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CityMatters

CUTS International

Demonetisation – The Jury is Still Out



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Let me begin by wishing you a Healthy and Productive New Year. How 2017 will evolve is anybody's guess, so everyone needs all the luck. The year 2016 was quite turbulent to say the least, both within our country and outside. Many tectonic changes happened, which will have a huge impact on the future.

UK voted to leave the European Union, while the US unexpectedly elected Donald Trump as its new President. Trump has no political experience and did not cover himself with glory during the campaigning. Even today, both the issues continue to be debated heatedly.

Both happenings were manifestations of public sentiments of anti-elitism; anti-establishment and anti-globalisation. At home, the government demonetised bulk of our currency – ₹500 and ₹1000 notes – overnight in a secret move. Surprisingly, the common person welcomed the move as s/he felt that it is the rich who are being rightly hauled up. They did not mind standing in queues, again and again, to draw their own money.

There were few immediate downsides of decreasing consumption and bad impact on the poor, farmers, daily wagers and so on. The government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) handled it badly. Nearly 90 notices were issued in 50 days and we were unable to replace the currency in the right speed or quantity. The problem continues today. The idea of curbing corruption is impossible where it has never been treated as an undesirable attribute of people in our age-old culture of *dasturi* and *bakshish*.

However, the silver lining was that the digital payment space got a big boost. Efforts are on to make our markets cashlite. Our bigger problem is its payment infrastructure and culture, which will take time to settle. My own experience with a Paytm transaction of ₹380 to buy a packet of tea was quite shocking. I got two SMSes, one indicating that there is an additional charge or addition of ₹33 to my account, nearly 8.6 percent. Later, it was reversed. But even an educated person like me was flummoxed. Just imagine the plight of millions of our illiterate brethren.

One does not know whether the tectonic move was right or wrong. It has been defined as very good by some and very bad by some. This included eminent economists like Amartya Sen and Jagdish Bhagwati. Politicians have gone hammer and tongs against and in favour, both. Clearly ideological and collateral factors have played a big role in all cases. But, the jury is still out in terms of its actual impact.

However, the venerable institution of the RBI has taken a big hit of credibility as it followed the government's diktat on demonetisation blindly. It did not even do a cost-benefit analysis of the move so as to take the call judiciously. The RBI and Finance Ministry are currently being hauled up by the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee to explain. We will be wiser once this process is over by January end or when the reports are made public, which should be very soon.



Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Clean India Campaign

For success of the *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Campaign), awareness among public has to be created, so that it becomes a *Jan Andolan* (public protest), Union Urban Development Minister Venkaiah Naidu said.



Stressing on adopting a three-pronged approach to maintain cleanliness in the country, he said, "First awareness should be created among masses, basic amenities, and toilets in public places should be provided. Then emphasis should be laid on imposing fines on those violating the rules".

Naidu also said the government would showcase short films on *Swachh Bharat* in cinema theatres for more awareness and making India cleaner by 2019.

(HT, 10.10.16)

Largest Presence in US Congress

Indian Americans have the largest ever presence in the US Congress presently and the community has got its first Senator in Kamala Harris, who won from California (US). While the Democratic Party faced crushing defeat at the hands of Republican insurgent Donald Trump for Presidency, Indian American leaders in the party have made a mark in recent elections.

Besides Senator-elect Harris, Ami Bera, the lone member of the outgoing House has won his California seat narrowly. However Raja Krishnamurthi from Chicago, Pramila Jaypal from Washington and Ro Khanna from California will be fresh Indian Americans faces in the US legislature. (TH, 10.11.16)

Low Tolerance Threshold

India has "lost the right to humour, the right to parody" due to "low threshold" of tolerance of speech, Delhi High Court Justice S Muralidhar said. He stated that it is time to push for a higher threshold for what is hate speech.

The judge also discussed the complications caused due to increasing use of internet-based communications

technology, in deciding court cases. He added that the cyber space with its social media was a "space for discourse" but "too many people" were "jostling for control of speech".

(IE, 19.11.16)

Excessive Whatsapp-ing Threats

Doctors are seeing increasing number of threats due to excessive Whatsapp. These days, young people are excessively addicted to social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp.

They are constantly using smart phones and tablets for texting, which has led to an increase over the past few years in the number of people complaining of aches and pains in their fingers, thumbs and hands.

Those who indulge in long duration texting on social media and gaming on smartphones can suffer from wrist and finger joint pain and sometimes crippling arthritis of fingers.

(DNA, 14.10.16)

Racing to Glory

They spent most of their lives in relative obscurity. Now, at the far end of their journey, they have covered



themselves in sporting glory. **Fauja Singh** and **Mann Kaur** – both centenarian runners – hold the world record in their respective events.

Fauja Singh holds the world record for the fastest marathon by a centenarian and even at 105, he runs 5 miles daily. While 100-year-old Mann Kaur from Chandigarh, Punjab recently hit the headlines by becoming the world's fastest centenarian at the American Masters Games in Vancouver, British Columbia. (HT, 09.10.16)

Enjoying Booming Trade

As more and more people flock to city's private detective agencies to dig out details about their prospective spouses, the agencies are making big bucks by offering range of 'pre-

matrimonial investigations' including checks on lifestyle, health issues and drug addiction of their clients' would-be bride or groom.

Prerak Paliwal, who runs a Jaipur-based investigation agency, said that clients hand over the task of verifying the background of their potential spouse to him.



"Most arranged marriages are through matrimonial websites or through any family member. This increases the risk of cheating", he added. (Tol, 24.10.16)

Pirated Books Like Medals

Celebrated author Paulo Coelho, a known advocate of pirated books, feels piracy is like a medal to any writer whose biggest reward is being read. The Brazilian author of bestselling novels like *The Alchemist*, *Eleven Minutes*, *Adultery*, *Like the Flowing River* etc. said that some call this 'piracy'.

He also posted a picture of boy selling books on a road along with his tweet. Piracy is a huge problem faced by India's publishing industry. "Piracy is widespread, with virtually every street in the country home to stalls selling pirated texts", Coelho added.

(BL, 08.11.16)

Living beyond 125 Years

Humans are unlikely to live longer than 125 years old and even advances in medical sciences will not break through the barrier, a huge study has concluded. Since the 19th century average life expectancy has risen almost continuously, with a baby born today expected to live until 81, compared to just 50 years in 1900.



The march of improvement in longevity led many scientists, such as Harvard's Prof David Sinclair, to speculate that there is no upper limit on how long humans can live for.

(HT, 09.10.16)

Observing 'Plastic Hartal'

Giving the word *hartal* (protest) a positive twist, the district administration of north Indian town Kanpur and the *Panchayat* (village council) called for a plastic *hartal* on December 08, 2016. The day will mark the district-level inauguration of the *Haritha Keralam* mission.

The *hartal* is a continuation of the campaign against plastic carry bags. The drive to collect cleaned plastic carry bags and other plastic waste from households has been underway since December 01, 2016. Under the initiative, plastic waste from households is brought to collection points in schools to be sent for recycling. (TH, 04.12.16)

'Post Truth' Word of the Year

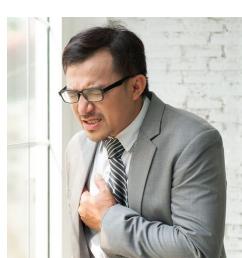
With political upheavals like the election of Donald Trump to the US Presidency and Brexit, Oxford Dictionaries has declared 'post truth' to be its international word of the year citing a 2,000 percent spike in its usage.

The word is an adjective, defined in the dictionary as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief". The usage of the word has increased by around 2,000 percent since 2015, according to the dictionary's research.

(Mint, 17.11.16)

Wearable Device to Predict Stroke

A wearable device that can predict a patient getting an episode of heart failure or brain stroke is on the anvil. The device, developed by UK-based company Cambridge Heartware, gives real time diagnosis of abnormal heart rhythms that may cause a heart problem and lead to a paralytic stroke.



Developed by Indian origin researcher Rameen Shakur and team from the University of Cambridge (UK) have claimed that the high-tech and cost-effective device is suitable for Asian countries. The device monitors and gives out parameters that are key contributors to an impending heart episode. (BL, 03.11.16)

Dispose of Your 'Stash'

As India scrambled to figure out what to do with ₹500 and ₹1,000 currency notes after the Indian government announced that these bank notes would be withdrawn from circulation starting November 08, 2016 midnight, marketers fell over themselves to announce offers, so that consumers could quickly dispose of their 'stash'.

"Our stores are open till midnight today for shopping", messaged Indian leading super market, 'Big Bazaar' after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement. "Could not withdraw cash earlier? Walk into any 'Dunkin Donuts', get 25 percent off on payment through credit/debit cards", messaged the doughnut brand. (BS, 16.11.16)

Pigmentation due to Social Structure

What causes your skin colour to be darker or lighter? Scientists say that this is in one's genes and have established a genetic link to the skin colour.



Kumarasamy Thangaraj at the CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad (Telangana) in collaboration with Estonian Biocentre published some insights into this phenomenon 'The Journal of Investigative Dermatology'. The authors found that social structure defined by the caste system has a "profound influence on skin pigmentation".

(BL, 21.10.16)

Tree Saviour Youngsters

Around 10pm almost every alternate day, Ahmedabad's west zone becomes abuzz with unique activity. A group of tree-lover youngsters armed with hammers, ladders and pluckers – move from tree to tree in a particular area zeroed for that night pulling out advertisement boards and banners nailed to the trunks and branches.

Ritesh Sharma, a founding-member of Highly Energised Youth for Helping Indians (HeyHI) said that by removing the nails, they add years to the trees'



lives. HeyHI has so far covered over 2,800 trees and removed nearly 100 kg of nails. (HT, 24.12.16)

Resetting Ageing Clock

At the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California (US), scientists are trying to get biological time to run backward. In the first attempt to reverse ageing by reprogramming the genome, mice organs have been rejuvenated and has lengthened their life spans by 30 percent.

The technique, which requires genetic engineering, cannot be applied directly to people, but the achievement points towards the possibility of rejuvenating human tissues by other means. "If this remarkable finding holds up it will be quite important in the history of ageing research", said Leonard Guarente of Massachusetts Institute of Technology. (HT, 17.12.16)

Flip-flop Gandhi

A handful of lucky ones received spanking new ₹2,000 notes as the rest of India continued to queue up in front of banks and ATMs to exchange their old ₹500 and ₹1,000 currency notes that became illegal tender since



November 09, 2016. Naturally, the new magenta notes, printed in Mysuru, sparked curiosity among people.

The new notes also had the image of Mahatma Gandhi. It was found that the image of Gandhi on the new series note was a mirror image of the previous series. Did someone out there simply flip the image? (BS, 15.11.16)

CUTS Gets 'Swachh Rajasthan Award 2016'

CUTS International received the 'Swachh Rajasthan Award 2016' from the Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje for its contribution to improve the quality of urban service delivery through civic engagement and to make Rajasthan 'Clean and Smart'.

George Cherian, Director and Amar Deep Singh, Project Coordinator of CUTS received the award from the Chief Minister in the 'Clean and



Smart Rajasthan' conference organised by Department of Local Self Government, Government of Rajasthan on December 22, 2016 at Udaipur.

CUTS has implemented a project named 'MyCity' in

Jaipur to enhance quality of urban services delivery through enhanced civic engagement, which resulted in successful community participation in urban services.

Cabinet to Go Digital

In yet another move towards digital future, the Rajasthan Government has decided to make cabinet meetings a paperless affair. As part of the integrated Raj e-office application, an application 'e-Cabinet' has been developed by the IT department. This would enable uploading of memos by departments and release final cabinet orders.

Besides helping the government shift to e-Cabinet meetings, the application will do away with huge files, cut down time and remove ambiguity in government decisions. The submission of documents and cabinet memos by each department to the cabinet secretariat will be done online. *(Tol, 22.12.16)*

Life Savers' Awarded

At a time when numbers of vehicles are continuously increasing in the capital city of Rajasthan, ambulances transporting patients are facing a difficult task to reach hospitals. But, those aware that giving way to ambulance could save life of a patient, they promptly move their vehicles aside to allow ambulance pass through the road immediately.

Times of India newspaper in partnership with CK Birla Hospitals – Rukmani Birla Hospital (RBH), identified more than 35 such persons on city roads and awarded them

with the title 'Life Savers' by conducting mock drill of ambulance, who immediately moved their vehicles aside to give way to ambulance first. *(Tol, 25.12.16)*

Notice for Licence Renewal

Starting from the year 2017, the Jaipur Police will be sending out notifications for renewal of all types of licences through bulk messaging services. This is to ease out the complexities and reduce substantial time to renew licences.

"We have decided to send bulk messages to all licence holders three months before the renewal date. That we can get rid of the current system of manually sending letters to each person, a cumbersome task to say the least", said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Headquarters), Gaurav Shrivastav. *(Tol, 07.12.16)*

Updates on Traffic

Taking a leaf out of their counterparts in Mumbai and Bangalore, the Jaipur police are all ready to initiate on social media for real-time updates on traffic. As part of the community outreach programme, the traffic police will have their Twitter handle and a dedicated Facebook page operational round the clock, which will be closely analysed.

"Suppose there is a rally being taken out in the city, we can ask

people to not take certain routes to avoid getting stuck in traffic", said Jaipur Police Commissioner Sanjay Agarwal. *(Tol, 22.11.16)*

Alarming Pollution

Pollution levels in Jaipur continue to be 'alarming'. Recently, air pollution measured four times higher than desired levels, according to 'RajVayu' mobile application.

The move came after pollution level in National Capital Region (NCR) was measured several times above the permissible levels. Air Quality Index (AQI) measured in Jaipur was at 383 (very poor), a notch below the highest category of 'severe'. As per health advisory, people with heart or lung diseases, older adults and children should reduce prolonged or heavy outdoor work. *(Tol, 09.11.16)*

Check on High-rise Buildings

The Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha has promised that the government would not approve high-rise buildings near airports in Rajasthan after meeting with the Chief Minister.

The No Objection Certificate (NoC) to construct buildings near Jodhpur, Jaipur and Udaipur (Rajasthan) airports will be issued only in special cases after consulting the security aspect with the district administration.

Discussions were also made to construct a VIP terminal near the State hangar in Jaipur. *(Tol, 28.10.16)*

Solace in Police App

From a new milkman roaming in their locality to neighbours, elderly citizens who are living alone in the city find almost everyone a threat, and the Jaipur city police's new mobile App is working overtime to lend a helping hand to these residents.

"The idea behind launching a dedicated mobile App for citizens was to create confidence building measures among scores of elderly people living alone. Vikas Pathak, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) stated that over 60 elderly people registered themselves on the recently launched application. *(Tol, 06.10.16)*



'Walled City' Basement Parking

The Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) has proposed to develop first underground parking in the Walled City under the Metro Phase I (B) project.

The JMRC has also proposed to develop a mini-market area for retail shops above the parking area. This will be constructed in the 300 m area near Ramganj over the reversal line (Metro) Badi Chaupar and Mansarovar.

JMRC Project Director Ashwani Saxena said, "The State Government has given in principal for construction of market and retail shops". (Tol, 26.12.16)

LEDs in Place of Sodium Lights

Continuing its efforts to save electricity, the JMRC has decided to replace all sodium lights at Vivek Vihar Metro station with light-emitting diode (LED) lights. This would save JMRC's ₹8 lakh per month. Currently, 56 kWh is consumed at this Metro station and after installing LED lights, the consumption will be 26 kWh.

The estimate cost to install these lights will be ₹14 lakh. The JMRC is setting an example for other government departments to save energy". (Tol, 12.12.16)

Rooftop Solar Panels

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

The power generated by 2,500-kwp 'Rooftop Power Plant' will be used to meet all the requirements at the stations in day time and would reduce its dependence on non-renewable sources. This will be the biggest solar plant, and will produce 2.5 lakh units meeting the requirement of the stations in day time. (Tol, 03.12.16)

4G Net Facilities Soon

The commuters at Jaipur Metro will get access to seamless 4G internet connection by year end. By enhancing the internet speed, JMRC will become the first Metro in the country to provide the facility.

JMRC Director (Operations), C S Jeengar said, "The mobile in-built solution device will be installed by the end of this year". The high internet speed will be provided at all the nine Metro stations. Currently, the passengers can use this facility only after getting themselves registered. (Tol, 18.11.16)

Protest against Heritage

The underground Jaipur Metro corridor Phase I (B), which has already been delayed by three months is expected to be delayed further as Walled City residents and Dharhohar Bachao Samiti (Heritage Protecting Committee) announced Jaipur Bandh on November 15, 2016.



Dhruv Mukhi Hanuman, Amneshwar Mahadev, Ganesh temple, Hanuman temple and Jambheshwar Mahadev temple becoming a hindrance in constructing the Metro corridor, JMRC administration is planning to relocate these temples before December 15, 2016.

(Tol, 14.11.16)

2018 Deadline Missed

The Jaipur Metro phase I(B) is all set to miss its March 2018 deadline. Work on 2.349 km project in Walled City has been delayed due to various reasons. However, the prime cause of delay is due to design change of two underground stations.

Therefore, the project is expected to be completed by June 2018. Announcement of revised deadline was made by Urban Development and Housing (UDH) Minister Rajpal Singh Shekhawat after he inspected the project for the first time along with Principal Secretary of UDH, Mukesh Sharma and Ashwani Saxena of JMRC . (Tol, 09.11.16)

Parking App at Metro Station

Soon, one can book a parking slot in Mansarovar Metro station even before reaching there. Driving around in search of an empty spot to park a four-wheeler or two-wheeler at this Metro station could soon be thing of the past as JMRC is planning to start a service through which motorists and drivers will be able to identify vacant spots on their mobile.

For the first time in Jaipur, a mobile application will guide drivers at Mansarovar Metro station where to park and allow them to pay on phone for the parking". (Tol, 29.10.16)

Firm 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 said, "Out of 22 companies, we have short-listed six international firms, which will submit request for proposal (RFP). The companies participated are from Korea, US, Spain and Japan". (Tol, 14.11.16)

Government's Massive Move for Water Conservation Campaign

Mukhya Mantri Jal Swawlamban Abhiyan



Rajasthan is the largest State of the country with an area of 343 lakh hectare. Out of this, only 168 lakh hectare is arable land. The State has 101 lakh hectare of land under wasteland. Moreover, 75 percent of its rural population depends on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood, hence in light of these conditions – there is need of *Mukhya Mantri Jal Swawlamban Abhiyan* (MJSA) to utilise the Four Waters – Rainfall, Runoff, Ground Water and In-situ Soil Moisture keeping Watershed or Cluster/Index Catchment as a unit for western Rajasthan where there is scanty rainfall and no defined drainage lines.

MJSA has been launched in Rajasthan with the vision to ensure effective implementation of water harvesting and water conservation related activities in the rural areas using a holistic approach, informed by the values of leadership, moral responsibility, excellence, innovation, partnership and purity.

The 'crowdsourcing' campaign aims to enable over 21,000 villages in arid Rajasthan to become self-reliant for their water needs by 2020. The flagship programme has been promoted by the Chief Minister personally, with sustained appeals to various sections of the society, including citizens, Non-government Organisations (NGOs), corporate, caste and religious leaders and the media, to contribute to it.

MJSA is being extended in urban areas of the State with the vision to ensure effective implementation of water harvesting and water conservation related activities in the urban areas. The programme is being designed in such a way that everything from planning to execution shall be followed in a participatory approach down to the city community level. Chief Minister had directed Chairperson, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and Water Resource Planning Authority (WRPA) to start the MJSA in urban areas also with MJSA phase-II i.e. from November 16, 2016. About 66 cities will be taken in phase-I for MJSA (urban) subject to maximum of two cities from one district.

Projects in cities with population of more than 1 lakh will be taken up in phased manner year-wise up to June 2019, for other cities, all project/works will be completed before June 30, 2017. Requiring a budget of ₹3,600 crore for the first phase of the campaign, ending June 30, 2016, the programme has been estimated to be falling short by ₹1,200 crore.

Work of Roof Top Water Harvesting in all government buildings/departments having roof top area 300 sq. m or more shall be done by concerned department at their own expenses. The statutory requirement of making water harvesting structure, compulsory in the buildings with built up area of 300 sq. m or more in urban areas may be strictly enforced by Urban Local Bodies/Development Authorities/Urban Improvement Trusts.

To start with, all government buildings (official, institutional and residential) may be equipped with Roof Top Rain Water Harvesting Structures (RTRWHS) converting these buildings in to green buildings. The Water Harvesting structure should also include a *Jal Mandir* with drinking water vending for visitors, which would have utility value as well as educative content.

Meanwhile, Rajasthan has become the third Indian State after Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh to formally join Centre's Ujal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) scheme meant for revival of distribution companies (Discoms) and it will help the State "save ₹21,000 crore in the following three years". UDAY will help Rajasthan save ₹21,000 crore over the following three years. The savings well ultimately help power consumers through lower tariffs", Power Minister Piyush Goyal stated after Rajasthan and its Discoms inked Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Central Government to join the scheme.

Raje hopes this will be met using crowdsourcing resources, with participation from citizens and other concerned organisations.

(This has been adapted from <http://mjsa.water.rajasthan.gov.in/#>)

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