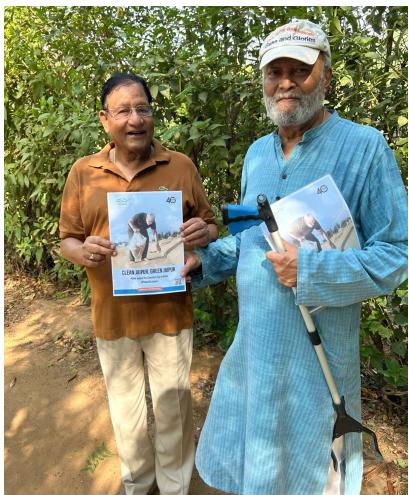


CityMatters



1/2025

A Cleaner City, A Greener Tomorrow



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Mornings in Jaipur’s Central Park are a delight for early risers—fresh air, chirping birds, and the gentle hum of life awakening. However, the experience is often marred by the presence of litter scattered across pathways and lawns. This growing concern has sparked a movement led by CUTS International, aptly titled “*Clean Jaipur, Green Jaipur*”, to restore and preserve the park’s natural charm.

The campaign is not just about cleanliness; it represents a shift in public attitude towards environmental responsibility. Under my leadership, the initiative promotes *plogging*—a Swedish-born activity that combines jogging (or walking) with picking up litter. Each morning, a group of dedicated individuals gathers in Central Park to plog, led by example and encouraging others to join.

A significant boost to the campaign came with the support of former Urban Development Minister, Shanti Dhariwal, who launched the campaign by releasing its poster. These posters, now displayed throughout the park, serve as daily reminders of the importance of civic responsibility and environmental care.

Keeping our cities clean and tidy is vital for many reasons. It enhances public health, boosts tourism, and promotes a sense of community pride. Clean environments also reduce stress and encourage people to spend more time outdoors, which in turn contributes to both physical and mental well-being.

Moreover, when citizens actively engage in maintaining their surroundings, it fosters a culture of mutual respect and accountability. Campaigns like *Clean Jaipur, Green Jaipur* highlight how collective action—no matter how small—can make a big difference. As Mehta notes, “Our goal is to inspire the community to take responsibility for their environment. By combining fitness with environmental stewardship, we hope to create a cleaner, greener Jaipur for everyone.”

The call to action is simple yet powerful: don’t just walk past litter—pick it up. Plogging may be a small act, but when done together, it becomes a movement. CUTS International invites all citizens to be part of this journey, helping to maintain the beauty and sanctity of Central Park and, by extension, our city.

After all, a cleaner city isn’t just more attractive—it’s a reflection of who we are and what we value.




Pradeep S. Mehta
Secretary General

Jaipur Literature Festival 2025

The Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) returned to Hotel Clarks Amer in Jaipur from January 30 to February 03, 2025, featuring over 300 speakers, including renowned writers and Nobel laureates. Co-directed by William Dalrymple and Namita Gokhale, this 18th edition emphasised environmental sustainability and showcased regional languages such as Hindi, Tamil, and Urdu. A curtain-raiser event was held at Leela Palace in New Delhi on January 09, 2025, offering a preview of the festival.

(TLA, 10.01.25)



Scraping BRTS corridors and tourism push

The state government announced an allocation of ₹12,000 crore for the construction of Jaipur Metro Line 2, extending from Sitapura to Ambabari and Vidhyadhar Nagar - the first major funding since the Jaipur Metro Railway Corporation (JMRC) was established 15 years ago. Finance Minister Diya Kumari confirmed that the project will be executed by the newly formed



Rajasthan Metro Railway Corporation (RMRC), a joint venture between the Centre and the state. She also officially announced the withdrawal of the BRTS project in Jaipur.

(IE, 19.02.25)

JDA releases GIS-based Master Plan

In a move towards technology-driven urban governance, the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) has made the GIS-based Master Plan 2025 available on its website. This initiative allows citizens to access

land use information from the comfort of their homes. JDA



Commissioner Anandhi stated that the public will no longer need to visit the JDA office to obtain details about land use classifications, such as residential, commercial, institutional, mixed-use, and ecological zones. The online system aims to improve transparency and accessibility in urban planning.

(Tol, 30.01.25)

'Explain action taken to solve civic issues'

The Rajasthan High Court has summoned the commissioners of Jaipur Municipal Corporation (Greater) and (Heritage) to address issues of cleanliness, encroachment, traffic, parking, and stray animals on February 10. Advocates Vimal



Chaudhary and Yogesh Taylor, involved in the case, criticised the HC's monitoring committee for lacking effectiveness, stating that the city remains dirty, traffic is congested, and stray animals are prevalent despite court orders.

(Tol, 01.02.25)

8 die after car-bus collide on Jaipur-Ajmer highway on way to Maha Kumbh

At least eight Maha Kumbh pilgrims were killed and six injured after their car collided with a roadways bus on the Jaipur-Ajmer highway in Rajasthan's Dudu area, police said. Locals rushed the victims to the hospital, where



doctors declared them dead on arrival. The bodies were sent for postmortem, while six to seven people with minor injuries were discharged after primary treatment, police official Sharma said. A case of negligence leading to death was registered, and an investigation is underway to determine the bus's fitness and any possible driver negligence.

(HT, 06.02.25)

City Briefs

7-Year-Old Girl Found Murdered On Rooftop

A seven-year-old girl was found murdered on the roof of her rented house in Jaipur on Monday night. DCP East Tejaswini Gautam stated that the child was reported missing at 6:15 PM, and after an extensive search, her body was



discovered. The accused, who worked at the same *dhaba* as the victim's father, allegedly strangled her with a towel when she screamed. Top police officials visited the scene, and investigations are ongoing to ensure justice.

(ETV, 25.02.25)

Vehicles with Fake Chassis Numbers Running Rampant

The District Transport and Road Safety Department in Jaipur has launched a special campaign against vehicles with fake chassis numbers, which are being used to exploit lower registration rates in states like Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.



During inspections, officials discovered counterfeit chassis numbers in several vehicles, particularly in passenger buses operating between Jaipur and Delhi. So far, 13 FIRs have been registered, and multiple vehicles have been seized. Transport authorities have emphasised that such illegal practices pose a serious threat to road safety and have urged the public to ensure proper documentation. The campaign will continue, with strict action against offenders. (AU, 18.01.25)

CBI books CISF SI for receiving a 10k bribe from a contractor

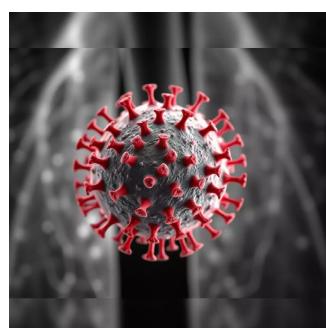
The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has launched a probe against CISF sub-inspector



Abhijit, posted in Deoli, Tonk district, for allegedly soliciting and accepting a ₹10,000 bribe from a contractor. According to the FIR registered, the bribe was received via a digital payment platform in exchange for clearing pending payments on five bills amounting to approximately ₹86,537. (Tol, 13.02.25)

HMPV Raises Concern: Two Cases Reported in Jaipur

Two cases of Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) have been reported in the capital city,



Jaipur. Both patients have been admitted to the medical ICU of Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital. According to Dr. Deepak Maheshwari, Principal of SMS Medical College, HMPV cases are steadily increasing across the country, raising concerns among health authorities. (AU, 23.01.25)

CUTS Campaign “Go Solar, Save Water”

Jaipur, the capital city of Rajasthan, known as the “Pink City”, is nestled amidst a scenic landscape of hills. Renowned for its tourism and bustling trade, the city still faces pressing environmental challenges. Despite being home to some of India's highest solar radiation levels, Jaipur remains heavily reliant on fossil fuels, leading to elevated carbon emissions and environmental damage.

Additionally, Jaipur has a rich history of rainwater conservation, with centuries-old systems offering sustainable solutions to address its water challenges.

However, rapid urbanisation and population growth have resulted in severe water scarcity issues, posing a significant concern for the city's future. We need to tap into Jaipur's enduring legacy of water conservation to tackle contemporary water issues.



CUTS campaign ‘Go Solar, Save Water’ is aimed at driving rainwater harvesting and solar energy adoption through policy initiatives and public awareness in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Read More:

<https://cuts-cart.org/cuts-campaign-go-solar-save-water/>

India's urban population set to reach \$900mln by 2047, says PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has projected that India's urban population will reach around \$900mln by 2047, urging private firms, especially in real estate and industry, to focus on planned urbanisation. Speaking at a post-Budget webinar, he emphasised the need for sustainable urban mobility, digital integration, and climate resilience in Indian cities. Highlighting key initiatives such as AMRUT 2.0 and the Jal Jeevan Mission, he called for collaborative efforts to drive urban transformation. Modi also stated that the Union Budget 2025-26 lays the foundation for a strong workforce and economic growth, with balanced investments in infrastructure, industries, people, economy, and innovation.



(BS, 05.03.25)

Rent a Robot for Dates

An influencer spent Rs 1.15 lakh to rent a humanoid robot for domestic chores, but it garnered attention for accompanying him on a date. The video showcases the robot's abilities and its clumsiness, sparking discussions on the



potential of humanoid robots becoming part of everyday life. Despite mishaps, the robot offered companionship, revolutionising perceptions of AI. (Tol, 22.03.25)

How to live beyond 100



Maria Branyas Morera, the world's oldest living person, passed away at 117 years in Spain. Researchers studied her lifestyle, Mediterranean diet, love for yoghurt, efficient metabolism, and strong genes. These factors contributed to her longevity and overall health. The findings on her microbiome and biological age provide insights into living a long, healthy life. (Tol, 19.03.25)

Phase out Petrol & Diesel Vehicles

Plans are being discussed to phase out pure diesel and petrol vehicles in Delhi-NCR, pushing for electric, hybrid, and CNG options instead. New vehicle registration may be restricted to cleaner fuels



soon, starting with buses by 2025, and eventually extending to all vehicles by 2035. Additional efforts include developing roads to reduce dust pollution. (ET, 31.03.25)

Banyan Tree of India's Culture



Mahakumbh 2025: Over 42 crore take dip, exceeding population of US and Canada

Over 42 crore people have taken a holy dip at the Kumbh Mela religious festival in Prayagraj, India, according to the government release. The Press Information Bureau stated, "More than 42 crore devotees took a dip in the holy Triveni Sangam." The Triveni Sangam is where the Ganges, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers meet. The number of attendees exceeds the combined populations of the US and Canada. (ET, 07.02.25)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the RSS headquarters in Nagpur for the first time in 11 years, celebrating the organisation's contributions to India's culture and development. Modi also paid homage to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at Deekshabhoomi, underscoring the government's commitment to realising Ambedkar's vision for social justice and inclusion. (ET, 30.03.25)

Miscellany

Kho Kho World Cup: India Wins

India clinched the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup titles in both men's and women's categories, defeating Nepal in the finals. Led by Pratik Waikar and Ramji Kashyap, the



men's team triumphed 54-36. Dominant throughout, India earlier beat Brazil, Peru, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and South Africa en route to the championship. (TH, 20.01.25)

Mumbai comedy club ransacked

A mob attacked Mumbai's Habitat comedy club after comedian Kunal Kamra performed a satirical song mocking Maharashtra's deputy CM, Eknath Shinde. Shiv Sena supporters vandalised the venue, and Kamra faced defamation charges. The club condemned the violence and shut



down temporarily, while politicians criticised the retaliation against free expression. (TG, 24.03.25)

Air India Flight Turns Back Due to Clogged Toilets

An Air India flight from Chicago to Delhi had to return mid-journey after passengers clogged the toilets by flushing inappropriate items, including clothing. Eight out of twelve lavatories became unusable, prompting the airline to issue a plea for proper restroom etiquette.

(NY, 12.03.25)

YouTuber slaps train passenger



A YouTuber in Bihar went viral after slapping a train passenger for social media attention. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) arrested him, and he issued a public apology, admitting the act was for clout. The incident highlights the extreme measures some take for online validation, leading to legal consequences. (IT, 02.03.25)

Japanese tourist breaks down

A Japanese tourist recently shared an emotional account of her journey through India. In a heartfelt post on Reddit, the tourist shared that the constant noise in the country became so overwhelming. She talked about her time exploring popular destinations like Agra, Rajasthan, and Punjab. While she acknowledged the beauty and richness of Indian culture, she admitted that the incessant noise proved to be a significant struggle for her. (IE, 02.01.25)

Bride's surprise dance to Chaudhary

A bride decided to surprise her groom by dancing to Mame Khan's chartbuster Chaudhary amid their wedding celebrations in a delightful moment that made viewers smile.



The video, shared on Instagram by the couple on their Instagram account, has gone viral with over 22 million views so far. In the video, Jinal gracefully enters the venue in a stunning green outfit, swaying to the rhythm of Chaudhary. He met her, watched in awe, unable to contain his joy, before eagerly joining her on the spot. (IT, 31.01.25)

Meerut man slaps strangers on the street for months, says it helps with his 'depression'

A 23-year-old man, Kapil Kumar, was arrested in Meerut for slapping people on the streets to experience a "dopamine rush". He admitted to being depressed after his father's death and his mother's remarriage. Police said he had been doing this for months, seeking relief from stress through random acts of aggression.



(HT, 01.01.25)

Turn tariff threats into opportunities

Financial Express, March 27, 2025
By Pradeep S Mehta and Sudip K Paul



A BTA also benefits the US. Around 63 percent of Indian exports to America are final goods. Tariffs on these would fuel inflation in the US. Meanwhile, 65 percent of India's imports from the US are intermediate goods, which support Indian manufacturing.

With Donald Trump's potential return to the White House and a renewed "America First" trade agenda, India must strategically convert emerging challenges into opportunities. Instead of engaging in a tariff war, both India and the US are negotiating a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), expected to conclude by autumn 2025.

This deal makes economic sense. India's average tariffs are around 20 percent higher than those of the US, especially in agriculture. Aligning tariffs would open India's market to American producers and make imports, many of which are intermediates, more affordable. This would enhance Indian industry's competitiveness and lower prices for consumers.

A BTA also benefits the US. Around 63 percent of Indian exports to America are final goods. Tariffs on these would fuel inflation in the US. Meanwhile, 65 percent of India's imports from the US are intermediate goods, which support Indian manufacturing. Reciprocal tariff reductions will strengthen both economies.

India's exports—such as jewellery, pharmaceuticals, and IT services—are largely price- and income-elastic, while US exports—like machinery and aircraft—are not. This natural complementarity supports a win-win trade expansion.

This BTA aligns with India's goal of becoming a manufacturing hub, supporting global supply chain diversification under the "China Plus One" strategy. Trade negotiations must be data-driven, evaluating tariff lines thoroughly. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's visit to Washington DC to meet USTR Jamieson Greer and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick highlights the seriousness of the initiative.

With trade aspirations set at US\$500bln, the agreement will likely be product-specific, with side letters managing sensitive sectors like agriculture. A well-structured BTA can advance the US-India COMPACT, fostering trade, technology, and innovation. India must act pragmatically to ensure this agreement benefits both economies and reflects their shared strategic ambitions.

India should re-imagine the National Green Tribunal for better outcomes

Livemint, January 20, 2025

By Vijay L. Kelkar and Pradeep S. Mehta

Despite its pioneering role in promoting environmental justice, the Tribunal must operate within its legislative bounds. Cases like Grasim Industries Ltd and the Shimla development plan show how deviations can undermine credibility and procedural fairness.



The National Green Tribunal (NGT), established under the 2010 Act following a series of landmark cases by advocate M.C. Mehta, plays a crucial role in addressing environmental issues in India. However, it has recently faced criticism for allegedly overstepping its jurisdiction, leading the Supreme Court to overturn some of its decisions and instruct it to review its orders.

Though the NGT is a specialised body with commendable efficiency in handling complex environmental matters, it lacks explicit statutory authority to take suo motu action. Its proactive approach has at times sparked debates over judicial overreach, particularly when it has intervened in areas traditionally under legislative or executive control.

The Tribunal's decision in the Sterlite Copper case in Tamil Nadu, which was overturned by the Supreme Court, highlighted the limitations of its jurisdiction, specifically its inability to challenge state government orders. A CUTS International study for NITI Aayog supported the NGT's stance and called for an expansion of its powers to cover state actions.

While the Supreme Court, in Municipal Corporation of Bombay vs Ankita Sinha, permitted the NGT to initiate suo motu cases for societal benefit, concerns persist. For instance, its directive requiring central rather than state approval for real estate projects has raised questions about federalism, as land falls under the State List.

Despite its pioneering role in promoting environmental justice, the Tribunal must operate within its legislative bounds. Cases like Grasim Industries Ltd and the Shimla development plan show how deviations can undermine credibility and procedural fairness.

To strengthen its role, an independent review of the NGT's mandate is essential. Clear legislative provisions and defined procedures will help the Tribunal balance ecological preservation with legitimate development, reinforcing its legitimacy and enhancing public trust.

The authors are, respectively, vice president of Pune International Centre and secretary general of CUTS International. Pragya Tiwari of CUTS International contributed to this article.

Sources: AU: Amar Ujala; BS: Business Standard; ET: Economic Times; HT: Hindustan Times; IE: The Indian Express; IT: India Today; N18: News 18; NY: New York Post; RT: Reuters; TG: The Guardian; TLA: Travel and Leisure Asia; TH: The Hindu; Tol: Times of India; TNIE: The New Indian Express

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