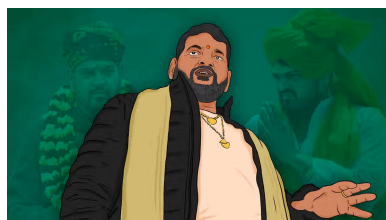


Need Exemplary Punishment For Those in Power



www.google.com

The other day I read in the newspaper that Rajesh Das, a DGP rank officer in Tamil Nadu was found guilty of sexually harassing a young IPS woman officer who was posted as SP. He was sentenced to three years in jail and a small fine. This is not a one-off incident. Seniors often engage in such dirty activities with the hope that they will get away.

Some of them do, nearly. For example, K P S Gill, the super cop who crushed the Khalistani movement (alas it is rearing its head again). He outraged the modesty of a senior IAS woman officer, Rupan Deol Bajaj, sometime in 2017. The poor Rupan Deol could not register an FIR in view of the stature of the opposite party but got a court-directed investigation launched.

She fought the case up to the Supreme Court as even the High Court did not find any major substance in her complaint. The issue was how Gill slapped the bottom of Rupan Deol and whether that constituted an outrage of modesty. The apex court did think so and ultimately, Gill had to pay a fine of ₹2 lakh, undergo jail for five months and probation for three years. Too small a punishment in my view.

As I write this, an interesting matter of sexual harassment of our champion female wrestlers by the wrestling federation's former supremo and BJP MP, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh was occupying the headlines. With great difficulty, FIRs were lodged and the matter is still under investigation. All this happened because of a strong protest by the female wrestlers along with other athletes, male and female. The girls were of course blackmailed into succumbing otherwise their careers would have got spoilt. The matter is yet to be decided, for obvious reasons.

It is not as cases against powerful people do not succeed, but they take a huge time and effort. If we look across to the USA, disgraced film producer Harvey Weinstein was sentenced to 16 years in prison on one count of rape and two counts of sexual assault, adding to an existing 23-year prison sentence, after allegations of sexual assault dating back decades brought down one of the most powerful producers in Hollywood.

The common factor across all the above cases is that people in power exploit their power for their lust, and the victim is quite helpless. If one looks at Weinstein's sentence it is certainly one which needs to be lauded.

However, if one looks at cases in India, the sentence is often too small or just difficult to obtain. In my view, in such cases, punishment should be exemplary so that people in commanding positions do not use their power to game the situation.



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Pradeep S Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Kohinoor was 'taken' by the British

A recently opened exhibition at the Tower of London, endorsed by Buckingham Palace, delves into the history of the crown jewels, with a particular focus on the Kohinoor diamond. The exhibit boldly asserts that the East India Company "took" the diamond and coerced Maharaja Duleep Singh into surrendering it. The new permanent Crown Jewels



exhibition features an "origins room" providing insights into various items in the Royal Collection, highlighting the 105.6-carat Kohinoor as a 'symbol of conquest.'

Throughout its storied past, the diamond has passed through the hands of Mughal Emperors, Shahs of Iran, Emirs of Afghanistan, and Sikh Maharajas. (Tol, 03.06.23)

New Shape Amazes Math World

David Smith, a retired print technician from the north of England, stumbled upon a fascinating 13-sided polygon while pursuing his hobby of exploring interesting shapes. He affectionately called it 'the hat.'

The unique feature of this polygon is its ability to completely cover an infinitely large flat surface without repeating any pattern, a groundbreaking characteristic.

In mathematical terms, it is the first 'Einstein,' named after the German word 'ein stein,' meaning 'one stone,' rather than the renowned physicist. Moreover, this discovery has resolved a problem that some mathematicians had deemed impossible for the past 60 years.

(Tol, 11.06.23)

Mauryan-era Stupa Unearthed

In Deorkothar, also known as Deur Kothar village in Rewa, Madhya Pradesh, India, lies a significant archaeological find - a Mauryan-era Stupa dating back to the 3rd century BC.

Despite its historical importance and discovery in 1982 by archaeologist Phani Kanta Mishra of ASI Bhopal, the site has been left neglected for over four decades.

Now resembling an overgrown hill where cattle graze, this stupa may predate the renowned Sanchi Stupa and stands as a symbol of India's neglected past. (Tol, 12.06.23)

Coins Rejected as Alimony Arrears

In a family court, a woman refused to accept coins amounting to ₹55,000 as alimony arrears from her estranged husband. Her application claimed that any transaction involving coins for more than ₹1,000 is invalid under the Coinage Act, 2011.

Instead, she urged the court to enforce the payment in currency notes or consider holding her husband in contempt for not complying with the alimony order.

Despite the man's failure to pay alimony for 11 months, the court did not make any immediate ruling on the woman's application. (Tol, 27.06.23)

Hockeywali Sarpanch

Until two years ago, Lambi Ahir village in the Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India confined its women to the boundaries of their homes, leading veiled lives with



limited exposure and participation beyond household chores.

However, Neeru Yadav, the village's youngest sarpanch, has become a liberating force for the women in the community. Under her guidance, the village girls are now preparing to participate in the Rajiv Gandhi Rural Olympic Games.

Neeru, affectionately known as the 'hockeywali sarpanch,' sees the rural Olympics as an excellent platform to foster the holistic development of the women in the village. Her efforts have not been without challenges, from igniting interest in sports among the girls to gaining parents' trust and consent for their daughters to play.

(Tol, 23.06.23)

Sprinter Shines with Gold Medals

In an inspiring display of athleticism, Rambai, the 106-year-old sprinter who took up athletics at the remarkable age of 104, achieved another milestone. At the 18th National Open Athletics Championships held by Yuvrani Sports Committee in Dehradun, she secured three gold medals.



Rambai's victories included one each in the 100m sprint, 200m sprint, and shot put events. This incredible feat adds to her previous world record for the 100m sprint in the above-85 category set last year. (Tol, 28.06.23)

'Puneri Pagadi' to King Charles

Mumbai's renowned dabbawalas have sent the traditional 'Puneri Pagadi' headgear and 'Uparne', a ceremonial stole, as special gifts to King Charles III ahead of his coronation ceremony in the UK on May 06, 2023.



The 'Puneri Pagadi' holds historical significance, dating back to the 19th century, and is a symbol of pride and honour in Pune, Maharashtra. Additionally, the 'Uparne' is a fabric worn during traditional ceremonies by men.

The dabbawalas' global fame comes from their lunchbox delivery and return system, providing hot lunches from homes and restaurants to people at work. (TH, 06.05.23)

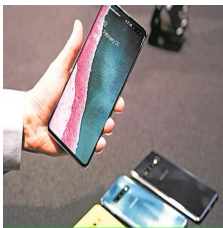
A Romantic Jewel on the Global Stage

Udaipur, a beloved destination wedding city, has once again been crowned as India's Most Romantic City, marking the second time in 21 months. This time, it has earned international acclaim, securing the fourth position among 17 romantic cities worldwide.

With its picturesque lakes, majestic mountains, rich heritage, warm hospitality, and diverse culture, Udaipur is a favourite among millions of tourists from across the globe. The city's recent recognition on the global stage has further boosted its local tourism industry, and there are hopes of attracting more international visitors post-pandemic, building on the recovery of domestic tourism.

Udaipur remains the sole Indian city on the list, which is led by Paris, France, followed by Venice, Italy, and Hangzhou, China. Additionally, the list includes two cities each from Italy, the United States, and Canada. (DB, 24.04.23)

Portal to Track Lost Mobile Phones



Millions of people will soon receive assistance in tracking their lost or stolen mobile phones through the newly launched portal, www.sancharsaathi.gov.in, coinciding with World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.

Telecom Minister of India Ashwini Vaishnaw officially introduced the Sanchar Saathi portal, providing nationwide coverage and support for lost or stolen mobile phones across all telecom circles. (BS, 13.05.23)

'Oldest' Tree Unveiling Earth's History

Deep within a forest in southern Chile stands a colossal tree known as the "Great Grandfather," vying for recognition as the oldest tree in the world. This remarkable tree's trunk



spans an impressive four meters (13 feet) in diameter and stands 28 meters tall. Beyond its age, the tree holds invaluable scientific data that could illuminate how the planet has adapted to climatic changes over time.

Believed to be over 5,000 years old, the Great Grandfather tree is poised to surpass Methuselah, a 4,850-year-old Great Basin bristlecone pine found in California, USA, and claims the title as the oldest living tree on Earth.

(BS, 14.05.23)

Global Push to End Plastic Pollution

On the occasion of the 50th World Environment Day, countries worldwide, including India, have come together to



combat plastic pollution. A significant step was taken during the UNEP's second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in Paris, where an agreement was reached to prepare a draft text, known as the 'zero draft,' for an international treaty. This treaty aims to end plastic pollution through various time-bound measures.

The 'zero draft' will be presented by UNEP at the third session of the INC in Nairobi, Kenya, in November. It will serve as a foundation for member countries to participate in further negotiations to finalise the global treaty, which will also address plastic pollution

in the marine environment. The collective efforts of these countries represent a vital push towards a plastic-free future and a cleaner, healthier planet. (ToI, 04.06.23)

Telangana's Environmental Performance

On the occasion of World Environment Day, the non-profit Centre for Science and Environment released its annual data compendium, revealing Telangana's commendable achievement in overall environmental performance. The state secured the top rank for its remarkable progress in increasing forest cover and efficient municipal waste treatment.

However, the report also highlighted areas where Telangana performed below average. These included the 'share of waterbodies not in use,' 'stage of groundwater extraction,' and 'change in the number of polluted rivers stretches.'

Despite these challenges, Telangana's leadership in environmental preservation sets an inspiring example for others to follow. (BS, 04.06.24)

Indian Charpai at ₹1 Lakh on Etsy

E-commerce company Etsy has astonishingly priced a traditional Indian charpai or khatiya at a whopping ₹112,168. This item, usually available for under ₹10,000, has been listed as a "traditional Indian bed with very beautiful decor."

It is described as a handmade product made from wood and jute ropes, and is dispatched by a small business in India. The product's dimensions and materials used are also mentioned in the item's description.

(IT, 10.05.23)

Man 'Pregnant' with Twins for 36 Years

In Nagpur, Maharashtra, a 60-year-old man named Sanju Bhagat has been living with a bulging stomach similar to that of a pregnant woman for over three decades. His community nicknamed him the 'pregnant man' due to his protruding belly.

Recently, he was diagnosed with a rare medical condition called 'fetus in fetu,' also known as 'vanishing twin syndrome.' This condition occurs when one twin is absorbed by the other during pregnancy, and it is estimated to happen in just one out of every 500,000 live births.

Bhagat was fit and healthy as a child, but when he reached his 20s, his stomach began to balloon to an alarming size. (ET, 22.06.23)



Japanese Ambassador Enjoys Vada Pav

Vada Pav, a beloved Mumbai street food, has won the taste buds of even Japan's Ambassador to India, Hiroshi Suzuki. During a visit to Pune, he shared a video of himself relishing the iconic snack from the renowned Garden Vada Pav Centre.

The video went viral on social media, showing Suzuki savouring the crispy Aloo Bonda with spicy chutneys, though he found it a bit too hot for his liking.

He playfully expressed his love for Indian street food while requesting a little less spice in jest, saying, "I love street food of India... but thoda teekha kam please!"



(NDTV, 09.06.23)

rare books at West Virginia University Libraries, received a stack of books as a donation, with the donor warning her to look out for a book previously belonging to another library.

Among the stack, Plein discovered "An Elementary Treatise on Electricity" by James Clerk Maxwell, borrowed from the New Bedford Free Library in Massachusetts with a return date of December 10, 1903.

(www.upi.com, 30.06.23)

Fakes Death to Teach Family a Lesson

In a bizarre incident, a Belgian Tiktoker staged his own death and then arrived at the burial in a helicopter to teach a lesson to his extended family.

David Baerten, known on TikTok as Ragnar le Fou, said he felt 'unappreciated' by his relatives, which



is why he faked his death. He carried out the elaborate "prank" to teach members of his family a lesson about the importance of staying in touch with one another.

Baerten arrived at his own funeral, with the mourners watching as the helicopter landed in a field and a door opened.

(NDTV, 14.06.23)

Moustache trend growing in New York

In recent times, the moustache trend has been sweeping across the vibrant streets of New York City, experiencing an impressive surge in popularity. Notably, even individuals who once adorned big, bushy beards have undergone a transformation, opting to preserve their moustaches while shaving.

This growing preference for moustache maintenance has even extended to salons, where clients now seek grooming and shaping services rather than removal.

The allure of the moustache doesn't end there; it has become a symbol of confidence and style, eliciting compliments and drawing the admiration of onlookers. (DB, 04.06.23)

Sweet Shop's 'Bahubali Challenge'



A sweet shop in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, called Kaushal Sweets, has introduced a unique challenge for hardcore samosa enthusiasts. They have created a massive 12-kilogram samosa named 'Bahubali' which is stuffed with potatoes, peas, spices, paneer, and dry fruits.

To win the prize of ₹71,000, a contestant must finish this huge samosa within just 30 minutes. The preparation of the 'Bahubali' samosa is quite time-consuming, taking around six hours for the shop's chefs to make.

Frying the samosa alone takes over 90 minutes and requires the efforts of three cooks. Due to its elaborate preparation, the shop only accepts advance orders for the 'Bahubali' samosa challenge.

Interestingly, people are now ordering 'Bahubali' samosas to celebrate their birthdays, replacing the traditional cake-cutting ritual with this unique treat.

(TN, 19.06.23)

Divorced Seeks Photographer Refund

In a surprising turn of events, a South African woman made an unusual request to her wedding photographer four years after tying the knot – she sought a refund, citing her divorce as the reason.

At first, the photographer thought it was a prank, but he soon realised that the woman was serious and genuinely believed she was entitled to a refund due to the divorce. The photographer, however, declined the request, and their WhatsApp conversation has now gone viral on the internet.

Lance Romeo, the photographer, shared the screenshots of their conversation on Twitter with the caption, "I swear my life is a movie. You can't make this stuff up."

(ABP News Bureau, 09.05.23)

Scorpion Bite on Air India Flight

A highly unusual incident occurred when a scorpion bit a woman passenger on an Air India flight from Nagpur to Mumbai. Upon landing, the airline attended to the passenger, who was then treated at a hospital and later discharged.

The airline stated that such an occurrence was "extremely rare and unfortunate" and promptly followed the required protocol. They conducted a thorough inspection of the aircraft, located the scorpion, and carried out necessary fumigation procedures.

This incident highlights the unusual challenges airlines may face in ensuring passenger safety and comfort, as previous instances of reptiles being found onboard aircraft have been reported as well.

(IE, 06.05.23)

120-Year Overdue Book Returned

A generous donation of books to a West Virginia library revealed a surprising find – a tome checked out from a Massachusetts library almost 120 years ago. Stewart Plein, the curator of

Master Plan: Parking Infrastructure

The forthcoming Master Plan 2047 for the city will prioritise the development of a comprehensive parking network.



Unlike the previous Master Plan 2025, which focused on increasing road length, this new plan aims to transform various areas, including Walled City, Mansarovar, Pratap Nagar, and Jagatpura, by improving parking facilities.

(Tol, 10.06.23)

Streamlining Patient Registration

The Jan Aadhaar card has streamlined patient registration at SMS Hospital. Patients can now provide their registered contact numbers linked to the Jan Aadhaar cards at the hospital counter for a seamless registration.

With the new Integrated Health Management System, patient details are automatically accessed from the Jan Aadhaar database. The IHMS software displays the names of all family members, eliminating the need for the hospital executive to ask for the patient's name.

The executive asks for the patient's name within the family and provides the registration card to the patient's attendant.

(Tol, 12.06.23)

RTDC to Revamp 10 Hotels

In response to stiff competition from private hotels, the Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation has



embarked on a facelift for 10 of its hotels. The aim is to rejuvenate these properties and enhance their appeal, bringing them on par with private hotels that have surpassed them over time.

Additionally, the corporation plans to hand over 34 hotels and motels to private players under the operation and management model as part of its strategy to improve overall efficiency and attractiveness.

(Tol, 12.06.23)

Recognising Excellence in Literature

The Rajasthan government will introduce the Rajasthan Literature Incentive Award to recognise excellence in literature. The award, named after Kanhiyalal Sethia, Komal Kothari, Sitaram Lalas, and Vijaydan Detha, will comprise ₹11 lakh, an appreciation letter, and a shawl for the selected recipient.

The Rajasthan Sahitya Academy will serve as the nodal agency for these awards, and they can be conferred posthumously and awarded to both individuals and organisations.

(Tol, 15.06.23)

JDA to Widen Road for B2B Bypass

The Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) is set to begin widening the road between New Sanganer Road and the B2B bypass crossing on Tonk Road to expedite the B2B bypass project. This decision was made following a visit to the project site by JDA Commissioner Joga Ram and Urban Development and Housing Department Advisor G S Sandhu.



The project includes the construction of two cloverleaves and an underpass, providing a convenient route for traffic from Tonk Road, and eliminating the need for a right turn at the crossing.

(Tol, 19.06.23)

Bags for Liquids Mandatory

Jaipur Airport now mandates the use of re-sealable bags for carrying liquid, aerosol, and gel items during security checks. Each passenger can carry one such bag, which must be presented separately for screening. This new measure aims to improve security screening efficiency and enhance passenger safety and convenience.

While this guideline facilitates faster checks and reduces prohibited item incidents, passengers are exempted from carrying medication and food for special dietary needs, such as baby food, in reasonable quantities in their cabin baggage for the flight.

(Tol, 28.06.23)

Smartphone Distribution Misses Deadline

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's ambitious project of providing free smartphones to 1.3 crore women in the state is set to miss its August 30 deadline. The project, announced in the state Budget 2021, carries an estimated burden of ₹12,000 crore on the exchequer. However, the bidding process for purchasing 1.35 crore mobile phones, initiated in May 2022, is still ongoing with no tangible results.

Due to the struggles faced by the IT Department in completing the bidding process, Gehlot admitted that if the government fails to purchase and distribute the phones, the money will be directly deposited into the women's bank accounts.

In the 2023 state budget, the scheme was revised to distribute smartphones in phases. The first phase targets distributing 40 lakh phones, with a preference given to young women, including students and working individuals.



(Tol, 11.08.23)

Jaipur's Water Supply to Increase



The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) aims to boost Jaipur's water supply from 500 MLD to 700 MLD by mid-July through the Bisalpur II project. This increase in supply will mark the first time the capital city receives 700 MLD of water.

The Bisalpur II project will supply 816 MLD to Jaipur and areas along the route, surpassing the current capacity by 200 MLD. Around 700 MLD will be allocated for the city, while the remaining amount will benefit towns and villages along the route. A new pumphouse in Renwal is a significant addition to the Bisalpur supply scheme, and the trial run will begin in early July to ensure smooth operations.

Since the commencement of the Bisalpur project in 2009, the city and surrounding areas received 400 MLD of water. *(Tol, 27.06.23)*

Camel Milk Ice Cream & Sweets in Jaipur

Jaipur residents and sweet enthusiasts have reason to celebrate as camel milk-based Kulfi, ice cream, and chocolate will soon be available in the city. The National Research Centre on Camel (NRCC) Bikaner has authorised Rudra Shivam Dairy Research Centre, located in Bhairana village near Jaipur, to produce various products using camel milk.

After receiving specialised training, Surendra Awana, Director of Rudra Shivam Dairy, was presented with a

certificate by renowned camel experts. Awana, a progressive farmer, has been recognised nine times by the Indian government for his innovative farming practices. *(www.jagran.com, 25.06.23)*

Bundi Welcomes New Jungle Safari

Bundi district in Rajasthan has introduced its third jungle safari, the Ramgarh Visdhari Tiger Reserve safari, during the Bundi festival. This safari offers



a chance for domestic and foreign tourists to witness tigers and other wildlife in the picturesque reserve.

With over 100 species of birds enchanting visitors with their melodies, the experience is further enhanced. Previously known for its art and culture, Bundi's landscape is now set to transform with the addition of the Jungle Safari. *(Tol, 26.06.23)*

Govt-aided English Medium Schools

The Rajasthan government plans to open more than 2,000 government-aided English medium schools in the state in the coming days.

The quality of government schools in the state is constantly improving as a result of the state government's continuous initiative, efforts, and educational innovations in the field of school education.

The state government has established over 2,700 English medium schools. The plan is to open 2,000 more such schools in the coming days. *(Tol, 20.05.23)*

Transforming Jawahar Circle

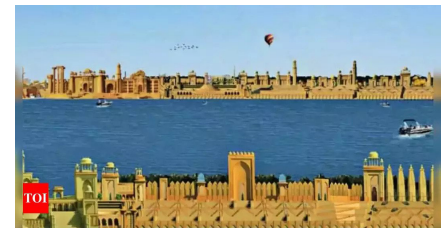
The JDA is undertaking a commendable initiative to enhance the jogging track at Jawahar Circle, catering to the needs of elderly and differently-abled individuals. With an allocated budget of ₹2.5 crore, the JDA aims to create a more user-friendly and accessible space.

The jogging track is being cemented to provide a sturdy and even surface. This will lay the groundwork for the next stage, where a specialised rubber surface will be installed on top using advanced scientific technology.

By providing a more cushioned and supportive pathway, it will enable individuals with joint problems to walk with greater ease and comfort, promoting their overall well-being. *(Tol, 22.05.23)*

World Class Heritage Riverfront

While Kota is renowned as an educational hub, the government is now focusing on promoting tourism in the city. The Chambal River Front Project, spanning from Kota Barrage to Nayapura



Pulia, is in its final stages and will soon be open to the public.

Costing ₹1200 crores, this world-class heritage riverfront is a unique attraction that showcases Rajasthan's royal heritage and architectural splendour. *(DB, 27.06.23)*

Developing 'Green Lungs' in Rajasthan

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has given the green light to a financial proposal of ₹19 crore to develop 'green lungs' in 13 cities across the state.

Key Points:

- The funds will be used to develop forest areas around the 13 cities and open them for public use.
- Each city will receive ₹2 crore for the development of forest areas in Moongaska (Alwar), Rajgarh (Churu), Mangalwar (Chittorgarh), Nathdwara & Ganesh Tekdi (Rajsamand), and Risala (Udaipur).
- Additionally, ₹1 crore will be allocated to develop forest

areas in Khairkhedi (Baran), Shyampura (Banswara), Qila Block (Chittorgarh), Neelkanth Mahadev (Dausa), Kanota Dam (Jaipur), Bandaria Magara (Rajsamand), and Kacha Dam area (Tonk).

- The initiative aims to provide the residents of these cities with a greener environment while protecting the ecosystem.
- The announcement for this project was previously made in the budget for the year 2023-24.

(www.drishtias.com, 26.06.23)



Gig Workers' Welfare

Rajasthan Shows the Way by Proposing a Law

By Pradeep S Mehta & Yatika Agarwal*

Rajasthan has become the pioneer as the first state to propose a law to protect the rights of gig workers and make them beneficiaries of various state welfare schemes. Gig workers are occupations such as app-based taxi drivers, food delivery agents, courier boys and so on. Today most global companies in terms of market capitalisation and over 70 percent of Indian unicorns are platform based. The optimal use of the gig and platform economy and India's demographic profile has increased employment opportunities for unorganised sector workers, especially in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.



Importance of The Gig Economy

Critically, the gig economy and the gig workers have a crucial ally in the government. This is because there is no urban economic activity that has a greater potential to create jobs among the educated youth, than the gig economy.

Before drafting the welfare legislation, the Rajasthan government conducted a sample survey to learn about the challenges faced by gig workers. The survey found that more than 50 percent of the gig workers did not have any kind of health insurance and about 40 percent were not covered under the state government's accident insurance schemes.

If we look at the overall picture of gig workers, the existing labour laws in India offer limited or no recognition to these workers. The gig workers were earlier unable to register on the Union government's e-Shram portal as gig work was not shown as a category there. The Code on Social Security, 2020, for the first time, recognised gig workers as unorganised sector workers and extended social security benefits to them. But this largely remained on paper.

Rajasthan's Proposed Law

In these circumstances, the Rajasthan government has introduced the Rajasthan Platform-based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill, 2023. This will help to formulate schemes for the benefit of the gig workers, provide them immediate financial assistance in case of accidents and medical emergencies, and offer them health insurance coverage under state government schemes. Moreover, it will ensure gratuity, scholarships, and pensions. It will thus result in attracting more youth to take up gig work.

The state government has also allotted ₹200 crore to the Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers Social Security and Welfare Fund and levied a "welfare cess" on consumers to ensure better rights and facilities for gig workers.

Adding to this, as per the draft of the bill, the government proposes to constitute a welfare board for the platform-based gig workers to register them and their aggregators. The board will generate a unique ID for a gig worker, which would be valid for three years. The information of all registered gig workers will be maintained in a database and help workers seek benefits from government welfare schemes such as the PM Sambhal scheme and also to seek redressal against aggregators over payment disputes and other issues.

Also, while the establishment of welfare boards is much appreciated, the reality of other sections of workers, say construction workers should not be ignored. These other groups of workers portray a poignant picture of the failure of such welfare boards set up in the past. The benefits claimed by the welfare board are far from the reach of the common workers.

Seen in this context, the Rajasthan government has started recognising the potential of the gig economy and taking steps to ensure social security to gig workers. It has also motivated other states to introduce similar Bills with welfare measures for gig workers. For instance, the Kerala government is working towards framing a policy to regulate the gig economy to ensure fair wages and better working conditions for the workers in the sector.

Therefore, Rajasthan's Bill is a step in the right direction for the 'Future of Work'. However, our plea is that the Union government should draft and adopt a national law so that it is more efficient.

* Authors work for CUTS International. Palashka Jha contributed to the article which has been written under the project: Good and Better Jobs supported by the Ford Foundation and can also be viewed at: www.moneycontrol.com

Rethinking Road Safety

Integrating Safety Measures At Road Level

By Madhu Sudan Sharma and Arnab Ganguly*

The 7th UN Global Road Safety Week, held from May 15-21, 2023, focused on the theme “Rethink Mobility.” Addressing road safety today is a complex issue as multiple road-owning agencies and stakeholder departments are accountable for reducing accidents and fatalities. There is a pressing need for bottom-to-top convergence to curb the escalating trend of road accidents and deaths.



There are serious concerns about the rise in road crashes, injuries, and fatalities in recent years since the victims are mainly youths and poor and vulnerable road users like pedestrians, cyclists, and two-wheeler users. The Government of India recognises that road safety needs to be addressed holistically by making vehicles, roads, and road users' behaviour safer. It deeply focuses on the 4Es: Engineering (Road & Vehicle Engineering), Education, Enforcement, and Emergency Care, and is highly committed to significantly reducing mortality and morbidity resulting from road crashes.

Out of the 4Es, the Government of India is looking at the engineering aspect with a renewed approach and propagating the adoption of the concept of 'Value Engineering'. It is an innovative engineering practice that will play a crucial role in designing, constructing, and maintaining all the ongoing and upcoming national highways in the country.

Role of Value Engineering

Value Engineering, popularly known as VE, provides numerous alternative techniques for road engineering and safety. As per a recent official order from the Government of India to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), other central road-owning agencies and states have been instructed to apply the concept of VE to all highways, state highways, and other road-related constructions with immediate effect.

There are several VE techniques that can be adopted for projects. A highway project typically consists of 70 percent material costs, 20 percent machinery costs, and 10 percent manpower costs. Therefore, to achieve an optimum value-engineered highway, emphasis should be placed on material selection and design.

According to the World Bank report on India's road construction industry, implementing VE exercises can result

in savings of 10-15 percent of the cost of the initially designed project. Considering that India has approximately 1.41 lakh km of National Highways and achieved progress of 37 km per day in development works during 2021-22, the use of VE techniques could significantly reduce the cost of constructing new roads.

Investing in Road Safety Highly Rewarding

There is a critical need for financing road safety in India to reduce the number of road deaths (131,714) by half by 2030. It is evident that most countries, including India, spend less than 1 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on road safety investments, despite the cost of poor road safety reaching up to 6 percent of GDP in our country. Therefore, increased investments at all levels are urgently required.

Road safety should be integrated into every stage of designing, maintaining, and constructing all types of roads in India, followed by a strict monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with safety norms.

Governments should adopt more innovative approaches and state-of-the-art technologies related to the 4Es: implementing and enforcing road safety laws through electronic and physical means, improving engineering aspects of roads and vehicles, and providing education to all road users.

The financing mechanism for road safety should be strengthened significantly to enable funding from various sources, including public, private, and individual philanthropists at the national, state, and local levels. To accomplish this, conventional approaches to road safety need to be reassessed and closely linked to measures addressing speeding and two-wheeler safety.

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Sources: BS: Business Standard; DB: Dainik Bhaskar; ET: Economic Times; IE: Indian Express; IT: India Today; NDTV: New Delhi Television Limited; TH: The Hindu; TN: Times Now; ToI: Times of India

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