



Chintan  
Research  
Foundation



HIGH-LEVEL WORKSHOP

# TOWARDS RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYAS

10 July 2026

Dr Manmohan Singh HP Institute of Public  
Administration (MS HIPA),  
Shimla, Himachal Pradesh



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The Western Himalayan region represents one of India's most fragile ecological and geological landscapes. As the youngest mountain system in the world, the Himalayas are inherently unstable and highly susceptible to landslides, slope failures, and erosion. Multiple scientific assessments have consistently classified large parts of the Western Himalayas under high to very high landslide susceptibility zones, highlighting the region's structural vulnerability even without the added pressures of climate change.

Climate change is now significantly intensifying these underlying risks. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation regimes, and an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events—particularly cloudbursts and short-duration, high-intensity monsoon spells—have led to a marked rise in landslides, flash floods, and infrastructure damage. These hazards have resulted in repeated socio-economic losses, disruption of livelihoods, reduced access to essential services, and mounting fiscal pressures on disaster response and recovery mechanisms.

A critical and compounding challenge arises from infrastructure-led development pathways, especially road construction, urban expansion, and tourism-oriented projects, often planned to use uniform design standards developed for relatively stable plain regions. In mountain environments, roads are frequently justified for their developmental value—improving access to markets, education, healthcare, off-farm employment, and emergency evacuation, while also supporting hydropower development and strategic connectivity. However, poorly located and inadequately designed roads in steep and geologically fragile terrain have been shown to trigger slope instability, accelerate landslide erosion, disrupt natural drainage patterns, and fragment habitats.

Evidence from mountain regions indicates that landslides occur more frequently along heavily disturbed road corridors, particularly on road cut-slopes, with long-term ecological and social costs. Reduced habitat connectivity, declining water quality, increased sedimentation, and repeated road blockages illustrate how short-term development gains can translate into persistent environmental and economic liabilities.

At the same time, there is growing recognition that alternative, more sustainable approaches to infrastructure development are possible. Decision-support frameworks that integrate geological, ecological, and socio-economic indicators can improve road placement, design, and construction practices. Better planning—such as avoiding unstable mid-slope alignments, prioritising ridgelines or valley bottoms where feasible, improving drainage, limiting blasting in unstable substrates and ensuring safe disposal of excavated material—can substantially reduce landslides, erosion, maintenance costs, and downstream impacts.

However, operationalising such sustainability-oriented approaches remains challenging due to limited local data, fragmented institutional responsibilities, bureaucratic constraints, competing stakeholder priorities, and resource limitations. Addressing these barriers requires a transdisciplinary and participatory framework that brings together scientific expertise, policy institutions, infrastructure agencies, and local communities to align development goals with ecological and social realities. Against this backdrop, the proposed workshop seeks to create a structured dialogue on climate change, geological fragility, and development pathways for the Western Himalayas. By foregrounding both the challenges and viable solutions, the workshop aims to contribute to context-sensitive, climate-resilient, and people-centric planning approaches suited to fragile mountain regions.

## Objective

To facilitate evidence-based dialogue among key stakeholders on climate risks, geological fragility, and infrastructure-led development in the Western Himalayas, with the aim of generating actionable, context-specific policy insights that can inform resilient and sustainable planning frameworks and support effective implementation by State and Union government institutions to address emerging developmental and climate challenges.

## Date & Venue

10<sup>th</sup> July 2026 | Auditorium, Dr Manmohan Singh HP Institute of Public Administration, Shimla

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## Agenda

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Schedule	Particulars
9:30 - 10:00 AM	Registration
10:00 - 10:10 AM	Deep Prajwalan followed by Felicitation of Dignitaries by CRF & MSHIPA
10:10 - 10:20 AM	Welcome Address – Ms Rupali Thakur, Director MSHIPA Opening Address – Dr Debajit Palit, Centre Head, Chintan Research Foundation
10:20- 10:40 AM	Setting the Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mr Prabodh Saxena, Former Chief Secretary-cum-Chairman, Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board.</li><li>Ms Nameeta Prasad, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Forest, Environment, and Climate Change</li></ul>
10:40- 10:50 AM	Keynote Address: Dr V K Paul, Former Member, NITI Aayog <i>Followed by release of Discussion Paper by CRF</i>
10:50 - 11:50 AM	<b><i>Technical Session 1: Climate Risks and Geological Fragility in the Western Himalayas: Emerging Impacts and Vulnerability Hotspots</i></b> Moderator: Mr Prashant Sirkek, Additional Director, MSHIPA Panellists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dr Pushpendra Rana, Director, Department of Environment, Science &amp; Technology, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh</li></ul>

Schedule	Particulars
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof P K Joshi, Professor, School of Environmental Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi</li> <li>• Prof Tikender Singh Panwar, Professor of Practice, Shoolini University</li> <li>• Prof Anjal Prakash, Flame University, Pune*</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Q&amp;A session: 15 mins</p>
11:50 - 12:20 PM	Tea and Networking
12:20- 01:20 PM	<p><i>Technical Session 2: Urban Planning, Infrastructure Development and Institutional Roles in Building Climate Resilience</i></p> <p>Moderator: Dr Debajit Palit, Centre Head, Climate Change and Energy Transition, Chintan Research Foundation</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Hemis Negi, Director, Town and Country Planning Department, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh</li> <li>• Er Sanjay Soni, Chief Engineer, Public Works Department (PWD), Govt. of Himachal Pradesh</li> <li>• Prof. Mohd Sultan Bhat, Professor, University of Kashmir</li> <li>• Dr Amit Gangotia, Professor School of Tourism &amp; Travel Management, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Dharamshala</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Q&amp;A session: 15 mins</p>
01:20 - 02:10 PM	Lunch and Networking
02:20- 03:20 PM	<p><i>Technical Session 3: Policy and Governance Imperatives for Climate-Resilient Development Pathways in Mountain Region: Infrastructure Adaptation, and Context-Sensitive Planning</i></p> <p>Moderator: Dr Mahesh Sharma, Himachal Pradesh University</p> <p>Panellists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr Sanjay Sood, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Forest Department, Government of Himachal Pradesh</li> <li>• Dr Suresh C Attri, Chief Scientific Officer, Department of Environment, Science Technology and Climate Change, Government of Himachal Pradesh</li> <li>• Dr. B R Thakur, Associate Professor, Department of Geography (Specialisation, Regional development and Geospatial technologies ) Himachal Pradesh University (HPU) Shimla</li> <li>• Dr. Nicolas Ziv *, Lead Specialist- Transport Sector Resilience, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure</li> <li>• Suksham Chauhan, FCI Arb (UK), Solicitor of Senior Courts of England &amp; Wales   Indian Advocate   Fellow of Charter Institute of Arbitrators (UK)</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Q&amp;A session: 15 mins</p>
03:20 - 03:50 PM	Tea & Networking

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## Valedictory Session Tentative Agenda

Venue: Auditorium, MSHIPA

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Schedule	Particulars
04:00 PM	Arrival of Hon'ble Chief Minister Himachal Pradesh at Auditorium
04:00 - 04:05 PM	Welcome & Felicitation of Dignitaries by CRF & MSHIPA
04:05 - 04:15 PM	<i>Highlights of Workshop</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr Debajit Palit, Centre Head, Climate Change and Energy Transition, Chintan Research Foundation</li></ul>
04:15 - 04:25 PM	<i>Special Address</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr V K Paul, Former Member, NITI Aayog</li></ul>
04:25 - 04:35 PM	<i>Special Address</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sh. Kamlesh Kumar Pant, IAS – Chief Secretary H.P.</li></ul>
04:35 - 04:50 PM	<i>Hon'ble Chief Minister</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Release of Report – Towards a Resilient Himachal Pradesh Lessons and Recommendations from the 2023 and 2025 Hydro-meteorological Disaster</li><li>• Launch of the SIAU Portal</li></ul>
	<i>Address by Hon'ble Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh</i>
	<i>Vote of Thanks by Director/Additional Director MSHIPA</i>
	<i>Group Photo and High tea</i>

\* Joining Online

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