



1/2021

CityMatters



Why am I angry?



Political rallies contributing to an increase in COVID cases



Norms go for a toss at Haridwar Kumbh Mela 2021

www.google.com

I am angry because I got infected with COVID-19 in spite of have had my two vaccine jabs. This was discovered on 18th April. While I was asymptomatic, my wife, who too had taken two jabs, had to be hospitalised at the wonderful Santokba Durlabhji Hospital due to body ache and fever. She was there for about three nights and then sent home without the symptoms, while I stayed at home, but quarantined.



But what was more surprising was that both my 11-year-old grandkids too tested positive. This made me more angry. They, too, were asymptomatic for a long time but stayed at home in quarantine with us.

We should soon be fit as a fiddle. However, we are told that we will need to keep maintaining all preventive measures, such as wearing a double mask, maintaining social distance and washing our hands regularly.

If one reviews the national situation, there is much chaos. We are told that there is a new variant that is causing a second wave. There is a shortage of oxygen, beds, doctors, medicines etc. which is causing a huge number of deaths. This, too, has made me very angry. Many have said that this a governance and institutional failure. Besides, elections were held in few states where the crowds collected without any precautions.

Similarly, the Kumbh Mela took place at Haridwar without any preventive measures. We do not have any figures as yet of the resultant infections, but surely they would be in thousands. In fact, the Madras High Court said that the Election Commission should be charged with murder for allowing the carelessness.

I am sure that all this could have been better managed by not allowing the events to have taken place and thus saved more lives. The courts too acted late in pulling up the government too late to protect people from dying. The deaths happened due to a lack of facilities.

Not so long ago, the country's supremo was speaking loudly about controlling the pandemic but ignored scientific advice given in September 2020 that new variants are in the pipeline. Consequently, we have reached record heights in the world in terms of infection and deaths.

Quite clearly, the health infrastructure is creaky, even in our national capital: Delhi. As a result, our control of the disease is not in order. Besides that, the virus is mutating in various new forms, which will beat all efforts to be made by us. The economy was in bad shape and will continue to slide downwards. Joblessness will continue to rise while our upcountry labour will return to their roots to eke out a living of sorts, knowing that their jobs in our industrial centres have gone out of the window. Social unrest will follow.

One cannot blame anyone for this but nature. The global community had adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, which were targeted at full achievement by 2030 when 'no one is left behind'. One of the 17 goals is on Sustainable Production and Consumption. This is best echoed in what Gandhi had said that there is enough on this Earth for everyone's needs, but not greed. The pandemic is a grim reminder for us to mend our ways or go to hell.

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Pradeep S Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

P.S. Our gratitude to esteemed subscribers.

USC to settle sex abuse case

The University of Southern California has agreed to a US\$852m settlement with more than 700 women who have accused the college's longtime campus gynecologist of sexual abuse.



Dr George Tyndall, faces 35 criminal counts of alleged sexual misconduct between 2009 and 2016. Hundreds of women came forward to report their allegations to police, but some of the cases fell outside the 10-year statute of limitations. In contrast, others did not rise to the level of criminal charges or lacked sufficient evidence to prosecute. (TG, 26.03.21)

Advert for life partner at 73

A matrimonial advert released by a 73 year outdated retired trainer seeking a spouse has triggered discussion and dialogue in the town and on the web, with numerous cheering her boldness and favourable attitude, and other advising warning from frauds.



In the ad, the lady sought an alliance from any healthful gentleman older than her, and mandatorily a Brahmin of her local community. She explained she is primary a lonely daily life and searching for a 'jeevana sangati.'

(Tol, 28.03.21)

Man dies after girlfriend throws acid

A man died with severe burns after a woman threw acid at him. The woman was in a relationship with him. She allegedly threw acid on him in a fit of rage as he married someone else.

Sonam Pandey was angry with Devendra Kumar since his marriage had been fixed with some other girl. She was a nurse at a private hospital in Agra, and Kumar, an assistant at a pathology lab, knew each other for a long time and were in a relationship.

(Tol, 26.03.21)

Fighting her way to annul a marriage

After suffering for 18 long years, Urma Bishnoi finally gathered the courage to approach the court to get her child marriage annulled.

Bishnoi, who was married when she was just a 10-month-old infant, received support from Dr Kriti Bharti, Rehabilitation Psychologist and Managing Trustee of Saarthi Trust, who challenged her child marriage in the family court-I of Jodhpur.

Bishnoi's in-laws started putting pressure on the family and threatened dire consequences like cutting their noses and ears.

(Tol, 26.03.21)

UP girl breaks national record

Ten years ago, this UP girl's resolve for victory on tracks was for winning a bag that was at stake. It culminated in a national record and a ticket to Tokyo Olympics and the World Athletics Championship in Oregon.

Priyanka Goswami, 25, shattered the national record in the 20-km walk at

the 8th Open National and 4th International Race Walking Championship in Ranchi. She broke Bhawna Jat's record at the same event last year.

This, however, was not a fluke. After joining the Railways in March 2018 through sports quota, Priyanka won two silver medals at the national level in 2017-2018.

(Tol, 14.02.21)

India's lone fossil of world's oldest animal

Hidden in plain sight, one of the rarest fossils in the world may have been discovered in the fascinating Bhimbetka rock shelters, a Unesco site about 40km from Bhopal.

Researchers believe they have found the first-ever fossil in India of a Dickinsonia —the Earth's 'oldest animal', dating back 570 million years — on the roof of what's called the 'Auditorium Cave' at Bhimbetka.

The find has been published in the February edition of Gondwana Research, an international journal. Dickinsonia fossils have shown they could exceed four feet in length, but the one found in Bhimbetka is 17 inches long.

(Tol, 10.02.21)

Woman in wheelchair fight for accessibility

Blowing up a large part of her salary on transportation every month has been Jasmina Khanna's pet peeve. The 49-year-old software tester lives with cerebral palsy and can only commute to work by car or a special taxi service that allows her wheelchair to be brought in.



So when Khanna found out a few years ago that the Central government had laid down guidelines for accessibility, she decided to do what she knew best— doggedly pursue implementation with local authorities.

Since three years Khanna took a survey of public amenities in Vile Parle, the Bombay Municipal Corporation has approved the transformation of two key streets in the suburb.

(Tol, 10.02.21)

'India for Humanity' programme

India's permanent representative to the United Nations, TS Tirumurti, mentioned the role played by the country under the 'India For Humanity'



programme to rehabilitate 500 Syrians by providing them with artificial limbs Jaipur Foot.

Speaking at the UN Security Council, he said India has already extended immediate medical and food assistance to Syria recently, in addition to development cooperation projects.

The artificial limb fitment camp of the well-known 'Jaipur Foot,' which was conducted in Damascus, benefited over 500 Syrians affected by the conflict.

(Tol, 31.03.21)

Airbags mandatory for front seats

The Indian government has made the passenger side airbag mandatory in new cars. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), in a gazette notification, announced the new rule that will require all new vehicles to have dual front airbags as standard fitment from April 01, 2021.

The Ministry has issued Gazette notification regarding the mandatory provision of an airbag for a passenger seated on the front seat next to the driver. This has been mandated as an essential safety feature and is also based on the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety suggestions. (Mint, 06.03.21)

Power to transmit through the air

Emrod, a firm based in Auckland, has collaborated with Powerco, a New Zealand electricity distributor, to develop a prototype system for an enclosed test facility. The plan is to beam energy from a solar farm on the North Island to a client several km away.

The aim is to transmit the power as a narrow beam of microwaves. That will overcome the two fundamental flaws in Tesla's plan.

One was how to charge people for the electricity they can scoop from the air. The other was the need to overcome the law of radiative propagation.

(TE, 27.02.21)

Japanese tycoon facilitate free Moon ride

Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa has invited eight people to join him for a free Moon voyage on SpaceX Starship rocket sometime in 2023.

Maezawa, the founder of Japan's largest online fashion retailer Zozotown, said that he wants people from all backgrounds to join. He has started a contest for the public where everyone who pre-registers will receive an email about the selection process.



Maezawa said he would pay for the entire journey and those eight people will fly with him for free. (ET, 04.03.21)

Woman awarded for housework

A Chinese divorce court has ordered a man to pay his wife the equivalent of US\$7,700 as compensation for housework during their five-year marriage.



Under a new civil code, a person may seek compensation from their partner during a divorce if they were the primary carer for children or elderly parents or did most unpaid household work. The amount should be negotiated, but if that fails, then it will be decided by the court.

A Beijing court ruled the husband, surnamed Chen, must pay his now ex-wife, Wang, the sum of 50,000 yuan for not pulling his weight around the house.

(DB, 25.02.21)

French Nun survives COVID



A French nun who lived through two world wars and the Spanish flu has also survived a bout of the coronavirus.

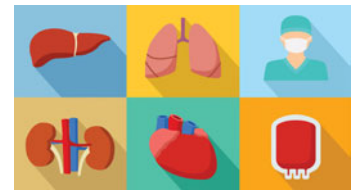
Sister André, 116, is the second-oldest person globally and the oldest person in Europe. She was diagnosed with COVID-19 in mid-January in a retirement home in Toulon. She reportedly showed no symptoms.

After being isolated, she has recovered and can celebrate her 117th birthday with a small group of friends.

(ET, 10.02.21)

Organs of 17-year-old donated

The family of a 17-year-old boy, a resident of Dholpur, Rajasthan, India donated his organs after he was declared brain dead at Sawai Man Singh hospital.



The teenager, Sevaram, was riding a pillion when he met with an accident recently. At the time of the accident, he was not wearing a helmet.

His lungs were transported to Hyderabad, while his heart and kidneys were transplanted into patients at SMS hospital, while the liver was transplanted at Mahatma Gandhi hospital. It was the 42nd cadaver donation in the state.

(Tol, 01.03.21)

Daughters light dad's pyre

Defying the age-old tradition of performing last rites only by a son, the five sisters took the mortal remains of their father to the cremation ground to perform the last rites in Dungarpur district of Rajasthan, India.

The daughters performed the last rite of 'mukhagni' and lit the funeral pyre of their father Karulal Trivedi, who had died after a long illness. The relatives and well-wishers of the family extended their support.

(Tol, 22.02.21)

Promotion on showing exemplary courage

The Government of Rajasthan, India offered the post of police sub-inspector to Vasundhara Chauhan to show exemplary courage

by engaging in a brave fight against armed goons who attacked a public transport bus to free their accomplices, a



hardcore criminal, in Dholpur.

Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot decided on a direct appointment offer to Chauhan to promote women empowerment on International Women's Day.

The 25-year-old has studied criminology during her post-graduation and is an NCC 'C' certificate holder.

(Tol, 09.03.21)

Mother, you are blessed!

Grenadier Hemraj, who gave martyrdom to the country, was awarded the Gallantry Award. The 70-year-old mother of martyr jawan reached the stage to receive the award.



Command at Etarana Cantonment, Alwar. His 70-year-old mother, Dakha Devi, had arrived to receive the award, during which the officers present there became emotional after seeing the old mother of Hemraj. (DB, 20.02.21)

During that time, he told Lieutenant General Alok Kaler that the name of his second son (Bansi) is Banshi, she also wants to get him recruited in the army, so that his old age can be improved. Shaheed Hemraj Jat was from Ajmer, Rajasthan. He was martyred for the country at the age of just 25 years.

Shaheed Hemraj was posthumously awarded the Gallantry Award at a ceremony organised by the South-Western

12-year-old creates ventilator out of Lego

A 12-year-old Illinois boy said shortages of medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic inspired him to design his ventilator using Lego pieces.



Anthony Hartman, a Winnetka seventh-grader, said he heard about projects to create ventilators to help offset shortages and decided to try to make one himself using a Lego Mindstorm EV3 robotics kit.

Anthony said he hopes to partner with Lego to make his EVentilator2020 available to medical professionals in rural areas.

(www.flipboard.com, 07.05.21)

1913 Menu found in rafters of British cafe

Workers doing renovations on a cafe in England made a surprising discovery inside the ceiling — a menu from the restaurant that occupied the building in 1913.

Natalie Haywood, owner of Leaf in Liverpool, said workers doing renovations on the building found a menu for Yamen Cafe and Tea Rooms, dated January 15, 1913, in the rafters.

Haywood said the workers also found a waiter's hat embroidered with the word "Yaman" and the instructions for a card game called "whist and bottles." (www.upi.com, 06.05.21)

Philippines man collects fast-food toys

The Guinness World Record holder for the largest collection of fast-food toys said his collection has now doubled to 20,000 toys.

Percival Lugue of Apalit, Philippines, was awarded a Guinness World Record in 2014 when his collection of kids' meal toys from eateries, including McDonald's, Burger King and Jollibee, was tallied at 10,000 items.

Lugue said his collection has grown in the ensuing years and he has now doubled his record with 20,000 toys. His eventual goal is to use his collection to start a museum for fast-food toys. (IT, 28.04.21)

Mr. Potato Head drops the mister

Hasbro created confusion when it announced that it would drop the "Mr." from the brand's name in order to be more inclusive and so all could feel "welcome in the Potato Head world."

It would sell a new playset this fall without the Mr. and Mrs. designations that will let kids create their own type of potato families, including two moms or two dads.



Hasbro clarified that while the brand is changing, the actual Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head characters will still live on and be sold in stores. In a picture posted on Twitter, the "Mr." and "Mrs." names are less prominently displayed at the bottom of the box, instead of the top. (DB, 02.03.21)

Man wins lottery with a 'wrong ticket'

A man who won a US\$5mn jackpot from the North Carolina Education Lottery said he owes his windfall to a store clerk who handed him the wrong ticket.

Jonathan Bate, a New York resident, working as a construction superintendent in North Carolina, told North Carolina Education Lottery officials he stopped after work at the Family Fare store in Burlington to buy a scratch-off lottery ticket.

"The funny part about the ticket is, I got the wrong ticket," Bate said. "I asked for one and I got another and I just said, 'Alright.' The ticket, a \$20 \$5,000,000 Fortune game, earned him a US\$5mn top prize.

(www.realityworld.com, 07.05.21)

Mississippi school broke jambalaya record

A Mississippi college broke a Guinness World Record by cooking up the world's largest jambalaya in the event that raised money for food pantries.

School officials successfully broke the record but did not publicly release the amount of jambalaya cooked up. The record currently stands at 3,371 pounds



and was set in 2009 by the Jambalaya Festival Association in Gonzales, La.

The jambalaya was sold for \$10 a plate and the more than \$3,200 raised by the event was given to campus food pantries, officials said.

(www.upi.com, 07.05.21)

Bhiwadi 5th polluted city in world

The city's air quality improved by approximately 14 percent between 2019 and 2020, according to the World Air Quality Report, 2020, released by the Swiss air technology company IQAir.



Jaipur is at 155 spots in the most polluted cities globally.

The air quality in Bhiwadi, Jodhpur, Pali, Jaipur, Kota, Alwar, Ajmer has also improved significantly during the same period, the report said.

According to the report, 22 out of the 20 most polluted cities are in India. In Rajasthan, an industrial town in Alwar, Bhiwadi has bagged the dubious distinction of being the fifth most polluted city globally. (Tol, 18.03.21)

Biological park gets new arrivals

A Rajasthan Forest Department team reached Nahargarh biological park. The new members are expected to boost the park, which lost a big cat in 2020. The animals will be kept in quarantine for three weeks and monitored before they are introduced to the public.

The forest team led by senior veterinarian Arvind Mathur had reached Odisha. In an exchange programme, the state forest department will send alligators, wolves, Chinkara and leopards to Odisha.

When a 15-year-old white tiger Raja died, the park was left with no white tiger. Similarly, another white tigress Sita died in 2020. (Tol, 22.03.21)

Hotels to set up microbreweries

For the lovers of freshly brewed beer in the city, here is a reason to celebrate.



To encourage light alcoholic beverages, the Excise Department has framed new rules to install microbreweries in the premises of hotels and clubs.

Excise commissioner Joga Ram has issued the notification of the Rajasthan Brewery (Amendments) Rules, 2021.

As provisioned in the new Excise Policy 2021-22, for the first time in history, the ED will grant licences for the working of the microbrewery.

(Tol, 01.04.21)

Survey of commercial properties

The Fire Department of Jaipur has started surveying the commercial properties to look at the fire security systems on their premises.

The department has given its officers a task to survey commercial properties and submit a report to its officers in each zone. Based on this report, action will be taken against these private property owners.

Paras Jain, Chairman of the Fire Committee, said that these surprise inspections show the condition of fire security. (Tol, 15.03.21)

Morning walk at Botanical park

The botanical park along the Dravyavati riverfront that remained closed despite work being completed two years ago has been opened for the public.

The area of the park is around 4,000 square-metre. It houses more than 1,000 different species and about 1 lakh plants and trees ranging from cactus, tropical plants, ayurvedic plants and herbs to exotic species which generally survive in the cold and high altitudes of the Himalayas. A greenhouse has also been created to house such exotic varieties as orchids and lilies.

The JDA will also soon rent out cafeterias and kiosks built in the bird and botanical parks that would help in earning more revenue. (Tol, 05.03.21)

Malls lack fire safety

During a sudden inspection of three malls in the city, the Fire Committee of Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), Greater, found many discrepancies and a weak fire security system.

Paras Jain, Chairman of the Fire Committee, and other members inspected Crystal Court, Gaurav Tower and OK Plus at Mansarovar, where many loopholes were found in the fire safety systems.

According to rules, notices will be served to the administration of these malls and if a reasonable reply is not received, then action will be initiated against them. (Tol, 18.02.21)

Bus services on rural roads

The transport department is attempting to run buses on new routes in the rural areas of Rajasthan. For this, the state transport minister wrote to all the MLAs, out of which over 150 have replied.

They have given the lists of routes that have no public transport and the officials will compile this data to



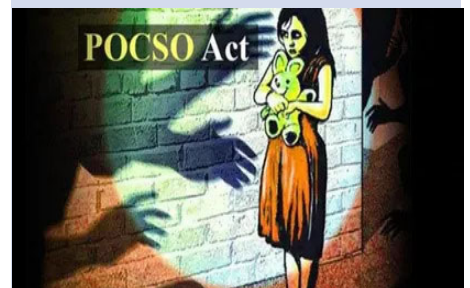
segregate between the routes that have absolutely no buses and those with fewer passengers.

There are a few routes in rural areas on which no buses have been operational even post-independence and we want the connectivity to be improved. (Tol, 17.02.21)

Pocso court convicts rapists

A Pocso court in Jhunjhunu awarded capital punishment to 21-year-old Sunil Kumar for kidnapping and raping a five-year-old girl, a mere 26 days after the crime. The accused has also been given 10 years imprisonment and asked to pay three penalties of ₹25,000 each.

According to police, the girl was playing along with her siblings in a



village near Pilani town of Jhunjhunu district when the accused approached them and asked for a screwdriver to repair his scooter.

As soon as the elder 15-year-old boy went inside the house to fetch it, the accused kidnapped the five-year-old and took her 40km away and raped her. (Tol, 18.03.21)

Shift dairies from city limits

Chief Secretary Niranjan Kumar Arya has directed local authorities to shift out dairies operating in the city limits at the earliest.

He said accidents are often happening due to stray animals roaming around the city roads, causing fatalities to humans and animals. The Supreme Court and High Court had ordered several times that dairies operating in the city needed to be shifted. He said action should be taken urgently on this matter.

Arya said the beautification of Jaipur was a priority of the state government. He also directed to speed up the work related to cleanliness. (Tol, 18.02.21)

Over 82% FASTag coverage in Raj

With nearly 6.25 lakh registered vehicles in the state, the FASTag coverage has crossed 82 percent. The vehicles without FASTag or functional FASTag will have to pay double the fare.



Meanwhile, state transport departments send text messages to vehicle owners, pointing to the violation and mentioning that they could be imposed a penalty if they are caught.

It has been further mandated that a valid FASTag is mandatory while getting new third party insurance through an amendment in Form 51 (certificate of Insurance), wherein the details of FASTag ID shall be captured. (Tol, 16.02.21)

Registration for e-rickshaws restarts

The transport department has restarted the registration process of e-rickshaws which had been stopped for over a year because these were causing traffic congestion.



There are approximately 14,000 e-rickshaws in Jaipur, and a committee of various stakeholders will be constituted for the functioning of the vehicles. A policy will also be drafted for their registration and giving licences.

The e-rickshaw dealers have been directed to submit an affidavit with a declaration to conduct a 10-day drivers' training programme for the e-rickshaw drivers. (Tol, 16.02.21)

Major intersections to be signal-free

Seven major intersections, including Rambagh Circle, B-2 Bypass, Birla Mandir will be signal-free. This ₹800 crore project will be completed by 2022.

First of all, work will be done on those crossroads where there is less land requirement or no need to acquire more land. Work on Jawahar Circle, B-2 Bypass and Laxmi Temple Tirahe will start first.

Rambagh and B-two will be provided with model leaf-under passes and models of modern design. The underpass will be built at Chaimu House Circle, Birla Mandir, OTS Chairahe and Laxmimandira Tirahe. (DB, 16.02.21)

Traders to install CCTVs without delay

Jaipur police have re-issued its order to ask financial and commercial establishments to install CCTV cameras to ensure better security and safety.

These establishments include shops, private lockers, petrol pumps, guest houses, restaurants and multi-storied housing societies. The police are going tough this year till now at least 10 FIRs have been lodged against those violating the order of installing CCTV.

Rahul Prakash, Additional Commissioner of Police, Law and Order, had earlier issued Section 144 of CrPC in which shops, private lockers, liquor shops, guest houses, restaurants were directed to install CCTV cameras. (Tol, 16.02.21)

Delay in providing flats to poor

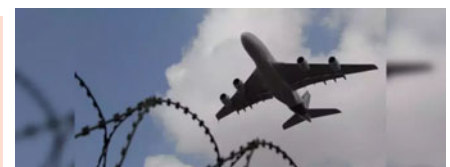
The Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) has miserably failed in providing houses to economic weaker section (EWS) and lower-income group (LIG) under Chief Minister Jan Awas Yojana.

In the past five years, the civic body provided possession to only 991 affordable houses against approved 44,900 houses in more than 65 schemes. As per JDA records, more than 15,000 flats of the EWS/LIG category are under construction and will be allotted soon.

The work in 69 multi-storied housing schemes is in progress. Similarly, plots will be allotted in 15 housing colonies. (Tol, 15.02.21)

Jaipur airport slips in quality ranking

In the Airport Council International ranking, the Jaipur airport has ranked 14 out of 22 airports based on 33 parameters. In 2020, the airport was on the 13th position.



ACI World has revealed this year's Airport Service Quality awards, highlighting the world's best airports as judged by their customers.

In this survey, 22 airports from India were ranked. Varanasi was at the top, followed by Chandigarh and Amritsar in the category of the airports with an annual passenger footfall between 20 to 50 lakh. (Tol, 14.03.21)

Metro Neo project on BRTS corridor

When the state government plans to raze allegedly under-utilised and accident-prone Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) corridor, the Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) has coined an idea to run low-cost Metro Neo service in the corridor.



This new Mass Rapid Transit System can provide a safe, eco-friendly, comfortable and reliable transportation alternative to the city without disturbing the existing infrastructure.

After a recent traffic survey in the city, there is a finding that Metro Neo service could easily replace buses in the 7.3-metre wide existing corridor. (Tol, 28.02.21)

Scaffolding support for crumbling verandas

The promises of renovating verandas of the walled city have fallen flat as the authorities are now resorting to erect scaffolding at many places where cracks have appeared on the roof.

The verandas were supposed to be renovated under the Smart City project, but the slow pace of work is a major hindrance.

In Johri bazaar, Tripolia and Chandpole market, scaffoldings have been put up at many places to support the broken structures. In Johri bazaar, there are places where the scaffolding is supporting the roof for the last five years now. *(Tol, 13.03.21)*

JMC-Heritage tops swachh feedback survey

The JMC-Heritage has left behind JMC-Greater in terms of getting feedback from citizens for Swachhta Survekshan 2021.

JMC-Heritage has received 60,000 feedback, while JMC-Greater got 10,000. The Survekshan ended on March 31, 2021. The higher number of feedback for JMC-Heritage is that they had already outsourced their feedback collection to a private firm.

In 2020, the municipal corporation (undivided) was able to get 40,000 feedback, but this year due to pandemic, corporations cannot gather people for awareness. *(Tol, 13.03.21)*

Innovative mask distribution campaign

The JDA's state-of-the-art initiative to distribute masks during ongoing pandemic has yielded desirable results



as four lakh residents have availed the free of cost facility.

The civic body rolled an innovative idea and started mask distribution after constructing the wall. The model turned out to successfully fight the pandemic and wall constructed for mask distribution continued to stand firm till the state government initiated a vaccination programme.

Taking a cue from 'Neki ki Deewar' idea (to assist those in want), the JDA

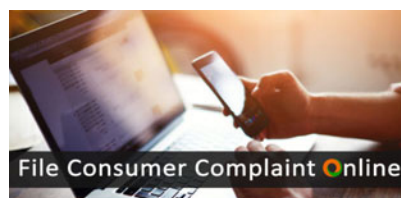


Masks placed on a statue, depicting mother and child, spreading awareness against COVID-19 in Kolkata

kept the option open for the philanthropist to donate masks at this wall. *(Tol, 29.01.21)*

Consumers to file their complaints online

Consumers can not only file their complaints online at State Consumer Helpline Number 1800-180-6030 but also at the website: consumeradvice.in for effective redressal. The Secretary of Consumer Affairs Department, Naveen



Jain, stated that counsellors provide free resolutions to consumers from 10am to 5pm during Monday-Saturday on State Consumer Helpline and WhatsApp number: 7230086030.

Among top 50 influential bureaucrats

Two senior IAS officers of the Rajasthan cadre are among the top 50 IAS officers rated for their efficiency. A survey conducted by the magazine Fame India enlisted 5,200 IAS officers across the country and used different parameters under which the evaluation was done.

Some of the parameters were excellence in governance, vision, excellence in thought process, answerability in governance, decision-making prowess, and ability in dealing with public affairs.

Additional Chief Secretary, Rohit Kumar Singh, and Principal Secretary and chairman of the industrial wing of the state government Rajasthan Industrial Investment Corporation (RIICO) Kuldeep Ranka featured in the 50 best bureaucrats list. Both are IITians. *(DB, 02.01.21)*

JMC fails to dispose biomedical waste

The JMC has failed to dispose of biomedical waste in a safe manner produced by the COVID-19 positive patients under home quarantine.

With the number of COVID-19 infections rising over the past several weeks, the city faces a massive surge in biomedical waste and many residents are staying at home. However, in the absence of strategy, the threat of spreading infection in the city colonies looms large.

With no JMC facility available to collect biomedical waste generated by patients in home isolation, many dispose of the waste in door-to-door garbage collection van. This improper and irresponsible disposal of COVID waste is not only endangering other citizens, but also garbage collectors. *(Tol, 05.05.21)*

Universal health insurance scheme

Chiranjeevi Yojana, the Rajasthan government's universal health insurance scheme is expected to provide succour to COVID-19 patients during the pandemic. The ₹3,500 crore scheme gives an annual cashless insurance cover of ₹5 lakh to every family in the State.



Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said while launching the scheme at a virtual event, it would be a "historic step" in ensuring social security for vulnerable sections of society and help bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

The Centre and other States should also consider starting such a scheme to give the right to health to the public at large, he said. *(TH, 02.05.21)*

Good urban governance is important

The development and management of urban centres is one of the major challenges of our time and one of the most complex tasks of our societies.

SPOTLIGHT ON:
GOOD GOVERNANCE



In an increasingly urbanising world, sustainable urban development will depend largely on the management capacity of cities and the active participation of their citizens. It is now widely accepted that urbanisation is not only inevitable but also a positive phenomenon.

Cities are growing and they offer opportunities and the promise of a better life. In cities, it is possible to integrate human, economic and technological resources efficiently. Well-managed cities are a pre-condition for successful urban development.

However, sustainable urban development depends largely on improved management of cities. Policies and programmes for developing cities require strong, open and accountable local government institutions working in partnership with all interested parties.

Here lies the importance of urban governance. Good governance is epitomised by predictable, open and enlightened policy-making, a professional bureaucracy acting for the public good, the rule of law, transparent processes, and strong civil society participation in public affairs. On the other hand, poor governance is characterised by arbitrary policymaking, unaccountable bureaucracies, unjust legal systems, the abuse of executive power, a civil society unengaged in public life, and widespread corruption.

Good urban governance involves participatory decision-making. It involves federal, state and local governments and civil society, such as the private sector, community-based institutions, the media, etc.

The progress of a country depends in no small measure on the quality of its governance. While a democratic government may lay the foundation for good governance, a vigilant and active citizenry is essential to its sustenance.

In Malaysia today, about 60 percent of the population resides in urban areas, indicating the country is facing rapid urbanisation resulting from rural to urban migration.

Our cities and towns are going to be the frontiers for building a new Malaysia. This is where our local authorities have to play a pivotal and crucial role in dealing with the many challenges and problems of the urbanised environment.

With the rapid growth in industrialisation, the landscape has changed and local authorities are on the front lines facing the challenges of urbanisation. Local government, therefore, must have the capacity and the wherewithal to cope with the many issues and find quick and effective answers to community needs and services, including matters concerning crime. Local government, instead of being the lowest level of government, should become the highest in terms of community needs and services.

There are about 150 local governments in the country yet we do not have a strong central training institute to cater for their manpower requirements to meet the diverse functions of urban management. The only exception is the training institute set up for Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

The rapid urbanisation taking place now necessitates the development of a training and urban governance institute which can eventually function as a centre of excellence to undertake research and provide consultancy on all urban issues as well as train local government officials to better manage our cities and towns.

Cities and towns must have a clear vision and adopt a holistic approach in managing their future. They must be shaped and developed with five key elements in mind, namely, they must be developed to be socially just, ecologically sustainable, politically participatory, economically productive and culturally vibrant.

The article appeared in The Star on May 04, 2021

Sources: DB: Dainik Bhaskar; ET: Economic Times; IT: India Today;
TE: The Economist; TG: The Guardian; TH: The Hindu; ToI: Times of India

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