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Two 4-letter Words Dotting the City's Roads



Google Images

Signboards carrying two 4-letter words have been dotting the city's roads for quite some time. They are responsible for digging up the roads and creating some amount of discomfort to road users. One is good news and the other not so good. The good news is the one carrying the initials: PHED or the Public Health Engineering Department. It is laying down pipelines for fresh water supplies from the Bisalpur project. Jaipur badly needs a steadier source of water supply, now that the sole source at Ramgarh is just not capable of coping with the increasing demand.



The other: Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) is not such good news, because it is a project to create dedicated lanes for buses on major arterial roads. It is not good news because of several reasons. One is that the traffic culture in Jaipur is so bad that it will only lead to more chaos. The other reason is that the existing roads in more than half the stretch are already so narrow that the balance of the road will have to carry a mixed traffic of slow and fast moving vehicles, jaywalkers etc. who will be jostling with others all the time (*please see page 2*).

In principle, the BRTS is a good thing, as we have seen in Bogota, Colombia. It expands the choice of travellers to use public transport if they are assured that they will reach their destinations faster than their own vehicles. It will thus be also good for the environment. Alas, what we have not considered are the issues mentioned before. Prof. Klaus Banse who worked extensively on the BRTS in Bogota advised against "carbon copying" the Bogota model.

The BRTS model has already been implemented in New Delhi and been in controversy. Terming the BRTS in the capital as a "failure", a Parliamentary Committee in December 2008 has suggested that the Delhi government scrap other five approved BRT corridors and asked other cities too to exercise caution. The 13-member Standing Committee of Urban Development headed by MP, Mohammed Salim expressed the view that a thorough scientific study of each city should be undertaken before implementing BRTS. However, these recommendations have not dissuaded our governments to step back.

If one looks at either Delhi or Jaipur or even the other eight cities where the BRTS is being implemented, the number of motorised 2- and 4-wheeler population is rising fast, and owners of these will hesitate to move to a BRTS mode. On the other hand, dedicated bus corridors can also be misused. In Delhi, government vehicles with or without red lights have been seen zipping away on the exclusive bus lanes. The same will happen in Jaipur too. And the police dare not apprehend them.

Perhaps an underground metro rail system maybe a better choice, even if it costs much more. Plans are also being discussed to have a metro in Jaipur, and that should be expedited. At the least we will not have more road accidents then.

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Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

BRTS Project: An Analysis

To streamline the public transport across 64 cities, the Planning Commission has approved Rs 4200 crore under Jawaharlal Urban Renewal Mission (JNURM). State governments that have evinced interest in becoming a part of this project have also entered into an agreement with the Central government with regard to its implementation, required infrastructure and running expenditures. The JDA plans to have BRTS functional by July 2009. It is expected to cost Rs 200 crores, half of which will come from the Central government.

Recent reports reveal that the project would hit the common man not only by the burden of extra taxation/fee planned for generating state government's share of the budget for the project but also with perceived road congestion. Proposals with regard to generating funds from a common man have already been put forth by some departments, such as:

- Renewal of driving licenses every year and the attendant annual collection of prescribed fee
- Increase in registration fee at the time of purchase of new vehicles, particularly for those driven by diesel
- Additional sale tax on petrol, etc.

In addition to the financial burden on the common man, there would arise a situation of traffic congestion due to part implementation of BRTS. As per required specifications, the road stretch along with BRT corridor should ideally have at least 100 feet wide road, but unfortunately in case of Jaipur more than 50 percent of the proposed stretch is less than that and at some places it is not even 60 feet wide.

Except the BRT stretch on the Sikar Road which got full land to make appropriate development, no corridor stretch is wide enough to hold all specific developments. To overcome this hurdle, an unusual 'Mixed Corridor' has already been proposed at all the narrow roads through which BRT would pass. The buses under BRT would ply along with the existing traffic in such mixed corridors which would be operative



After the petrol price hike, it's the next step to force motorists to take to BRT or Metro rail.

between *Panipech* and *Sahkar Bhawan* through *Chinkara*, *Collectorate Circle*, *Khasa Kothi* and *Government Hostel* and from *Rambagh* to *Gandhi Mod*. This will result in heavy congestion on all these stretches as all these roads are already busy.

In the midst of all the above the state government has been attracted towards developing a Metro Rail project for Jaipur. This has compelled JDA to re-think the ongoing BRTS development from the sustainability point of view. JDA has already delayed the development of package-3 of BRTS while the Delhi Metro

Rail Corporation is exploring the possibility of running Metro on Ajmer Road.

The feasibility of Metro Rail project should have been explored prior to providing a green signal to BRTS. In trying to ride two horses at a time, the authorities have only made matters worse. At many BRTS stretches where the work has started recently, improper planning is compromising with the safety of road users. The corridor which has been made at *Sitabari*, *Tonk Road* was completed with metallic railings but without widening the roads which is expected to be completed first. The entire stretch was witness to frequent accidents. The railings have recently been removed in the face of strong objections from the people living nearby, thereby wasting a big chunk from project funds. Similar resistance was faced at several other locations where people raised their voices against demolition of some structures coming in the way of BRT track.

The government along with the concerned departments has made numerous changes to the prescribed model of BRT. Whether the modified BRT will really solve the existing chaotic traffic problems in Jaipur or it will contribute towards additional road congestions remains to be seen.

TCS Project

Measures Suggested for Implementation

CUTS and the Lund University, Sweden, are implementing a project entitled, 'Traffic Calming Strategies (TCS) to Improve Pedestrian Safety in India', with the support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

One research component in the TCS project was selection of sites. The proposed measures to be implemented at the seven sites were submitted to the JDA and JMC. Other six sites: *Sodala Thana*, *Shanti Path*, *Vaishali Nagar*, *Khirmi Phatak*, *4 No. Dispensary*, *Kumba Marg*, and *Bhaskar Marg* were identified to analyse the traffic conflicts and come up with some more new suggestions with regard to calming the traffic and contributing towards reducing the accidents.

The Swedish team visited Jaipur during February-March 2009 and it has been decided to commence with some interesting measures especially for the busy intersections of residential areas, hence an intersection on *Bhaskar Marg* was chosen to work on. The idea is to create an 'inverted plate type circular hump' occupying most of the intersection area, allowing all the passing vehicles to encounter and develop a tendency to apply brakes while crossing such intersections.

The JMC has lauded the concept of reducing the speed of vehicles inside the colonies/residential areas and visited the proposed site. If the proposed model is accepted, it would be effective towards reducing speed in the residential areas.

City Mobility Plan: Initiatives to Improve Parking

Jaipur has swiftly developed as one of the 23 metropolitan cities in India and is witnessing an ever-increasing population together with high traffic volume growing between 6-12 percent per annum. Inadequate and improper parking facilities within the city have been a major cause of concern and the issue has been raised on numerous occasions. The problem has been persistent mainly due to lackadaisical attitude of the traffic police and the JDA and/or irresponsible mind-set of the people.

Jaipurites, however, may soon witness an improved parking facility within the city. This can be said considering the numerous discussions held and concern shown by the JDA, Department of Transport and traffic police to devise a blueprint for sustainable mobility in the city.

To bring in a fresh approach to improve parking scenario in Rajasthan, Transport Minister for State, BK Sharma recently conducted a meeting of the Integrated Metropolitan Transport Authority and Executive Council. He informed about the new City Mobility Plan (CMP) which will be executed in 20 big cities of Rajasthan with population of more than one lakh. The plan has been designed to ensure participation of heads and members of local bodies that will address the urban development needs for the next 20 years.

The mobility plan has been aimed to achieve rationalisation of routes and improved parking arrangements in the cities. Jaipur is one of the 20 cities of Rajasthan identified under the CMP. The Minister also discussed the possibility of underground parking arrangements in the walled city in order to ease the strain in congested areas.

Pursuing this objective further, the state government is planning to conduct research to improve parking scenario in



Jaipur which was discussed in the meeting of Traffic Control Board chaired by Commissioner, JDA, Umesh Kumar. It was decided to formulate a new parking policy keeping in view, among others, problems arising due to amendments required in the present Building Regulation. A proposed base paper on the issue will be drafted soon and parking rules will be changed.

JDA has also planned to do research and study the Regulation executed in other states of India to bring change in the current JDA Building Regulation 2000. Additionally, current provisions of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) in states like Maharashtra and Karnataka will be studied to provide benefit to builders who can provide more parking spaces. TDR provides government with a provision to take land from any private owner of the property who will then receive Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The owner will be able to sell the FAR to one or more builders. As a result, the government will get bonus land to be utilised for public and the owner too will not be losers.

Looking at the trend of development of commercial activities in residential buildings, the government has started working on a new parking policy where buildings with no parking facility will be seized and action will be taken against such builders.

In another recent development, the state government is planning to invite proposals on the basis of build, own and transfer (BOT) from private sectors to develop government land for well defined parking areas. Instructions have been issued to identify such government lands on which parking space can be developed considering the increasing demand for the same. Private sector will then develop these areas and charge fee from people using the space.

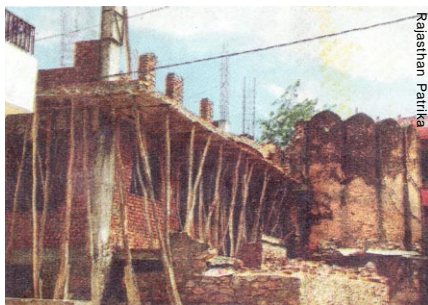
The traffic police has also highlighted causes of traffic congestion on many occasions and is working towards implementing ways to ensure safe and convenient traffic system in the city. Besides removing vehicles from no parking zones to systematise traffic in the city, the traffic police have been assigned with a new task of identifying marriage gardens devoid of proper parking facility. The traffic police have also recommended laying down specific hours for rallies/processions which will assist in avoiding traffic jams and inconvenience to common man.

Mobility works as a fuel to keep the life cycles of the city moving. CMP is an integrated idea which consists of various elements to sustain mobility in a city. This will be a good measure for congestion control and will include the innovative logistic solutions for optimising the transport of people and goods.

Why is JMC Quiet on Encroachment?

Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) is spending crores of rupees through the JNURM to improve the condition of the walled city but is surprisingly silent on numerous encroachments taking place right under its nose.

As per the High Court orders, no encroachment can be made within a radius of 15 metres of the walled city and the monuments. In spite of the orders, city walls have been dismantled and the Corporation is mutely observing illegal encroachments.



Construction of new residential buildings on the city walls are another cause of distress and reveal the ease with which the encroachments are flourishing. JMC has exhausted nearly Rs 3crores under the JNURM's project 'Urban Renewal of Walled City' to refurbish parts of old city. (RP, 05.04.09)

Flaws in Redressal Mechanism

Sampark – Jaipur City Grievance Management System was launched a year ago by the Department of Local Self Governance to support multi-channel (voice/mail/web/SMS) registration of complaints pertaining to public services like sanitation, sewer line, road lights, removal of dead bodies of stray animals and others.

Under this, a citizen can inquire the status of his/her complaint in real time without visiting offices of various civic authorities. Provision of resolving a registered complaint within 48 hours had received appreciation by its first time users.

Over time this redressal system has thrown up various constraints that need to be sorted out. Flaws in the website, for instance, have not been rectified. People cannot lodge a complaint as the website does not accept another complaint in the same name. (RP, 09.04.09)

Garbage as a Source of Energy



The JMC is planning to start a project for generating power through fermentation of garbage. An outline of the project has been prepared after studying similar projects with municipal corporations of Bangalore, Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

Chief Executive Officer of JMC, Damodar Sharma said that the city presently generated over 1,100 metric tonnes of garbage daily which is collected at the landfill site in Mathura Daspura. This site has been used to dump the garbage for the past 30 years, and hence is found suitable as the first power generation site.

JMC has already planned to opt for an efficient process of 'blasting garbage methane' to produce power and has acquired another site at Langariawas to be used as an additional dumping ground for city's garbage. (HT, 09.04.09)

Auto Problem – 'Invisible' Menace

The auto menace in the city has largely remained an invisible problem. The Regional Transport Office has received only two complaints of the 10,000 auto rickshaws on the roads of Jaipur. Reports disclosed that out of the total number of auto rickshaws available in the town, less than 20 percent are installed with meters, a majority of which never function properly.



Not only these three wheelers are a great threat to the passengers' pockets but are also contributing to pollution since they repair their autos only once a year, i.e. before they have to pass the fitness test to gain delivery permit for a year.

The transport department has opened a grievance cell where harassed passengers can file their complaints mentioning the auto's registration number against which timely action is assured. (HT, 14.05.09 & 16.04.09)

Women Demanding Water Supply

The notorious water works department of Jaipur faced a strong agitation in March 2009 by the housewives of Jhalana village. These women were demanding supply of water as their taps had been dry for four days.

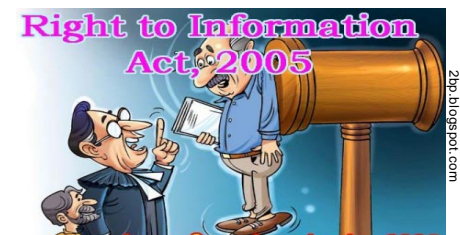


The residents of Jhalana have already lodged several complaints in this regard. Though, there is a water tank of the said department but it has never been utilised and water is directly supplied by tube-wells, which remain non-functional for most of the time.

Agitating women approached the Malviya Nagar Water Works Department and captured the office and chair of the Engineer. After receiving assurance from him, they left. As per the latest information, water tank is being filled for supply. (DB, 19.03.09)

RTI Monitoring Compliance

The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) has prepared a draft document for the JMC to enable it to improve delivery of services and monitor timely completion of works through "self-disclosure" under the Right to Information Act, 2005.



The document will ensure people's access to vital information about the urban body. PRIA has prepared the self-disclosure manual for JMC under Section 4(1) (b) of the Right to Information Act and submitted it to the JMC head office.

The initiative approved by the JMC would facilitate participation of Jaipur residents in running the urban local body. (TH, 31.03.09)

Sources: DB: Dainik Bhaskar; RP: Rajasthan Patrika; TH: The Hindu; HT: Hindustan Times