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Saving Lives on Jaipur's Roads?



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Jaipur is one of the worst five cities in the country for road accident deaths. In 2006, the rate of traffic accident deaths per million population in Jaipur was 233, as against Amritsar's 33 or Kolkata's 36. Agra was the worst at about 317 deaths per million population. And the numbers continue to rise every year for cities like Jaipur where poor attention is paid to this epidemic.

Road fatalities have been described as an epidemic by the World Health Organisation in its first ever 'Global Status Report on Road Safety'. This report was launched in New York on June 15, 2009. The reason is that in 2004 road accidents was the ninth biggest cause for death in the world and by 2030 it is going to become the fifth biggest killer.



The report further says, more people die in road accidents in India than anywhere else in the world, including the more populous China. In 2007, 1.14 lakh people in India lost their lives in road mishaps indicating a sharp rise of 6.1 percent during 2006-2007. One of the main causes of overall casualties is speed and nearly half of the most affected people are the vulnerable road users that include pedestrians, cyclists and the two wheeler riders.

If the government is serious, the way forward to arrest this spate of casualties is to implement holistic traffic calming measures on the roads, which can reduce speed substantially. This was the focus of a just completed two-year extensive research study done by CUTS along with Lund University of Sweden in the high accident zones of Jaipur city (see page 2) with the support of Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Sweden has been at the forefront of road safety, where it is a national obsession. They have evolved scientific systems, which are being used around the world to save lives. Using the famous Swedish conflict technology, the CUTS research study has come up with distinctive traffic calming strategies that if implemented will definitely bring down the rate of accidents and improve the environment by bringing down the levels of noise and air pollution. Above all, it will provide safety to vulnerable road users.

Alas, the issue of safety for road users has long been neglected by the town planners and policy makers. Our roads are not meant only for motorised vehicles, but also for pedestrians. The project has triggered a debate for the first time in India that every road user has a right to feel safe and comfortable on road.

Measures suggested to calm the traffic are not only simple but also extremely low-cost and if implemented as per the locations suggested and with proper design will not only help in the reduction of fatalities to a large scale but also improve the overall environment.

In spite of several rounds of meetings and presentations in the past two years on the project with the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) personnel, a bizarre disinterest has been shown to implement the suggested measures. They have been hiding behind the norms of Indian Road Congress (IRC) and justifying their inability in implementing the measures on the sites. JDA believes that the speed breakers and raised zebra crossings, that are the major components of the project, cannot be installed on the roads as the per the IRC guidelines. However, the IRC guidelines are merely suggestive in nature and are not cast in stone. Another reason for this callousness was that the proposed measures were cheap and not big budget projects, which provide greater 'incentives'. This attitude is the biggest enemy to any innovation, which can improve the Indian system. *Status quoism zindabad!*

Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General

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Calm Traffic to Improve Pedestrian Safety

CUTS and the Department of Technology and Society (DTS), Lund University, Sweden, under the project 'Traffic Calming Strategies to Improve Pedestrian Safety in India', implemented in partnership with Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and in collaboration with Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme (TRIPP) of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, organised regional dissemination meetings at Jaipur, Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata and New Delhi during October 01-28, 2009.

The pilot project was initiated in November 2007 selecting 24 accidental sites of Jaipur based on the accidents occurred and recorded in First Information Reports (FIRs – a written document prepared by the police when they receive information about the commission of a cognisable offence) for the year 2006. Each site was video recorded along with manual observation for 26 hours. Then these recordings were used to judge and verify the behavioural studies, counts, situation etc. to identify problems from the pedestrians' perspective based on "Conflict Technique".

The technique identified the appropriate solutions to be an effective and inexpensive measure in reducing the intensity of conflicts in Indian scenario and also can be replicated on Jaipur roads. Suggestions emerged from the



study were submitted to the JDA and Jaipur Traffic Police for their needful.

The aim of the meetings was to disseminate the key findings (flaws in road geometry affecting pedestrians) of two years research studies conducted on accident-prone sites of Jaipur city and for getting responses and opinions from relevant stakeholders, which can be used all over the country. The responses will be documented in the form of a Manual, which will be the first of its kind, including recommendations on *remedial traffic calming strategies* to be utilised by policymakers, primarily from the Department of Police, Transport, Municipal Corporation, Development Authority and Public Works.

The responses received in the regional meetings were incorporated in the said manual and were shared with national level policymakers, researchers and institutions at New Delhi, on October 28, 2009. Apart from representative from educational institutions and departments engaged in construction, planning and execution of road and traffic policy/plans etc. also joined the dissemination meeting to share their opinions on the findings presented in the meetings.

While presenting the "Traffic Calming Model", the project partners Prof Christer Hydén and Prof Ase Svensson from Lund University especially pointed out that there is an urgent need for Traffic Calming measures in Indian cities. Pedestrians are extremely exposed and vulnerable, and the speeds are too high to allow a safe and proper communication.

One main problem is that road users are not offered any comfortable and safe crossing options e.g. existing pedestrian crossings are not suited for pedestrians. They concluded that there exists a condition of "chaos" on majority of Indian Roads that has to be dealt with the help of Traffic Calming only and in terms of remedy to this chaos they strongly suggested the presented model to be adopted in Indian cities which will help in reducing speeds and promote decent road user behaviours in the same way as they have proven in Europe.



Jaipur to Have Metro by 2013

In view of burgeoning population and rising traffic congestion in the Pink City, the State Government is gearing up to bring metro rail here and, if all goes well, the project will materialise by 2013.

The State Government has roped in the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) for the



project. The project will take off in March 2010. The phase I of the project will run over 28.5 km. It will start on the 9-km long Chandpole-Mansarovar corridor. This will be elevated part of the east-west corridor, while the remaining 3 km will run underground in Ramganj, Badi Chaupar and Chhoti Chaupar.

The 16.5 km long north-south corridor will run between Jawahar Circle and Jal Mahal, of which 13-km stretch will be elevated. The work on this section will be over by 2014 and the Metro will start operations on this route by 2015. The initial run would be limited to a nine-km stretch that would be expanded in separate phases as was done in New Delhi.

The first phase of the Metro would cost the State around Rs 5,300 crore and it plans to float a company based on "equity holding" to arrange for the funds.

(TT, 23.08.09)

Jaipur in Top 10 Rich City List

'Have money, will spend' seems to be the *mantra* that Jaipur swears by. According to the first of its kind of survey on the lifestyle of the Upper Middle and Rich (UMAR) Class done by Nielsen, the Pink City features in the top 10 affluent cities in the country.

It was found in the survey that Jaipur was at par with cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, when it came to mall visits, but lagged behind in premium health club memberships. Surprisingly, it topped the charts in matters of looking good.

Multinationals and big companies heading to Jaipur in the last few years have made a big difference to the lifestyle and outlook of people here. Not just that, the number of denizens heading overseas on leisure holidays too was impressive,

despite the economic downturn. With the city on a splurge spree, it is going to zoom ahead in such charts in the time to come.

(Tol, 04.09.09)

Satellite Imaging for Jaipur

Going a step further from checking ground realities, the JDA will take a bird's view of Pink City to ensure that it drafts city's development plans to perfection. In a first time move, the JDA plans to buy aerial pictures of the city and has set the ball rolling by applying for license to acquire the pictures.

The authority is expected to take help of 'Google Earth'. Till now, aerial mapping has been used by private developers and satellite images were just confined to researches. The Google investment will be multi-functional. The Authority aims to use images to tackle the evil of encroachment and curb land mafia. It aspires to optimise land use pattern in the city by identifying empty pockets and ensuring their appropriate utilisation in future projects.

If implemented, it will be the first time that JDA will be using the method that is fast becoming popular among the net savvy citizens to plan their road trips in the city.

(Tol, 04.07.09)

Swap Incandescent for CFL

Exchange your incandescent bulb with a CFL for a nominal charge. That's the offer *Jaipur Vidyut Vitran Nigam* is giving to its domestic connection holders, part of its energy saving projects. Under the *Bachat Lamp Yojna* of the bureau of energy efficiency, the Government, Jaipur Discom, along with Banyan Environmental Innovations, Hyderabad, would replace more than 3.1 million bulbs in the district.



Turning to CFLs would reduce total peak demand by 140 MW of power and about 255 million units of electricity will be saved annually. A consumer could save up to Rs 700 in his annual energy bill.

Under the scheme, Banyan will replace two incandescent lamps of 60 or 40 watt of working condition with CFL for each consumer of Jaipur Discom at the cost of Rs 15 each. It will take a year to implement the scheme across

the district. Initially, this shall be applicable to the clients of Jaipur district only, but later on, it will be spread all over Rajasthan.

(Tol, 04.07.09)

Auto-on-metre a Non-starter

The transport authorities' bid to run the autorickshaws on metre seems to have few takers in the city. After the notification came into effect asking the auto drivers to charge their customers as per the metre reading, it seems to be ignored by all.



The *autowallahs* continue to charge the hapless commuters exorbitantly, with virtually no check on them. However, the fact remains that despite the directives, the drivers have not fixed their metres.

When the plan was launched, many autorickshaws did not have metres installed, while the drivers did not have uniforms. Fares based on meters would eliminate disparity and make travelling convenient for locals as well as tourists. Meanwhile, commuters allege the autorickshaw drivers tamper with the metres, so as to charge higher amounts.

(Tol, 08.10.09)

More Liabilities to JMC

Already grappling with a shoestring budget, the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) has been waiting to get the housing colonies transferred from other civic bodies like the JDA and Rajasthan Housing Board (RHB) for many years.

"The Government only transfers liabilities to the JMC and not any assets. The lack of political will on part of the Government and the JDA has delayed the transfer. We could have generated some resources as we are acutely short of funds", said Mayor Pankaj Joshi.

More than 250 colonies from the RHB and the JDA are waiting to come into the JMC fold, so that the 'world-class city' dream could take off. The JMC looks all set to expedite the process of transfer, amid reluctance on part of other civic organs.

(Tol, 04.07.09)

Jaipur Walkways Await 'Walkers'

The walkways constructed by the JDA at the Collectorate Circle and the Narayan Singh Circle, and a subway at Ajmeri Gate, are rarely used by the pedestrians. Built at the cost of hundreds of thousands of rupees, the walkways have been put to best use only by advertisers.

Pramod Bhasin of Muskan (an NGO), said that it is wastage of money if people do not use pathways and subways, particularly when pedestrian road accidents are on the rise in Jaipur.

An official of CUTS said the authorities have ignored its suggestions on road safety. He said that the walkways remained unused because the Government did not conduct a need-assessment study before going ahead with the construction.

(HT, 06.10.09)

Nitrate in Underground Water

Jaipur's underground water quality is in danger. Nitrate, a molecule made up of nitrogen and oxygen, is found in a disproportionate amount in underground water. The consumption of nitrate is harmful for the human body, as it causes stomach disorder and in infants it causes 'methemoglobin', a condition which is also known as blue babies.

Nitrate consumption can be avoided by use of reverse osmosis water plant. Long-term measures should be initiated to increase the level of ground water. The Government should lay sewerage lines in areas that lack them.

(HT, 29.09.09)

First Road Tunnel in Jaipur

The work on JDA's biggest ever project, the Rs 150 crore *Ghat ki Guni* Tunnel project, was formally inaugurated by the Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, near Transport Nagar Bus Depot.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister said efforts will be made for overall development of the city to ensure that Jaipur is developed as a world class city and said emphasis will be on completing projects in scheduled time.

He said that the tunnel will open new possibilities for development along the Jaipur-Agra highway and help in extension of Jaipur. The possibilities for development of *Naya Jaipur* (a new township near Kho Nagoriyan) are being searched. (Tol, 14.10.09 & PTI, 11.10.09)

New Master Plan

The Government is drawing up a new master plan for Jaipur to develop it as a world class city. New master plans are also being prepared for 109 other towns. The Metro rail project and the Jaimahal project are some of the steps taken in this direction.

The State Government would shortly come out with a new housing policy, where the poor would be given due consideration. The Government has set a target of constructing at least 10,000 houses a year and a total of 1.25 lakh houses in the next five years.

It is a challenge to provide quality basic services to the people, with the ever-increasing population. The agencies working in these areas had to accept the challenge and come out with solutions.

(Tol, 13.10.09)

Bisalpur Pipeline Leaked

Chaos prevailed near the Officers Training School (OTS) Circle on JLN Marg as the Bisalpur pipeline leaked with lakhs of litres of valuable water gushing out of the damaged pipe. The leakage gave a tough time to officials concerned and also created a mess in the surrounding area, only adding to the woes of citizens.



The Chief Engineer of the Bisalpur Water Project, Agam Mathur, informed that the mishap occurred due to an increased air-locking pressure in the pipeline. The maintenance work and filling up of the trench would be completed soon and that the water supply from this line to the walled city and other centres in the city would resume this month.

According to the officials, the Chief Minister visited the site and has made it clear that the loss due to the mishap will be paid by the contractor at the site.

(Tol, 03.10.09 & 04.10.09)

Business Thriving under Cops' Nose

Across the road, just outside the entrance of Rajasthan University, is a lane of hawkers selling banned cigarettes and tobacco



products. Not that the sale of these products is banned, but according to the government guidelines, there is a complete ban on the sale of tobacco products within 100 square yards of any educational institute.

On the busy JLN Marg, which is constantly under the surveillance of cops, the rule is almost non-existent. When asked about how come they are allowed to sell these products near the university, vendors almost unanimously say, "What's the harm. We do brisk business and a small cut ensures that the business runs smoothly. Also, operating out of temporary outfits helps". (Tol, 01.10.09)

Illegal Construction High in Jaipur

As Jaipur advances towards becoming a metro city more hi-rise buildings are set to show up on the city map in future. It has become vital for the authorities to ensure safety of inhabitants of these tall structures when hit by calamities like fire and earthquake.

The JDA has marked some areas in the master plan 2025 where extra caution has been prescribed for earthquake safety. However, not all the buildings in the city are being constructed as per architecture design or even with administrative clearance.

It is these illegal constructions that are most prone to damage during calamities; in several cases encroachers have constructed multi-storeyed buildings at locations which earlier used to be water bodies. In many multi-storeyed buildings there are not enough signages to guide people in cases of earthquake and fire. (Tol, 24.10.09)

Sources: HT: Hindustan Times; Tol: Times of India; PTI: Press Trust of India; TT: The Tribune