



CityMatters

CUTS International 

Need Peace to Prosper



In the last few months' incidents of mob lynching have hogged the headlines. Reports suggest that there are religious and nationalist undertones to these incidents. It appears that stray parochial interests are stoking up a feeling of hate, anger and violence against some sections of the population.

It ill behoves a nation that is trying hard to move forward on the path of development and growth. The recent tragic incidents of mob lynching have triggered widespread protests across the country, with people uniting against such incidents across 10 major cities under the campaign '#NotInMyName'. This included thousands of commoners and celebrities who came out on the streets thereby sending a message that democratic India does not approve violence.

The protests were remarkably well organised and panned out internationally as well. In all, the cities where people took to streets in a peaceful yet emphatic way included New Delhi, Kolkata, Jaipur, Bhopal, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, London, Toronto, and Boston.

The question is, will the message reach out to the perpetrators of violence? Prime Minister Narendra Modi too has spoken out strongly against such violence by cow vigilante groups, which are responsible for creating this turmoil.

In a way it is a test for the Prime Minister, his exceedingly high popularity means, he enjoys an appeal amongst the people. Therefore, it remains to be seen if people will give heed to his appeal and the virulent environment of hate is contained.

More importantly, it is also a test for state governments and their law and order machinery. In the din of chaos, they will have to play a proactive role to safely secure the diverse and democratic character of our society.

Let us not forget that the large number of different cultures, knitted together in such a close and co-habitable manner, make India's diversity one of the biggest wonders of the world.

India has been since ancient times a bastion of free thought, speech and expression. Our society has always been characterised by the open contestation of diverse schools of **debate**, **dissension** as well as **discussion**. Therefore, there is need to sustain the glorious tradition of discussion, dissent and debate and make these virtues of further progress.

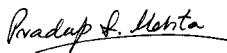
At our disposal, is a young India with a promise of a bright future if the productive energy of the young is channelised properly. Therefore, there is all the more reason to condemn acts based on sectarianism and intolerance. The stakes are way too high for the country to have its people waste themselves into meaningless pursuits.

If there is a time in the contemporary era when India must realign itself in the spirit of quintessential phrase 'Unity in Diversity', it is now!!!



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Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Equal Pay to Employees

Iceland's Parliament presented a Bill that would require public and private businesses to prove they offer equal pay to employees, in what would be the first such requirement in the world.



"The Bill entails that companies and institutions of a certain size, 25 or more employees, undertake a certification of their equal-pay programmes", Thorsteinn Viglundsson, Minister of Social Affairs and Equality, said. The new law aims to close a 7 percent wage gap between men and women in the island nation of more than 323,000 people, Viglundsson said.

(Mint, 05.04.17)

Chinese Man Marries' Robot

A 31 years old Chinese engineer has 'married' a robot he created after failing to find a human spouse.



Zheng Jiajia, an artificial intelligence expert who designs and creates robots in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, created the 'female' robot in 2016.

The robot, which he named Yingying, can identify Chinese characters and images and even say a few simple words and Zheng 'married' his creation in a simple ceremony.

Yingying wore a black suit and 'her' head was covered with a red scarf during the wedding ceremony, as per the traditional Chinese wedding ritual.

(SCMP, 03.04.17)

Call of Duty Triumphs



It was a routine morning in Raipur for news anchor Supreet Kaur when she walked into her studio on April 08, 2017.

Breaking news came midway through the bulletin: a live phone-in. And in as composed a voice as she could muster,

Supreet read out the news of her husband's death in a road accident.

After the end of the bulletin, Supreet walked out of the studio and called up the reporter to confirm her worst fears – her husband Harsad Kawade was indeed one of the three casualties who was one of the victims of the car accident in Mahasamund district (Chhattisgarh).

(Tol, 09.04.17)

Naming New Species after Kalam

In great news for India, scientists at National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have named a new organism discovered by them after the much-loved A P J Abdul Kalam.

Researchers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in NASA's laboratory for work on inter-planetary travel named it *Solibacillus kalamii* to honour the late Indian President, who was a renowned aerospace scientist.

Kalam had his early training at NASA in 1963 before he set up India's first rocket-launching facility in the fishing village of Thumba in Kerala.

(HT, 21.05.17)

Big Bang Warning to Humanity

Humans will need to colonise another planet within the following 100 years to survive climate change, asteroid strikes and overpopulation, according to renowned British physicist Stephen Hawking.



In a documentary, *Expedition New Earth* – Hawking and his former student Christophe Galfard will travel the world to find out how humans could survive in outer space. In the series, Hawking claims that time is running out for the Earth and humanity will need to leave the planet for its survival.

(TAA, 04.05.17)

Record 320-Run Stand

The Indian women's cricket team breached the 300-run mark in the One Day Internationals (ODIs) for the first time scoring 358 for 3 in eighth match of the Women's Quadrangular series at Senwes Park, Potchefstroom against Ireland women on May 15, 2017.

The base for this record score was setup by openers Deepti Sharma and

Punam Raut who combined for a women's world record of 320-run stand for the opening wicket



with Sharma scoring 188 and Raut scoring 109. The partnership is the first 300 plus stand in Women's ODIs.

(Tol, 16.05.17)

Tiny Country – 839 Languages

If you thought learning just one foreign language was tough, pity the people of Papua New Guinea, where



839 languages are spoken. That is nearly three times as many living languages as in the entire European continent.

These are the findings of the latest research from Ethnologue, an organisation that catalogues the world's languages. India comes in at 4th place with 454. For a language to be considered 'living', it has to have at least one speaker who considers it his mother tongue.

(Mint, 04.05.17)

Equality for All!

The Centre has pushed for allowing members from the third-gender to use washrooms meant for both men and women in community and public toilets. The Sanitation Ministry has issued this advisory to all state governments in its latest circular on the guidelines on gender issues in sanitation.

The circular said, "In many communities, the third gender may often be dissociated from the main stream *Swachh Bharat Mission* should make a



conscious effort that they are recognised as equal citizens and users of toilets. They should be allowed to use the facility of their choice (men or women) in public toilets".

(Tol, 05.04.17)

Spelling Bee Trophy

Ananya Vinay showed little emotion until she finally let a smile slip and lifted the Scripps National Spelling Bee trophy. The 12-year-old from Fresno, California, won the spelling competition after numerous rounds against Rohan Rajeev – the last two standing of the initial 291 spellers.

“I just focussed on my word and tried to spell it right”, she said. The winning word was ‘marocain’, a dress fabric that is made of ribbed silk or rayon and a filling of other yarns. After she was proclaimed the champion rest of her family joined her in moments of happiness. (CNN, 01.06.17)

Rest in Vinyl

For some, a love affair with vinyl can continue to the grave and beyond. Jason Leach company of And Vinyl offers this unique service. This is an interesting iteration of the whole idea



of ‘dust to dust’. It is also something that imbues the sombreness of death with some music and memories.

“Originally, this was an idea for myself and a bit of a joke and not something I thought of commercially, but as people started taking an interest in it, I thought it was a great way of coming to terms with the inevitability of death”, said Leach, who started the website. (Mint, 10.06.17)

Largest Plane Unveiled

A colossal aircraft capable of launching satellite-toting rockets into space is closer to testing, having been rolled out of a hangar in the Mojave desert (California). The project backed by billionaire Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen has been proceeding for about 6 years and was on track for its first launch demonstration as early as 2019.

“This marks a historic step in our work to achieve Paul’s vision of normalising access to low Earth orbit. The aircraft weighed in at 500,000

pounds (226,796 kg) and has the world’s largest plane wingspan, measuring 117 metre. (Mint, 02.06.17)

Devising Happiness Index

Happiness, its pursuit and examining its essential nature have been considered the domain of philosophy, an ephemeral rather than tangible value.

The Madhya Pradesh (MP) government, however, has tasked the Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur with finding a quantifiable answer to that eternal question – what constitutes happiness and how happy are people really.

The state government had, in July 2016, set up the Anand Mantralaya or the Ministry of Happiness, with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan as its first ‘Happiness Minister’. (TH, 21.05.17)

Enjoy the ‘Covfefe’

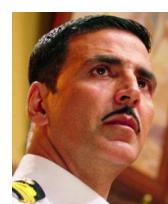
The US President Donald Trump coined a word for Twitterati to go berserk with. “Despite the negative press Covfefe...” tweeted Trump on May 30, 2017 probably meaning ‘coverage’.



Grabbing the typo with greedy hands, social media turned the gibberish into a viral sensation, with journalists and celebrities adding their bit by reading their own meanings into it and forming funny sentences.

Indian liberals tried to poke their right-wing rivals saying it was actually ‘Cowfefe’. Trump himself took the episode in his stride and tweeted, “Who can figure out the true meaning of ‘Covfefe’? Enjoy!” (BS, 01.05.17)

Regional Films Getting Awards



A Marathi film ‘Kasaav’ directed by Sumitra Bhave and Sunil Sukthankar was chosen as the best film as regional language cinema overshadowed Bollywood in most of the award categories.

A film about a young man suffering from depression and the good Samaritans who help him won the top honour at India’s National Film Awards recently.

“It is poetic justice that this award has been announced on World Health Day, we need to talk about mental health just as often as we talk about physical health”, said Sukthankar, who along with Bhave has won multiple national awards. (HT, 08.04.17)

Marriage and Health Link

A new study challenges the claim that people who marry get healthier. In ‘The Ambiguous Link between Marriage and Health’, recently published online



in a journal reported findings from the Swiss Household Panel, a 16-year survey of a nationally representative sample of more than 11,000 Swiss adults.

People who married reported slightly worse health than they had when they were single. Over time, their health did not improve – it tended to deteriorate, even after taking into account changes in health as people age. (Tol, 04.05.17)

Helping in Mars



Famous for helping stranded Indians in the world via micro-blogging site Twitter, Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj was at her wittiest best while replying to a man saying Indian embassy will help any of its countrymen even if they are located on a different planet.

Responding to a tweet stating: “@SushmaSwaraj I am stuck on Mars, food sent via Mangalyaan (987 days ago), is running out, when is Mangalyaan-II being sent? @isro,” Swaraj replied, “Even if you are stuck on Mars, Indian Embassy there will help you”. (Tol, 09.06.17)

Highest Tax Collection

Rajasthan for the financial year 2016-17 registered highest growth rate in direct tax collection among all the states in the country. Against the previous financial year, total percentage growth rate of direct tax collection was 53 percent while for all India the growth rate was 11.8 percent.

In absolute numbers, the total collection through income and corporate tax was ₹19,654 crore. It was ₹6,864 crore more than previous financial year where it was ₹12,790 crore. Direct taxes are paid in entirety by a taxpayer directly to the government. (Tol, 04.04.17)

Virtual 360-Degree Tour

The Department of Information Technology and Communications (DoIT&C) has introduced virtual 360 degree tours of Rajasthan's important historical monuments and festivals on the Rajasthan tourism portal.

The initiative is taken to boost tourism across the State and also focusses on preservation of heritage assets and recreation of these structures. The viewer can log on to the Rajasthan Tourism Portal and click on 'Virtual Tours' under the experience tab.

Viewers can then select the historical monument or festival he wants to experience. (DNA, 06.04.17)

Collecting 30 Timeless Beauties

Aquib Hameed's love for cars started in his childhood and the passion grew with age. Hameed, a student of business management of Jaipur stated the family owns 35

vehicles, including 1923 Austin Chummy, the oldest vintage car in Rajasthan.

Hameed helps in the running the family of restoring vintage cars, said that a Ford 1928 model was the first vintage car his grandfather bought in 1981. The family also owns only Erskine – an American car – in a running condition, he added.

(HT, 23.05.17)

Eco-friendly Cycle Track

The Jaipur Smart Mission Ltd. (JSML) eco-friendly cycle track project will be cut down to size. To promote non-motorised transport system in the city, JSML had proposed to construct a 50 km-long cycle track in various areas. The project was proposed to be taken up in two phases.

In phase I, the cycle track was to be developed on JLN Marg, between Albert Hall and Jawahar Circle, which is a 9-km stretch. After preparing a detailed project report (DPR) for phase-I, the JSML will construct a track in 3-km stretch between Albert Hall and Trimurti Circle. (Tol, 07.04.17)

Open Gyms in Parks

Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) too has decided to set up open gyms in its parks on lines of those set up by Jaipur Development Authority (JDA). A budget of ₹8 crore has been allocated to set up open gyms in parks of all 91 wards.

The corporation will soon invite tenders for this purpose. These machines will be set up in phased manner and JMC will seek

suggestions from its councillors. JDA has spent ₹15 lakh to install 12 equipments at the Central Park in the city. (Tol, 05.04.17)

JMRC's Efforts Fail

The efforts of Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) to earn additional revenue by leasing out space for advertisements inside and outside the Metro trains and stations have entirely failed.

The JMRC would invite tenders once again. For buying space for advertisement inside trains, two companies had participated in the tender process. Out of which, one company failed to clear the technical bid.

The company which won the tender quoted 40 percent low rates. Another company that showed interest to use space on rent for advertisements on Metro pillars also quoted rates 50 percent less than expected. (Tol, 17.04.17)

Record-breaking Feats

A loaf of bread weighing 180 kg, a 14-footlong pie, a sugar cube structure made of 14,353 smaller cubes and a *maalpua* covering an area of 32 square feet.

These are not items on the menu of some kingly feast, but among a Jaipur-based professor's eight record-breaking feats that figure in the Limca Book of Records – the highest number of records totted by any individual.

49-year-old Manoj Srivastava a 'doctorate' from the UK-based World Records University that claims to honour record breakers. (HT, 23.05.17)

Development Agencies under a Banner

There are more than nine development agencies working for several infrastructure works in Jaipur but there is no cooperation between those agencies and should come under one umbrella for better cooperation and implementation, stated Jaipur Mayor, Dr. Ashok Lahoti during Mayors' Conference. This was organised by CUTS on April 10, 2017 at Jaipur with collaboration of JMC.

Justice (Retd.) V S Dave, Former Chairman of Supreme Court's Empowered



Committee on World Class City (Jaipur), said that such Mayors' Platform should be there for heads of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to discuss larger city issues. The event was attended by Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Chairpersons of various ULBs in Rajasthan.

Water Harvesting Plan

The Directorate of Local Bodies (DLB) has started restoration of stepwells and construction of rainwater harvesting systems under the *Mukhyamantri Jal Swavalamban Scheme (MJSS)* without any concrete planning.



The Department has already initiated rainwater conservation work in 66 ULBs. However, several anomalies came to fore after Sriram Vedire, Chairperson of Rajasthan River Basin and Water Resources Planning Authority, inspected three sites in the state capital.

"Besides, directions were given to submit the planning to use stored rainwater", said an official.

(Tol, 06.04.17)

Bereaved Families Seek Justice

We want justice....No more families should lose their loved ones. When will the administration wake up from its slumber?" said Surekha Sharma. Sharma's son Rahul was one of the five people who died when an overloaded truck overturned and collapsed on a car near Chomu House Circle, Jaipur on June 06, 2017.

The family members of the deceased held a press conference after the accident appealing to the administration to take action against overloaded vehicles. The family members were also agast at the fact that none of the traffic signals, CCTV cameras and traffic lights was working near the accident site.

(HT, 12.06.17)

Decorating Metro Stations

Overseas artists have collaborated with a city-based art initiative to decorate stations of Metro rail and contribute to a city-wide cleanliness drive. The initiative – Cartist, aims at contributing to the *Swachh Bharat*



Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign) in Jaipur in a 'new creative and beautiful style'.

Joey Baker and Kahili Young, two UK-based artists, have created artworks at Vivek Vihar and Shyam Nagar Metro stations.

Besides, the initiative also involves installing designed dustbins during the 'Cartist Automobile Art Festival' to be held in April 12, 2017.

(IE, 08.04.17)

Organised Wild Life Safaris

Jaipur's wildlife safaris in Jhalana Forest Reserve are now going to be far more organised. The Forest Department is working on the lines of how 'safaris' are organised in the other national parks, in the State.



"To take care of the man-animal conflict, we have allocated ₹7 crore Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds to construct 7 and 9 feet high wall. This is to restrict the movement of animals, especially leopards into human habitation", said Forest Minister Gajendra Singh Khimsar.

(Tol, 07.04.17)

No BS-III Buses Purchase

Jaipur City Transport Services Limited (JCTSL) has decided to cancel purchase of hundred new BS-III buses. With this, fleet of new buses will now be replaced with existing ones in June 2017. JCTSL had ordered new buses as many existing rear-engine buses were in need of maintenance and their performance was poor.

The firm had to deliverer new buses in March 2017. However, after the Supreme Court's order, JCTSL cancelled the delivery and asked for buses with upgraded model. The company has sought three months' time to deliver new buses.

(Tol, 04.04.17)

Developed India's Fest

The key initiatives and programmes of the central government will be highlighted during exhibitions which will be held in 15 places of Rajasthan as part of the 'Making of Developed India' fest to mark the completion of three years of the BJP-led NDA dispensation.



Exhibitions will be held from June 02-04 in Jaipur city, Sikar, Jhunjhunu, Jhalawar, Ajmer, from June 09-11, 2017 in Jaipur rural, Nagaur, Churu, Kota and Pali; and from June 16 to 18, 2017 in Bhartpur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Chittorgarh and Udaipur under the fest, officials said.

(DNA, 30.05.17)

SC Fines NWR

Rajasthan High Court imposes a fine of ₹1 lakh on North Western Railway (NWR), Jaipur for filing a frivolous litigation. The NWR had filed litigation with regard to regularisation of part-time porters, on which the Supreme Court has already given its direction. The cost is to be distributed equally among the petitioners.

The single bench of Justice Sanjeev Prakash Sharma imposed the cost on a petition by Madan Mohan Sharma and 38 others, who were working as part time porters with the North Western Railway in Jaipur.

(Tol, 26.05.17)

Govt. Checks Irregularities

The state government has started tightening the noose around Bhagwan Mahaveer Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (BMCHRC) at JLN Marg, Jaipur. JDA officials along with a doctor from Health Department also reached the hospital to check the alleged irregularity of not providing free medication to 25 percent patients from below poverty line (BPL) category.

It is mandatory to fix an hour and provide free medical check-ups to poor patients at the outdoor patients department (OPD). Similarly, 10 percent beds should be reserved for the poor.

(Tol, 03.06.17)

Judiciary Takes the Wheel for Road Safety

Supreme Court Panel's direction to all states – suspend driving licence for a minimum of three months for traffic violations including over speeding and red light jumping



Justice K S Radhakrishnan

Supreme Court (SC) Panel has directed all the Indian states to suspend driving licence for a minimum of three months for traffic violations including over speeding and red light jumping. In a major step towards curbing road accidents, a SC appointed Committee has asked all the states to suspend licence of traffic rule violators, even for over speeding and red light jumping, for a minimum period of three months.

The other violations listed by the panel headed by former SC Judge Justice K S Radhakrishnan include carrying overload in goods carriages and carrying persons in goods carriages, driving vehicles under the influence of drink and drugs, using cell phones while driving. The Committee further directs that in case of driving a vehicle under the influence of drinks or drugs, the police should prosecute the offender and seek imprisonment as prescribed under Section 185 of the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 even for the first offence.

It also directed that the helmet laws be made applicable all over the State/Union Territory or UT both for main riders and the pillion riders. "In case where the law relating to the use of helmet is violated by either the main rider or the pillion rider, they should both be subject to Road Safety Education and Counselling for not less than 2 hours before imposition of fine as prescribed under the Act", it mentioned.

It indicated that those who violate the seat belt law should also be subject to Road Safety Education and Counselling before imposition of fine. The Committee also directed the States and UTs to submit action taken reports at the end of every year. The Committee has so far submitted four reports to the SC from October 2014 to March 2015. It has pointed out serious lapses in implementation of safety laws by States, which has led to increasing number of road fatalities.

Furthermore, the Committee constituted by the Supreme Court of India to monitor and measure implementation of

road safety laws in the country has had detailed discussions with the concerned Central Ministries and all the States/UTs on the trend of road accidents and fatalities.

The data furnished by them have clearly established that the number of fatalities in India continues to be very high, causing serious emotional trauma and economic loss to the families of the deceased and the society. The compensation awarded to the victims by the insurance companies also runs into hundreds of crores of rupees every year.

The Committee has in the recent past years issued directions to the States/UTs to establish institutional arrangements to promote road safety, undertake engineering measures to make roads safe, tighten enforcement together with promoting road safety education and establishing adequate trauma care facilities, and the Committee has been closely monitoring the action being taken by the States/UTs.

CUTS Contribution in Road Safety

CUTS International has been consistently advocating and initiating many projects on road safety. In its recent endeavour, CUTS in partnership with Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC), Ahmedabad organised an Advocacy Meeting on Road Safety on May 26, 2017 under the project 'Campaign for Enhanced Road Safety in India' through advocacy for enactment of Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017' at Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

The main agenda of the meeting was to discuss the changes made in the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill or MVA Bill, 2017 and to advocate for the early passage of the Bill as it has been passed in Lok Sabha and expected to be passed in Rajya Sabha in the upcoming monsoon season.

This has been adapted from: <https://www.pressreader.com/india/hindustan-times-delhi/06.01.17> & <http://www.livelaw.in/sc-panels-direction-to-all-states-suspend-driving-license-for-a-minimum-of-3-19.08.15>

Sources: BS: Business Standard; CNN: Cable News Network; DNA: Daily News and Analysis; HT: The Hindustan Times; IE: Indian Express; SCMP: South China Morning Post; TAA: The Asian Age; TH: The Hindu; Tol: The Times of India