



3/2016

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Increasing Intolerance



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A famous TV advertisement which comes quite frequently shows a bunch of freshers being asked to climb up and create a human pyramid in a college by apparently a bunch of seniors. One fresher at the top of the human pyramid points out to a CCTV, saying that the session is being watched by some authority. The moment he says this, the seniors run for shelter.



There are advertisements on radio as well where citizens are informed that ragging is banned and that complaints can be made to a particular number or website. Ragging has been a healthy tradition in many of our schools and colleges (remember the film: '3 Idiots'), and in so far as it was non-violent it was good. Alas, over time and in some cases it became violent and there were few suicides as well.

I too underwent and indulged in ragging when in school and college, but it was always sporting and never violent. The degeneration took place over the last few decades, and thus presently there is a total ban on ragging. This is a tragic knee jerk reaction, like cutting off the head to cure a headache, as many of our responses are. Rather, what could be done is to allow ragging in controlled situations like at a Freshers' Event in schools/colleges. Such events do take place, but they are limited to performances, such as dancing, singing, skits and so on, but not impromptu mirthful leg pulling which can be really much more enjoyable.

As society, we do like humour, banter, leg pulling, comedies, stand up comics and so on, but are we not becoming more intolerant of the same. For example, a comedy movie called Santa Banta Pvt. Ltd. was made few years ago with the excellent versatile Bollywood actor: Boman Irani in the lead as a Sikh spook working for Indian Government. His sidekick was another Sikh and they had to rescue a captured Indian diplomat in South Pacific country Fiji and underwent the whole mission with fun. But the movie was made badly and flopped. Some Sikh gentlemen moved the Bombay High Court to get a stay on the exhibition of the movie stating that it hurt Sikh sentiments.

Fortunately, they did not succeed. Furthermore, another writ petition was filed recently at the apex court asking for a complete ban on all Sardar oriented jokes. The court asked the petitioners to tell them on how such a ban can be enforced and that what about other leg pullers like calling a Gujarati a *guju* who enjoys eating 'snakes' because they pronounce 'snacks' as such. Or calling a Bengali a *bong* and so on and so forth. Each of the communities in India have their own lingual peculiarities and people do make fun of them, but no one minds.

Many of the Sikh jokes are in fact narrated by Sikh friends who are sporting and I have never come across a single Sardar who has objected to the same. Mexicans are the butt of American jokes and Norwegians are the butt of Swedish jokes. The list is endless but at the same time tolerance is high and people accept them as part of life, to be enjoyed rather than agitate about them.

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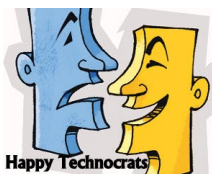
Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Centre for Science of Happiness

IIT Kharagpur, one of the premier institutes in India, is planning to set up a 'centre for science of happiness' to promote science and practice of positivity for fostering meaningful life.

The Minister of State for HRD Mahendra Nath Pandey mentioned that the proposal was received from IIT Kharagpur alumni Satinder Singh Rekhi. The centre's vision is to promote science and practice of positivity for fostering meaningful life, happiness, well-being and holistic self-development by bringing together various disciplines ranging from psychology, management to engineering.

(BL, 25.07.16)



'Powerful' Indian Bankers

India's top women bankers, State Bank of India (SBI) Chief **Arundhati Bhattacharya**, ICICI Head **Chanda Kochhar** and Axis Bank CEO **Shikha Sharma** are among the 50 most powerful women based outside the US, according to a list by 'Fortune', which is topped by Eurozone's largest bank by market value, Banco Santander's Head Ana Botín.



Bhattacharya is ranked **second** on the list, while Kochhar comes in on the **5th** spot and Sharma on the **19th** position in the "Fortune's 50 Most Powerful Women International" list of 2016, which spans 19 countries.

(BL, 13.09.16)

New 'Splendiferous' Collection

Clicktivism and **YOLO** are among more than 1,000 new entries added by the Oxford English Dictionary to its latest update. The update also marks the centenary of the birth of British novelist Roald Dahl with a range of new words connected to his writing. These include **Splendiferous**, **Human Bean**, **Yogalates** etc.

Clicktivism describes the use of social media and other online methods to promote a cause. The acronym '**YOLO**' (1996) is traced back to its axiomatic 'you only live once'. **Human Bean** is a humorous alteration or mispronunciation of human being whereas **Yogalates** refers to the trend of combining pilates exercises with the postures and breathing techniques of yoga.

(TH, 13.09.16)

Driving Licence on Mobile

Citizens will now be spared from the hassle of carrying physical driving licences and vehicle registration certificates, which can be accessed online or on their mobile phones using DigiLocker.



Launching the integration of DigiLocker with the Driving Licence and Vehicle Registration system of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said citizens can use these as valid identification at airports too.

The digital driving licence and vehicle registration documents will be available on citizens' cellphones via the *DigiLocker* mobile app.

(BS, 08.09.16)

Unique Tree Planting Record

Radhika Anand, CEO of Delhi-based Plantology, has planted 110,000 fruit trees in a single year across army cantonments in Delhi, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Anand has worked for environment protection since last two decades.

In 2015, she wanted to do something impactful and thus tried her hand at waste management but was unable to make any breakthrough. That is when the idea of planting fruit trees struck her. Tree planting was her life and on July 28, 2016 she accomplished her target of planting 100,000 trees in a year along with plantation of 10,000 extra trees.

(BS, 13.08.16)

150-year Life Span

Human beings may live till the age of 150 years if they do not suffer from cancer, diabetes and heart diseases, said Dr U S Agarwal, Principal, Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Medical College, Jaipur.



Dr Hemant Malhotra of SMS Medical College said for 30-35 years after independence, communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis, pneumonia etc. were the main killers, but now non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, diabetes and heart diseases have become the number one killer in India.

(HT, 08.09.16)

Refugee Team Makes History at Rio

The antipathy many Brazilians feel towards the Rio Olympics briefly vanished when onlookers cheered Hanan Dacka, a 12-year-old Syrian (Asian) refugee, as she jogged through the nation's capital, Brasilia with the Olympic flame in her hand.

History was also created as Rose Nathike Lokonyen, a 23 year-old South Sudanese (African) runner, led the first-ever Refugee Olympic Team into the Maracana Stadium (Brazil) during the Opening Ceremony under the Olympic flag to cries of support from an ecstatic crowd.

Rose was eight when she fled war and found safety in the remote Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya and has lived there ever since, a report on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) website stated.

(ToI, 07.08.16)

Feeding the Needy

Khushroo Poacha holds a regular job with the central railways in its commercial department in Nagpur, Maharashtra. An idea that he conceived two years back has now come to fruition and feeds around 2,500 people every week in his *Seva Kitchen*.

"My mother was then hospitalised in Nagpur for a surgery. I saw a lot of people sitting outside the hospital, cooking *chappatis* on a brick kiln to make ends meet", shares Poacha. He followed his mother's suggestion that if he was so touched by their plight then he should do something for them and this made him launch the initiative of *Seva Kitchen*.

(DNA, 14.07.16)

Demand for Purush Ayog

Scores of distressed men who claimed to be victims of false cases protested at Collectorate Circle in Jaipur as the rain failed to drench their cause.

Their demonstration in the form of a protest saw men from different corners of the State narrating their personal experiences of being harassed by wives and of being dragged into false family law cases, mostly dowry.

They demanded the formation of a *Purush Aayog (Men's Commission)*, a Ministry for men and protection against false cases. Anil Rao from Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan) who was the organiser of the protest had filed a FIR against his wife in March 2016 under IPC Section 12-1A.

(DNA, 31.07.16)

'Rent Men' to Lend an Ear

From lonely pensioners to Japanese schoolgirls with shattered dreams, Takanobu Nishimoto and his crew of middle-aged Japanese men will lend an ear to clients who would never dream of spilling their guts to a therapist or worse, their families.



Anyone in need of company can sign up to his online service to rent an 'ossan' – a man aged between 45 and 55 – for ¥1,000 (US\$10) an hour. "For me, the service is a hobby more than anything", said Nishimoto, who first came up with the concept four years ago and currently has a growing network of some 60 men across Japan. "The people who rent me are just asking me to keep them company for an hour or two, mainly to listen to them", he added.

(BL, 22.07.16)

Pollution Costs Economy

Premature deaths due to air pollution cost the global economy US\$5.1tn annually, which is roughly twice the economic output of the UK, according to a World Bank (WB) report.

In a major study of the economic costs of indoor and outdoor pollution, the WB said air pollution prematurely kills 5.5 million people a year, or one in ten deaths worldwide.

According to the survey, air pollution significantly hampers the economic development of China and other growing economies in Asia. WB also found that in 2013 China lost nearly 10 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), India over 7 percent, Sri Lanka and Cambodia roughly 8 percent.

(QM, 20.09.16)



₹10 Coin Still Valid: RBI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said the ₹10 coin was very much in circulation and those refusing to accept it could face legal action, setting to rest rumours that the coin was banned.



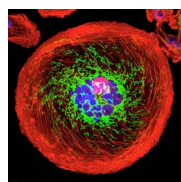
Reports have poured in of shopkeepers, kiosks owners and auto rickshaw drivers in and around Delhi returning ₹10 coins and asking for currency notes after a WhatsApp message, shared widely, claimed the coin was declared invalid by the central bank. "People should not hesitate in using the coins for transactions as these coins are legal tender".

(HT, 20.09.16)

Quick Cancer Detection

Four years ago, Shantikumar V Nair and Manzoor Koyakutty of Amrita University's Kochi-based centre in Kerala for Nanomedicine were using lasers to detect food contaminants using Raman spectroscopy.

As the contaminants threw up distinct patterns, Nair wondered why not bounce lasers off human tissue to detect cancer cells?



The result is a technology that enables cancer detection in less than 30 minutes without a hospital visit. The team is now working on a hand-held instrument to detect cancer, which is expected to be ready in two years.

(ToI, 17.09.16)

Dead Outnumber the Living

Colma, a quiet town in California (US) of roughly two square miles is home to 1,700 living residents and over 1.5 million dead ones. Most of the town's forever-silent population are people who lived and died in San Francisco, but just like most of today's living residents, could not afford to spend their afterlives in the expensive metropolis.

In the year 1900, San Francisco, hilly city of California was a city crowded by the dead. During the gold rush, gold miners, merchants and immigrants from all around the world flocked here, bringing with them disease, and as the death toll rose, the 27 cemeteries filled to the brink of overflowing.

(OC, 30.09.16)

Mistress-dispelling Business

Mistress-dispelling services, increasingly common in China's larger cities, specialise in ending affairs between married men and their extramarital lovers. Mistress dispelling typically begins with research on the targeted woman, said Director of Shu Xin, Weiqing's International Marriage Hospital Emotion Clinic Group.

Typically hired by a scorned wife, they coach women on how to save their marriages, while inducing the mistress to disappear. The services have emerged as China's economy has opened up in recent decades, and as extramarital affairs grew more common.

(TH, 31.07.16)

Garbage for Houses

For the past five decades, Nargis Latif has been actively advocating for the recycling of trash in Pakistan as an alternative to simply burning it all and raising pollution levels. She has successfully developed a technique of building cheap housing for the poor of Karachi out of blocks of dry waste.



Nargis set up a non-governmental organisation called *Gul Bahao* that focussed on using trash instead of throwing it away. She paid junk dealers good money for paper, cardboard, shopping bags, plastic, glass etc.

(OC, 30.09.16)

Online FIR Facility

The Rajasthan Police has recently launched an online First Information Report (FIR) facility for lost articles and documents. The facility was launched by Rajasthan Home Minister Gulab Chand Kataria.



The Director General of Police Manoj Bhatt said driving licence, ATM/debit/credit cards, birth certificate, bank pass book, camera, caste certificate, Aadhaar card, PAN card, passport, property documents, tablets, laptops, mobile phones are some of the articles, which are covered by the facility.

All that a person has to do is to log into the Rajasthan police website (www.police.rajasthan.gov.in), fill up the relevant form with due details, get the automated copy of it downloaded or printed in minutes. (HT, 13.07.16)

Successful in PM's Campaign

Rajasthan, infamous for female foeticide and infanticide and child marriages, is now saving its girls and their numbers are growing. The State, which was in the bottom half of India's child sex ratio rankings in the 2011 Census, has scripted a comeback and is bringing back its girls.



It is a turnaround that has impressed the Centre because it is probably the most successful example so far of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao* campaign. (ET, 09.07.16)

Rajasthan HRIDAY Scheme

On the lines of Centre's National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojna (HRIDAY), the Government of Rajasthan has started to develop 'Rajasthan HRIDAY Yojna'.

Under the scheme, the Government would develop and conserve the heritage by providing basic amenities. City heritages of Rajasthan would be conserved indistinctly and distinctly by the State Government. The State capital Jaipur has been included along with three other towns in the first phase. In Centre's first phase scheme, Ajmer has been listed from the State.

(DNA, 25.07.16)

Move to Mark 'World Car Free Day'

Responding to an appeal by a local Hindi daily, a good number of Jaipurites left their cars at home and used either two-wheelers or three wheelers to travel to their work places to mark the 'World Car Free Day'.

A large of numbers of two-wheelers were on the roads. The residents found lesser pollution on the roads, could reach faster due to lesser traffic jams, shared cars. In the walled city, cycles are used to move from one place to another. Parking of cars is becoming another problem in big cities, which requires popularising alternative modes of transport.

(merinews, 26.09.16)



Connecting People with Wildlife

The wildlife wing of Forest Department in Rajasthan has floated an innovative programme to invite experts, entrepreneurs, technical graduates and interested persons to take up time-bound assignments as part of an internship. This will enable the participants to provide critical inputs on policy and regulation in the natural resource management sector.

The engagement of interns in the wildlife and forestry sector will help develop various nuances of plant and animal behaviour, ecology and biology in order to demystify commonly held superstitions and misconceptions about wildlife.

(TH, 29.08.16)

Bigger Solar Plant

Jaipur airport will now be able to cater its electricity needs with the commissioning of a second solar plant of 1800 KW. "We already have a solar plant of 102 KW running on the airport premises. The second solar plant will be totally independent and will help generate maximum electricity for the terminal building", confirmed B K Tailong, Airport Director.

Continuing with its efforts to go green, the Jaipur airport authorities have replaced all its lights with LED lighting with the aim to save energy. Moreover, water harvesting plant as well as sewerage treatment plant is functional for generating conventional source of power. (DNA, 05.08.16)

Toy Banks in Anganwadi Centres

People's participation of Jaipur has led to collection of over 95,000 toys for *anganwadi* centres in Jaipur. *Anganwadi* centres are part of Integrated Child Development Services programme of the Indian Government where children from the age group of 3 to 6 years are benefitted through various health schemes.

With the help of Women and Child Development (WCD) Department, the Jaipur district administration set up toy banks in all 4,200 *anganwadi* centres in the city. The toy banks were inaugurated on July 01, 2016. (Tol, 03.07.16)

Enhancing Municipal Services

"For getting the quality municipal services people not only need to pay the required minimum user charges but also participate effectively in the planning process", said Professor V S Vyas, former Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission (Rajasthan).

He stated this in the fourth Mayors' Conference organised in Jaipur on September 14, 2016 by CUTS in collaboration with Directorate of Local Bodies, Government of Rajasthan, under 'Rajasthan City Mayors' Learning Platform'. He said that Local Self Government need to further explore the possibilities of introducing some more taxes like professional taxes etc. to ensure maximum revenue collection.



Metro to Run till 10.25 PM

The Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) will operate services till 10:25 pm between October 01 to October 31, 2016 during the festival month of Diwali.

The extension of the timings will help passengers who need to travel to the walled city area for shopping and visiting religious places.

The last train from *Chandpole* will leave at 10 pm and reach *Mansarovar* at 10:25 pm. Similarly, last train from *Mansarovar* station will leave at 9:45 pm and would reach *Chandpole* at 10:10 pm. (Tol, 01.10.16)

Rooftop Solar Panels at Metro Stations

Going green in its second year of operations, Jaipur Metro has decided to set up rooftop solar panels at eight elevated Metro stations on its 9.25-km-long corridor between *Mansarovar* and *Chandpole*.

The power generated by 200-kWp 'Rooftop Solar Power Plant' will be used to meet the requirements at the Metro stations and would reduce its dependence on non-renewable sources. The JMRC has received a proposal from the Centre under its scheme to install the rooftop solar panels. (Tol, 13.09.16)

Metro Clears Final Hurdle

The JMRC has cleared the final hurdle as its second tunnel has also crossed the State monument *Isar Lat* in the walled city without causing any damage.

The entire operation of constructing two underground tunnels between *Chandpole* to *Badi Chaupar* (2.789 km), under Jaipur Metro Rail (phase-I B) project, was meticulously monitored online and simultaneously by the technicians in Jaipur, Delhi and experts at Athens, Greece. (Tol, 10.09.16)

Plans to Review Metro-II DPR

The JMRC is planning to appoint an international firm to review the detailed project report (DPR) of Jaipur Metro phase-II proposed between *Ambabari* and *Sitapura*.

For the 24-km-long corridor, six firms were short-listed, which will submit the technical and financial bids by October 20, 2016.

Ashwani Saxena, Director (project) of JMRC said, "Out of 22 companies, we have short-listed six international firms, which will submit request for proposal". (Tol, 07.09.16)

Metro Fines Commuters for Violating Rules

Nearly 100 Metro passengers per month on average were penalised for violating safety and sanitation rules set by JMRC in the last 14 months. Several penalised riders were those who were found spitting and throwing garbage on metro stations.

This data showing a poor civic sense of Metro riders and underlining their attempt to put lives at risk was released by Jaipur Metro. It said that 1400 Metro riders



have been fined under Metro Railway (Operation and Safety) Act 2002 for violation of various rules enforced. (DNA, 17.08.16)

Centre Scraps Metro Aid

In a major setback for the JMRC, the Centre has cancelled the sanctioned financial assistance of about ₹627 crore after the State Government failed to sign the memorandum of understanding (MoU) for Metro phase I (B).

This has come at a time when the Metro is facing huge operational losses, expected to reach up to ₹29 crore in current financial year by an optimistic calculation. The JMRC was expecting financial aid from the Centre in the form of equity, but due to 'delay' in signing the agreement, the Centre has decided to cancel funds. (Tol, 01.08.16)

Metro's Green Drive

Jaipur Metro planted 1,000 saplings as part of the *Van Mahotsav* held recently in Jaipur. To keep the newly planted plants alive for a longer time, this plantation drive was organised in Jaipur.

With an aim of converting the idea of 'Green Metro Clean Metro' into reality, first time *Van Mahotsav* was organised at *Mansarovar Depot*, after operations of Metro. To keep a record of these new plants, various departments were given to name around 1,000 plants. (DNA, 01.08.16)

Survey Seeking Public Views

Nearly 37 percent of commuters in an online survey suggested JMRC to take up *Sitapura-Ambabari* Metro line project at the earliest that is struggling to come out of papers owing to sluggishness of bureaucracy and lack of will.

The Metro body had started an online survey inviting public to open up their views on one year of Metro operations completed on June 03, 2016. In the survey, nearly 464 persons voted and gave their opinions on future expectations from JMRC and their feedback on Metro services on *Mansarovar-Chandpole* route. (DNA, 30.06.16)

Rajasthan Crosses Policy Challenges

Sahil Makkar*



Rajasthan has implemented a series of labour, industry and legal reforms, and received investment proposals worth 3.5 lakh crore



In another two and a half years, Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje will seek a fresh mandate from voters for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, it might be difficult for her to repeat the success of the 2013 assembly elections, in which her party had won a landslide victory by winning 163 seats out of a total of 200 seats.

Raje will face difficulties on two counts. First, she may not be able to reap the benefits of the so-called Modi wave that catapulted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to power at the Centre in 2014 and helped the BJP form Governments in other states, such as Jharkhand and Haryana. Raje's second challenge will be the anti-incumbency factor. Over the past two decades, people have alternately voted the BJP and the Congress to power in Rajasthan; neither party has won two consecutive elections.

Political analysts indicate that Raje is well aware of these challenges, and is taking measures to counter them. Among Raje's major outreach programmes was *Sarkar Aapke Dwar* (government at your doorsteps). She camped in Bharatpur, Bikaner and Udaipur cities of Rajasthan on different occasions for two to three days along with her Cabinet Ministers and senior bureaucrats, directly hearing the complaints of the people.

Though the programme had the right intent, it did not yield the desired results. Soon after the programme in Bharatpur, Raje's party lost three of the four assembly by-elections.

People also rejected Raje's idea of shutting down neighbourhood schools to pool resources at one school. This did not hold back the Raje Government from taking some tough decisions, which included involving the private sector in running state-owned primary healthcare centres,

schools and diagnostic centres through public-private partnerships (PPPs).

PPPs were also started in tourism, solar power and transportation. Raje blames it on the financial mismanagement of the previous Ashok Gehlot-led Congress Government. She mentioned that of every ₹100 earned, ₹95 is spent in paying salaries, pensions and debt. The remaining ₹5 is used for development work. This explains the rationale behind her Government's decision to outsource most services to the private sector.

At present, the State's power distribution companies have debts of ₹80,000 crore, and Rajasthan's fiscal deficit is 3.1 percent of its gross state domestic product (GSDP).

With limited fiscal space to manoeuvre in, the Raje Government will find it difficult to roll out more social schemes before the coming assembly elections, unless it cuts back on spending. Some in the State Government feel that attracting more investment is the only way to fuel economic growth.

In the past two and a half years, Rajasthan has announced labour, industry and legal reforms that helped the State sign investment proposals aggregating ₹3.5 lakh crore during the recently-held 'Resurgent Rajasthan Summit' in Jaipur.

Raje believes that these investments could help create 250,000 jobs. Though she has reached out to industrialists in China, Singapore, Korea and Russia, the policies announced by her Government are still taking root in the State. "We will not announce anything new. In the following two and a half years, our focus will be on implementing all the reforms and policies announced by us", said the Chief Minister.

(* Journalist at Business Standard. This has been abridged from an article published on August 22, 2016)

Sources: BS: Business Standard; BL: The Hindu Business Line; DNA: The Daily New & Analysis; ET: The Economic Times; HT: The Hindustan Times; QM: QuestionMore; OC: OddityCentral; TH: The Hindu; Tol: Times of India