



2/2015

# CityMatters

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## Can Pee Fixation Hold Water?



**N**ot so long ago, the venerable former Prime Minister, Morarji Desai claimed to consume his own urine for its medicinal properties. Not many subscribed to his views and surprisingly, we never heard from Baba Ramdev (a spiritual leader of India) about it either.



In May 2015, urine was back in the news after the ebullient Union Road Transport Minister, Nitin Gadkari spoke about its virtues saying that he collects his pee in a container and uses it to water plants in his garden. Fortunately, it was not a vicious mention although one cannot but recall another Maharastrian, the former Minister, Ajit Pawar saying with scorn that if dams do not have enough water, does he expect farmers to see him peeing into the dams to fill them up.

In mirth, a columnist writes that Gadkari might be a serious contender for a Nobel Prize for his novel approach to use his urine to enable irrigation. If he does get the Nobel, the Brussels Mayor might be tempted to put up his statue next to the famous Manneken Piss at the city square. The other joke is that he sends his garden's vegetables to his neighbour in Delhi: Sonia Gandhi and wonder how she would have reacted had she known how the same have been grown.

Another commentator: Geetanjali Krishna writes in *Business Standard* that Gadkari's assertion they are backed by scientific studies and experience. Urine contains nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium – together called NPK – which are the key ingredients of agricultural fertiliser. Fresh urine is however acidic and can be counteracted by adding gypsum.

Bangalore-based University of Agricultural Sciences conducted a study on the effects of human urine and claims that gypsum-treated urine led to larger maize cobs, more bananas and faster growing radish – as well as enriched soil. In China, Japan and Nepal urine has been used successfully as a liquid fertiliser. In Manipur, it has been used to cultivate chillies and potatoes. Farm scientists across the world believe that using human urine as fertiliser can bring about significant improvement in food security.

It is not only human urine, which can be useful, but also the cow's urine. An organisation in Bawana village in rural Delhi: Gopalgosadan makes go-nyl, a substitute for phenyl made from cow's urine. It asserts that cow's urine is also used to make medicines to treat cancer and HIV patients, other than diabetes, blood pressure, cholesterol etc. Gopalgosadan also makes environmentally-friendly dung cakes for funerals and manure from a mixture of dung and urine. It maintains nearly 4,000 cows and runs a pension scheme for retired animals, so that people can send them to the organisation when their productivity ceases.

The Government of Rajasthan has recently started a cow urine refinery in the district Jalore and is planning to use refined urine to clean the SMS Hospital of Jaipur stated a news report in *Times of India*. As it is the public urinals in SMS Hospital or anywhere stink to hell, and need cleaning. Perhaps the *Swachh Bharat* Campaign might be able to attack this problem also.



[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

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## Signs of Alien Life

Humanity is on the verge of discovering alien life. Signs of alien life will be detected by the year 2025, while 'definitive evidences' of extra-terrestrial beings might be found within next 20 to



30 years, indicated the top National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) scientists. According to NASA's Chief scientist Ellen Stofan, there are going to be strong indications of life

beyond the earth within a decade, and there will be definitive evidences within 20 to 30 years.

John Grunsfeld, Associate Administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate, also predicted that signs of life will be found relatively soon both in our own solar system and beyond.

Hunting for evidences of alien life is a much trickier proposition than identifying potential environments. But researchers are working steadily towards that more involved and ambitious goal, stated Stofan. (Tol, 12.04.15 & space.com)

## Tree Certificates by RBI

Instead of presenting a bouquet of flowers at Reserve Bank of India (RBI)



meetings the participants will get 'tree certificates' as proof of trees having been planted on their behalf on the bank's campus. It has been the usual practice at the RBI to present bouquets on birthdays of employees, retirement functions and other such events.

While asking its offices across the country to arrange to obtain tree certificates, the RBI suggested that they could be obtained from several organisations that cater to corporate/individual requirement for growing trees.

The RBI also stated that planting of trees not only creates low-skill jobs, it also has a direct impact on carbon reduction, restores forests and upgrades water catchment areas. (BL, 27.04.15)

## Web Platforms for Families

Joint families are getting smaller and physical contacts between kin are becoming rarer. With an aim of uniting the geographically scattered family members and connecting them, a couple in Bengaluru have developed a social networking platform, *Parivartree* (family tree).



The idea is to position this as an alternative to 'Facebook' which is more for connecting with friends, and LinkedIn for the professional circle. Started by Manoj L, a qualified Chartered Accountant, and wife Puja Tumulu, Chief Executive Officer of the company. In the early current year, *Parivartree* has already has over 4,000 users.

Tumulu indicated that unlike other social platforms, the focus is on connecting the past to the present, not on garnering 'likes'. There are no unheeded messages or unwanted friend requests from unknown sources.

(BS, 10.05.15)

## Stockholm's 'Walking City'

In the capital city of Stockholm of Sweden, a new way is adopted to avoid road accidents and making the environment very clean and clear. This is done by adopting the vision zero where no cars or any vehicles are allowed to be driven anywhere.

All the people have to walk in the main markets and that is why it is called as a 'Walking City'. This is presently being adopted in New York and Seattle where the people are restricted to only walk or



to use bicycles only. This would restrict the use of fuels like petrol and diesel.

Stockholm is the most populous city in the Nordic region, with 911989 people

living in the municipality, approximately 1.4mn in the urban area and a total population close to 2.2mn in the metropolitan area. (<https://medium.com>)

## Losing Part of Deposit

If you book a venue for any social, political or family event, you will be held responsible for cleaning up the area. If you fail to do it within six hours after the event, a certain portion of the security deposited with municipal bodies or local authorities will be deducted.

In its latest move to ensure garbage and other wastes are not left behind at such venues, the Urban Development



Ministry of India has issued a standard operating procedure (SOP) for all municipal bodies and development authorities to make the organisers accountable for such acts. The SOP has been circulated under the Swatch Bharat Mission (SBM) in urban areas.

As per the guideline, the organisers will be required to submit security deposit for obtaining permission for any event. (Tol, 22.04.15)

## Paying Environment Compensation

Every household in Delhi has to pay a minimum environment compensation of ₹100 as for generating sewerage, according to the National Green Tribunal. The bench, however, clarified that the compensation, in this regard would be directly proportional to the property tax or water bill whichever is higher and for those who reside in unauthorised colonies or not paying water bills, the amount would be in the range of ₹100 to ₹500.

The monthly compensation payable by all households in Delhi would be directly proportionate to the property tax or water bill whichever is higher. Further, this amount would be determined by the concerned authority with reference to the construction existing on the plot, according to the bench.

(HT, 09.05.15)

## Text Walking Lane

In a bid to avoid 'text walking' collisions, a Belgian city has been provided with dedicated temporary 'text walking lanes' for pedestrians who are



glued to their mobile phones. The walkways, marked with white paint and the signages 'text walking lane', is the brainchild of a smartphone store in Antwerp, a port city of Belgium.

The lanes are designed to enable those on their phone busy texting to walk without disrupting regular pedestrians. The lanes are designed to enable those on their phone busy texting to walk without disrupting the regular pedestrians.

Furthermore, the lanes were created by Miab, a smartphone company with a mission to stop mobile phone wreckage. Figures released by mobile operators and associated companies show that there are about 7.5bn mobiles in the world, compared to a world population estimated to be 7.2bn by the US Census Bureau. (HT, 15.06.15)

## Anti-Spitting Bill

The Maharashtra State Government is coming out with a new Anti-Spitting Bill, which if passed, is expected to be progressive act against the habit of spitting. The State Cabinet decided to appoint a committee headed by the Health Minister Deepak Savant to finalise the draft for the Bill.



It will be drafted in such a way that there would be novel punishments for the offenders. The Government wants to have such punishments that they create a sense of shame in the offender after he/she spits in a public place.

Chief Minister of Maharashtra Devendra Fadnavis said that the

proposed Maharashtra Arogya Rakshanani Thunki – *Pratibandhak Adhiniyam*, 2015 (Maharashtra Act of Health Protection and Anti-Spitting, 2015) will have provision for social punishments to prevent spitting in public places.

(DNA, 18.06.15)

## Revolution for Girls

In 2012, two teens of Guatemala (a central American country) Emelin and her friend Elba helped in implementing policies to address some of these issues by getting in touch with the Mayor of Concepción Chiquirichapa, Guatemala.

The girls met with many government officials, and even spoke on youth radio programmes to get the word out about the movement to secure education and health funding for girls in Guatemala. They fought for what they believed was right, and eventually, people started to realise the power behind what these girls were trying to accomplish.

With the local government behind them, the programmes began to pick up steam. The girls started getting funding approved to construct the Municipal Office of Childhood and Adolescence. They were able to promote gender equality in Guatemala, but their message spanned globally. (<http://amazingnews.org/>)

## Late is Good

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi might be leaving no stone unturned to ensure that his Ministers and government officials turn up for work on time though being late has its advantages. This was found by officials working at Kolkata's New Secretariat building few days back.

When a fire broke out in a section of the seventh floor, hundreds of officials who work in the building escaped unhurt because they simply had not turned up.

While the official time to start work in a state government office is 10 AM, according to some estimates, less than 10 percent of the 3,500-odd employees who work in the 13-storey building were present when the fire broke out in the office of Subrata Mukherjee, who is the

Minister for Panchayat and Rural Development and Public Health Engineering in the State. (BS, 13.04.15)

## Chandigarh: The Happiest City

People of Chandigarh are happiest in the country while those of Guwahati are least happy, according to a survey. The survey conducted by South Korean electronics firm LG showed, amongst the metros, people in Delhi are the happiest while those in Mumbai are the least happy.



Chandigarh is the happiest city of all and Jaipur is the least happy. In East, which is overall the least happy zone? Patna is the happiest city and Guwahati the least happy. Among metros.

According to the survey, "People of these cities are broadly happy with the amount of time they get to spend with family and quality of relationship they share with their friends and family and are happy with the kind of control they have over their life with respect to doing what they want to and taking decisions for themselves". (DNA, 13.06.15)

## Perfect Human Pyramid

Physics students in the UK have calculated the formula for a perfect human pyramid and found the best suited candidates to achieve maximum height are groups of men, women and children.



The human pyramid is a formation used in cheerleading and gymnastics, which involves participants kneeling together to form a row, forming a base for another tier of participants who kneel or stand on their shoulders, backs or thighs.

Students Hayley Allison, Jordan Penney, Roger Leyser and Giles Lipcombe at the University of Leicester (England) investigated the science, using basic calculations to try to work out the best formula for constructing the tallest pyramid possible. (TH, 21.04.15)

### Mayor as BPC Head

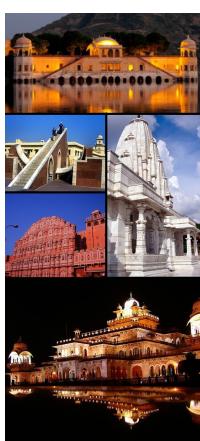
The Jaipur Municipal Corporation's (JMC's) standing committees will be constituted on May 21, 2015 and will be shaping up after six months of formation of the new board.

According to the sources, the Building Plan Committee (BPC), which is considered as the most powerful Committee is likely to be given to city Mayor Nirmal Nahata. If the Mayor gets the BPC, it would be easier for him to dispose the files as it is a norm that the Mayor has to verify all the BPC files.

Moreover, after a gap of 15 years three sanitation committees would be formed in the JMC. The number of committees has been restricted to 17, which were earlier 21. (DNA, 18.05.15)

### Bagging 'World Heritage' Tag

The walled city of Jaipur commands a unique recognition as an architectural and cultural marvel. After Keoladeo National Park, Jantar Mantar and six hill forts of the State of Rajasthan nominated as world



heritage sites Jaipur's walled city is on its way bagging the 'World Heritage' title.

In a latest move, Jaipur has been placed on the tentative list for 'World Heritage City' by United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for its outstanding universal value.

The application for Jaipur's nomination was submitted by the department of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in March 2015.

(Tol, 15.05.15)

### First Solar Powered School

Jaipur's St. Angela Sophia Senior Secondary School has become the first solar-powered school in Jaipur. The 45-kilowatt off-grid solar power plant, which will meet all the electricity needs of the institute. According to the Principal, Sister

Helen the Sophian family had seen villagers suffer due to lack of electricity during their outreach programmes.



The school was motivated to install a solar plant by Sophia College, Ajmer, which has recently installed a solar plant with the same capacity. Further, power plants, based on fossil fuel were a major source of green house gases that was causing global warming. (HT, 09.05.15)

### Launching ATM at GPO

Inching closer to spread its financial services, India Posts will launch its ATM facilities in the State from April 27, 2015. The first ATM (Automatic Teller Machine) would be launched at the General Post office (GPO) and would subsequently roll out to 64 other places across the State.

ATMs would be a major boost for the savings account holders in post offices as they need not go to the counters to withdraw money. Initially, these cards would be operational at their (POs) ATMs only.

"Out of 64, 13 machines are fully ready and have passed user acceptance test (UAT), said Chief Postmaster General, D K S Chauhan.

People with savings accounts in the post offices will have to apply for these ATM cards and must have a minimum balance of ₹5000 while applying. (Tol, 21.04.15)

### Intra-state Air Services

The State Aviation department is trying to find out the operators, which have 18-19 seater aircraft or a bit smaller on the patterns that are popular in Africa or Nepal and companies having requisite experience to start its intra-state aviation service.

The aviation experts discussed the need of smaller aircraft as compared to the larger ones for this service. The issue of government subsidy in the form of Viability Gap Funding (VGF) to keep the service going and make it financially relevant for the airlines was also discussed.

According to an industry official, the suggestions regarding the experience of carrying out the work of such a work was also taken into consideration and a few tourist operators demanded that relaxation in conditions of work experience be given to encourage entrepreneurs in the field. (DNA, 08.05.15)

## Alternative Means of Service Delivery: Need of the Hour

Alternative ways to deliver existing key municipal services need to be developed for making municipal services more effective and accessible. This can be acquired by adopting innovative means of implementing the services and usage of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) tools and methods. These views were unanimously expressed in the first ever Rajasthan Mayors' Conference organised by CUTS in Jaipur.

Nirmal Nahata, Mayor, Jaipur stated that the discussions on the present condition of the Urban Local Bodies are in progress at various levels in the Government and some good decisions are taken by the current government for empowering the boards etc. V S Vyas, former Deputy Chairman, State Planning Board, Rajasthan mentioned that there has to be fine balance in all parts of the city in development work.





## Jaipur's Marvel: India's Fastest Built Metro Begins its Journey



**Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje flagged off the inaugural train on 9.6 km long route from Mansarovar to Chandpole**

Jaipur Metro, touted as one of the fastest built metro systems in the country, was thrown open to public on June 03, 2015. Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje flagged off the inaugural train on 9.6 km long route from *Mansarovar* to *Chandpole*. Urban Development and Housing Minister Rajpal Singh; Food Minister Hem Singh; Industry Minister Gajendra Singh; BJP State President Ashok Parnami; MLAs Ghanshyam Tiwari and Mohan Lal Gupta and other leaders were present at the inaugural ceremony.

### Metro starts operations

Raje along with the Ministers, concerned Officers and supporters travelled in the train from *Mansarovar* to *Chandpole* and alighted at Civil Lines station while returning.

After the opening ceremony, the Jaipur Metro commenced its regular commercial operations from all its nine stations – *Mansarovar*, *New Aatish Market*, *Vivek Vihar*, *Shyam Nagar*, *Ram Nagar*, *Civil Lines*, *Railway Station*, *Sindhi Camp* and *Chandpole*. For effective execution of the project in its initial stages, the total work of Phase-I was divided into two parts – Phase-IA and Phase-IB. Phase IA is from *Mansarovar* to *Chandpole*, opened on June 03, 2015 while work on Phase IB from *Chandpole* to *Badi Chaupad* is underway.

Raje visited *Mansarovar* station where Jaipur Metro Chief Managing Director (CMD) N C Goel briefed her about the functioning and operations of the Metro. People in the buildings along the metro line were seen greeting and waving hands as the train undertook its first official journey. A large number of local people was seen queuing up at the ticket counters to enjoy their first ride in the Jaipur metro. As per the time-table issued by the Jaipur Municipal Rail Corporation (JMRC) for first three months, trains will operate from *Mansarovar* to *Chandpole* and from *Chandpole* to *Mansarovar* at a frequency of 10 to 15 minutes from 6.45 AM to 9 PM every day.

### Fare structure and discount

The fare structure varies for peak and off-peak hours. They have been fixed in multiples of ₹5 and a flat discount of ₹5 has been offered for off-peak hours. For the first six months, off-peak fares will be charged throughout the day. Automatic fare collection system has been installed to collect and manage the fare revenue. Moreover, to encourage people to travel in the Metro, up to 15 percent discount has been offered on smart cards, which can be recharged using Jaipur Metro website or ticket vending machines installed at all stations.

### Project budget

The project, which was initiated by the previous government and fully funded by the state government and its agencies, has been commissioned in about four years and a quarter with estimated cost of ₹2,023 crore and is one of the fastest project implementations in the Metro sector, the JMRC stated.

### Exclusive features

A double-decked elevated corridor, common for the Metro and Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS), is one of features of the civil structure of the Jaipur Metro. All the Metro stations are supported by a single row of piers to make the overall structure lighter and more open.

Of the nine stations, *Chandpole* is an underground station. About 30 percent of Jaipur Metro's operation and maintenance staff, including train operators and station controllers, are women. Rajasthan police has been given the responsibility of the Metro and 789 police personnel have been sanctioned for security. Latest security equipment have also been provided at all the Metro stations. Furthermore, feeder services will be available to provide last mile connectivity to the passengers at all the nine stations.

(TH, 03.06.15 & [www.rediff.com](http://www.rediff.com), 04.06.15)

## Improving Quality of Urban Governance

**Urbanisation is an indicator of economic development. However, today, big cities are under severe strain, particularly in terms of making access to infrastructure and services to the increasing population**



The Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) play an important role in the planning and development of urban areas. The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendment Act (CAA) of 1992 provides for a significant devolution of functions and powers to the local bodies through decentralisation and people's participation in local self-governance. However, unlike the 73<sup>rd</sup> CAA, the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, aimed at the creation of local bodies in the rural areas, has not yet taken off.

The main thrust of decentralisation is to bring governance nearer to the people in order to enhance its quality. Civic engagement is one of the critical norms of good urban governance. This could be achieved by promoting democracy through free and fair elections, providing space for civil society participation, promoting civic sense through mechanisms like city watch groups, citizens actions groups etc. People would take part in the issues that affect them directly, thereby having a say in the decision-making.

The concept of ward committees as per 74<sup>th</sup> CAA is a novel addition in examples of people-centric governance. The ward committees create the platform for citizen's participation from below the municipal-level, thus bringing the electorate closer to their representatives. It is expected to increase the effectiveness of public policy by providing feedback to policy-makers and extract accountability of elected representatives and local officials, by providing a space for citizens to critically evaluate their performance.

Despite the clarity and details that the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA provides about the constitution of the ward committees, majority of the states have neither constituted the ward committees nor are functional or have interpreted the provisions differently. One of the reasons for poor performance of the ULBs is a complete disconnection with the citizens.

Kerala has been considered a potential model for citizen participation through ward committees, which provided an elaborate legal and institutional framework for functioning of ward committees, designed to be highly participatory, providing proximity of people to elected representatives. Ward committees in Kerala have tasks comprising preparing and supervising ward-level development schemes and identifying beneficiaries of welfare schemes among others.

Though it was as a result of court directive in January 2013 to form ward committees in all the 198 wards and put online contact details of all ward committee members to enable citizens to reach out to their respective wards and apprise them of grievances, in all wards the ward committees were indeed formed. Though initial apprehensions were there, the corporations acknowledged the benefit of the same.

In order to create a space for citizen's engagement, as visualised in the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, CUTS initiated a pilot intervention entitled 'Improving service delivery by local urban government in Jaipur in Rajasthan through enhanced civic engagement' – 'MyCity', in Jaipur in August 2012 in partnership with 'The Asia Foundation' (TAF). In three years, the intervention covered a total of about 40 wards.

These interventions crafted space for citizen engagement and resulted in changes on the ground in the selected wards. The 'Citizen Report Cards' and 'Public Services Index' of the targeted wards showed a substantial improvement in the quality of delivery of services, wherever the citizen engagement mechanisms were put in place and Citizen Action Groups were formed.

'MyCity' is well recognised by all the stakeholders as a platform for civic engagement in the city of Jaipur and there is a competition among and demand from councillors to get their wards covered under the intervention. Furthermore, to enhance the quality of urban governance, space for active civic engagement is a must and need to implement the 74<sup>th</sup> CAA, in letter and spirit.

*(Excerpts from an article by George Cherriyan, Director, and Amar Deep Singh, Project Coordinator of CUTS International. This was published in Deccan Herald (Bengaluru) on June 25, 2015)*

Sources: BL: The Hindu Business Line; BS: Business Standard; DNA: Daily News Analysis; HT: Hindustan Times; TH: The Hindu; Tol: Times of India