

Harmonising Bike Taxi Regulations in India

An Evidence-Based Assessment and Suggested Pathways for Reform



July 14, 2026



India International Centre (IIC), Delhi



9:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Background

A hybrid event was organised by Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) for launching a research report titled “*Harmonising Bike Taxi Regulations in India: An Evidence Based Assessment and Suggested Pathways for Reform*” on 14 July 2026 at IIC, New Delhi. The event underscored the need for a harmonised, predictable, and trust-based regulatory framework to unlock the full potential of bike taxis while ensuring legal clarity, safety, accountability, and worker welfare.

The launch event included two panel discussions with panellists and participants comprising representatives from government departments such as State and Union Department of Transport, industry, civil society organisations, media and academics.

A brief snapshot of the event along with key discussions are as follows:

Presentation on Key Findings and Recommendations from the Report

Tasmita Sengupta, Senior Research Associate, CUTS International presented the key findings and recommendations from the research report. The presentation highlighted the growing importance of bike taxis in advancing affordable urban mobility, first- and last-mile connectivity, livelihood generation, and environmental sustainability. It examined the evolving legal and regulatory framework governing bike taxis and presented a comparative assessment of six States, identifying significant variations in licensing frameworks, the recognition of non-transport motorcycles, electrification requirements, social protection measures, and revenue models.

The analysis underscored how fragmented State-level regulations have created regulatory uncertainty, increased compliance costs, and constrained the sector's potential. Based on these findings, the study recommended a harmonised and predictable regulatory framework, including structured authorisation of non-transport motorcycles, platform-enabled permit models, harmonised safety and welfare standards, incentive-based phased electrification, and

evidence-based policymaking through stakeholder consultations and Regulatory Impact Assessments.

Keynote Address

Gopal Krishna Agarwal, National Spokesperson (Economic Affairs), Bhartiya Janta Party emphasised that an integrated urban mobility ecosystem can play a pivotal role in advancing connectivity, employment, productivity, and sustainable growth as India pursues its ease of living agenda. He underscored that building a harmonised regulatory framework requires identifying the right policy problem, leveraging technology-driven solutions, undertaking meaningful stakeholder consultations, and applying rigorous cost-benefit analysis to ensure regulations are evidence-based, practical, and outcome-oriented. He noted that such an approach is essential for fostering innovation while strengthening ease of doing business and creating a future-ready urban mobility ecosystem.

Special Address

Dr. Nitin R. Gokarn, Chairman, National Road Safety Board emphasised that regulation must evolve with technological innovation to avoid becoming a constraint on sectoral growth. While recognising technology as a key enabler of transformative mobility solutions, he stressed that sustainable progress ultimately depends on effective governance. He underscored the importance of safety, platform accountability, AI-enabled digital governance, real-time monitoring, and adaptive, evidence-based regulation, anchored in cooperative federalism, as the foundation of a trusted, resilient, and future-ready mobility ecosystem.

Panel 1- Harmonising Regulation Across States: Bridging Policy Gaps and Legal Ambiguities

Moderator:

Amol Kulkarni, Director (Research), CUTS International

Panellists:

- **Chhavi Banswal**: Former Senior Manager, Policy Research and Advocacy: Ola Mobility Institute
- **Paroma Bhat**: Head of Public Policy and Government Relations: Uber: India and South Asia
- **Pravesh Biyani**: Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Mobility, IIIT Delhi
- **Shantanu Sharma**: Senior Manager (Law, Policy and Regulations), Rapido
- **Nikhil Rathi**: Senior Account Director of Public Policy, Chase Advisors

Key Discussions

- The panel agreed that the debate should move beyond whether bike taxis should operate to how they should be regulated. Given their growing role in urban mobility, States

should focus on establishing clear and predictable regulatory frameworks that ensure safety, platform accountability, worker welfare, and legal certainty.

- Cooperative federalism emerged as the preferred approach for regulatory harmonisation. Since road transport falls under the Concurrent List, panellists supported a GST Council–style institutional mechanism where the Centre provides a common regulatory baseline while States retain flexibility to adapt regulations to local mobility needs. International experiences, particularly the European Union's platform work framework and Indonesia's compliance-based framework, were cited as useful reference points.
- A recurring theme was the need for light-touch, evidence-based regulation that lowers barriers to livelihood opportunities. Recognising that bike taxi work is often transitional rather than permanent employment, the discussion emphasised that regulations should preserve flexibility instead of imposing compliance burdens that discourage participation.
- The panel highlighted that mandatory electrification should be pursued through a phased and incentive-based approach. Premature EV mandates, without adequate charging infrastructure, battery-swapping networks, affordable financing, and a functioning second-hand EV market, could unintentionally exclude potential riders and restrict livelihood opportunities.
- While acknowledging that States already possess adequate legal authority to regulate bike taxis, panellists stressed that implementation remains the primary challenge. Greater political will, consistent enforcement, and institutionalisation of successful regulatory innovations were considered more important than creating new legislative powers.
- Bike taxis were viewed as complementary rather than substitutive to public transport. They effectively bridge first- and last-mile connectivity gaps, but should not compensate for inadequate investment in public transport systems, pedestrian infrastructure, and broader urban mobility planning. Consumer choice should be driven by convenience rather than the absence of viable alternatives.
- The discussion underscored that India's mobility challenges require context-specific regulatory solutions. Global regulatory models can inform policymaking but cannot be transplanted directly, given India's diverse urban, semi-urban, and rural mobility requirements, population scale, and socio-economic conditions.
- Finally, the panel observed that prolonged regulatory uncertainty has become a greater constraint than overregulation. A harmonised, predictable, and adaptive regulatory framework would not only improve safety and compliance but also enhance investor confidence, enable platform innovation, support gig workers, and strengthen the overall urban mobility ecosystem.

Panel 2: Bike Taxis in India's Mobility Ecosystem: Innovation, Livelihoods and Consumer Welfare

Moderator:

Anil Sasi: National Business Editor, The Indian Express

Panellists:

- **Virendra S. Rathore:** Additional Commissioner, Department of Transport, Rajasthan
- **Shreya Yadav:** Associate Manager: Legal Public Policy and Corporate Affairs, Rapido
- **Amit Das:** Chief Executive Officer, Electric One
- **Shiksha Srivastava:** Associate at PLR Chambers
- **Sourav Dhar:** Programme Lead, Mobility, Council on Energy, Environment and Water

Key Discussions:

- The panel recognised bike taxis as an established mobility and livelihood solution rather than a regulatory problem. Instead of debating their legitimacy, the discussion focused on designing smart, harmonised regulations that enable the sector to operate safely and efficiently. The current debate often reflects a mismatch between the problem being diagnosed and the solutions proposed, when in fact practical, workable options already exist and need only be regulated coherently.
- People and livelihoods remained at the centre of the discussion. Panellists emphasised that the bike taxi debate extends beyond regulation to improving livelihoods, expanding financial independence, and creating flexible employment opportunities, particularly for workers seeking supplementary or transitional sources of income.
- Bike taxis hold particular promise as a women-led mode of transport. A harmonised regulatory environment could enable a safer, more conducive ecosystem for women-led transport, supporting a model that is by women and for women, and giving women greater safety and confidence as both drivers and passengers.
- Flexible platform work allows women to make use of existing assets, support their families, and invest in their children while balancing other responsibilities, offering many a rare combination of livelihood, flexibility, and dignity.
- Stakeholder consultation was considered fundamental to effective policymaking. The panel emphasised that governments should work closely with platforms, workers, consumers, industry, and civil society to develop harmonised regulations that are practical, implementable, and responsive to evolving market realities.
- A balanced approach to electrification received broad support. Rather than imposing mandatory EV adoption, participants advocated a phased transition supported by adequate charging infrastructure, battery-swapping facilities, and financial incentives so that environmental objectives align with economic viability.

- Innovation and safety were viewed as complementary policy objectives. The discussion stressed that harmonised regulations should combine platform accountability, rider training, quality safety equipment, effective grievance redressal, and standardised skill development to create a safer and more trustworthy mobility ecosystem.
- Bike taxis were recognised as an integral component of a broader urban mobility ecosystem. While they effectively address first- and last-mile connectivity gaps, panellists emphasised that they should complement stronger public transport systems and preserve consumer choice rather than substitute for essential public infrastructure.
- The panel concluded that a harmonised, evidence-based regulatory framework is essential to unlock the sector's full potential. Such a framework should balance innovation, commuter safety, worker welfare, consumer interests, and environmental sustainability while providing regulatory certainty for all stakeholders.

Way Forward

- Adopt a GST Council-style cooperative federalism model, bringing together the Centre and the States to develop a harmonised bike taxi regulatory regime that can evolve in line with market needs.
- Institutionalise successful state-level regulatory innovations, such as Uttar Pradesh's temporary permission for non-transport motorcycles during the Kumbh Mela should be extended by incorporating them into permanent regulatory frameworks.
- Pursue a phased, infrastructure-led transition to EVs, ensuring charging networks, battery-swapping facilities, and affordable financing are in place before mandates are imposed, so that sustainability and livelihoods advance together.
- Embed safety measures, including helmets, rider training, responsible road behaviour, and golden-hour response systems, into platform operations to build a safer and more accountable mobility ecosystem.
- Adopt a light-touch regulatory approach that avoids cumbersome compliance requirements, preserving the flexibility that makes gig-based bike taxi work an accessible livelihood option.
- Strengthen public transport systems and pedestrian infrastructure alongside bike taxi regulation, ensuring bike taxis complement rather than substitute for essential public mobility infrastructure.
- Design regulatory frameworks around India's own scale, population, and socio-economic realities, using global models to inform policy without allowing them to define it.
- Recognise bike taxis as an existing, established mobility solution deserving smart, harmonised regulation, and close the sector's policy vacuum through structured consultation across states, workers, platforms, and regulators.

- Design regulations that actively enable women-led bike taxi models, building a safer, more confident, and inclusive transport ecosystem that is by women and for women.
- Align EV adoption incentives with clear, visible economic benefits for riders, alongside adequate charging and financing infrastructure, so that climate goals and livelihood goals reinforce rather than compete with each other.
- Incorporate the livelihood and dignity dimension of gig-based bike taxi work into the broader policy narrative, ensuring the regulatory conversation reflects both the economic and human stakes of the sector.