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# CityMatters

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## Buttressing Airport Facilities for Expanding Tourism

One critical issue which can help create more jobs in Rajasthan is tourism, and all that goes into enabling it to happen more comfortably. The state has taken a step forward in addressing a key concern, i.e. aviation fuel tax, which is crucial to enable more flights to operate in Rajasthan and bring in more tourists. This is purely under the state's jurisdiction.

The tax on aviation fuel was as high as 28 percent and has now been brought down to 4 percent. I have never understood as to why the rate was so high when the taxes from aviation fuels contributed just a piddly Rs 80 crores, which is even less than 0.1 percent of the whole commercial taxes earnings of about Rs 9,000 crores per annum. Most other states in India too, charge low tax rates.

Better late than never. This step will attract airlines to use the Jaipur airport to save on fuel costs. In view of the clogging of the Delhi airport, some airlines have been mulling over the prospect of using Jaipur as a hub. That will now happen faster.

We now also have spanking new airport terminals in Jaipur and Udaipur with an expanded runway to be able to handle bigger aircrafts. This can enable large number of international flights for several reasons. Firstly, both Jaipur and Udaipur are on the international tourist map, though served mainly by domestic flights. Tourists have, therefore, to fly to Delhi and Mumbai to travel to Jaipur and/or Udaipur.

What is surprising about the two new terminals is that there are no aerobridges for passengers to walk into jet aircrafts from the security area. There are plans to do so, but has not been done until now. For smaller aircrafts, buses will still be needed because they are too low for aerobridges to serve them. For jets, the passengers have to be ferried across in buses on the airside, which means more time loss and costs to the airlines. They have to use a large number of buses and each flight means carrying the passengers in several buses.

This seems to be an anachronistic trend in our country, and can be seen even in the very busy new terminals at Delhi and Mumbai. At both the new terminals there are large number of gates for passengers to be ferried across to their jet aircrafts. It is another story that airlines are not using aerobridges at the new private Bangalore airport because of high costs. While the Jaipur and Udaipur airports are in the public sector, the Delhi, Mumbai, Kochi, Bangalore and Hyderabad airports are being managed by private sector.

The other anachronism is in the facilities on the ground side, i.e. different airlines use different x-ray machines to examine baggage which needs to be checked in. Thus, the area is crowded by these machines. The same still exists at Jaipur and Udaipur airports, while in Delhi it is now done online, i.e. you can check in your baggage at the airline counter without it going through an x-ray machine. The technology is there, and one wonders why this was not used by the Airport Authority of India at the new airports at Jaipur and Udaipur.

One hopes that the Civil Aviation Ministry will take a fresh look to address these incongruities, and enable smoother flow of passengers.



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## Can the City's Water Woes Ever be Tackled?

The water table throughout Jaipur has fallen dramatically over the past three decades and continues to decline at an alarming rate. Concentrations of nitrates in the ground water supply have also been increasing to dangerous and unacceptable levels. Four consecutive years of drought have only exacerbated the problem.

Poor management of this scarce resource is being widely reported. The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) declared Jhotwara Block as a 'Dark Zone' yet around 200 non-ISI water-manufacturing units continue to operate. Efforts made to cancel the licenses of three big water manufacturing units working without CGWB's 'no-objection certificates' have been delayed.

Supply inefficiency is mainly due to wastage through water leakage episodes in one area or the other because of decades old water pipelines. In the past few months, leakage has badly affected supply in the areas of *Ramgali* of *Rajapark ice factory*, lane close to *Kendriya Vidyalyaya 5*, *Mansarovar* where thousands of cusecs of water was wasted as the problem remained unattended for days creating water scarcity in entire area. A couple of weeks back, laying of electricity cables damaged the water pipelines at three points and adversely affected the water supply for almost 36 hours across *Sodala*.

The scourge of coloured water supply recently brought misery to more than 200 families of *Parkota* and *Char Darwaza* areas of the city. The local *dailies* frequently carried photographs of contaminated water and citizens undergoing treatment at various hospitals. When the residents reported the same to the concerned authorities they were advised to avail the facilities of water tankers, instead. The water works department outsourced supply of



water via tankers run by private hands. In last few months, it has been reported that the real supply of water per 300 houses is one tanker per day but has been documented as thrice the actual supply, creating a fake supply record of 1350 tankers a day. Such cases have frequently been identified at *Mahavaton ka Mohalla*, *Subhash Chowk*, *Ramganj*, *Shabbir Maulana ka Chowk*, *Peswali Gali*, *Babu ka Tila*, *Kadion ki Masjid*, *Machchi Market*, *Gulzar Masjid*, *Darzion ka Rasta*, *Sothlion ka Rasta*, *Hathi walon ka Chowk* and colonies opposite *Jalmahal*.

The ambitious Bisalpur Water Supply Project (BWSP) is an essential component of the government's long-term strategy to ensure a sustainable drinking water supply to the city. The initial Phase I of the BWSP is expected to reduce the city's dependence on its ground-water resources and benefit about 2.2 million people, and the system is expected to progressively expand to a level sufficient to supply about 5 million

people in the major settlement areas by the year 2021.

Apart from Bisalpur, the water works department is thinking of a high tech water project, at a cost of about Rs 40 crore, which would be financed by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation. Under the project, among others, all the existing water pipelines of the city would be identified and marked on a computerised map which would help to identify the exact location of the problem. Once this map is prepared, the city will be divided in two pilot zones through which 20,000 connections and rusted/leaked pipelines shall be replaced by new ones within a target period of two years. Following the 'Geographical Information System', the department will computerise 70 pumping stations.

The resolve of the new government to make Jaipur a 'world class city' largely depends on how this problem is addressed.



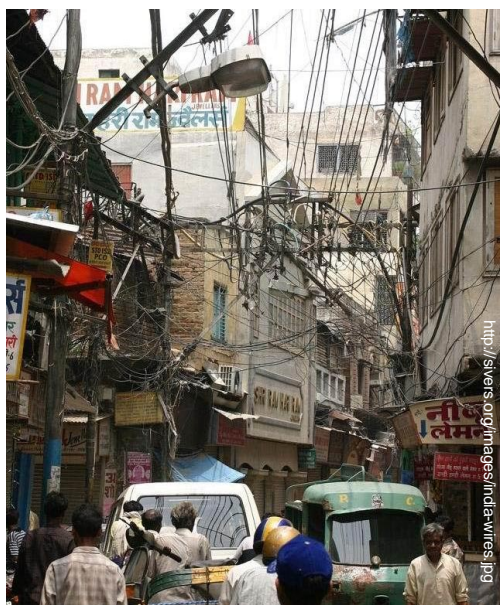
## Ensuring Consumer Safety in Power Sector

Recently, a blast was reported in some areas of Jaipur including Vaishali Nagar due to unexpected surge in the power supply that damaged numerous household electrical appliances. Such incidents of fires and damages caused by voltage fluctuations or irregular power supply mechanism are quite a common phenomenon experienced by most of us in the city.

This unsafe electric supply system on the roads has also caused harm to pedestrians and utility personnel engaged in repair and maintenance of the system. Hanging electric wires, unsealed panel boxes and transformers in various areas of Jaipur are a common sight that invite catastrophe. The *Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd. (JVVNL)* has, however, turned a blind eye in spite of receiving several consumer complaints and photographs often published in local dailies by the media.

The local government is equally responsible for this, as it must not approve house maps if construction is not planned keeping suitable distance from electric lines, poles and transformers. However, the power distribution companies have already instructed the owners of multi-storey residential and commercial buildings and cinema halls to compulsorily install dry transformers on the premises for supply of electricity. Installation of wet transformers at clogged places on the ground floor in these buildings exposes them to the risk of mishaps. New electricity connections at such places should be released only after ensuring that dry transformers along with fire-fighting equipment have been fitted.

Rajasthan is one of the pioneering states initiating power sector reforms. The main objective of reforms is to improve service delivery as well as to ensure consumer safety in the supply system. Section 53 of the Electricity Act 2003 requires utilities to ensure consumer safety in the electricity supply system. However, so far, adequate attention has not been provided to this serious problem.



In order to check the tendency on the part of consumers, it is prescribed that prior to installation of consumer's Distribution Transformer in residential and non residential complexes/large buildings, it is mandatory to get such transformers tested in the Nigam's Central Testing laboratory.

The Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) has identified 145 transformers on 37 roads and asked power supply companies to remove them and lay underground cables. However, so far there is no progress on this issue.

Rajasthan State in general, and Jaipur city, in particular suffers from very high distribution losses as well as poor and unsafe quality of supply and electrical network which is needed to be improved

by making proper capital investment on techno economic considerations to finally affect a turn around of the discom and quality services to the consumers. Feeder Renovation Programme has been conceived as one of the key activities besides other programmes to achieve this end result.

The move toward installing 132 KW hybrid Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) should be welcomed. JVVNL would construct first GIS in Sawai Man Singh Stadium at Jaipur on pilot basis. GIS is considered as a safe system that is based on advanced German technology.

Further, the government is also planning to replace the existing overhead distribution system with underground cabling by 2010. In the coming time, underground cables will be laid in the walled city, *Amber* and other posh residential colonies of the city.

Now the time has come when the state government should invest adequate money to strengthen the deteriorating distribution systems in the state. It will not only help in reducing the technical energy losses but also ensure more consumer as well safety of personnel in the system. At the same time citizens should also provide attention to this serious problem. Without proper consumer support, it is very difficult for the utility to ensure a reliable, efficient and safe supply system.

### Follow up on Suggested Measures and Future Strategies

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).

After completion of field surveys and conflict study, most reasonable and cost effective measures for traffic calming were submitted to the stakeholders. Subsequently, TCS team started with rigorous follow up to ensure implementation on the suggested measures through regular meetings and reminder presentations before the officials from JDA, Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), SP Traffic, Transport Commissioner, Addl. Collector etc. However, till date in spite of receiving verbal consent and acclaim on suggested measures by the JDC, SP Traffic and also a written recommendation by the Transport Commissioner nothing substantial has taken place.

Detailed report is being prepared on the conflicts recorded between various road users, illustrating negligence while driving, abnormal behaviour of road users, severity of observed conflicts and its remedies. This information will be incorporated in a Manual and disseminated during the workshops under the project.

This Manual would suggest simple road modifications across India to the policy makers through four regional and one national level workshops to be organised in Jaipur, Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi during October 2009.

### A Circular Market Soon!

Jaipur city may soon have a circular market at the Jawahar circle on the lines of Connaught Place at New Delhi. The market will be constructed using modern and conventional architectural pattern as found in historical monuments of the city.

The JDA is in the process of preparing a framework for this project. A committee has been formed to furnish a constructive shape to the project. The market will be designed after ensuring proper provision for greenery and parking.

Being in the vicinity of the international airport, it will be a major tourist attraction and convenient for short trip tourists. On completion, the market would provide Jaipur a special identity and distinctive place in the map of eminent tourist hot spots.

(DB, 03.6.09)

### Feel Safe on Zebra Crossing

The authorities have finally acted on the need for pedestrian safety. JDA will soon be putting special lights on Zebra crossings at all the prominent intersections of the city.

Zebra lights will enhance horizontal and vertical illumination at crossings. Generally there are 30-35 lux lights on roads whereas these special lights will generate 100-150 lux lights thereby reducing the chances of mishaps. Pedestrians will be benefited by a better visibility and drivers too will feel convenient, as the lights are antiglare.

Drivers will be able to lower speed from a safe distance seeing pedestrians using zebra crossing. JDA will be using black and yellow coloured poles so that these can be viewed from a safe distance.

(DN, 13.06.09)

### 12 New Parking Spaces for Jaipur

The Department of Urban Development, while analysing the existing and ever increasing parking problems across the city, came up with a proposal to construct 12 modern parking spaces.

The proposed parking spaces will be developed as per most modern standards at 12 locations which include *Ramlila Ground, Badi Chaupar, Atish Market, Pension Office, Chandpole Anaj Mandi*, above *Ashok Marg nallah*, at the open space available at the back of Mall 21, on the available land stretches of MGD school and Jai Club and close to Home Guard Office on *Sansar Chand Road*.

Urban Development Minister Shanti Dhariwal said that 12 most appropriate sites were identified and a detailed report justifying the needs of an advanced and multi-layered parking has already been submitted to the concerned departments. He further said that the work is expected to start by December 2009.

(MB, 19.06.09)

### Development at the Cost of Environment

About 400 lush green trees between *Pani Pech* and *Sahkar Road* and between *Tonk Road* and *Sanganer Circle* will be brought down shortly under the package 1 and 2 of the much-hyped Bus Rapid Transit

System (BRTS) project rendering thousands of birds homeless.

Albeit BRTS work is on hold but road broadening is in progression. JDA has sought consent from the district administration to cut down the trees. Eminent environmentalists have regretted this decision and have raised an alarm that removal of fully-grown trees in large numbers will definitely generate a negative impact on the ecological balance.

Concerned Jaipurites too have shown their retaliation on development at the rate of environment by exclaiming that Jaipur has witnessed lesser rainfall and higher temperature in recent years.

(DB, 05.05.09)

### Funds Crunch Hits Cable Project

It was over a year ago that Rs 500 crore under-ground cable laying project was implemented to free the state capital of the high-tension wires that are passing above the residential colonies. However, shortage of funds has delayed the execution of the project in most areas of the city.

The haphazard and unplanned growth of city is the one of the main reasons behind high-tension wires passing over several residential colonies across the city. It is not an uncommon sight to see high-tension wires dangerously passing over the terraces. Accidents due to these wires are equally frequent, most of the times proving to be fatal.

(Tol, 29.06.09)

## JMC's 'Best Efforts'...

Just two days of rain have brought misery for commuters who have to negotiate gaping potholes and waterlogged roads some of which could prove fatal, even as the JMC struggled to cope with the situation.

The huge pothole on the *Khasa Kothi Circle* is proof of how efficient the civic body is. The passers-by and vehicles more often than are forced to change their route. The potholes from *Ram Ganj Chaupar* to *Char Darwaza* also trouble commuters a lot.

*Ambedkar Circle* to *Rambagh Circle*, *Arjun Nagar Phatak* to *Tonk Phatak*, *Durgapura* and *Lal Kothi* area too have gaping potholes. In some areas, the JMC has repaired the roads; a temporary arrangement. Once it rains, the roads are back to their original pot-holed shape. The JMC has made no efforts to cover the open manholes, which can be mistaken for potholes.

(HT, 18.07.09)



Sources: DB: Dainik Bhaskar; DN: Dainik Navjyoti; HT: Hindustan Times; MB: Mahka Bharat; Tol: Times of India