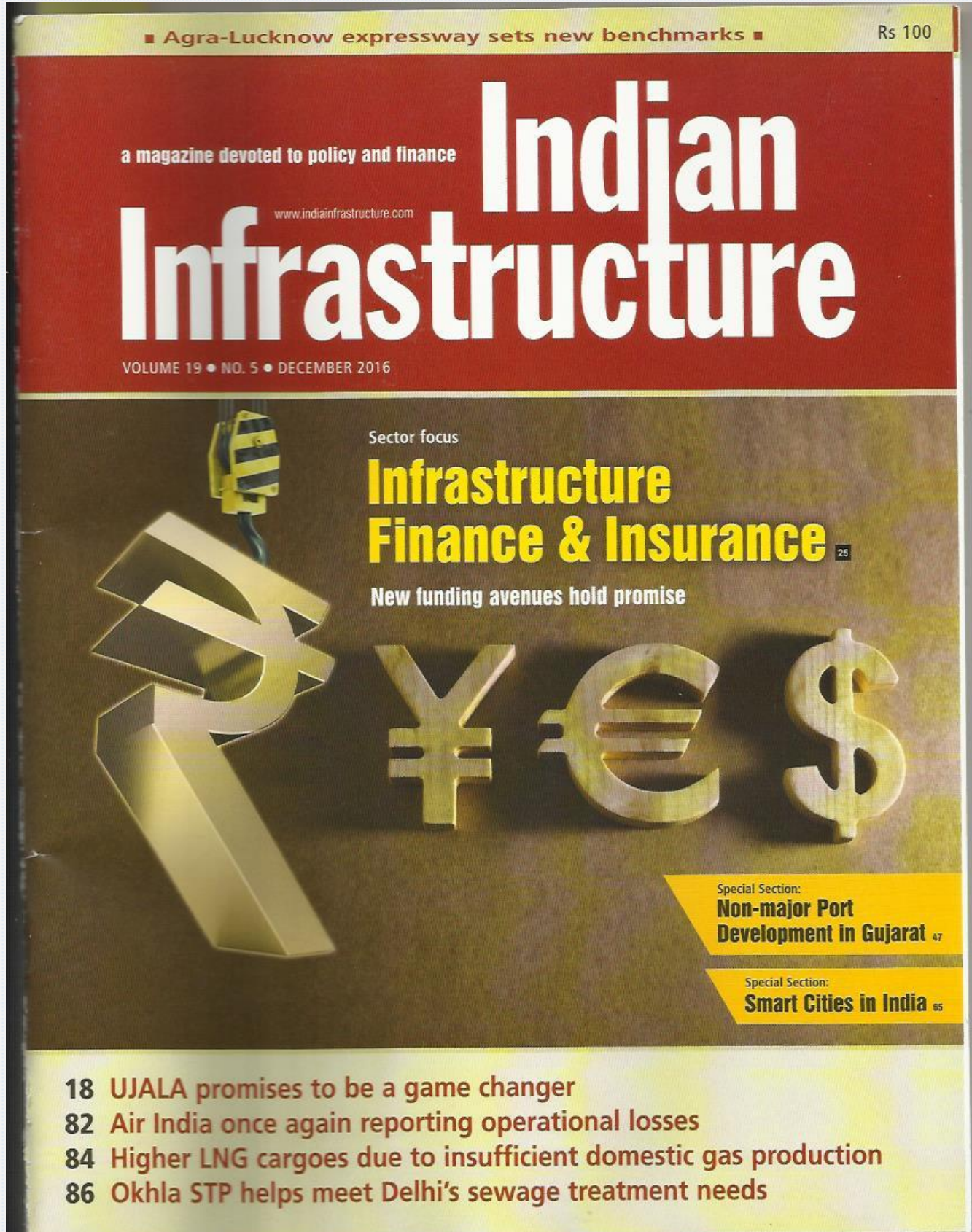


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Indian Infrastructure Magazine - (December 2016) - 'IMPROVING GOVERNANCE- Using IT enabled solutions for smart urban services' - coverage based on presentation by Kalpesh Shah, Pre-Sales Head, ABM Knowledgeware given at one of India Infrastructure conference.



# Improving Governance

## Using IT-enabled solutions for smart urban services

**W**ith the development of smart cities, urban local bodies (ULBs) across the country have increased their focus on undertaking reforms for smarter governance. The emphasis on technology solutions has stemmed from the increasing demand for smarter urban services by citizens. Today, they seek transparent and efficient municipal services, faster grievance redressal, accessible and efficient public transport, smart navigation within city limits, and round-the-clock access to urban services. Therefore, to facilitate the provision of these services, ULBs are adopting technology solutions for smart education, healthcare, parking, buildings, security, energy and transportation.

### Key initiatives

In this context, various municipalities have adopted information and communication technology (ICT) tools for smart governance. ULBs are deploying content management solutions for software development and content publishing. At the same time, robust rule engines and dynamic workflow engines are being deployed to customise software according to each ULB's requirements. Civic agencies are also delivering services to their citizens through platforms such as mobile phones, tablets and kiosks to increase mobility and ease of access. Notifications through SMS/e-mail and the use of digital signatures are some of the other IT tools that have simplified the process for availing of urban services.

At the state level, the Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra governments have undertaken such technology reforms. The Urban Development and Housing Department of the Bihar government has set up an e-municipality website. In February 2016, it rolled out e-municipality solutions with 24 modules on the website on a pilot basis. These were imple-

mented across 11 locations and 25 ULBs in Bihar. Under the project, services provided by these civic agencies were computerised and can now be availed of through web portals or mobile applications.

Similarly, the Madhya Pradesh government has rolled out an e-nagarpalika project on a pilot basis in 107 ULBs across the state. Under the project, all the services of the municipalities have been automated and computerised. In 2010, the Maharashtra government had implemented similar e-governance reforms. At present, the project is in its post-implementation support period.

At the city level, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) in Maharashtra implemented e-governance solutions in 2007. While 70-80 per cent of MCGM's operations are automated, the civic agency is constantly striving to improve its online services by introducing mobile applications and moving its services to the cloud.

Further, a few ULBs have also adopted digital locker facilities to reduce the time taken to avail of municipal services. A digital locker provides an online portal for citizens to upload all their legacy documents at one place. It effectively eliminates the need for submitting physical documents while availing of municipal services. The facility also allows consumers to authenticate their documents through e-signatures. Further, these documents can be

accessed by citizens from anywhere and at any point in time. While MCGM has already rolled out the use of digital lockers on a pilot basis, the Bihar government is considering the adoption of this solution.

The adoption of technology-based solutions, however, poses various challenges for ULBs. Adopting best practices by optimising and re-engineering the existing business processes of these organisations often proves to be a difficult task. Further, once the organisation implements technology solutions, it also needs to build capacity to ensure project sustainability. Data security is paramount while implementing such IT solutions. Therefore, organisations often find themselves in need of post-installation support for a period of at least five years to effectively roll out solutions for smart governance.

### Conclusion

In a bid to move towards smart governance, ULBs are increasingly adopting technology-based solutions. Adopting digital lockers and e-signature facilities and computerising the process of accessing municipal services have been steps in the right direction. Going forward, civic agencies will need to focus on citizen-centric service delivery. Further, ULBs are also expected to ensure round-the-clock access to these services from any geographical location.

At present, various central government initiatives such as the Smart Cities Mission, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation and the Digital India programme provide opportunities for the adoption of ICT solutions for governance. However, it is imperative to understand that technology is just an enabler. The actual focus should still be on improving the process of governance itself. ▀

**Based on a presentation by Kalpesh Shah, Head, Pre-Sales, ABM Knowledgeware, at a recent India Infrastructure conference**

