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# CityMatters

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## A Letter to a Common Consumer



Seasons Greetings!



You must be on a shopping spree in this festive season. Of course, we know that shopping is a strenuous task. There must be hundreds of items on your list, right from jewellery for your wife to sweets for relatives. And who can forget about crackers and new clothes for children. Don't worry, let us volunteer to assist you in making smart, informed and intelligent choice.



Let's start with jewellery, it is precious and for we Indians a capital investment. To ensure authenticity and value for money jewellery should be purchased from jewellers who adhere to Bureau of Indian Standards Hallmarking scheme. To make the taste of sweets sweeter, make sure that box is not weighed with the sweets. This is an Unfair Trade Practice (UTP) and has been acted against by consumer forums several times.

As a smart consumer you ought to be careful against practices which are against your interest and violative of the Competition Act. It has been seen that not only in Jaipur but in other parts of the country as well, people are forced to buy their children's school uniform and books from the school itself or the stores specified by the schools. Such a practice is called "tie-in-arrangement" and is prohibited under the Competition Act, 2002. So, now you can save money and have more choices when next time you go to purchase your kid's school uniform.



In festive seasons the kitchen occupies centre stage, and why not, after all Rajasthan is famous for its cuisines. But are you purchasing substandard or spurious food products? Well, in Jaipur there is a big market of non-branded food products, such as flour, snacks, spices, maava etc. While branded food products have to mandatorily adhere to standards prescribed like Agmark, ISI etc and have to declare manufacturing date, expiry date and maximum retail price; non-branded local food items make entry into our houses without passing through any scanner. Therefore, there is a need to bring even the unorganised sectors within the purview of existing laws.

Do you know that even big recognised brands resort to practices that dupe consumers? Take for example the case of branded soaps, which are often sold in bundles of three or four. You are forced to buy all the soaps even if you just need only one. Next time when you purchase mosquito vaporiser make sure the brand is same as that of your mosquito repellent machine, or else you will be left with a vaporiser that doesn't fit in the repellent machine. Well gulping down all this is difficult, how about trying some juice or health drink? But wait: you will not find expiry date on many juice bottles, it just says – best before six months from the date of package. You don't know if it quenches your thirst or lands you in hospital bed.

Thankfully, you are not remediless in all the mentioned cases. These practices are proscribed under the Consumer Protection Act or Competition Act. Wake up to these malpractices and report them to concerned authorities. Your vigilance and proactiveness becomes all the more important because authorities are often found sleeping over such issues.

We wish you happy shopping!

Pradeep S. Mehta  
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

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# Our Right to Fair Healthcare Services



We all have visited a doctor sometime or the other. Generally, our perception about doctors is that they are Gods, because they save your life or make living more easy. However, with the experiences a common man has, this no longer sounds true or even credible!

The health sector in India is riddled with many problems, and serves as an epitome of government apathy. Jaipur is not an exception to this phenomenon. Making things worse for Jaipur is the sorry state of government dispensaries in terms of infrastructure and lack of qualified doctors. Although Jaipur has 51 dispensaries, most of them are in dilapidated state and do not even have medicines. Further, there are just 72 doctors to cater to a large number of patients. These circumstances naturally compel patients to move to private healthcare centres that are found mushrooming these days.

Private hospitals charge exorbitantly and also resort to certain unethical practices. It is not uncommon for doctors to prescribe expensive medicines, even though a cheaper generic alternative is present. Take for example Albendazole 400 mg – a common medicine to treat worms. The generic version of this medicine will cost us '1.10, whereas some doctors prescribe branded version costing from M12-20.

Like us, even you must have found it strange when your doctor insists you to visit a particular diagnostic centre. This happens because of collusiveness between doctors and diagnostic centres; a certain share of diagnosis fee goes to the doctor for referring patients to the particular centre.

A little awareness and proactiveness on our part can save us from being ripped off. It will be helpful, if we take second opinion and ask the doctor to prescribe cheap generic medicines instead of expensive ones.

Currently, CUTS is carrying out a project entitled, '*Collusive Behaviour in Health Delivery in India: Need for Effective Regulation*'

in Assam and Chhattisgarh in an attempt towards identifying more accurately the source and nature of such medical malpractices and their impacts on consumers. It would highlight various distortions in healthcare delivery system in the country and provide inputs to policy community as well as other stakeholders for taking necessary actions to curb such practices.

Another area, which calls for our attention, is the quality of medical services. Even after paying a hefty amount, patients fall victim to highhandedness and carelessness of doctors. By availing the protection granted under Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) we can fix the responsibility on erring doctors.

Indra Raj Choudhary, a resident of Jodhpur, successfully got compensation of M70,000 from L N Hospital, when the latter was found negligent in operating upon Choudhary. Choudhary had to undergo second operation to fix his humerus bone, when the doctors in L N Hospital had fixed his broken bone wrongly.

The Clinical Establishment Bill seeks to redress the problems of innocent consumers and fixes responsibility upon doctors and clinical establishments. But it is unfortunate that despite being a welfare legislation the Bill has yet not become a law. Competition law can also check collusive practices between doctors and diagnosis centres. Alas!, the Competition Commission of India – the authority responsible for its implementation – is new and needs capacity building before it can start flexing its muscles.

In these circumstances, awareness and proactiveness of the consumer herself become her best aid. Do not take doctors' word as gospel truth, reason with them and always ask them for prescribing generic medicines...it is your right. Remember, doctors are within the purview of COPRA and one can use it to redress one's grievances in case of deficiency in services on part of doctors.

## No Proper Solid Waste Management

Pink City that vouches for becoming a world-class city lacks proper management of solid waste. Residents often complain of littered garbage in their neighbourhood and there is no system of proper door-to-door collection. Till date, Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) has completed one garbage transfer station at *Jhalana* out of five as planned under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).

The project has already been delayed by two years. Over 100 vehicles dedicated to solid waste management in the city will have Global Positioning Resource Satellite (GPRS) TV complied chip to track their movement in the city. The system would enable monitoring of garbage collection from different sites to the final destination, i.e. the garbage recycling units at different places.

(RP, 14.08.10)

## No Two-wheelers for Schoolkids



Buying a two-wheeler for schoolchildren or those below 18 years may become next to impossible with the Road Safety Council (RSC) making such a proposal. There are many children who lose their lives in road accidents. A law would be implemented for making suitable amendments so that two-wheelers are beyond bounds of children.

The proposal includes checking licence of bike owners at the time of sale and incorporating special courses on traffic rules and regulation at all government schools from the high school level. Proposals for compulsory lane-driving on highways were also mooted. Though this will not be done immediately but drivers will be trained for the same. In the second phase such offenders will be warned and after that penalties will be imposed.

(Tol, 14.08.10)

## JMC Reclaims Land Worth Rs 40 cr

The JMC reclaimed land worth ₹40 crore near *Janata colony*. The anti-encroachment squad started dismantling encroachments on at least 10,000 square yards that was under the control of land *mafias* for years. According to *Moti Doongri* zone commissioner Bhanwar Singh Choudhury, the land was enclosed with a boundary which was razed to the ground despite massive protest by the *mafia*.

The land was allotted to a temple's chief priest by the government a few years ago. However, after his death his disciples illegally sold the public land to a fake society. After receiving complaints, the district administration had annulled the allotment to the priest and declared it as government land. (Tol, 15.08.10)

## RHB to Build 20,000 Units in Jaipur

The Rajasthan Housing Board (RHB) will soon announce two new residential schemes for the city as the state government has approved acquisition of nearly 714 hectares of land for the purpose. The two schemes proposed at *Jagatpura* and *Goner* in *Siroli* will lead to construction of nearly 20,000 residential units.

While Indira Gandhi Nagar Extension is to come up over 314.30 hectares at *Jagatpura*, the *Goner* scheme set up on 400 hectare. The RHB has developed some of the most popular residential schemes in Jaipur. However, it has not announced any major residential project since the Indira Gandhi Nagar scheme in 2002. Land acquisition has also been slow during the period and the board activities have considerably reduced in the city.

(Tol, 15.08.10)

## Jaipur Dairy Denies ACB Allegations

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) seized 15 tonnes of rotten milk powder from the Jaipur Dairy. Managing Director of Jaipur Dairy L K Kaushik said that the claim of the ACB that they were using stale milk powder for making milk was false and unfounded.

He said the powder seized by the ACB had already been "discarded". Challenging the ACB's allegations, he said that they have strict quality control measures and checks on the materials used for making milk. Moreover, they also

invite nearly six lakh consumers to come to their state-of-the-art lab and test the quality of the products. He also questioned the bureau's claim the seized milk powder contained maltose.

(Tol, 11.08.10)

## Single Ticket for BRTS, Metro



The metro and Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) ride will be possible on a single ticket. An authority will have to be formed for coordinating the movement of BRTS and metro to provide better integrated public transport services. At present, the BRTS is operational in 10 routes in the city and its approach will be soon extended to cover outskirts areas of the city. The BRTS is unable to provide fast connectivity inside the congested areas. However, the metro will have no constraints of road space and will help bridge the gap.

The two proposed corridors of the Jaipur Metro will intersect at the *Sindhi Camp* bus stand enabling the passengers to travel through metro between the 27 proposed metro stations. The BRTS will help as a feeder to these metro stations providing further public transportation connectivity.

(Tol, 06.08.10)

## JM Gets World Heritage Stamp

The largest stone astronomical observatory in the world – *Jantar Mantar* (JM) – has been accorded world heritage status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The observatory, built between 1727 and 1734 by Maharaja Jai Singh II at his new capital of Jaipur, is among the seven sites in the world which have been added to the UNESCO's World Heritage list in 2010.

The new status of *Jantar Mantar* would be a boost to the tourism sector. The observatory consists of 20 major geometric devices for measuring time,

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predicting eclipses and tracking stars' location as the earth orbits around the sun. It can also ascertain the declinations of planets and determine the celestial altitudes and related ephemerids.

(Tol, 01.08.10)

## Ban on Plastic Bags

With the state government imposing a complete ban on manufacturing, a

 storing and selling of plastic carry bags from August 01, 2010, Jaipurites are set to welcome the eco-friendly change with open arms.

Anybody found using a plastic bag could face up to five-seven years imprisonment or a fine of up to ₹ one lakh. Cotton and jute bags along with recycled paper bags will now be used and promoted instead of plastic made bags. The state government has already withdrawn value added tax over cotton and jute in order to promote them.

The ban has been brought keeping in mind the ill-effects of plastic. These plastic bags cause damage to health, hygiene and environment. Non-degradable plastic bags, which are commonly used and are omnipresent, are poisonous.

(RP, 01.08.10)

## New Traffic Plan on Anvil

While the *Khasa Kothi* crossroad was free of traffic congestion, there was no relief for commuters on the first trial day of the new traffic management plan. With the traffic diversion, the congestion was merely transferred to other locations in the city.

Commuters had a tough time crossing the railway station intersection. Despite the efforts of the police, the long queue of vehicles, both inside and outside the station, resulted in a traffic nightmare. The traffic police, however, were "contended" with the traffic management.

The new plan covers the majority of traffic movement between *Sindhi Camp*

*bus stand, Jaipur railway station, Collectorate Circle, Hasanpura Flyover and areas around Khasa Kothi*. The broad base traffic plan has been prepared after the recently inaugurated ₹22 crore *Khasa Kothi* flyover was unable to provide any respite from traffic congestion.

(RP, 14.08.10 & Tol, 26.08.10)

## Airport Fails to Attract Airlines



The Jaipur airport has failed to attract premier international airlines despite its swanky new terminal building operating since June 2009. Many international airlines had inspected the facilities at the airport. The new swanky building was built at an estimated cost of ₹206 crore. It is equipped with all modern facilities in order to attract the best airlines of the world.

According to sources, Jaipur airport is running without safety licence from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Another area of concern for international airlines is the sterile area which is inadequate for international operations. So far, foreign nationals coming to Jaipur prefer to land in Delhi. It has a maximum capacity of 70 flights a day but currently has 30 movements a day.

(Tol, 31.07.10)

## Low-floor Buses in Jaipur

The Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation (RSRTC) is hoping that the low-floor buses will reduce the number of vehicles plying on the roads. These buses would connect the suburban areas. With a nominal ticket of ₹20, a commuter can now travel more than 40 km in the low floored buses in the suburban areas. Consequently, the fare will be just ₹15 if one has to travel for

35 km and ₹10 for travelling 25 km of distance.

Recently, RSRTC has introduced 20 low-floor buses on *Goner Road*. But now, it has plans to introduce the buses on *Delhi Road, Agra Road, Sikar Road and Tonk Road*. There will be 400 low-floor buses which would become the lifeline of the city. The buses are the part of the three-tier transportation system planned by the state government to improve transport in the city.

(DB, 09.08.10)

## Fresh DPR for Ring Road Likely

A fresh detailed project report (DPR) of the ring road will be drafted if the project is reassigned to the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA). The road alignment will, however, remain more or less same as before.

The alignment of the road was provided by the JDA while the remaining details were drafted by the contractor. However, if the project is to be developed by JDA, a new DPR will be needed. The JDA Commissioner, Sudhansh Pant called for rapid progress on the public private partnership projects for rehabilitation of residents in eight slum areas of the city.

(RP, 20.08.10)

## An Ayurvedic Park Soon

An Ayush cluster scheme will be developed in Jaipur with the support of the Union Health Ministry. The park will have facilities for conservation, treatment and processing of medicinal plants along with area and auditorium. It would be developed at a cost of ₹17 crore of which the Union Ministry has provided ₹9.6 crore.

Spread over six acres of land, the proposed Ayush Park will be second such cluster scheme across the country after Kerala in which quality ayurvedic medicines would be produced. According to the officials, more than 50 factories will be setting up their base in the park and investment of around ₹70 crore will be needed. The park will be completed by March 2012 and is expected to provide employment to around 5000 people.

(DNA, 24.07.10)

Sources: DB: Dainik Bhaskar; DNA: Daily News & Analysis; RP: Rajasthan Patrika; Tol: Times of India