

Daily Editorial Analysis 5 July 2025

July 5, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

Urban Renaissance: Unlocking the Potential of India's Top 15 Cities for a \$30 Trillion Economy by 2047

Context:

- As India aspires to become an over \$30 trillion economy by 2047, **its urban centres must drive innovation, job creation, and economic growth.**
- However, the country's **top 15 cities face systemic issues** — pollution, poor planning, weak governance, and infrastructure deficits.
- This article discusses key reforms to unlock their full potential in the coming “**urban decade.**”

The Engine of India's Future Growth:

- **15 cities** — including Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad — **contribute 30% of India's GDP.**
- These cities **can add 1.5% additional annual GDP growth** and play a key role in achieving India's long-term economic vision.
- Despite their importance, they remain **plagued by pollution, traffic, slums**, water stress, and inadequate digital infrastructure.

Environmental and Health Challenges in Urban Spaces:

- **Air pollution crisis:**
 - India hosts **42** of the world's 50 **most polluted**
 - **Key pollutants** are vehicular emissions, construction dust, and biomass burning.
 - **Solutions proposed includes –**
 - Electrify public transport.
 - Strict enforcement of construction dust norms.
 - The Union Budget 2025-26 announced the ₹1 lakh crore **Urban Challenge Fund** to rank cities and disburse financial incentives based on performance.
- **Solid waste management – A missed opportunity:**
 - According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Indian cities generate 1.5 lakh tonnes of solid waste per day, but **only 25% is processed.**

- At the national level, India is estimated to generate about 62 million tonnes of municipal solid waste yearly, of which **only 30% is processed**.
- **Reform steps:**
 - Municipalities must **procure equipment** and **train** sanitation staff.
 - Encourage performance-based **accountability** and regulations.
 - Transition to a **circular waste economy** could unlock \$73.5 trillion by 2030.
 - **Best practice:** Indore's bio-CNG and segregated waste model.

Urban Water Crisis and Solutions:

- **Rising water stress:**
 - As water stress is an urgent challenge, **nearly half of our rivers are polluted**.
 - In 2018, NITI Aayog predicted that 40% of India's population would face water scarcity by 2030.
 - **Cities lose 40-50% of piped water due to leakages.**
- **Water-sensitive urban planning - Indore's innovations:**
 - Sewage leakages into water bodies were plugged, leveraging **GIS technology**.
 - Rainwater harvesting and reuse of treated water have turned Indore into **India's first water-plus city**.

Housing Deficit and Informal Settlements:

- **Affordable housing gap:**
 - **Estimated shortfall:** 10 million homes now, 31 million by 2030 (CII).
 - **Rise of informal settlements** and illegal colonies lacking sanitation and infrastructure.
- **Vertical expansion and policy tools:**
 - **Increasing** floor space index (**FSI**) and floor area ratio (**FAR**) growth will **promote vertical growth**.
 - As the G20 India and OECD report on "Financing Cities of Tomorrow" points out, **density-related incentives** are another possible remedy.

Urban Mobility and Congestion:

- **Congestion crisis:**
 - The average urban commuter loses 1.5–2 hours daily in traffic.
 - This is mainly due to overpopulation, weak public transport, poor enforcement.
- **Smart urban mobility solutions:**
 - Prioritise investment in public transport.
 - Use AI and IoT for real-time traffic management.
 - Introduce congestion pricing models.
 - Encourage citizen discipline and smart driving habits.

Digital Infrastructure Gaps:

- **Slow internet speed:**

- **Average speed:** ~100 Mbps in India vs more than 1 Gbps in Seoul, Singapore.
- To attract top MNCs, and for setting up innovation centres, global capability centres (GCCs), and R&D hubs, **India needs to dramatically upgrade its digital infrastructure.**
- **Strengthening digital connectivity:**
 - India needs to expand high-speed broadband, **4G and 5G across cities and rural areas.**
 - This requires **cutting spectrum prices** to attract investment, building extensive fibre-optic networks, and deploying 5G nationally.

Governance and Financing Reforms:

- **Weak urban planning capacity: India has 1 planner per 1,00,000 people**, as against the global norm of 1 per 5,000–10,000. Most cities lack robust master plans.
- **Strengthening decentralised governance:**
 - Full implementation of the **74th** Constitutional Amendment.
 - **Increasing property tax collection**, which is currently less than 0.2% of GDP.
 - **Use digitised land records**, land value capture (LVC), and municipal bonds post governance reform.

Reimagining Cities as Cultural-Economic Hubs:

- **Promote walkable heritage zones** and integrated urban experiences.
- **Partnership** between government (policy/infrastructure) and private sector (innovation/delivery).
- Cities must evolve into global magnets for business and culture, like **Dubai** or **Singapore**.

Conclusion – India’s Decade of Urban Transformation:

- India’s top 15 cities must be empowered to lead the country’s economic, cultural, and technological transformation by **2047**.
- With focused investments in infrastructure, governance, environment, and digital access, these urban centres can **spearhead India’s journey toward becoming a \$30 trillion economy and global powerhouse.**

Urban Renaissance: Unlocking the Potential of India’s Top 15 Cities for a \$30 Trillion Economy by 2047 FAQs

Q1. Discuss the role of India’s top 15 urban centres in achieving the \$30 trillion economic vision by 2047.

Ans. India’s top 15 cities contribute 30% to the GDP and are critical to the \$30 trillion vision, but suffer from poor planning, pollution, traffic congestion, and infrastructural bottlenecks.

Q2. How can solid waste management be transformed into a sustainable and circular economy in Indian cities?

Ans. Indore’s successful waste-to-bio-CNG initiative demonstrates that through regulation, community participation, infrastructure investment, and capacity building, solid waste management can be turned into a circular economy model.

Q3. Analyze the urban water stress scenario in India and suggest sustainable water management strategies that cities can adopt.

Ans. With nearly 40% of rivers polluted and high water loss in transmission, cities need strategies like GIS-based leak detection, rainwater harvesting, and treated water reuse.

Q4. Examine the challenges and opportunities in making Indian cities digitally robust to support innovation and economic competitiveness.

Ans. Low internet speeds and high spectrum costs hamper digital infrastructure, which can be improved through 5G rollout, fibre-optic expansion, and investment in broadband.

Q5. What structural reforms are needed in urban governance to improve planning, revenue generation, and service delivery in Indian cities?

Ans. Effective implementation of the 74th Amendment, improved urban planning capacity, digitised land records, increased property tax collection, and adoption of municipal bonds.

Source: **IE**

Two Democracies and The Echoes of Tyranny

Context

- **On July 4, Americans commemorate their nation's declaration of independence**, a revolution sparked by a defiant belief in government by laws, not monarchs.
- **Yet this celebration masks a deeper truth: the ideals of 1776 are not self-sustaining.** As Judge J. Michael Luttig warns, democracy does not survive by virtue of its founding documents alone.
- **It must be renewed daily, by vigilance, courage, and a refusal to surrender** to authoritarian impulses and this message is not mere rhetoric.

The American Warning: Tyranny from Within

- **Judge Luttig, a conservative legal figure**, offers a sobering reflection: **tyranny is no longer an external threat but an internal one.**
- **His 27 truths emphasise that the constitutional order is not upheld merely by words** written on parchment but by people's willingness to act when it is threatened.
- **His concern is rooted in the rise of figures who seek personal power** rather than public service, leaders who claim to act within the Constitution while undermining its core principles.
- The **spectre of a self-crowned leader haunts the American political landscape**, where President Donald Trump's actions reflect a disdain for the very accountability that defines a republic.
- **With control over the legislature and a sympathetic judiciary, his power goes largely unchecked**, echoing not the aspirations of the Founders, but the habits of monarchs.

A Historical Mirror

- **India's Emergency**

- If Americans seek a cautionary tale, they need only look to **India's Emergency of 1975**.
- **When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi faced political vulnerability** after being convicted of electoral fraud, she **invoked constitutional mechanisms to declare an internal disturbance under Article 352**.
- This **legal veneer masked a de facto dictatorship**: civil liberties were suspended, the press muzzled, and over 100,000 citizens imprisoned.
- Parliament and the judiciary were reduced to **rubber stamps**.

- **Mechanics of Authoritarianism**

- As historian Gyan Prakash reveals in Emergency Chronicles, **India's descent into authoritarianism happened with chilling ease**.
- **There were no tanks on the streets** and there was no dramatic overthrow. Instead, the **judiciary surrendered, journalists complied**, and civil servants bowed.
- Only **Justice H.R. Khanna stood firm**, and he was punished for his integrity.
- **H.V. Kamath**, a member of the Constituent Assembly, had foreseen this danger in 1949, comparing India's constitutional framework to that of Weimar Germany.
- His warnings were ignored and **when the Emergency finally arrived, it followed the very path he feared**.

The Dangerous Legality of Authoritarianism

- The Indian Emergency reveals a key insight: **tyranny often wears legal clothes**.
- **Every brutal action**, preventive detentions, censorship, sterilisation drives, and slum demolitions, **was technically legal**.
- But **legality is not the same as justice and democracies can implode not only through violence but through compliance**, through the slow, legal erosion of institutional checks.
- The **tragedy of the Emergency was not merely what Indira Gandhi did, but how easily others allowed her to do it**.
- This **dynamic is echoed in contemporary America**. President Trump has not declared an **Emergency**, but he has deployed many tools of autocracy: targeting opponents through legal institutions, undermining public trust in elections, and threatening constitutional norms.

History's Cycles and the Call to Vigilance

- **Echoes and Ironies: History's Cycles**

- There is **profound historical irony in the present moment**.
- The Leader of Opposition, the grandson of Indira Gandhi, now champions the Constitution his grandmother once twisted.
- **He invokes Ambedkar's legacy**, brandishing the same document used decades ago to silence dissent.

- This **inversion illustrates that the Constitution is not a fixed relic, but a battlefield**, one that each generation must fight to reclaim.
- The **stories of both nations underline a universal truth: democratic decay is not inevitable, but it is always possible.**
- **The Call to Vigilance**
 - **Fireworks and flags cannot preserve a republic.** Only daily acts of vigilance can. Democracy is not just a system of laws and procedures; it is a culture, one that values restraint, humility, and accountability.
 - The **Founders of the United States declared that the law must be king** but that ideal only lives if citizens demand it.
 - **Constitutions do not protect liberty on their own** and they must be guarded by people with the courage to say no.
 - **If courts yield to political pressure, if legislatures serve partisanship over principle**, if media becomes a mouthpiece, and if law enforcement protects the powerful over the public, **then the Constitution becomes a hollow symbol.**

Conclusion

- **In 1975, India failed the test of democratic resilience** but the people eventually reclaimed their rights and in 2024 and beyond, both India and the United States stand at a similar crossroads.
- **Their futures hinge not on the strength of their constitutions**, but on the courage of their citizens. History does not repeat, but it does echo.
- The **Emergency was not an anomaly; it was a warning and it warns us still:** that tyranny, when it comes, will seem familiar and it will be legal.

Two Democracies and The Echoes of Tyranny FAQs

Q1. What does Judge Luttig warn about in the United States?

Ans. Judge Luttig warns that tyranny now threatens the United States from within, and that constitutional ideals must be actively defended to survive.

Q2. How did Indira Gandhi impose authoritarian rule during the Emergency?

Ans. Indira Gandhi imposed authoritarian rule by legally declaring an internal emergency, suspending civil liberties, censoring the press, and detaining opponents without trial.

Q3. What key institution failed during India's Emergency?

Ans. The judiciary failed during India's Emergency, with most judges complying with the regime, except for Justice H.R. Khanna who courageously dissented.

Q4. What is the main parallel between India and the United States today?

Ans. The main parallel is the erosion of democratic institutions through legal means and the failure of key actors to check authoritarian tendencies.

Q5. What is needed to preserve democracy?

Ans. To preserve democracy, citizens and institutions must remain vigilant, uphold the rule of law, and resist the normalisation of unchecked power.

Source: **The Hindu**

A Deliberate Strategy to Usher in a Communal Order

Context

- **On the eve of the 75th anniversary** of the Indian Constitution, **the Supreme Court of India reaffirmed a critical element** of the country's democratic framework by **upholding the inclusion of the words secular and socialist in the Constitution's Preamble**.
- These terms, **introduced during the Emergency through the 42nd Amendment in 1976**, have faced persistent political and legal challenge.
- The Court's decision, however, underscored a foundational truth: **the essence of India's constitutional vision transcends the circumstances of its wording**.
- Even if the original Preamble of 1949 did not include these specific terms, **the principles they represent were already embedded in the spirit and structure of the Constitution**.

Supreme Court's Ruling on Words Secular and Socialism: A Reaffirmation Amidst a Rising Offensive

- While the **judiciary's ruling offered a vital legal defence** of secularism and socialism, **it also prompted a renewed ideological offensive stance**.
- Some **prominent right-wing organisations publicly demanded the removal of secular and socialist from the Preamble**, calling them alien to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision.
- Further amplifying this sentiment, **the Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, termed their insertion a sacrilege to the spirit of Sanatan**.
- These **statements emanating not from fringe actors but from the apex of national authority**.

The Historical Consensus on Secularism and Socialism

- **Historical Consensus on Secularism**
 - The **idea of India as a secular nation was not a post-independence innovation** but an integral part of its foundational consensus.
 - The **Constituent Assembly debates leave no ambiguity on this matter and** there was unanimous agreement that India should be a secular state.
 - **No member advocated a theocratic state**. Leaders such as Govind Ballabh Pant posed fundamental questions about the dangers of a religious state.

- **Jaspat Roy Kapoor cited Mahatma Gandhi's assertion that religion should be a private affair.** Begum Aizaz Rasul described secularism as the most outstanding feature of the Constitution.
- **Sardar Patel, in a moment of profound reassurance,** vowed that the **new Constitution would not be disfigured by any provision on a communal basis.**
- These **voices collectively charted a vision of a modern, pluralistic India,** one that would reject colonial tactics of division and ensure dignity and equality for all citizens.
- **The Socialism in the Constitution: A Vision for Justice**
 - The **campaign to erase the word socialist** from the Preamble **is similarly aimed at dismantling the Constitution's egalitarian framework.**
 - **Socialism,** as envisioned in the Indian context, **is not a foreign doctrine but a moral and political commitment to social and economic justice.**
 - Ambedkar himself emphasised that the **Directive Principles of State Policy** reflected these socialist ideals.
 - **They aimed to create a welfare state committed to eradicating inequality,** ending caste-based exploitation, and ensuring land reform and labour rights.
 - **The Supreme Court, in its latest ruling, echoed this interpretation by equating socialist with the vision of a welfare state,** a state that exists not for the market or the majority alone, but for all its citizens.

The Way Forward: The Responsibility of Resistance

- The **Constitution is more than a legal document** it is a moral covenant forged in the crucible of India's long and diverse freedom struggle.
- It **represents the dreams of millions** who fought not just for independence from colonial rule, but for justice, equality, and freedom at home.
- Defending the secular and socialist character of **the Constitution is synonymous with defending the very idea of India,** a democracy in which every citizen, regardless of religion, caste, class, or gender, has the right to live with dignity and freedom.
- This **defence must be multifaceted: through public education, legal challenges, political mobilisation,** and sustained democratic struggle.
- It **must involve not just lawyers and politicians, but students, workers, thinkers, and every citizen** who believes in the idea of a modern, plural, and just republic.

Conclusion

- As India marks the 75th year of its Constitution, **the battle to preserve its soul has never been more urgent.**
- The **words secular and socialist are not accidental insertions or ideological imports and they are deeply rooted in the Indian experience** of colonialism, communal violence, and social inequality.
- **To erase them is to erase the legacy of Gandhi, Ambedkar, Patel, and countless others** who dreamed of a free and fair India.

- The **challenge today is clear: either we uphold and strengthen the democratic edifice built over decades, or we allow it to be dismantled** in favour of a narrower, more exclusionary order.

A Deliberate Strategy to Usher in a Communal Order FAQs

Q1. What did the Supreme Court recently uphold in the Constitution's Preamble?

Ans. The Supreme Court recently upheld the inclusion of the words secular and socialist in the Constitution's Preamble.

Q2. Who is demanding the removal of these terms from the Preamble?

Ans. Some prominent right wing organisations are demanding the removal of these terms.

Q3. What does secularism in India mean?

Ans. Secularism in India means that the state remains neutral in matters of religion and treats all religions equally.

Q4. What does socialism in the Preamble signify?

Ans. Socialism in the Preamble signifies the state's commitment to building a welfare society based on justice, equality, and the removal of socio-economic inequalities.

Q5. Why is defending the Constitution important today?

Ans. Defending the Constitution is important today to protect the democratic, inclusive, and pluralistic values on which modern India was founded.

Source: **The Hindu**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-5-july-2025/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.