

Editor's Note

Thank You For Everything and Happy New Year.

As the year ends, our gratitude to everyone who walked with us on this most unusual journey. This is the third year of The Infravision Foundation's existence and it has been exciting to establish thought leadership and policy intervention in the infrastructure space. The Infravision Foundation (TIF) is delighted at the response it has received so far for its research papers as well as its outreach efforts. 2024 was a momentous year for many reasons, not in the least because of the impact of its study on Sooraj se Rozgari which found an echo in the Prime Minister's Surya Ghar Yojana and its work on getting surety bonds market ready. TIF started two exciting new initiatives, the Infrashakti Awards in collaboration with NDTV, and InfraKatha in partnership with India Habitat Centre. TIF conducted capacity building workshops with the World Bank, establishing its credentials as a think and do-tank and creating an action model going forward.

Telling the Story of India

From the origin of the Mekong Delta's name to Pliny's complaints about Roman ladies of leisure wearing diaphanous Indian silk; from 90 per cent of Nalanda University still to be excavated to Sanskrit as the international language of the ancient world, William Dalrymple conducted a masterclass in ancient India and the rise of India as a global giant in the seventh edition of InfraKatha at the India Habitat Centre on November 24, 2024. In a conversation with TIF Founder Vinayak Chatterjee in a session titled "Indosphere: How Indian Trade Grew", Dalrymple offered a riveting exploration of India's historical influence on global trade and culture. Dalrymple set the tone by stating, "India was one of the places in the world where the big questions of mankind were answered—what are we doing here, how do we live a moral life...?" This powerful opening captivated an audience comprising leading columnists, academics, historians, scholars, and even young enthusiasts clutching copies of The Golden Road, buzzing with energy and questions. The discussion delved into how Indian civilization shaped both the oriental and occidental worlds. Dalrymple highlighted overlooked achievements of forgotten Indian thinkers like Brahmagupta and Aryabhata, comparing them to celebrated Western figures like Pythagoras and Archimedes, whose contributions dominate colonial curricula. He also debunked the myth of the ancient "Silk Route," noting that it was a 19th-century colonial construct invented by geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen in the 1870s and didn't make it into English until the 1970s, whereas India had been exporting culture and civilization for over 2,000 years. He concluded with a forward-looking perspective, urging India to develop its temple complexes and revive the narrative of the Indosphere's vast influence. For those who missed it, here's the link to the conversation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ae8InU9IGgk&t=1025s>



IHC Director Sunit Tandon welcomes historian William Dalrymple and TIF Founder Vinayak Chatterjee



Dalrymple holds forth on ancient India and its role in the world



The audience at the event



Sneak Peek: InfraKatha #8

The last edition of InfraKatha for 2024 will feature former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Montek Singh Ahluwalia. He will be in conversation with TIF Founder Vinayak Chatterjee on December 14, 2024, at 7 pm at Gulmohar, India Habitat Centre. The topic: "Can Public Private Partnerships (PPP) be Revitalised?" Be there.

Event Alert

On December 16, TIF will be hosting a National Workshop on Promoting Trees Outside Forests (TOF) in India's Construction Sector in collaboration with the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), under the USAID-funded TOFI project. India's construction sector stands at a pivotal moment, where sustainable timber sourcing is both an opportunity and a necessity. With nearly 93 per cent of the nation's timber supply originating from TOF—primarily agroforestry—India has the potential to redefine its approach to resource management. Projections indicate that timber demand will almost double by 2030, rising from 57 million cubic meters in 2020 to 98 million cubic meters in 2030, spurred by the country's expanding infrastructure and housing sectors. Meeting this demand sustainably requires decisive policy action to prevent a growing dependency on imports and to avoid exacerbating global resource depletion and climate challenges. All this and more will be in discussion.



Roundtable Update

The Centre for Agri Infrastructure Research and Action (CAIRA), a new vertical under TIF, will have its first roundtable on January 18 at the India Habitat Centre on Agriculture Exports: Improving Infrastructure to Tap Global Markets. It will feature speakers from across the foodgrains, fisheries and horticulture sectors and they will address trends, gaps and barriers, as well as potential markets highlighted in a white paper that will be presented at the event by CAIRA Chairman of Governing Council, Siraj Hussain. This is the first of several initiatives CAIRA intends to bring attention to—a sector that is as neglected as it is important.



TIF@Media



TIF Founder Vinayak Chatterjee wrote in Business Standard on the significant public procurement reforms announced three years ago, seeking to review their impact, as well as suggest follow-through measures.

TIF@Consultation

TIF CEO Jagan Shah was nominated as a Member of the Working Group on Capacity Building at the Local Level by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Shah also spoke on how technology can improve India's urbanisation at The Indian Express's initiative, Thinc Our Cities, along with Saswat Bandyopadhyaya, Professor, CEPT University, Ahmedabad, and Shalini Agrawal, Municipal Commissioner, Surat.

TIF@IIMA

TIF Co-founder Rumjhum Chatterjee conducted an interactive discussion with employees from Suzuki Motor Corporation, Japan, on the topic of gender inclusive mobility and transportation systems in India, focusing on problems, innovative and frugal solutions, and the way forward to address gender disparity in the sector at IIM Ahmedabad. This was part of the Next Bharat Thinking programme, a collaboration between IIMA and Suzuki. Next Bharat Thinking is a week long immersion programme designed by IIM Ahmedabad and Next Bharat Ventures (A Suzuki Initiative) for Japanese employees of Suzuki to inculcate Indian thinking into them through a week-long Bharat visit.



Rumjhum Chatterjee, Co-founder, TIF with participants at interactive session

CAIRA@TIF



TIF is also delighted to announce additions to the governing council of CAIRA. TIF Distinguished Fellow and public policy expert Akhilesh Tilotia has joined as member as has Professor Seema Bathla of JNU. The governing council so far comprises TIF founder Vinayak Chatterjee, co-founder Rumjhum Chatterjee, Tilotia, Bathla and TIF CEO Jagan Shah as member secretary.

TIF@FICCI

TIF Head, Advocacy, Kaveree Bamzai, was part of the jury for the 4th Sustainable Agri Summit & Awards. This year, the theme was Sustainable Agricultural Development, and competition was tough. The various initiatives across the board, from sustainable innovations in sourcing to income enhancement programmes, were eye-opening.

TIF@ClimateChange

TIF Distinguished Fellow Akhilesh Tilotia was co-chair of Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association's (IVCA) Climate and Sustainability Council, which brought to life the inaugural IVCA GreenReturns Summit 2024 in Delhi on December 2 and 3, featuring a stellar set of speakers and panels. The event covered a wide breadth of topics on climate, investing, finance, and policy.



Chatterjee with Kinji Saito, board member of Suzuki Motor Corp

TIF@Cinema

Laapataa Infrastructure

One of the most remarkable things about Kiran Rao's *Laapataa Ladies*, now known as *Lost Ladies* in the run-up to the Oscars where it is hoping to be nominated in the Best Foreign Film category, is how it puts infra front and centre of the film. Not only do two grooms mix up their veil-clad wives on a train, but also it shows exactly how many different modes of transport it takes to connect India's tiny villages to slightly bigger villages in the fictional Nirmal Pradesh.

So when Phool gets married and has to go to her in-laws in Surajmukhi, she first has to walk along with her family, then ride a scooter with her husband, then take a boat, then ride atop a bus, and finally travel by the fateful train where she goes laapataa (missing). The movie is set in 2001 but have things really improved all that much in terms of connectivity?



Test Your Infra Power

1. When is Noida International Airport set to commence commercial operations?
2. What is the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's infrastructure monitoring system for accelerating 340 projects worth \$205 billion across the country and bringing about economic transformation?
3. What percentage of global financial transactions happen in India?
4. According to latest data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, of the 1,872 ongoing Union government projects valued above Rs 150 crore, how many are running behind schedule?
5. Which heritage building is used as a substitute for the Viceroy's House (now known as Rashtrapati Bhavan) in SonyLIV's new series *Freedom at Midnight*?



1. April 2025
2. PRAGATI, which stands for Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation
3. 48 to 50 per cent
4. 779
5. Umaid Bhawan, in Jodhpur



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