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# CityMatters

**CUTS** International  
1983-2012

## From Permit Raj to NOC Raj



www.google.com

**E**ven after two decades of economic reforms, India continues to figure at the bottom in most indicators with its overall rank in the World Bank's (WB) 'Ease of Doing Business' dropping from the 131<sup>st</sup> position in 2013 to 134<sup>th</sup> in 2014 out of 189 countries. Moreover, the Bank's last available *Subnational Doing Business* data (2009) for Jaipur, among 17 cities in India showed its poor ranking in the category of 'dealing with construction permits' as can be seen in the table. In this category, India's position is a dismal as being 182 out of 189.



The category of 'dealing with construction permits' is a good example to show why Jaipur is at the bottom end of the pile among the 17 Indian cities. Upon submission of municipal drawings for approval to Jaipur Development Authority (JDA), drawings for fire security approval based on National Building Code are also submitted. The detailed bye laws of JDA refer to fire requirements at many places but specifically at clause number 14.7. A perusal thereof leads one to believe that the approving authority (JDA) would examine the fire security drawings submitted *vis-a-vis* the National Building Code and clear the municipal drawings for construction to begin, subject to inspections during and on completion of the proposed construction to ensure compliance.

In practice, however, the JDA seeks from the applicant a 'No Objection Certificate' (NOC) to be issued by the Fire Department of Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), among other NOCs, such as from the Airports Authority of India in addition to an affidavit declaring that the applicant will procure such NOCs before approving the municipal drawings.

Topic/Category	Jaipur's rank among 17 Indian cities	Top city in India
Starting a Business	3	New Delhi
Dealing with Construction Permits	13	Bengaluru
Registering Property	3	Gurgaon
Paying Taxes	2	Ludhiana
Trading across Borders	14	Bhubaneswar
Enforcing Contracts	7	Hyderabad
Resolving Insolvency	14	Hyderabad

Source: WB's Doing Business in India, 2009 Report

On applying to the Fire Department, a standard letter is issued by the department, normally after 15 days or so, asking for arranging a 'site visit' to enable them to process issuance of a temporary NOC. Interestingly, the Fire Department, too, needs an affidavit from the applicant declaring *inter alia* that inspections by the fire officer will be arranged from time to time and after completion of construction, another NOC would be required before making use of the building. The actual site visit can take anytime between 30-45 days from the date of the original request. It is not clear what a site-visit to an empty plot of land is for. After several failed appointments, the fire officer did visit the plot and stayed there for just 60 seconds and returned! A hint was dropped for grease, but we politely declined...knowing fully well that this is going to be an annual feature.

Then begins another waiting period for the Fire Department to actually issue the temporary NOC consulting the JMC Zone, under which the plot of land falls. In our case, it has already been over 70 days, since we applied to the Fire Department but still await the requisite NOC. Sorry, the temporary NOC!

Progression from permit raj to NOC raj is one factor responsible for Jaipur lagging behind 12 other cities in the country in dealing with construction permits.

*Pradeep S. Mehta*  
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

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## About 2.5bn Smartphone Users

Nearly 2.5bn people or 35 percent of the global population is expected to use smartphones by the end of 2015, according to the report of the US based Industry Tracker Strategy Analytics. The reason behind this surge is the expansion of low-end smart-phones by global players that has helped them make inroads into emerging markets in the developing countries like India.

The report also pointed out that the Asia-Pacific region holds the most number of smartphone users while Europe and North America have the highest portion of people holding the high-tech handsets among all mobile phone users.

That means more than three in every 10 people will be smart phone users. According to the market research firm, the number of global users had surpassed one billion in 2012. (HT, 29.07.14)

## Top Richest Indians

The top five Indian billionaires led by Reliance Industries Chairman, Mukesh Ambani collectively control \$85.5bn (about ₹5,23,897cr) in personal wealth, accounting for nearly half of the country's total billionaire wealth, according to a new study.

According to the analysis by wealth research firm, Wealth-X of India's richest individuals, Mukesh Ambani remains the richest man in the country with an estimated net worth of \$24.4bn (about ₹1,49,474 cr).

Ambani is followed by steel tycoon, Lakshmi Mittal; drugmaker Sun Pharma's Dilip Sanghvi; IT giant, Wipro's Azim Premji and Tata Son's shareholder, Palonji Shapoorji Mistry among the top five wealthiest individuals from India.

(BL, 14.08.14)

## Village or a Museum?

Erriadh is one of the oldest villages of Tunisia in North Africa. It has kept its authenticity by its narrow streets and preservation of the typical architecture of "houch" (house built with a patio, which is surrounded by rooms and living areas).

These houchs are painted with white chalk decorated with blue woodwork or a yellow straw decorated with green trim. The architecture of the village is low, it is rare to find more than one floor.



The village Erriadh is also the first Jewish village, which houses the oldest synagogue in North Africa and the second largest worldwide. Street art project 'Djerbahood' in the village of Erriadh on the island of Djerba, Tunisia was initiated by Tunisian-French artist, Mehdi Ben Cheikh and aims at enlivening the village and attracting tourists.

(RP, 07.09.14)

## Proposal to Legalise Bribes

Rajiv Ranjan, a senior Janata Dal (United) MLA, said that he was driven to make this extreme demand out of frustration and anger he felt owing to the Bihar Government's inability to control corruption. "The fair thing to do in the prevailing situation is to legislate and adopt a new law by the name of Right to Bribe, on the lines of Right to Information (RTI) and Right to Service (RTS)", said Ranjan.



"If you cannot rein in corruption, you should legalise it", argued Ranjan, who is the MLA from Islampur assembly constituency in Nalanda. "I will move a private member's bill for a law to lend legal sanctity to the all pervading practices of taking bribe, during the next session of the Bihar legislature", he added.

Ranjan's 'outburst' embarrassed the Jitan Ram Manji Government sufficiently for it to vow to take suitable disciplinary action against the MLA, at the earliest. (HT, 19.08.14)

## 'Pink Lane' for Female Drivers

A new concept of an exclusive 'pink lane' for female drivers has been proposed by Sheila's Wheels, a British car insurance company in London. The 'pink lane' includes exclusive overpasses and sidewalks for women.

It is suggested that women can relax and drive a car on the highway and there is no need to worry about the reckless bursts of speed from men's cars.

Despite being utterly preposterous and riddled with negative gender stereotypes – about both men and women – after extensive research it has been determined that this is not in fact



satire, nor is it a parody, however, it is highly likely to be "churnalism" – a PR statement released by a company in the form of news story.

(www.womenofchina.cn, 20.08.14)

## Latecomers to Take Leave

Dozens of officials in the Information and Broadcasting Ministry were left red-faced when after an unexpected visit by Prakash Javadekar, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting walked into the office sharp at 9 am, found more than 100 of the officials absent from the desks.

Sensing that the attendance levels were thin, he decided to take a round of the office soon after around 9:15 am. He randomly walked into the offices and found only a few present. The Minister then left a message for the latecomers that he had come to meet them.

The Minister later met the officials and politely told them that as it was their first time he would let them go. But he firmly suggested that since they have arrived late they should take casual leave and go home, one official reported.

(DNA, 01.07.14)

## First 3 D Printer Vertebra

The wonders of the 3-D printer are just beginning to populate the common consciousness and for one 12-year-old boy, the fantastical invention is changing

his life. Minghao of China learned about two months ago that he had a tumor lodged on the second vertebra of his spine. The usual treatment for this is removing the bone and inserting a titanium tube.

Minghao's doctors decided to try something different. Using the research and technology developed by the 3-D printer, the doctors at Beijing's Peking University Third Hospital fabricated an extract replica of Minghao's vertebra. When it is implanted surgically, they will be able to forego the usual surgical screws or cement. This makes him the first recipient of a vertebra created by a 3-D printer. (AN, 16.09.14)

## High-tech Benches

Moscow authorities decided to replace ordinary park benches with high-tech scales that will tell the users' weight. Designed to raise fitness consciousness, the benches will replace the ones already existing in the city's most popular parks.

Inspired from a similar campaign that is already taking place at a public bus



stop in The Netherlands, one of the first parks in Moscow to embrace the change is northern Sokolniki. The benches will also give tips on healthy eating as well as advertising nearby fitness clubs.

The idea might seem a bit awkward but obesity has become a problem of over 25 percent of Russia's population. After an annual examination of 1,500 people across the country, scientists found that 55 percent of Russians had excessive weight. (OC, 23.09.14)

## Bottled Water Ban

San Francisco became the first major city in the US to ban the sale of plastic water bottles on public property, building on a nation-wide effort to curb waste from the billion-dollar industry.

The proposal by the Board of Supervisors, President, David Chiu, navigated a number of challenging issues, from the city's drinking-water infrastructure to impact on events, such

as the Folsom Street Fair or lower-key non-profit events that often rely on the sale of bottled water for revenue.

The ban will phase out the sales of plastic water bottles holding 21 ounces or less on city property, indoor or outdoor. The proposal was supported by the 'Think Outside the Bottle' campaign, a nation-wide effort that encourages restrictions of the "eco-unfriendly product". (DB, 23.07.14)

## Testing Track on Terrace

Lingotto in district Turin, Italy had a building that once housed an automobile factory built by Fiat. The construction of the building started in 1916 and the building was opened in 1923.

The design was unusual as it had five floors, with raw materials going in at the ground floor and cars built on a line that went up through the building. Finished cars emerged at rooftop level to go onto the test track.

It was the largest car factory in the world at that time and was influential and impressive and was called one of the most impressive sights in industry, and "a guideline for town planning". About 80 different models of cars were produced there in its lifetime. (DB, 16.07.14)

## Absolute Water Crisis

The ice bucket challenge craze going viral has caused absolute chaos to the 135 residents of the island of Colonsay, in Inner Hebrides of Scotland as they were left without water. There is a brewery on this tiny island and water engineers were called out to it five times.

The ice bucket challenge has spread round the island like wild fire! Because



of the huge demand placed upon it. The system is such that the water supply automatically stops to cut wastage but can be switched back on manually.

The craze has affected other areas too, in South Shields on Tyneside, UK the Tesco supermarket ran out of bagged ice. The challenge is to raise awareness and funds for motor neurone disease. (ST, 29.09.14)

## Indoor LED Farm

Humans have spent the last 10,000 years mastering agriculture. But a freak summer storm or bad drought can still mar many a well-planted harvest. A Japanese plant physiologist, Shigeharu Shimamura, has moved industrial-scale farming, under the roof.



Working in Miyagi Prefecture in Eastern Japan, which was badly hit by powerful earthquake and tsunamis in 2011, Shimamura turned a former Sony Corporation semiconductor factory into the world's largest indoor farm illuminated by light emitting diodes (LEDs). The special LED fixtures were developed by General Electricity (GE) and emit light at wavelengths optimal for plant growth.

The farm is nearly half the size of a football field (25,000 square feet). It was opened in July and has been producing 10,000 heads of lettuce per day. (DB, 23.07.14)

## Desolated City of Russia

Elena Chernyshova's *Days of Night – Nights of Day* is the story of Norilsk, Russia, a city of 170,000 residents, isolated from the rest of the world and shrouded in a thick pollution of mines and factories.

Four hundred miles north of the polar circle and 3000 km from Moscow, the community has no outgoing roads and is only accessible by plane. Being the seventh most polluted city in the world, Norilsk has an extremely low life expectation and its populace abounds with cancer, respiratory disease and depression.

With 2mn tons of gas expelled into Norilsk's atmosphere annually and temperatures plummeting to unimaginable conditions, the people of this desolate Tundra region live a dangerous and lonely existence.

(DB, 06.09.14)

### Greater Civic Engagement

**A** 'Dissemination cum Advocacy Meeting' was organised by CUTS in Jaipur on August 28, 2014, under 'MyCity' Project with the objective to improve service delivery of JMC through an enhanced civic engagement and to measure the status of service delivery and identifying the level of citizens' satisfaction.

Jyoti Khandelwal, Mayor of JMC said that the Ward Committees should be formed and there is even a provision in the Municipal Corporation Act for the same.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS International, pointed out that in accordance with the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of Constitution has been functioning well in rural areas, however, there is no progress on the implementation of 74<sup>th</sup> Amendment like formation of 'Ward Sabhas' in urban bodies. Other eminent guests comprised Dr Sagar Parsai, country representative, the Asia Foundation; Rao Rajendra Singh, MLA and Manish Pareek, Deputy Mayor of Jaipur.

#### First Health and Wellness Mall

India's first Health and Wellness mall would come up in Jaipur in the following two years. The Health and Fitness mall, to be built at a cost of ₹110 cr to 120 cr, is especially



designed where all verticals of doctors, chemists, pathology laboratories, ayurvedas, homeopathy, gymnasium, swimming pool, jogging track and food court and everything one can think of in terms of health and

wellness would be available at one point.

Mental health is important as well as physical health. The mall will be a one-stop shop for everyone. The CEO of GTM Builders and Promoters Group's, a conglomerate of diverse business interests, Tushar Kumar, said that initially there was no tie-up with any government and the project would be the first in Jaipur and in India, for every class of society, especially the middle class. (DNA, 31.08.14)

#### Good Investment Prospect

The US Ambassador, Kathleen Stephens, said that the US sees Rajasthan as a good 'prospect' as far as investment tie ups are concerned. She said that Rajasthan is a beautiful place with massive investment

opportunities where the relationship between the two countries can grow stronger.

She said that currently India-US trade stands at US\$100bn and she expected it to increase five folds to reach US\$500bn in times to come. Both the countries stand on a platform where one can support the other in partnership and improve communication.

Speaking about the tourism and education sectors she said that in the current year, the number of applications by Indian students to study in the US has increased by 60 percent. This shows the belief that India has in the US. (DNA, 04.09.14)

#### Clinics' Registration Mandatory

The State Government is gearing up to keep a check on private clinics, hospitals and other establishments including diagnostic centres, which offer health care services without ensuring minimum facilities.

According to the sources, the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act 2010, pending for more than three years will be implemented in the State soon. The previous Government failed to implement it due to protests from private doctors as they feared that the Act would encourage "Inspector Raj".

According to an official, there is no such Act in the State, which keeps a check on private clinics and hospitals by registering them. (Tol, 04.08.14)

#### Best State in Literacy

On the occasion of International Literacy Day, President Pranav Mukherjee awarded Rajasthan as the "Best State" for encouraging literacy and for the efforts in making literacy programme better. Human Resource Minister, Smriti Zubin Irani was also present on the occasion.

The Governor of Rajasthan, Kalyan Singh, was the chief guest for the programme. Nivedita Mehru, Director of Continuous Education in Rajasthan and Joint Director, Shish Ram Chawla got the honour from the President.

According to Nivedita Mehru, Rajasthan has made efforts to spread literacy in this coveted category. Moreover, efforts have been made to make people literate through retired teachers and soldiers, unemployed youth and volunteers of Literate-India Programme. (DN, 09.09.14)



## Check on Inflation

Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje, has asked the Food and Civil Supply Department to come out with a plan to sell vegetables and pulses through Public Distribution System (PDS) at low prices in the State. The step was taken as a measure to put a check on inflation and rise of prices of essential commodities.

The State Government would take urgent measures against hoarding of



essential commodities, vegetables and food grains by black marketers, said Raje to review price rise and steps to check the same.

Raje set up a four member Committee to review the inflation index, availability of foodgrains, vegetables and other essential commodities in the market. The Committee will conduct a study on the price variations of various food products in the State and would submit its report to the Chief Minister's office.

(DNA, 09.07.14)



## Metro Updates

### More Control for Metro Project

Vasundhara Raje, after meeting the Union Ministers requested for greater control for the State Government in Jaipur Metro Rail project. Raje pointed out that while the Centre intends to get 50 percent share in capital and wants to appoint its Chairman in Metro projects of the State, the share of Centre is limited to only 20 percent of the total cost of the Metro project.

She demanded eradication of this imparity and suggested that the Centre should either provide 20 percent of its share as a subsidy or demand for only 20 percent of share in the capital of metro project. She had earlier raised the demand for only 20 percent of share in capital of Metro project.

(Tol, 04.07.14)

### Load Testing in Final Phase

After three successful rounds of load testing, the officials began fourth and final round of load testing on the elevated metro road from Mansarovar to Chandpole. In this phase, a load of 372 tonne was kept on the elevated road, which has been constructed below the Metro track on Ajmer road.



Earlier, three phases of load testing were conducted to check the strength of road and track, which would bear the burden of trains carrying passengers when the commercial run of trains commence.

Officials of Jaipur Municipal Rail Corporation (JMRC) and Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) have expressed happiness over the success of load testing exercises.

(DNA, 23.07.14)

### Metro Run Delayed

Work on Jaipur Metro Phase-I (B) will be further delayed due to the retirement of the Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS) in August. The process of procuring final safety certification and opening of corridor for commercial run is expected to be postponed.

The JMRC made a final announcement that the commercial run will start from September first week.

However, the CMRS safety check, which is the last statutory certification before opening the corridor, is yet to be carried out.

The average speed of the Jaipur Metro on the 9.25 km route will be 32 km per hour. "Metro trains will not be allowed to cross 42 km per hour at curves", according to an official.

(Tol, 19.08.14)

### HC Rejects Petition

Rajasthan High Court has rejected the request for a stay on the construction of the Jaipur Metro project in the 'Walled City' areas claiming that it posed a serious threat to the heritage buildings of the old city.

A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed by Yadunath Dashanan in the court of acting Chief Justice, Sunil K Ambabani and V S Saradana seeking an immediate stay

on the construction of the Metro project in the 'Walled City'. He contended that the construction of the tunnel and digging could pose a serious threat to the old heritage buildings.

The JMRC pointed out that it has already got the necessary approval from the State Pollution Control Board, District Collector and the Archaeology Department. (Tol, 23.08.14)

### Metro's Dry Run

The Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) plans to conduct a dry run for 45 days that will start from mid-October. This is being done to equip the staff and check the operations thoroughly before the Metro corridor is opened for public.

Although elevated corridors of Phase I are almost complete, the trains can only ply between Mansarovar and Chandpole in mid-December. The Chief Managing Director (CMD), JMRC, N C Goel said, "The Metro can be commercially operated from mid-December. Before that a dry run for one and a half month will be conducted and this will be the testing period".

According to the officials, the staff and trains will function just as they would when operational. The exercise is to make the system smooth.

(Tol, 02.09.14)

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## Rajasthan Budget: Leaving Unanswered Questions

Pradeep S Mehta\*

*Every budget is a reboot of the previous year's planning. The 2014-15 budget presented by Vasundhara Raje, however, is more than a reboot where she decidedly takes control over State's finances, takes alternate route like PPP model to fund infra development and tinkers with tax structure in a way that taxes luxury goods and services to refresh the flagging economy of the State.*



Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje's Budget tries to answer questions surrounding the economy of the State through her budget speech, including that of job creation. However, questions remain over how the Government will achieve the target of creating 15 lakh jobs over the next five years or how the Public Private Partnerships (PPP) would be executed to the advantage of the end user. Indeed, job creation is a core agenda of any government in the current dismal scenario, but not the only one.

Addressing the availability of basic needs and at the right price is always a challenge. However, inflation, growth and corruption as issues played a distinct role when people voted to change and elected new governments in the State and at the Centre. Managing expectations will, therefore, remain critical throughout Vasundhara Raje's current regime.

Jobs can only be created when there is a job-oriented growth and a clear strategy to achieve a goal of doubling of our Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) from the current level of ₹4.8 lakh cr to ₹10 lakh cr by 2020. If this path is forged then creating 15 lakh jobs will fall in line. The how to go about it has not been spelt scientifically in the Budget speech.

The achievement of higher growth needs higher labour intensive manufacturing and services. For that to happen, many things have to be done in parallel and not just in linear mode in both the hardware and software of governance. While the Government has already announced reforms in Labour Laws, the draconian Land Acquisition Law is yet to be addressed at the level of the State, even if the Centre moves slower.

Land and other related issues will be a problem in road building agenda. However, opening up the road transport sector to private participation is a welcome

feature, but road safety, which costs three percent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is tragically missing.

The proposed road regulator should be a composite body, which should oversee all the three areas: roads, transport and safety. A PPP approach to build roads is also welcome but the contracts will need to be drafted in a pragmatic manner, otherwise we will suffer the fate of the stalled National Highway projects. But tolling these smaller roads will be a problem with disruptive local dynamics. Real cost pricing for water too is welcome, but how can the State ensure water supply when factors are not in their control and Rajasthan is a problem State.

Turning some of the city Discoms (distribution companies) into PPP ventures too is welcome but once again care will be needed to ensure that consumers do not end up in the frying pan, and that the State does not lose its rightful revenue share. Our experience with most PPP projects in infra is that they are grabbed by resourceful people through crony capitalism and costs are inflated through gold plating as we see in our major PPP airports or even the oil exploration contracts.

Many of the reforms proposed will be opposed by vested interests. Administrative reforms have not been spoken about at all, and good governance features in one para in the context of road transport. Without administrative reforms the Government machinery will move in a business as usual manner i.e. while the spirit may be strong the flesh will be weak.

Our bureaucracy is so opaque and unresponsive, and for that to change in feudal Rajasthan will need a clarion call from the Chief Minister. If that is done, many of the reforms can be carried out by Team Rajasthan, comprising all stakeholders including the civil society, which she speaks about so beautifully in her speech.

\* Secretary General, CUTS International. This article was published in DNA on 15.07.14

Sources: AN: Amazing News; BL: The Hindu Business Line; DB: Dainik Bhaskar; DNA: Daily News Analysis; HT: Hindustan Times; OC: Oddity Central; RP: Rajasthan Patrika; ST: Shocking Times; Tol: Times of India