



CityMatters

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Elections: The Great Circus of Indian Democracy



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As I walked out of the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.

— Nelson Mandela

Modernity and unprecedented progress of our times can leave us feeling overwhelmed. Quite often, if not always, we are berating self. There seems to be an endless list of to-dos, an endless list of what could have been and isn't, an endless list of accomplishments that couldn't come by. Sometimes, people feel helplessly trapped in this rip tide of self-doubt, anger, grudges, and disappointments. Such lingering anxiety and worry is detrimental to one's physical and mental health. This should be avoided. Disagreements, dilemmas, disappointments will always exist – one must learn to navigate one's way through it.



The elections bring an invigorated wave of anger, hatred, and malignance. With the State Elections in Rajasthan having just got over and the General Elections round the corner – political feuds, forced allies, and constant mud-slinging is in full swing.

The bickering and the endless smear campaigns leave one wondering if there is ever any end to sensational politics. Why can't the politicians leave aside these complaint battles and move ahead. Why can't this country have better debates? Talks which are required – dialogues which are necessary to alleviate the people's suffering.

Every election is turned into a circus. And India is always undergoing some election or the other. The papers are filled with hate speeches – and, in our times, social media adds fuel to the fire. The rumours and gossip circulated among lakhs induce rage and reactions filled with hatred. The entire cycle, right from the beginning to the end, is one massive circle of bitterness.

I wonder if we will ever be able to break this cycle. I wish and pray the politicians could. I have faith that, We the People of India, can take a firm decision to not participate in such nitpicking with zilch positive outcomes. We can, if we choose to, refuse to be a part of this circus. Awareness, and as Mandela said letting go will be greatly helpful. We need to build a society on the foundations of camaraderie and forgiveness, and not the futile and pointless hate and bitterness.

But newer times bring newer hopes. Moving into 2019, we should all take steps, no matter how small, to alleviate the pain we inflict upon ourselves. To free ourselves of the debilitating emotions we need to free our minds from the bonds of anger and misery. This act should not be restricted to being an individualistic act. The embrace should be widened. I hope, Nelson Mandela's words, bring wisdom to all of us and especially our politicians so that they fight the elections in the right spirit and not as a means to boost their ego or enrich their coffers.

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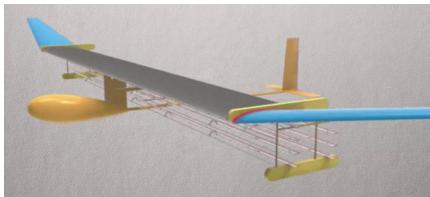


Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Miscellany

A Plane With No Moving Parts

Ever since the Wright Brothers flew the world's first plane more than a century ago, aircraft have typically flown with the help of moving parts, such as propellers, turbine blades and fans, and powered by the combustion of fossil fuels or battery packs.



Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) engineers are attempting a revolutionary change. They have built and flown a prototype plane with no moving parts.

Instead of propellers or turbines, the aircraft is powered by electrohydrodynamic thrust or the so-called 'ionic wind', a phenomenon first identified in the 1960s. When a current passes between two electrodes, it creates a wind in the air between.

If enough voltage is applied, the resulting 'ionic wind' can produce a thrust without the help of motors or fuel and power a small plane.

(Mint, 22.11.18)

Remarkable Tale of Hitler's Friend

A photograph showing Adolf Hitler embracing a young girl who had a Jewish grandmother has been sold at an auction for more than US\$11,000.

The Washington Post reports the black-and-white image taken by Heinrich Hoffmann and inscribed by Hitler in dark blue ink shows him smiling as he embraces Rosa Bernile Nienau in 1933 at his mountainside retreat. The paper reports the image was deployed as propaganda at a time when the Nazi leader was being presented to the world as a kindly figure.



The auction house said research showed Hitler became aware of the girl's Jewish heritage but chose to ignore it. Nienau, who was nearly 6 when the photo was taken, died of polio in 1943.

(DNA, 16.11.18)

Crying Once a Week Reduces Stress

What is the secret to a life free-from tension headaches and relentless toe-tapping? Rather than laughter, sleep or a warm cup of coffee, one Japanese academic claims that the most beneficial way to relieve stress is to shed a tear — or several.

Former High School Teacher Hidefumi Yoshida refers to himself as a 'tears teacher' and organises regular workshops and lectures across Japan to educate people on the psychological benefits of crying.

Yoshida explains that listening to emotive music, watching sad films and reading tear-jerking books can offer huge benefits to your mental health by stimulating parasympathetic nerve activity, which slows the heart rate, that can have a soothing effect on the mind.

"If you cry once a week, you can live a stress-free life," he added.

(Tol, 01.11.18)

Google Marks 1st Radio Signal

Google celebrated humankind's first attempt 44 years ago to communicate with intelligent life beyond our own planet with an animated doodle.



In 1974, a group of scientists gathered at the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico to send the most powerful broadcast ever deliberately beamed into space, called Arecibo Message. Their three-minute radio message was aimed at a cluster of stars in the constellation Hercules 25,000 light years away from Earth, Google said.

This historic transmission was intended to demonstrate the capabilities of Arecibo's recently upgraded radio telescope, whose 1000-foot-diameter dish made it the largest and most powerful in the world at the time.

(DNA, 17.11.18)

First Woman Army Chief in Slovenia

Slovenia's government has appointed a female officer as the head of armed forces, a first for the small country which is a member of North Atlantic Treaty

Organisation (NATO) and the European Union.



Major General Alenka Ermenc, 55, formally took up her post as the Chief of the General Staff of the Slovenian Armed Forces, when she will also become the only woman to currently hold the top armed forces post among the NATO countries.

The British-educated Ermenc replaces Major General Alan Geder. Ermenc's appointment would help improve the performance of the military.

(IE, 28.11.18)

North Sentinel Remains a Mystery

For thousands of years, the people of North Sentinel Island have been isolated from the rest of the world.

They use spears and bows and arrows to hunt the animals that roam the small, heavily forested island, and gather plants to eat and to fashion into homes. Their closest neighbours live more than 50 kms away. Deeply suspicious of outsiders, they attack anyone who comes through the surf and onto their beaches.

The Sentinelese wants to be left alone. Scholars believe the Sentinelese migrated from Africa roughly 50,000 years ago, but most details of their lives remain completely unknown.

(BL, 23.11.18)

'Easy-to-Make' Re-writable Paper

Scientists have developed an easy-to-make 'rewritable' paper that can be drawn or printed on over and over again.

Researchers including those from the Fujian Normal University in China wanted to develop a simple method for



making long-lasting rewritable paper that can be wiped clean simply by changing the temperature.

The messages can last more than half a year, compared to other rewritable papers whose messages fade after a few days or a few months.

(DNA, 09.12.18)

Fly Blade, 'Uber of Helicopters'

Come March, booking a seat on a helicopter will be just a tap of an app away. Fly Blade, the largest arranger of helicopters for civilian travel in the US, is starting its helicopter services in the country through a joint venture with local venture capital firm Hunch Ventures.



The new company, Blade India, will offer intercity helicopter services, though it will be initially available only in Mumbai. Flights would depart from Juhu and Mahalaxmi, connecting with heliports in Pune and Shirdi. It aims to eventually offer services on intracity routes.

In the US, Blade has often been called 'Uber of Helicopters', though there is no connection between the two.

(Mint, 05.12.18)

Caledonian Crows Make Complex Tools

New Caledonian crows, cognitive champions of the avian world, have achieved another amazing feat of creativity: captive birds combined short sticks to make an implement long enough to reach inside a box and extract food.

In the latest study, eight crows were presented with a selection of short cylinders with slightly different diameters, some hollow and some solid. These sticks were individually too short to reach food hidden deep inside a box, but four of the birds worked out within five minutes how to fit two pieces



together into a pole long enough to push the morsel out of an opening in the side of the container.

One made compound tools from three and even four parts, making it 'the first demonstration of compound tool construction with more than two elements in any non-human animal'.

(FT, 25.10.18)

Gandhi Statue Removed after Protest

A statue of Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi has been removed from Ghana's most prestigious university after complaints that he was racist against black Africans.

India's former President Pranab Mukherjee unveiled the statue to the global peace icon at the University of Ghana in Accra two years ago as a symbol of ties between the two nations.

Ghana's former government said the statue would be relocated 'to avoid the controversy... becoming a distraction from our strong ties of friendship' with India.

Though Gandhi is more commonly remembered for his non-violent resistance to British colonial rule in his native India, his legacy in Africa is more mixed. He lived and worked as a lawyer in South Africa from 1893-1915.

(ET, 14.12.18)

Finding Beauty in Garbage

'Finding Beauty in Garbage', a documentary film based on the garbage of Dibrugarh town in Assam has



received the Best Short documentary film award in Asia South East International Short Film Festival at Phnom Penh in Cambodia.

The seven minute film was produced, directed and scripted by Dutta who is an Indian Revenue Service officer presently posted in Dibrugarh.

Dutta said that the burning problem of garbage disposal has been projected by him with a satirical approach prompting viewers to think and realise how the disposal of garbage affects their life.

(BS, 28.12.18)

'Durga' Fetches ₹20 Crore

Tyeb Mehta's painting 'Durga Mahisasura Mardini' was sold for US\$2.9mn (₹20.49 crore) at Boundless India, Sotheby's inaugural India auction. Mehta's painting had remained in the same private collection ever since it was commissioned from the artist in 1993.

Strong competition for Amrita Sher-Gil's 'The Little Girl in Blue' drove the painting to sell over the high estimate for ₹18.69 crore (US\$2.7mn), a record price for the artist in India. This is only the seventh oil painting by the artist to be offered anywhere in the world.

The work had remained in the same collection for 80 years, since it was selected by the artist for her first solo show in 1937.

(Tol, 30.11.18)

India: A Diabetic Capital of the World

At a time when diabetes is rapidly gaining the status of a potential epidemic in India, according to National Family Health Survey-4, in Rajasthan, 8.1 percent men and 4.7 percent women were found diabetic, which indicates that men are more prone to diabetes than women.

With the estimate that every fifth person suffering from diabetes in the world is an Indian, recent Lancet study reveals that India is among the top three countries with a high number of diabetic population.

Attributing the rise in diabetic population to modern lifestyle, on World Diabetes Day, diabetes experts emphasised to adopt a healthy lifestyle. "India is the diabetic capital of the world and it is the fastest growing disease", Dr G Karthihaivelan, Unit Head, Manipal Hospitals, Jaipur said. (DNA, 15.11.18)

'999' to Offer Consumer Information

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has asked the broadcasting industry to launch '999' channel across all TV-viewing platforms.

The channel will offer consumers audio/video assistance to help them with network-related queries, lodging complaints, subscriptions, and many others.



The operators will have the flexibility to allot any number for the channel but they have been requested to have the same number to make it easier for customers.

(DNA, 07.11.18)

Natural Bypass Can Save Lives

With change in lifestyle, numbers of heart patients are increasing by the day. In such a scenario, Enhanced External Counter Pulsation (EECP) or 'natural bypass', a non-invasive, outpatient treatment for heart disease has emerged as a new life saver for cardiac patients.

As per well-established facts cardiovascular diseases, especially coronary artery disease (CAD), are epidemic in India. The Registrar General of India reported that CAD led to 17 percent of total deaths and 26 percent of adult deaths in 2001-2003, which increased to 23 percent of total and 32 percent of adult deaths in 2010-2013.

(DNA, 02.11.18)

First-of-its-kind Park

A much-awaited Botanical theme park ironically waits for formal inauguration. A first of its kind park in the city, the botanical garden located near Bambala flyover has over a 1000 varieties of plants, many of these have been acquired from nurseries of different states.



There are around 10 different sections at the park based on the category of plants. Among these, Laser Area, Night Garden and Butterfly Park are expected to attract many tourists while the greenhouse and Ayurveda garden will be the venue for botanical knowledge sharing.

(Tol, 01.01.19)

Rise in Footfalls at Airport

There has been a rise of 24 percent in the passenger traffic at Jaipur Airport in the span of 5 months of 2018-19 as compared to 2017-18.

In a report issued by Airports Authority of India (AAI), between April-August 2018, 2174939 passengers used Jaipur Airport for their travel. These include both domestic and international passengers.

Moreover, in August 2018, 456416 passengers travelled through Jaipur which is about 18.9 percent more than the number of passengers who travelled in August in 2017.

(DNA, 13.10.18)

Garbage Management Derails

Jaipur's cleanliness system has been derailed just before the *Swachh Survekshan* (cleanliness survey) 2019. To improve the city's cleanliness system, door-to-door waste collection system was started in 2017.



Now, the system has become a cause of trouble for the people. Waste collection vehicles are not reaching on time in many areas of the city. In some colonies, vehicles are lifting garbage after three to five days.

The Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) has given the work of door-to-door waste collection project to Pune's BVG Company. During the *Swachh Survekshan* year 2018, the company did a great job.

(DNA, 22.12.18)

Kishangarh Airport 2nd Busiest

Kishangarh airport is set to become the second busiest airport in Rajasthan within a year of its operations. The airport is set to have flight operations to six new destinations like Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kolkatta, Mumbai and Surat soon.

Rajasthan has a total of five airports, the busiest being Jaipur followed by Udaipur and Jodhpur.



Jaisalmer has just started with two flight operations at present.

Ashok Kapoor, Airport Director of Kishangarh Airport said that under the *Udaan* scheme, the AAI, Kishangarh has invited proposals

from the airlines in these sectors. *Udaan* is a Government of India scheme made air travel accessible for the common man. (Tol, 29.12.18)

Enhancing Free Medicine Scheme

Infusing new life into 'neglected' free medicine scheme, the State Health Department has directed its officials to send proposals for procurement of new medicines, which are not listed under the scheme to distribute them to needy patients free of cost.

Along with ensuring availability of medicines already listed in free medicine scheme, the Health Department is planning to add more drugs in the list.

The move has been taken to strengthen free medicine scheme for the benefit of patients. However, the official claimed that focus is now more on availability of medicines, which are listed under the free medicine scheme. (Tol, 24.12.18)

Jaipur Metro goes 'Driverless'

The Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) has started operating the metro line between Chandpole and Mansarovar through 'Automatic Train



Operation' (ATO) system from January 01, 2019.

According to JMRC officials, there will be no need for motorman (driver) in the metro as the operation will take place automatically. No human intervention will be involved. The driver will be there to regulate the automated doors in the metro and to check on emergencies.

The speed of the metro will be controlled automatically as per situation. The automatic system will be less time-consuming. The travel time will be reduced by four minutes.

(Tol, 01.01.19)

Fixing Fees of Private Schools

Education Minister of Rajasthan Govind Singh Dotsara has hinted to replace Rajasthan Schools (Regulation of fees) Act 2017.



Dotsara said that the existing fees Act which mandates to form a committee of parents and school management has not prevented schools to fleece parents. Several news reports have highlighted that how the Act has not provided any relief to the parents.

He said that the new government will bring the new system to determine the fees of the private schools.

The fees Act mandates a 10-member committee, including five parents, three teachers, a principal and one member of the school management to decide the fees six months before the start of the academic session. (Tol, 30.12.18)

Khajuraho to Regain its Lost Glory

The 11th century Kiradu temples in Barmer known as 'Khajuraho of Rajasthan' having large number of temples in a compound marked with explicit rock carvings, depiction of Mahabharata, combat operations, dancing women and music instruments is set for a restoration.



The restoration work is restricted to removing the layers of dust from the structures. Of total temples, only five of them will be restored as others have crumbled in pieces over the centuries.

Keeping the international standards, the restoration team will make platforms to place crumbled pieces for the visitors. (Tol, 27.12.18)

Tourist Centre on the Anvil

Nearly after three years of its construction, Pink City will soon get a tourist centre in the heart of the city to guide and provide facilities to the tourists.

Three months back, Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) had given the building on commercial rent of ₹40 lakh a year. Situated at Chaura Rasta in Walled City, this three-storey building will contain money exchange and banking facilities, medical clinic, library, souvenir shop and a cyber cafe.

On the second floor of the building there will be a conference room and display centre and on the third floor there will be a restaurant and a bar. There are also plans of making a roof top restaurant and bar. (Tol, 29.12.18)

Street Vendors, a Nuisance

Street vendors have become a big nuisance in the city with number of vending shops cropping up in empty roads are rising and giving hard time to commuters.

Travelling in the evening to residential areas, such as Raja Park and Mansarovar or in office areas near the Secretariat have become a difficulty because of vendors encroaching both sides of the road. Many times the complaint was filed in the JMC without any solution.



In tourist season, the presence of vendors becomes prominent and one might find them selling street food, jewellery, bedsheets, shoes, vegetables and all kinds of items. The customers shopping in the markets find it convenient to shop from the streets which offer huge bargaining.

(Tol & DB, 27.12.18)

Plastic Ban Still Rampant

Use of plastic bag was banned for the first time in Rajasthan during Ashok Gehlot government in 2010. However, over the years, the use of plastic bag has become rampant and the ban remains only on paper.

Shopkeepers, vegetable vendors, food stalls are all using plastic bags,

cups, plates and others openly. Earlier, plastic bags were kept hidden but now they can be seen on every shop's counter.

Rajasthan is a plastic-free state but one can see plastic waste piled up in almost all the corners of the street. In July 26, 2010, Rajasthan government passed a notification declaring the state as a 'plastic carry bag free zone' making it a part of 25 states in India where it is banned.

(Tol & DB, 20.12.18)

App for on-board Crime Complaints

Emphasising on the need of providing better security and safety to passengers, Arun Kumar, Director General, Railway Protection Force (RPF) said that railways is coming up with an app to facilitate passengers in getting their complaints registered relating to crime on board.

Kumar said that RPF earlier was merely confined to the guarding of the railway property but now they have got a responsibility of passengers' safety too.

He said that for various crimes of Indian Penal Code, RPF do not have the power of investigation and prosecution. But now the safety of passengers and their belongings have been prioritised. (Tol, 10.12.18)

Ring Road on Nevta Dam

After resolving the issue of constructing Ring Road at Nevta Dam that was a bone of contention since beginning of the project, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is on final stage to complete the stretch.

Now, the authority has constructed 60 metre transport corridor on the irrigation land. In nearly 1.5 km area, the JDA will not construct development corridor.

As per the proposal, width of Ring Road would be 360 metre, including the development corridor. The JDA proposed to construct development corridor of 135-135 metres on either side of the Ring Road. (Tol, 10.12.18)

The Decisions of Last Six Months Will Be Reviewed

The Rajasthan Chief Minister on his appointment and equation with Sachin Pilot, his government's agenda, and the Congress party's strategy for 2019



Ashok Gehlot became Chief Minister of Rajasthan for the third time after the Congress narrowly won the Rajasthan Assembly election in December. In an interview, he speaks of Congress President Rahul Gandhi's leadership, says he 'really likes' Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, and promises to take strong action against efforts to foment communal tension. Excerpts:

How do you interpret the mandate received by the Congress in Rajasthan?

Congress President Rahul Gandhi in Gujarat spoke about the false promise made by the NDA government at the Centre of giving employment to two crore people and its failure to do anything for farmers' welfare despite its promise to double their income by 2022. Their mandate was till 2019, but they are talking about 2022! Rahul raised the Rafale issue during the election campaign, but the NDA government has not been able to reply to it till today.

After appointing you as Chief Minister, what mandate did Rahul Gandhi give you?

Good governance is our main mandate. The agenda set by Rahul Gandhi will be taken forward. It includes farmers, youths, maintaining law and order, and eliminating hatred and violence. Politics should be based on non-violence and brotherhood.

The deliberations ahead of your appointment as Chief Minister went on for long. What was going on?

Nothing! I was appointed and I took over as Chief Minister.

But how? Why were you selected?

There are three factors that are taken into account for the Chief Minister's appointment. First, who does the public want? Second, what the party workers think. Third, what do

the legislators think after getting elected? The high command takes a decision on the basis of these three factors.

Are you and Pilot on good terms or is there tension?

Pilot is a young man and has miles to go. I really like him. I became a Union Minister at the young age in the Indira Gandhi government and Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president. I was PCC president for three terms and then became the Chief Minister, after 14 years. The young generation should appreciate that its time will come. I said this to Pilot when he became the PCC president and conveyed to him my observation that offering one's candidature will not bring the post to him.

What are the decisions of the previous BJP regime that you are reviewing?

There is a tradition in Rajasthan, whether the Congress or the BJP is elected to power, that the decisions of the last six months are reviewed. We have appointed a committee for the purpose after a Cabinet decision. There is no vendetta or prejudice involved in it. After a change of government, individuals who took decisions against public interest or worked with vested interests are punished. This is necessary for good governance.

Do you think Rahul Gandhi will become the Prime Minister after the Lok Sabha polls?

Why not? Nobody from the Gandhi family has occupied the post in the last three decades, but Sonia, UPA Chairperson and Rahul continued their work for the welfare of the people. Rahul Gandhi has emerged as a personality who is challenging a man like Modi.

Excerpts from an interview that appeared in The Hindu on January 09, 2019

Sources: BL: The Hindu Business Line; BS: Business Standard; DB: Dainik Bhaskar; DNA: Daily News and Analysis; ET: The Economic Times; FT: Financial Times; IE: Indian Express; Tol: Times of India

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