

Background

India's energy transition is accelerating through large-scale renewable energy deployment, electrification of transport, expansion of transmission networks, battery storage, and green hydrogen. At the same time, climate change is exposing these systems to growing risks from heatwaves, cyclones, floods, droughts, and landslides.

As climate risks intensify, the Government of India has constituted a National Task Force on Climate-Resilient Energy Infrastructure to develop a strategy for safeguarding the country's energy system through 2040.

The Problem: Why it Matters

Climate change is exposing these systems to growing risks from heatwaves, cyclones, floods, droughts, and landslides. Recent events such as Cyclone Amphan (2020), Cyclone Biparjoy (2023), recurring Himalayan floods and landslides, and the record-breaking heatwaves of 2025-2026 have demonstrated how extreme weather can affect power generation, damage transmission infrastructure, delay clean energy projects, and strain electricity systems during periods of peak demand.

However, with limited fiscal resources and adaptation needs far exceeding available funding, policymakers must make difficult decisions on where, how, and by whom resilience investments should be made while balancing energy security, affordability, equity, and long-term sustainability.

What Needs to be Addressed?

It is in this context that participants may address one or more of the following questions as to the role that smaller cities can play in contributing to India's development objectives:

1. How should India prioritise climate-resilient planning across different energy infrastructure assets and regions to maximise reliability, energy security, and socio-economic benefits under constrained public resources?
2. What governance and innovative financing mechanisms can enable coordinated climate resilience planning across the Union and State governments, utilities, regulators, and the private sector?
3. How can climate risk be systematically integrated into the planning, design, operation, and expansion of India's future energy infrastructure to ensure a resilient and adaptive energy transition?

Panel 4 on Health:

Essential Drugs and Diagnostics for Health Equity: Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide

Background

As India moves towards the 'Viksit Bharat 2047' goal, the health sector must go through a transformative shift that ensures equitable and high-quality healthcare for everyone. Universal Health Assurance (UHA) is a framework primarily conceptualized in the Indian context. UHA extends beyond the globally accepted notion of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). UHA emphasizes a guarantee that all citizens have a right to comprehensive, equitable and quality healthcare, primarily delivered through a strong public system. This vision goes beyond treating illness; it ensures that all the social determinants of health are addressed, so that each individual is supported to remain healthy throughout their lives. The shift from 'Coverage' to 'Assurance' re-centres the health system on the constitutional right to health for every individual, especially the marginalized and underserved. The government has taken steps to ensure equitable healthcare access through multiple initiatives (Ayushman Bharat, National Health Policy 2017, National List of Essential Medicines, National Essential Diagnostics List, etc.). These initiatives have expanded access and established standards. There are still disparities in availability, quality and affordability. To attain Universal Health Assurance and for India to achieve the Viksit Bharat 2047 goals, these gaps must be addressed.

The Problem: Why it Matters

Essential drugs and diagnostics are foundational components of effective and efficient healthcare systems. Historically, expanding health infrastructure and health financing have dominated the health policy discussions. Access to affordable and quality drugs and timely diagnostics have received less attention and often been overlooked. Access to essential drugs and diagnostics sits at the intersection of equity, quality of care, financial protection and overall health system performance. Timely diagnosis of the disease and availability of affordable and quality drugs are prerequisites for effective treatment and better health outcomes for the population.

The urban-rural disparities in availability of affordable drugs and diagnostics contribute to delayed detection of diseases, poorer health outcomes and increased out-of-pocket expenditure, particularly for chronic conditions and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Addressing the issue of accessibility of quality drugs and diagnostics is therefore essential for strengthening primary care, improving health outcomes and ensuring that healthcare coverage translates into meaningful access.

What Needs to be Addressed?

It is in this context that participants may address the following questions:

1. How can India close the rural-urban gap in medicines and diagnostics? Are there any innovations or cost-effective service delivery models that can be scaled?
2. How can primary healthcare systems be strengthened to ensure equitable access to essential medicines and diagnostics, particularly in underserved and remote areas?
3. What kind of policy, financing and procurement reforms are needed to ensure uninterrupted access to essential drugs and diagnostics?
4. What role can digital health technologies, point-of-care diagnostics and artificial intelligence play in improving medicine and diagnostic access while ensuring quality, affordability and equity?

Policy Proposal Submission Template

Component	Guidance
A. DIAGNOSE THE PROBLEM – The Four S's	
1. Situation	What is happening, and why does it matter now? Set out the current state of the issue, relevant data or trends, and the key stakeholders involved.
2. Scope	What are the boundaries of this proposal? Define the geography, population or sector, and time horizon covered – and what is explicitly excluded.
3. Structure (Causal Linkage)	Why does the problem exist? Trace the root cause(s) and intermediate causes, and show how they combine to produce the effect. A simple causal chain is encouraged.
4. Statement (Narrow)	What exact problem are you solving? State it in one precise, bounded sentence – specific enough to act on, not a restatement of the whole domain.
B. EXPLORE THE OPTIONS	
5. Alternatives	What could plausibly be done? List 3-4 distinct approaches (e.g. regulatory, market-based, technology-led, community-led), without yet judging between them.
6. Action Review (SWOT)	What has already been tried, and how well has it worked? Review relevant domestic or global schemes, pilots or models, assessing each for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
C. DESIGN THE SOLUTION	
7. Solution and Rationale	What are you recommending, and why? State the chosen solution – from the alternatives above, a hybrid, or a novel proposal – and justify it on feasibility, cost, impact and equity, etc. using the SWOT evidence.
8. Policy Design (Instruments) & Governance Mechanism	How will this actually be implemented? Specify the instruments used (mandate, subsidy, tax, PPP, digital platform, etc.), the implementing institutions/tiers of government, and the roles and sequencing involved.
D. TRACK THE IMPACT	
9. Monitoring and Evaluation	How will you know if it is working? Define the output/outcome indicators, monitoring frequency and method, the body responsible, and triggers for course-correction.



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