

ESG in Indian Real Estate

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Executive Summary

This whitepaper delves into the transformative impact of ESG principles on India's real estate sector. Embracing ESG not only enhances financial value but also fuels sustainable growth and responsible development. Key highlights include:

- **ESG Boosts Valuation**: **Robust ESG practices** attract high-quality tenants, driving premium rentals and occupancy rates, fortifying long-term stability.
- **Rising ESG Investments:** ESG-driven investments surged from **5% (2021) to 13% (2022)**, reflecting a **2.4x deal** value increase to \$7.9 billion.
- Climate Challenges: Bengaluru's case underscores risks of unchecked urbanization, spurring the need for resilient urban development aligned with ESG.
- Holistic Approach: Transparent reporting, stakeholder awareness, and robust regulatory compliance enhance reputation and investor confidence.

As India's real estate industry charts its course into the future, the integration of ESG principles emerges not only as a necessity but also as a powerful catalyst for holistic growth. By embracing sustainability, fostering innovation, and addressing challenges posed by climate change, the industry can unlock a sustainable future that harmonizes financial success with environmental stewardship and societal well-being. As ESG continues to gain prominence, the industry's commitment to responsible development solidifies its position as a trailblazer, shaping a thriving and resilient real estate landscape for generations to come.

Introduction

The real estate industry in India is witnessing a growing emphasis on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investing, driven by the recognition of the potential benefits of sustainable and socially responsible properties. The significance of this trend is underscored by the industry's substantial contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. Buildings currently account for approximately 40% of global energy consumption and emit 33% of greenhouse gas emissions.

The urgency for green and sustainable development has become an undeniable priority across sectors, especially after COP27. Achieving the 1.5°C climate target hinges on substantial progress in key emission-driving sectors: energy, transport, and real estate. Several Indian companies have partnered with the government to propel India towards a green economy and align with the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement. Consequently, ESG considerations have taken centre stage in corporate decision-making.

As businesses strategically plan for the future, considering climatic, societal, and ethical issues, ESG has transformed from a peripheral discussion to a critical aspect of investment decision-making. Developers worldwide have made significant strides in pursuing nationally and internationally recognized green certifications, such as LEED and IGBC, to attract potential tenants and demonstrate their dedication to sustainability.

A recent APAC report by CBRE underscores the importance of reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions as the top ESG consideration likely to impact property value. Investors and occupiers exhibit a strong willingness to pay a premium for buildings equipped with onsite renewable energy generation and smart technology to monitor and optimize energy usage. This trend is evident in India, where major cities like Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune, Chennai, and Kolkata boast a remarkable 30% certified stock of green buildings.²

This whitepaper delves into the evolving landscape of ESG investing in the Indian real estate industry. We explore the drivers behind this paradigm shift, analyze the impact of ESG considerations on property value, and shed light on the successful integration of sustainability measures by leading developers.

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Benefits of ESG for the Real Estate Industry

By embracing ESG considerations, real estate companies in India can not only enhance their financial performance and attract sustainable investment but also contribute to ecological preservation, societal well-being, and resilient growth.

Driving Marketability and Tenant Attraction

Buildings with green certifications, energy-efficient features, and sustainable designs become highly appealing to quality tenants, leading to premium rentals and reduced vacancy periods. Such strategic adoption of sustainability enhances financial value, as evidenced by the surge from **37% to 93% in built-up areas in 2020**, while projections indicate a population jump to **18 million by 2031** from an estimated **12.3 million in 2022**.₃

Crucial for Investors' Preferences

With a focus on medium-to-long term profit and reduced volatility, ESG-compliant real estate assets are becoming the preferred choice. A CFA December 2020 survey underscored that over **59% of the participating firms** noted a growing demand for ESG from clients and investors, marking a substantial **15% rise from 2017**. Additionally, more than **64% of respondents** highlighted ESG's capacity to enhance investment risk management. Notably, a higher emphasis on reputation emerged as a significant incentive, exhibiting nearly **10% increase since 2017**.



ESG factors considered in investment propositions 5

^{3.} Real Estate Sector Embraces ESG." Outlook Planet

^{4.} Da Cunha, Francisco, et al. "ESG as a value driver for real estate." Deloitte

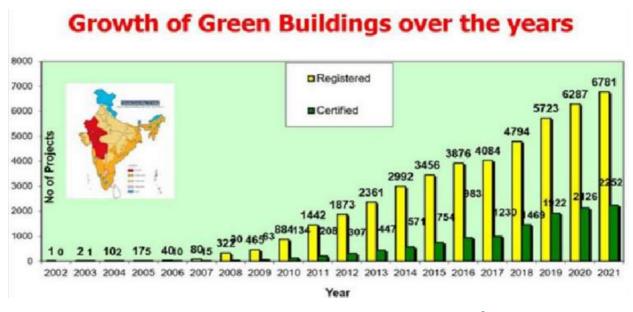
^{5. 5%} of investors considered ESG factors in their investment propositions." *Gartner*, 10 June 2021

Creating Sustainable Long-term Value

ESG initiatives are integral to securing enduring value in the Indian real estate industry. By future-proofing properties against climate risks and adapting to dynamic market shifts, sustainable buildings ensure long-term asset appreciation and minimize value depreciation risks. Amid a tripling of the area within city limits in 2011 and a burgeoning population, embracing ESG measures is essential to mitigate risks and capitalize on the rapidly growing demand for sustainable real estate.

Catalyst for Growth and Responsibility

ESG adoption goes beyond a mere checkbox exercise in the Indian real estate industry. It is a transformative driver for growth and responsibility. Companies embracing sustainability practices witness improved operational efficiency, attract sustainable investment, and safeguard their reputation. As climate change continues to impact the industry, ESG practices hold the key to financial resilience, operational excellence, and fostering a responsible real estate ecosystem.



Growth of Green Building According to the IGBC 6

Industry trends

Climate change is increasingly impacting real estate and the industry plays a crucial role in mitigating these risks. The growing impact of climate change, regulatory compliances, and customer demands may influence investment preferences, leading to higher energy costs, power grid strain, and even limited development opportunities due to extended drought conditions.

Building climate resilience

- Changing climatic conditions may alter living and investment preferences, driven by discomfort, health risks, increased energy costs, and potential power grid strain.
- In 2022, there has been a notable surge in ESG-oriented investments, accounting for a significant 13% of the total investment value, a substantial rise from the 5% recorded in 2021. This growth is further underscored by a substantial 2.4-fold increase in deal value, reaching an impressive sum of nearly \$7.9 billion.
- The real estate industry plays a vital role in mitigating climate change, but climate risks are escalating, demanding proactive measures.

Case study: Bangalore floods 2022

Bengaluru accommodates over 3,500 IT firms and around 79 "tech parks," upscale complexes catering to tech workers. Navigating through flooded highways, employees struggled to access modern glass-faced offices near Yemalur, where companies like JP Morgan and Deloitte operate.

In the wake of recent flooding, even affluent entrepreneurs were compelled to evacuate inundated living spaces using tractors. Initial estimates by insurance companies indicated property losses in the millions of rupees, with numbers projected to rise in the coming days.

A report highlights that Bengaluru, India's Silicon Valley, requires an estimated 2800 crores rupees to restore a damaged drainage network caused by rapid real estate development. The influx of workers and real estate construction has compromised the city's drainage capacity, leading to unprecedented floods that disrupted the IT sector.

Knight Frank's report noted a surge in the city's built-up area, from 37% in 2002 to a staggering 93% in 2020. This unchecked expansion strained the natural drainage system, leading to concerns about water management. The report projected a population increase to 18 million by 2031 from an estimated 12.3 million in 2022, while the city's area within limits more than tripled from 1995 levels to 741 square kilometres in 2011.⁸

The recent flooding in Bengaluru highlights the repercussions of rapid real estate expansion in the face of climate change. Evacuations, property losses, and a staggering restoration cost of \$339 million underscore the urgency for sustainable urban development. As the city's population projection soars to 18 million by 2031 and its area triples, the imperative for effective infrastructure planning becomes undeniable. The report's focus on intensified precipitation and heightened flooding risks amplifies the call for immediate, resilience-driven action.



Bangalore Floods 2022⁹

Grading of Housing and Infrastructure Projects:

- Civic bodies, like the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, have introduced voluntary eco-housing ratings and certifications to assess the environmental performance of residential projects. Three primary Rating systems in India **GRIHA**, **IGBC**, **BEE**.
- To encourage sustainable practices, the government should mandate the grading of buildings and infrastructure projects, and real estate regulatory authorities can require developers to disclose the grading on official websites.
- Transparency in eco-friendly practices can drive consumer confidence and contribute to a greener real estate market.

Several initiatives underway at either national or local level that include the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct from 2021, with reporting for the largest **1,000 companies** by market cap expected to be compulsory from 2022-23, and local plans such as **Mumbai's Climate Action Plan (MCAP)**, released in 2022, which is expected to establish a system to conduct regular energy performance benchmarking of buildings by 2025, and mandate a building energy management system in all new buildings. ¹⁰



GRIHA Rating System ¹

Incentives for Green Buildings

- The government should incentivize developers constructing green buildings and adopting eco-friendly practices, fostering a culture of sustainability in the industry.
- Offering additional incentives, such as tax discounts or stamp duty rebates, to buyers of eco-friendly structures can significantly boost demand for sustainable real estate.
- These incentives align economic interests with environmental concerns, accelerating the adoption of greener practices.¹²

Case Study: Suzlon One Earth Campus

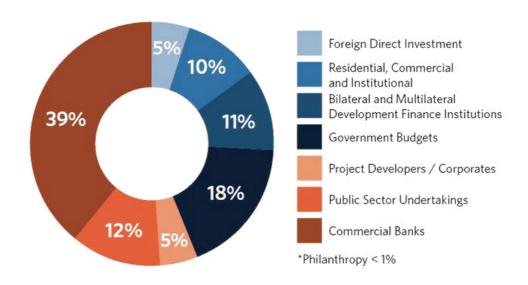
The Suzlon one earth campus situated in Pune boasts of being one of the greenest corporate campuses in the world. **7% of the energy consumed** by the campus is produced by on-site hybrid wind turbines, solar panels, and photovoltaic cells. Rest **93% is brought in from offsite wind turbines**. The building as a whole has **154.83KW renewable energy** incorporated. Designing of each of the components, from H**VAC to the solar photovoltaic roof of the atrium**, is done with special care administered for maximum utilisation of green energy. Another interesting feature is the landscaping that has employed Xeriscaping with very efficient water management systems. Reflective pools form the main feature of the landscape design, which along with adding to the natural beauty of the campus, creates a cool microclimate in the surrounding structures.

Since the site is located in a hot and dry climate, Christopher Charles Benninger, the lead architect of this project, aimed to utilize natural sources of daylight and ventilation wherever possible. Daylight is let in through Aluminium louvers which also act as a protective skin. The openable fenestrations which are provided in most areas allow for natural cross ventilation. A strategy of increasing the ratio of fenestration to volume was used to improve the natural lighting and ventilation which ultimately resulted in thinner and longer building shapes. The lighting of individual workplaces is constrained by consolidated daylight and occupancy sensors. ¹³

Green Financing

- Financial institutions should introduce special schemes offering competitive financing rates for projects complying with green norms, encouraging developers to prioritize sustainable construction.
- Extending similar preferential treatment to homebuyers opting for ecofriendly structures can further incentivize the demand for sustainable real estate.
- Green financing initiatives can facilitate the transition to a greener real estate landscape in India
- To achieve its **net zero target by 2070**, India would need to reduce the energy intensity of its GDP by about **5% annually** and increase the use of renewable energy to around **80% by 2070-71**.
- An RBI report estimates that India's green financing requirement should be at least **2.5% of GDP annually until 2030**.
- A balanced policy approach that addresses all aspects of the issue can help the country reach its green transition goals by 2030 and eventually achieve its net zero target by 2070.¹⁴

The report emphasises that climate change is a pressing issue and highlights that the 2015-22 period was the warmest on record, according to the World Meteorological Organisation.



Landscape of green financing 15

ESG Risks and Challenges in the Real Estate Industry

Environmental Risks and Sustainability

- **Physical Risks**: Climate change can impact real estate through extreme weather events and shifting climate patterns. A strong ESG strategy should focus on minimizing disruptions during these events.
- **Transition Risks**: Changing consumer preferences and environmental policies can influence the market. ESG strategies must address potential shifts in energy sources, costs, and regulations.
- **Social Risks**: Rising temperatures and resource scarcity could render certain regions unlivable. ESG strategies should prioritize occupant and community safety.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

- A survey by JLL reveals that 65% of corporate occupiers and 50% of polled investors have incorporated carbon-emission reduction in their sustainability strategies.
- Sustainability ranks among the top three considerations for occupiers during site selection, according to a report by ILL.
- Around **87**% **of occupiers and 78**% **of investors** acknowledge the financial risks posed by climate risks.
- Implementing Indian GRIHA standards in buildings can minimize energy consumption, recycling, and wastewater treatment. While only 5% of buildings are green in India, government incentives drive adoption of GRIHA guidelines.¹⁶

Shifting Market Preferences

- Market preferences for green buildings are increasing as awareness of climate change grows.
- The Indian green building market, valued at **US\$21 billion in 2021,** experiences annual growth of **7.2**%.
- Energy-efficient buildings offer lower energy costs, better amenities, and attract more tenants and buyers.
- Commercial tenants favor modern, well-ventilated buildings post-COVID-19. Therefore, shifting preferences could decrease demand for lowefficiency properties, leading to lower occupancy rates and reduced asset valuations.

Climate Impact on Insurance and Insurability

- Climate change affects insurance costs and availability for properties. For instance, repeated flooding and wildfires lead to higher insurance rates.
- California's real estate market faces insurance challenges due to wildfires.
 Insurance companies are using AI to price future climate risks and
 restructure policies resulting in insurance premiums to rise by 12.1% in the
 US in 2022 due to inflation and disasters. 18
- Insurers are expected to limit coverage for vulnerable properties, impacting desirability and property values.
- As the Indian real estate industry evolves, addressing these factors and statistics will be crucial to ensure climate resilience and sustainability in the face of changing environmental dynamics

ESG Risks and Challenges in the Mining Industry

Risk	Description	Mitigation
Financial	Potential liabilities linked to ESG concerns and increasing scrutiny on ESG performance can discourage investment, especially in projects related to biodiversity or water hotspots. Non-compliance penalties may also strain finances.	Encourage investment diversification by supporting green energy transition. Develop robust ESG strategies with tangible evidence of compliance to instill investor confidence.
Reputational	Multiple sustainability reporting frameworks can foster inconsistent practices, hindering accurate assessment of a company's true ESG performance. "Greenwashing" risks, affecting reputation, may emerge.	Prioritize transparent, consistent ESG reporting. Avoid token gestures towards sustainability frameworks and strive for substantial, measurable change. Strong communication strategies can spotlight genuine achievements and counter potential greenwashing allegations.
Physical Risks	Escalating climate-related events pose threats such as asset damage and supply chain disruption.	Develop proactive climate change mitigation strategies. Continuously assess and update these strategies in response to evolving climate patterns and forecasts.
Regulatory Risks	New ESG-related laws and regulations carry risks, including higher compliance costs, potential legal penalties for non-compliance, and increased scrutiny leading to additional operational challenges.	Maintain up-to-date awareness of evolving regulations. Consistently and comprehensively comply with regulations. Implement proactive strategies to anticipate and meet legal requirements, positioning the company as a leader in addressing ESG issues.

Embracing Environmentally Friendly Construction Technologies

- Adoption of sustainable construction materials and green technologies is pivotal for ESG integration.
- Government endorsement of eco-friendly materials and technologies can drive their widespread use.
- Mandating the use of sustainable materials and technologies can reshape the industry's ecological footprint.

Grading of Housing and Infrastructure Projects:

- Voluntary eco-housing rating systems, like the one by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, quantify environmental impacts.
- Governmental involvement could make grading of buildings and infrastructure a statutory mandate.
- Real Estate Regulatory Authorities (RERA) could enhance transparency by requiring disclosure of grading on official platforms.

Driving Incentivization

- Governments should incentivize developers constructing green buildings and employing eco-friendly methodologies.
- Tax concessions and stamp duty rebates for buyers can stimulate demand for sustainable structures.
- Mutual reinforcement between incentives for developers and buyers can foster responsible development.

Raising Stakeholder Awareness

- Developers, investors, and buyers should incorporate climate risk assessments in their due diligence processes.
- United Kingdom's Law Society's guidance on addressing climate changerelated risks can serve as a model.
- Stakeholders' awareness can catalyze responsible growth and enhance sustainability and resilience.

As the Indian real estate industry moves towards an ESG-driven future, the integration of these strategies has the potential to revolutionize the sector. By adopting environmentally friendly practices, fostering transparency through grading, incentivizing sustainable initiatives, and raising stakeholder awareness, the industry can transcend traditional norms and contribute positively to societal and environmental well-being.

Case Study: Government of Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, the Government's Urban Development Department provides extra **Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3%, 5%, and 7%** for buildings rated as Silver, Gold, and Platinum by IGBC. Similarly, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA) also offer additional FAR percentages of **3%, 5%, and 7%** respectively for buildings rated as Silver, Gold, and Platinum by IGBC. The Public Works Department (PWD) mandates that both the renovation of existing buildings and the development of new government buildings in Maharashtra adhere to the suitable IGBC Green Building Rating system. Additionally, under the updated UDCPR 2020, Integrated Township **Projects in Maharashtra** must have buildings with at least a Silver rating from IGBC to qualify for incentives. ¹⁹

The Essential Role of ESG Integration in India's Real Estate Sector

The Indian real estate industry stands at the precipice of transformation, and the integration of ESG considerations is paramount for its sustainable future. This whitepaper delved into the multifaceted dimensions of ESG's influence on the sector, highlighting its impact on valuation, growth, and responsibility.

In a world where climate change's effects are becoming increasingly palpable, the industry's role in mitigating its impact has taken center stage. As seen in the case of Bengaluru, rapid urbanization and unchecked development have led to infrastructure vulnerabilities, underlining the urgency of ESG adoption. The quest for sustainability has prompted automotive companies to set ambitious emissions reduction targets, highlighting a paradigm shift towards ecoconscious practices that resonate with investors. ESG has also fostered diversity and inclusion, vital components of business success in the Indian real estate industry.

The integration of ESG into business strategies is pivotal. Not merely an addendum, ESG practices are being woven into the fabric of decision-making, ensuring long-term asset appreciation, risk mitigation, and enhanced valuation. The data-driven landscape is compelling real estate companies to adopt technology for efficient ESG reporting and streamlined processes.

As the Indian real estate industry continues to evolve, it is evident that ESG principles are instrumental in shaping its trajectory. Sustainability is no longer an option; it's an imperative that transcends business interests.

In this journey towards a more responsible and resilient future, the Indian real estate industry has a pivotal role to play. By embracing ESG's principles, companies can unlock value, fortify their financial standing, nurture inclusive workspaces, and navigate the challenges posed by climate change.

How can Breathe ESG help?

Breathe ESG is a scalable SaaS solution that centralises sustainability data management and reporting. It can enable companies to seamlessly collect, analyse, and leverage data such as emissions, water and energy use among many other ESG performance metrics critical to metals and mining industry.

Businesses can use this information to integrate ESG considerations into strategic decision making and drive sustainable initiatives. The platform also allows for performance tracking and transparent, streamlined reporting, thus helping to improve brand reputation, build trust and attract investors in an increasingly ESG-focused business landscape.

Baseline Report	
Materiality Assessment	
Peer Review and Gap analysis	
GHG Accounting and Net Zero Solutions	
ESG Reporting	
ESG Training and Certification Support	
ESG Roadmap and Strategy	



Baseline report

A tailored baseline report enables organisations to assess their current ESG performance and identify specific areas for improvement.

Identification of sustainable topics: Identify the relevant sustainability frameworks and disclosures like Energy consumed, gender diversity and compliance.

Collect data: Collect data on relevant activities within each category, such as the quantity of electricity purchased, the waste generated and water consumed.

Identify Peers: Identify Peers that have disclosed their ESG report that can serve as a benchmark

Determine Gaps and trends: Benchmark the performance against peers as well as internally against other assets, and previous performances to identify gaps in their sustainability performance



Materiality Assessment

Organisations can prioritize ESG issues based on their relevance and impact in consultation with all stakeholders.

Identification of stakeholders: The preliminary step is to identify all internal and external stakeholders

Shortlisting material topics: Shortlisting 15-20 material topics that is immediately relevant to the organisation.

Identify Business Priorities: Identify business priorities through inputs of key management personnels (KMP's)

Conduct Materiality Survey: Understand key stakeholder priorities by sharing a materiality survey

Materiality Matrix: Weight business priorities against stakeholder priorities to create a materiality matrix that will help pave the ESG roadmap.



Peer review and gap analysis

Offers insights into industry best practices and areas where organisations can improve their ESG performance, promoting continuous improvement and competitiveness.

Peer identification: Identify peers within the industry for comparative analysis,

Setting KPIs: Identifying and setting industry relevant KPI's to collect peer information

Secondary Research: Collecting KPI oriented data from peer public reports and press releases

Benchmarking ESG performance: Benchmark the ESG data of the organisation over the past year against its peers

Gap Analysis: Identify the areas where the sustainability performance of the organisation falls short with respect to its internal benchmarks and peer performance



GHG Accounting

Implementing robust GHG accounting methodologies and working towards netzero emissions demonstrates an organisation's commitment to environmental stewardship.

Establish the baseline: Determine the organization's current greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions baseline by conducting a comprehensive GHG inventory and assessment.

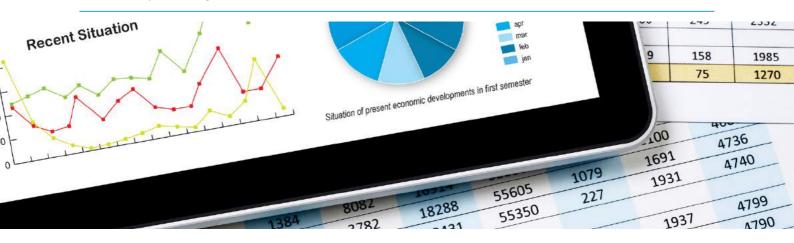
Set the target: Establish a net-zero emissions target for the organisation, aligned with Science Based Target initiative (SBTi)

Identify and prioritise actions: Identify and prioritise actions needed to achieve the net-zero target. Including both short-term and long-term actions.

Develop a roadmap: Develop a roadmap that outlines the specific actions, timelines, and responsible parties required to achieve the netzero target aligned with SBTi.

Monitor and report progress: Establish a monitoring and reporting system to track progress towards the net-zero target and ensure accountability.

ESG Reporting



ESG Reporting

Transparent and comprehensive ESG reporting enhances risk management, strengthens stakeholder trust, and drives sustainable financial performance.

Identifying Reporting Frameworks and Standards: Identify key ESG reporting frameworks and standards for ESG reporting

Onboarding onto the ESGMS Platform: Allow the ESG data to be on boarded onto the ESGMS platform which can be further utilized by the organisation in the future for publishing ESG related data

Creation of draft ESG reports: Draft ESG report for KMP approval

Publishing ESG Reports: Publish ESG reports across frameworks and standards for stakeholder and public viewing



Training support

Providing ESG training and certification support to professionals in the mining sector, equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate ESG principles into their decision-making.

Key Management Personnel Training: Train KMP's and company directors on ESG practices

Employee Sensitisation: Provide training to the employees of the organisation about the field of ESG

Technical training: Train the staff to use ESG management systems for measuring, monitoring and reporting.

Certification support: Providing end to end support to the organisation to pursue a certification or entry into an index



ESG Roadmap Creation

ESG roadmap creation aligns business strategies with sustainability goals, fosters long-term value creation, and promotes responsible and ethical practices.

Identify and prioritise actions: Identify and prioritise actions needed to achieve the sustainability targets, including both short-term and long-term actions.

Set targets: Establish sustainability targets for the organisation, aligned with UNSDG principles

Develop a roadmap: Develop a roadmap that outlines the specific actions, timelines, and responsible parties required to achieve the organisation's targets

Monitor and report progress: Establish a monitoring and reporting system to track progress towards the target and ensure accountability.

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