



Underground Space and Tunnelling Association (UTA)

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing pressure on surface land due to rapid urbanization, infrastructure expansion, and environmental constraints has led to a global shift towards the planned use of underground space. Recognizing this need, the concept of organized professional bodies dedicated to tunnelling and underground space development emerged in the 1970s, culminating in the establishment of the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association (ITA) in 1974. This marked the beginning of a coordinated international effort to promote safe, sustainable, and efficient underground infrastructure.

Building on this global framework, national and regional associations have been formed across various countries to address local challenges while aligning with international best practices. The proposed **Underground Space and Tunnelling Association (UTA)** is envisaged as a professional, non-profit platform aimed at advancing the science, technology, and policy aspects of underground space utilization.

The primary rationale for UTA lies in the growing importance of underground infrastructure in sectors such as urban transportation (metros, road tunnels), water resources (hydropower tunnels, underground reservoirs), utilities (sewerage, power, communication corridors), and strategic storage. Underground development not only optimizes land use but also enhances resilience against climate change, reduces environmental impact, and improves urban livability.

UTA seeks to bring together stakeholders from government agencies, academia, industry, consultants, and international experts to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange. It will serve as a nodal platform for dissemination of global best practices, development of standards and guidelines, capacity building, and promotion of research and innovation in tunnelling and underground engineering.

The Association will also play a key role in addressing emerging challenges such as complex geological conditions, urban tunnelling risks, safety management, digital construction technologies, and sustainability considerations. By facilitating training programs, workshops, conferences, and technical publications, UTA aims to strengthen professional competencies and support the successful implementation of underground projects.

In alignment with global initiatives and organizations like ITA, UTA will contribute to the broader objective of sustainable infrastructure development by promoting the optimal and responsible use of underground space. It will act as a bridge between international expertise and national requirements, thereby enhancing the quality, safety, and efficiency of tunnelling practices.

In summary, the Underground Space and Tunnelling Association is conceived as a strategic initiative to institutionalize excellence in underground space and tunnelling projects development, support infrastructure growth, and contribute to resilient and sustainable urban and regional planning.



Message from the President



The rapid global expansion of urbanization, transportation, and utility networks has made tunnelling and underground space development the cornerstone of sustainable, climate-resilient infrastructure. However, the sector is currently hindered by systemic challenges that isolated, project-level interventions can no longer resolve.

Tunnelling inherently involves severe geological uncertainties and high construction risks. Unpredictable subsurface conditions routinely trigger cost overruns, prolonged delays, and complex contractual disputes. In urban environments, these issues are magnified by congested underground corridors, legacy utilities, and stringent environmental constraints, exposing the critical absence of a cohesive underground management framework.

Compounding these technical hurdles are severe institutional, financial, and workforce bottlenecks. Fragmented governance, overlapping regulatory mandates, and a distinct lack of harmonized technical standards stifle efficient project execution. Financially, the sector is plagued by inequitable risk allocation and outdated contract models that strain public resources and deter investor confidence. Furthermore, a severe shortage of skilled professionals, coupled with academic curricula that lag behind modern mechanized and digital tunnelling practices; threatens the industry's long-term technical excellence and institutional memory.

To aggressively overcome these escalating challenges, establishing the **Underground Space and Tunnelling Association (UTA)** is not just timely; it is an industry imperative. UTA serves as the premier, unified platform bringing together engineers, geologists, planners, contractors, regulators, and academics.

Our mandate is to decisively address these sector-wide vulnerabilities through unified knowledge exchange, targeted capacity building, and robust policy engagement. UTA will champion the standardization of best practices in design, safety, and asset management. We will act as a vital bridge between the industry and the government, advocating for balanced contracting frameworks, equitable risk distribution, and continuous professional development. By formalizing this professional ecosystem, UTA will mitigate disputes, optimize project delivery, and elevate underground infrastructure as a strategic enabler of future-ready development.

The industry can no longer afford to operate in silos. I, therefore strongly urge you and your organization to join the UTA as individual or institutional members. By uniting our capabilities, we will amplify our collective voice, resolve shared concerns, and secure a resilient, world-class future for the tunnelling and underground sector.

Vikas Kumar

Dr. Vikas Kumar

President, Underground Space & Tunnelling Association & Managing Director, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Limited

Vision



To be the global benchmark for excellence, safety, and innovation in tunnelling and underground development.



Mission



To promote the planned, safe, and sustainable development and use of underground space and tunnelling for infrastructure and urban development, in accordance with internationally recognized engineering, safety, and environmental principles.

Objective

Technical & Professional Advancement

Promote best practices, standards, and innovations in tunnelling and underground construction, and facilitate R&D in key areas like mechanized tunnelling, underground stations, caverns, and subsurface infrastructure. Enhance the safety, quality, and durability of these works.

Sustainability & Environmental Stewardship

To encourage environmentally sustainable design, construction, and operation, supporting underground solutions that contribute to sustainable transport, energy, water, and waste management while minimizing ecological impact and surface disruption.

Planning & Infrastructure Integration

To promote integrated urban planning that utilizes underground space for diverse transport corridors, parking, utilities, commercial, and public facilities. Advocate for multi-use developments in dense urban areas to improve livability, resilience, and disaster preparedness.

Capacity Building & Knowledge Sharing

To disseminate technical knowledge through publications (papers, guidelines, case studies) and organize conferences, workshops, training programs, and technical visits to build professional capacity. Foster collaboration across industry, academia, and government.

Policy Advocacy & Strategic Collaboration

To engage with policymakers on relevant codes, standards, and policies; enhance public awareness of subsurface benefits; and collaborate strategically with key national (Smart Cities, Metro Policies) and international organizations (ITA, PIARC, UN SDGs).

FOUNDING OFFICE BEARERS



Dr. Vikas Kumar
President



Dr. Pramit Garg
Sr. Vice President



Mr. Rajiv Dhankher
Vice President



Mr. Atul Kr. Kankane
Vice President



Mr. Sunil Kr. Sharma
Secretary General



Mr. Saurabh Sharma
Treasurer

STRUCTURE OF UNDERGROUND SPACE AND TUNNELLING ASSOCIATION

Governing Council	Consisting of main office bearers (President, Sr. Vice President, Vice Presidents, Secretary General & Treasurer) and other Governing Council members.
General Assembly	Consisting of all registered members of the association. General Assembly will be the supreme body of UTA.

INVITATION FOR JOINING THE ASSOCIATION

The Underground Space and Tunnelling Association (UTA) is a premier community for professionals, infrastructure owners, and solution providers dedicated to advancing the tunnelling sector. To support our members and drive the industry forward, we focus on:

Global Reach	Recognizing that the challenges of underground development are universal, UTA welcomes individuals and organizations from across the globe to share international best practices.
Exclusive Privileges	We offer tailored opportunities and special recognition for organizations that own underground projects or provide specialized engineering solutions.
Collaborative Platform	Through our dedicated forums, members can engage with industry leaders to share strengths, navigate emerging opportunities, and address complex sector challenges on a professional stage.



We invite you to join us as an individual or institutional member. Partner with UTA to elevate your own capabilities while contributing to the strength and resilience of the global underground sector.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership fee (excluding taxes which shall be payable as per actuals) payable on a financial year basis (1st April – 31st March), is as follows:

Individual Member

<i>Annual Membership (For Young and Research Students)</i>	: Rs. 1,000/-
<i>Lifetime Membership</i>	: Rs.10,000/-

Institutional Member*

<i>Annual Membership</i>	: Rs.25,000/-
<i>Lifetime Membership (For 11 years period)</i>	: Rs.2,50,000/-

Corporate Member*

<i>Annual Membership</i>	: Rs.50,000/-
<i>Lifetime Membership (For 11 years period)</i>	: Rs. 5,00,000/-

**including complementary membership for upto 5 individuals of respective institution/corporate.*



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