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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

# How Land Pooling Solves India's Land-Acquisition Woes

THE HINDU

3 June 2026

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# How Land Pooling Solves India's Land-Acquisition Woes

 **The Hindu**    3 June 2026    **GS2**    **GS3**

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## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"Compulsory land acquisition remains the biggest bottleneck for Indian infrastructure. Can Town Planning Schemes be mandated nationally, or does their success depend on local land-market conditions?"*

*Town Planning Schemes — voluntary land contribution for serviced reconstituted plots — are a self-financing, displacement-free alternative to compulsory acquisition. Gujarat's century-long success proves national replicability.*

## THE MECHANISM

STEP	DETAIL
1	Landowners in a development zone <b>voluntarily contribute</b> 30-50% of their land
2	Authority develops <b>roads, water, sewage, amenities</b> across the whole area
3	Owners receive <b>reconstituted plots</b> — smaller but <b>fully serviced + connected</b>
4	Serviced plots worth <b>more than original land</b> → owners are net <b>gainers</b>
5	Authority retains land for roads/parks <b>at no cash cost</b> → <b>self-financing</b>

## WHY IT BEATS LARR

FEATURE	TPS	LARR 2013
Displacement	<b>None</b>	Often required
Government capital	<b>None</b> (self-financing)	Large upfront
Consent	Built-in (voluntary)	70-80% required
Litigation	Minimal	Common

## UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	RELEVANCE
<b>GS2</b>	Governance — LARR 2013; urban planning; land acquisition
<b>GS3</b>	Infrastructure — urban development; TPS; DILRMP
<b>Prelims</b>	LARR 2013; Town Planning Scheme; DILRMP (land digitisation); Gujarat Town Planning Act 1976

Sources: *The Hindu*

Source: How Land Pooling Solves India's Land-Acquisition Woes — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

### ● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

Town Planning Schemes (TPS) — where landowners voluntarily contribute land for infrastructure in exchange for smaller but serviced, highly valued reconstituted plots — offer a fiscally self-sustaining and displacement-free alternative to compulsory acquisition under LARR 2013; Gujarat's century-long record proves replicability, but success depends on updated state statutes, digitised land records, and calibrated contribution ratios.

✓ **SUPPORTING**

- Under TPS, landowners contribute a portion of their land (typically 30-50%); the government develops roads, water, sewage, and amenities; owners receive “reconstituted plots” that are smaller but serviced and thus far more valuable — owners gain net positive land value, eliminating the compensation-litigation cycle of compulsory acquisition.
- Unlike LARR 2013, TPS requires no up-front government capital for land purchase; the land value appreciation (betterment) funds the infrastructure itself — genuinely self-financing, not dependent on state budget allocations.
- Gujarat has used TPS since the early 20th century (legally formalised in the Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act 1976); Ahmedabad’s development has been substantially shaped by TPS.


**COUNTER**

Critics argue TPS works in Gujarat because of active land markets and cooperative land-record culture; in states with fragmented tenancies, absentee ownership, disputed records, or tribal land categories it is difficult to implement without updated cadastral surveys.


**WAY FORWARD**

Mandate a model TPS Act at the central level (as a model law under Article 252); invest in cadastral digitalisation and land-record modernisation (DILRMP); train urban local bodies in TPS administration; use TPS for peri-urban fringe areas where land markets are active.


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**MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK**
**QUESTION**

*"Land pooling offers a fiscally self-sustaining and consent-based alternative to compulsory acquisition for urban infrastructure development." Examine with evidence from Indian practice. (250 words)*

**INTRODUCTION**

India's infrastructure expansion has consistently been derailed by land acquisition disputes. The LARR Act 2013 requires social impact assessments, consent of up to 80% of affected families, and compensation at 2-4× circle rates — which has made large projects expensive and slow.

Town Planning Schemes offer a fundamentally different architecture: instead of taking land, they transform land in partnership with its owners.

### BODY

Under a Town Planning Scheme, landowners in a development zone contribute a portion of their land (typically 30-50%); the planning authority develops the entire area with roads, drainage, and amenities; owners then receive "reconstituted plots" — smaller in area but with full services and connectivity, and thus far higher in market value. The net result is that owners are net gainers (the serviced plot is worth more than their original share), the public authority acquires land for roads and parks at no cash cost, and no one is displaced.

Gujarat has operated this model continuously since the 1960s; Ahmedabad's well-planned road network and mixed-income development in Surat, Rajkot, and Vadodara were substantially built through TPS. The barriers to national replication are real — fragmented land records, absentee ownership in peri-urban areas, and insufficient urban local body capacity — but these are governance problems, not inherent to the TPS model.

### CONCLUSION

Land pooling is not a Gujarat curiosity — it is a proven, replicable alternative to the acquisition-compensation-litigation cycle. A central model Act, DILRMP-backed digitised land records, and capacity investment in urban planning bodies would enable India to build its cities without displacing their future residents.

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