



1/2024

CityMatters

Passing away of two great Indians



In the month of February, we lost two great Indians: Fali Nariman, a great advocate and Ameen Sayani, a long-term popular broadcaster. Both giants had crossed their 90th birthday. They lived a happy and eventful life with immortality earned by their splendid performance which made them popular in their own ways. Nariman was well known as a lawyer and an advocate, while Sayani was a popular broadcaster known all over the country, particularly those who loved Hindi songs. The accompanying cartoons say it well. I had some sort of relationship with both and hence this editorial is about them.



Only recently, I had gotten an email from Fali Nariman complimenting me on my new book: "Supreme Court and the Indian Economy". I was looking forward to engaging with him on the book, but he passed away. The book is a rare one which has examined six cases before the apex court which had an adverse economic impact. It was the result of the Prime Minister's angst which was the driver behind the book project.

The analysis shows as to what should have been done to avoid the huge economic setback that the country had suffered. The book has been praised by many including our leading advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who said in his Foreword: "The book carries the fragrance of my home state and author's reputation with a Ralph Nader lifetime contribution to such issues—at it makes compelling reading".

So much about my book, which is available on Amazon, but let me quote here what Singhvi wrote in his obituary on Nariman: "Fali was a rare amalgam of an outstanding lawyer and an equally good advocate, a distinction frequently forgotten with the combination of two talents usually lacking in the same person....Of many qualities, my first pick is his clean, open and magnanimous large-heartedness".

Ameen Sayani too was a large-hearted man. With him, I share two things, though both are intertwined. Both of us went to the Scindia School in Gwalior and were also recipients of the Madhav Old Boys of Eminence Award, though years apart.

Because of a narrow-minded Information and Broadcasting Minister, B. V. Keskar, All India Radio did not play any Hindi film music.

Radio Sri Lanka launched a weekly Binaca Geetmala funded by the toothpaste which was broadcast by Sayani for 41 years. Among many, I too was a great fan. This programme was driven by choices expressed by listeners all over the country. In fact, one unknown village Jhumri Teliya in Bihar became a household word because there were requests from here in every broadcast. In one record week, 65,000 letters were received by Radio Sri Lanka which would have operated a postal address in Bombay.

In his baritone voice, he would always start his programme with an affectionate salutation: Namaskar, behano and bhaiyon (sisters and brothers). Sayani also acted in a few films and conducted live programmes as master of ceremonies.

Said the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, on his death: "Through his work, he played an important role in revolutionising Indian broadcasting and nurtured a special bond with his (countless) listeners".

Al Vida, Fali and Ameen, you will always be in our hearts.

Pradeep S Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

INSIDE

- ◆ Intermittent Fasting and Type 2 Diabetes
- ◆ Artificial Intelligence and Your Health
- ◆ Jaipur Literature Festival 2024
- ◆ India's gig economy demands a homegrown policy agenda

Intermittent Fasting and Type 2 Diabetes

Around 1 in 10 Americans suffer from type 2 diabetes, marked by high blood glucose levels. NIH-funded research tested time-restricted eating for weight loss in 75 obese type 2 diabetics.

One group fasted from 12 am to 8 pm, another cut calories by 25 percent, while a third made no changes. After six months, the fasting group lost 3.6 percent body weight, with improved glucose levels. Dr Varady suggests consulting a doctor before trying intermittent fasting. (NIH, 13.01.24)



Pitch for a Two-State Solution

India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, at the NAM summit in



Kampala, called for a sustainable solution to the violence in Gaza, stressing the need to prevent its spread.

He advocated for a two-state solution, expressing India's deep concern and offering Palestinian humanitarian aid. Jaishankar also met with regional counterparts to discuss the crisis.

(TH, 20.01.24)

MoU with Madhya Pradesh

The Department of Tourism, Madhya Pradesh, partners with MakeMyTrip and redBus to promote sustainable tourism and homestays.

MakeMyTrip will boost pilgrimage and wildlife experiences, while redBus becomes the official bus ticketing partner, spotlighting festivals and events.

Officials express enthusiasm, aiming to enhance tourist visibility and experiences, emphasising conscious and equitable tourism practices in the state.

(Tol, 12.03.24)

Football's Farewell Reflection

Many people in America have decided to stop watching American football due to its violent nature and impact on players' health. Instead, they



spend time with their families at the zoo, feeling detached from the game.

Despite missing it, they realise football does not miss them and continues its popularity. (CNN, 11.02.24)

How Tonic Fetches the Gin

Home delivery of liquor is prohibited in Delhi-NCR, but residents circumvent this by ordering food or groceries online and then privately arranging alcohol deliveries with the same riders. The



practice thrives due to the financial incentive for both riders and liquor shops.

Despite warnings from authorities, the demand for surrogate alcohol delivery persists, prompting calls for regulatory adjustments in line with evolving societal norms. (ET, 07.01.24)

Kate's Cancer Diagnosis

Catherine, Princess of Wales, revealed she's undergoing chemotherapy for



cancer, citing it as a "huge shock." Details remain scarce, and Kensington Palace is unlikely to disclose more.

Previously sidelined for abdominal surgery, the 42-year-old princess started preventative chemo in February, delaying her return to duties. The news garnered global sympathy, coming amidst King Charles III's battle with cancer. (CNN, 22.03.24)

The Newly Emerging AI Tokens

New AI tokens like Scotty the AI, eTukTuk, Nosana, Artificial Liquid Intelligence (ALI), and Delysium are stirring the crypto market. Scotty combines memes and AI for enhanced trading insights, while eTukTuk focuses on affordable EVs for developing countries.



Nosana offers a cost-effective GPU grid, ALI tokenises AI assets, and Delysium creates AI Twins for virtual societies. These tokens promise growth in 2024. (ET, 11.03.24)

Siraj Reveals Plans to Leave

On his 30th birthday, cricketer Mohammad Siraj reflected on his journey, revealing he considered quitting cricket in 2019-20. In a BCCI video, he toured his hometown Hyderabad, cherishing the tranquillity of Eidgah ground.



Siraj recalled working as a caterer to support his family, enduring burns while flipping roomali roti. Despite struggles, cricket became his passion, leading him to international success.

(Tol, 14.03.24)

Artificial Intelligence and Your Health

AI, or artificial intelligence, is revolutionising healthcare through machine learning and chatbots. AI



analyses medical images, aiding in early disease detection like breast cancer. However, reliance on chatbots for medical advice raises concerns about accuracy and context.

Despite this, chatbots offer the potential to fill healthcare gaps, especially in mental health. Ethical concerns, such as biases in data, need addressing as AI expands in healthcare. (NIH, 22.01.24)

City Briefs

Modi and Macron Meet

French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Jaipur on 25th January 2024 ahead of his attendance at India's Republic Day in Delhi. Macron, invited as the chief guest for the 75th Republic Day celebrations, concludes the 25th-anniversary celebrations of the India-France Strategic Partnership.



His visit, the sixth by a French president, underscores the strong bilateral ties, with notable ministerial and business delegations accompanying him.

(TH, 25.01.24)

Government Announces Early Diwali

Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal Sharma flagged off a convoy to Ayodhya's Ram Temple, carrying 2,100 casks of mustard oil for prasad. The oil, significant in Sita's kitchen, holds inscriptions praising Lord Ram.



Jaipur prepares for Mahadeepotsav, with elaborate decorations, lamp donation ceremonies, and market illuminations resembling Diwali. Jaipur Discom offers discounted electricity for festive lighting, responding to business requests.

(TH, 11.01.24)

Third Edition of Jaipur Art Week

The third Jaipur Art Week, spearheaded by the Public Art Trust of India, organised a dynamic contemporary art programme in January 2024. Celebrating Jaipur's rich cultural legacy, the event featured exhibitions, installations, performances, and workshops across iconic venues. Notable highlights included Hindolo by



Bhimanshu Pandel and SHANKHA by Shilo Shiv Suleman. The event was supported by various sponsors and coincided with the Sculpture Park at Nahargarh Fort.

(SB, 17.01.24)

Amit Shah Eyes Hat-Trick

Home Minister Amit Shah kicks off BJP's election campaign in Rajasthan, targeting a third consecutive win on all 25 Lok Sabha seats. Shah's rally in Bikaner, Udaipur, and Jaipur rallies supporters, predicting BJP to surpass 400 seats in the Lok Sabha.



He lauds Modi's governance achievements, criticises Congress, and addresses factionalism concerns within the party. BJP aims for a stronghold in Rajasthan, ensuring victory in the upcoming elections.

(DH, 20.02.24)

Sunday Rain in Jaipur

After two days of rainfall, minor relief in maximum temperatures was observed, though minimum temperatures remained largely unchanged on Monday. Dholpur and Dausa received the highest rainfall of 30 mm in the state.

Jaipur experienced its highest February rainfall in a decade with 22.4 mm on Sunday. The Meteorological Office forecasts clear skies, attributing the rain to active western disturbances, but anticipates rising temperatures.

(Tol, 06.02.24)

Diya Kumari Presents Interim Budget

Rajasthan's Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister, Diya Kumari, commenced presenting a vote on account (interim Budget) in the assembly, intending to cover essential government expenses temporarily.



Governed by Article 116 of the Constitution, this measure allows for expenditure until the approval of the full Budget in July. The interim Budget grants funds equivalent to one-sixth of the total estimation for a limited period.

(TH, 08.02.24)

Jaipur Literature Festival 2024

The 17th Jaipur Literature Festival commenced in Jaipur on 01 February 2024, advocating for the promotion of "literary tourism" to bolster the economy and cultural exchange.



Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari inaugurated the event at Hotel Clarks Amer. With 550 speakers and artists from diverse backgrounds, the festival, relocated from Diggi Palace to a larger venue, aims to embrace varied voices and perspectives.

(DH, 02.02.24)

City Briefs

Sculpture Park Gets Cosmic Installation

Alicja Kwade's "Superposition" installation at Madhavendra Palace in Jaipur merges steel frames with mirrors and plastic chairs, engaging viewers in a playful exploration of space and perception. The art challenges conventional notions of reality, weaving physics and philosophy into her sculptures.



Kwade aims to democratise art by inviting public interaction and contemplation, fostering a deeper understanding of our existence and relationship with the world.

(MC, 03.02.24)

Hernan Diaz Emphasises Trust



Hernan Diaz, winner of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, discusses his award-winning novel "Trust" at the 2024 Jaipur Literature Festival. This novel delves into the complexities of wealth, power, and voice in America.

Diaz employs a multifaceted narrative structure to explore the polyphony of capital and the significance of trust between author and reader, urging reflection on the nature of truth and investment.

(MC, 04.02.24)

Chemical Factory Fire Near Jaipur



A chemical factory fire in Jaipur's Bassi area claimed five lives and injured two others. Jaipur Commissioner of Police Biju George Joseph confirmed the fatalities, while Jaipur District Collector Prakash Rajpurohit stated that the blaze followed an explosion in the factory's boiler.

The injured are receiving treatment at Jaipur's Sawai Man Singh government hospital, with authorities promising a thorough investigation into the incident.

(MC, 23.03.24)

Commercial Real Estate Platform

Property Share launches its first India warehousing asset, a Grade A warehouse in Jaipur leased to Flipkart, valued at ₹191 crores. Spanning 528,631 square feet, it's Flipkart's largest distribution centre in the West.



With Tier 2 cities driving e-commerce demand, CEO Kunal Moktan highlights the underserved Grade A warehousing market. Property Share aims to capitalise on India's warehousing growth story.

(Tol, 07.03.24)

JDA Staff to Work Weekends

Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) mandates select staff to work weekends for digitisation efforts. PHED secretary's order enforces this move. JDA aims for a full online transition by financial year-end. The manual file upload process progresses slowly.



JAIPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The commissioner categorises files and sets deadlines. Raj Kaaj portal is now the primary platform for operations, replacing offline methods. Staff adapting to the system and portal delays progress.

(Tol, 19.02.24)

'Three Bharat Ratnas a Year' Rule



Former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot accuses the BJP-led government of breaching protocol by awarding five Bharat Ratna honours in a year for electoral gain, diminishing the award's prestige. Gehlot suggests fulfilling the legacies of recipients instead.

BJP counters, citing progress in Kashmir and Ram temple as non-political achievements. BJP spokesperson urges recognition of honours without political bias, citing adherence to regulations.

(Tol, 11.02.24)

SWOT Analysis of Rajasthan Royals

Rajasthan Royals, led by Sanju Samson, target IPL success, bolstered by Avesh Khan. Their potent top order with Buttler, Jaiswal, and Samson, supported by Powell, strengthens batting.

However, vulnerability to early wickets and inconsistent finishers like Hetmyer pose challenges. Opportunities arise for Dubey to shine, while threats loom with Prasidh Krishna's injury. RR's XI combines experience and potential, aiming for IPL glory.

(Tol, 24.03.24)



India's gig economy demands a homegrown policy agenda

By Pradeep S Mehta and Debashree Hazarika*

The gig economy in India is not merely a reflection of its counterparts in developed nations. Historically present, it has been significantly transformed by digital technology. Recognising this unique aspect is crucial for developing welfare policies specifically suited to Indian gig workers, rather than adopting a generalised approach from abroad.

The year 2023 marked notable changes in the global gig economy, particularly in worker welfare. This focus is vital given the inherent uncertainties of this unprotected economic segment. A significant development was the European Union's potential reclassification of certain gig workers as employees, enhancing worker protection. In India, the Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023, exemplifies commitment to gig worker welfare, inspiring similar legislation in states like Karnataka. However, India must carefully consider its unique socio-economic landscape before adopting international models.

While these global developments are encouraging, India needs to be cautious. In the Global North, the gig economy emerged alongside robust social security systems, strong infrastructure, and established worker protections. India does not have the social security nets which makes direct adoption of foreign models potentially harmful. A tailored approach, recognising the vulnerabilities and realities of Indian gig workers, is essential.

In the Global North, the gig economy represents a transition from traditional labour to flexible, digital employment, as highlighted in the World Bank's recent report. Since 2011, this shift has been characterised by online platforms connecting service providers with immediate demand. Narratives from the Global North emphasise the flexibility and empowerment of employment roles, supported by robust social security systems and strict regulations – which are missing in the Indian context.

The trajectory of India's gig sector, however, is unique. The NITI Aayog report indicates that the Indian gig workforce, around 7.7 million in 2020-21, is expected to rise to 23.5 million by 2029-2030.

This difference necessitates different policy solutions. Unlike the Global North, where gig work may supplement existing income streams, in India, it can be the sole source of livelihood, particularly for those transitioning from informal sectors. This context underscores the urgency of addressing issues like low wages, lack of social security, and limited job security, which threaten to perpetuate existing inequalities within the informal economy. Policies focused on enhancing job quality, providing social security benefits, and facilitating upskilling will empower Indian gig workers to thrive in the digital formal markets.

Indian policies on gig workers need a comprehensive overhaul, focusing on job quality and upskilling initiatives, vital for a resilient workforce in the digital formal markets. Policies should ensure fair pay and continuous skill development for workers transitioning from informal to digital formal sectors



The Indian gig model differs notably from the Global North. In India, gig work often blurs with full-time employment, and many rely on it as their main income source. This dependency, rooted in informal sectors such as agriculture and daily wage labour, presents challenges. Gig workers, typically classified as contractors, lack social security benefits, and digital platform companies often resist providing these due to cost and competitiveness concerns. Consequently, Indian gig workers face low pay and social standing issues, perpetuating inequalities within the informal economy.

Indian policies on gig workers need a comprehensive overhaul, focusing on job quality and upskilling initiatives, vital for a resilient workforce in the digital formal markets. Policies should ensure fair pay and continuous skill development for workers transitioning from informal to digital formal sectors.

Recognising the unique nature of India's gig workers is essential amid global shifts. In India, gig roles, deeply embedded in an unequal power divide, are not exceptions, but the norm. A nuanced understanding of the social realities shaping gig practices is crucial. State-led social security measures, strict regulation of platform companies, and clear guidelines for worker classification, social security benefits, fair wages, and continuous upskilling are essential. These elements form the foundation of a robust, equitable gig economy in India, reflecting its unique dynamics and challenges.

*(Authors work for CUTS International.)
This article item can also be viewed at: <https://www.policycircle.org/>*

Innovative financial options being examined for funding of road infrastructure in Rajasthan

Rajasthan ranks seventh in terms of the State highways and second largest in terms of the national highways in the country



The Bharatiya Janata Party government in Rajasthan is examining some innovative financial options, including public-private partnership (PPP), for securing increased funding for the expansion of road infrastructure. Infrastructure investment trusts, asset monetisation and corporate responsibility frameworks are some of the choices being considered in this respect.

Rajasthan ranks seventh in terms of the State highways and second largest in terms of the national highways in the country. The Rajasthan State Highways Authority has started adopting new measures to cater to the need for better connectivity and facilitate innovative investment and financing models.

Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari, who holds the Public Works Department portfolio, said here that the development of highways would be crucial for the success of the national-level flagship programmes with better rural

connectivity. Kumari said the potential for the development of industries and tourism in the State could befully exploited with the construction of roads of good quality.

Kumari addressed a workshop on "Financing models for road infrastructure development", organised jointly by the PWD and the India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) Projects. Experts attending the workshop spoke on the asset monetisation avenues, green finance and sustainability, and the hybrid annuity model for PPP projects in road infrastructure.

IIFCL is a leading public sector infrastructure finance institution, which has funded about 21 percent of the country's national highway capacity, comprising nearly 30,000 km roads. IIFCL Projects is a subsidiary of IIFCL providing advisory services to the Union and State governments.

Kumari said the State government would work closely with the IIFCL Projects for strengthening its road network and bring it on par with those in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The "double engine government" would develop the State Highways Authority as a premier developer of roads on the lines of the National Highways Authority of India, she said.

IIFCL Projects chief executive officer Palash Srivastava said Rajasthan could become the country's first State to garner funds for green highways and set up its own Infrastructure Investment Trust. IIFCL managing director P.R. Jaishankar highlighted the State's potential to raise resources through innovative means for financing of road development works.

The News item appeared in The Hindu on February 22, 2024

Sources: CNN: Cable News Network; DH: Deccan Herald; ET: Economic Times; MC: Money Control; NIH: News in Health; SB: Story Board; TH: The Hindu; Tol: Times of India; WP: Washington Post

The news/articles in this Newsletter are compressed from several newspapers. The sources given are to be used as a reference for further information, and do not indicate the literal transcript of a particular news/story. CUTS International is a not-for-profit organisation and the listing of paid news/articles is for informative and educative purposes only.

CityMatters is a quarterly newsletter published by Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302016, India,

Phone: 91.141.2282821, Fax: 91.141.2282485, Email: cuts@cuts.org, Web site: www.cuts-international.org

CUTS offices also at Kolkata, Chittorgarh and New Delhi (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Accra (Ghana); Hanoi (Vietnam); Geneva (Switzerland) and Washington DC (USA).