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Termites and Un-Ease of Doing Business



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Corruption in India has grown to gargantuan proportions, although in high places it is not so visible. It saps the economy and causes delays and discomfort in everything that we do, or try to do. Accountability is absent, with the result that corruption and non-performance expand exponentially. Our CM, Ashok Gehlot did say that corruption and indiscipline will not be tolerated. Undoubtedly, Gehlot is sincere but the ecosystem has already got so corrupted that little will happen to improve it unless he takes some drastic measures.



Let me give you an example where corruption is systematically built-in so that without the illegal gratification nothing moves. Some of these stories are heartening that some vigilance exists in our system and it acts as a disincentive, but not always.

The other day, two Rajasthan Administrative Services (RAS) officers in Dausa District were caught red-handed by the Anti Corruption Bureau. They were Pushkar Mittal of Dausa and Pinki Meena of Bandikui subdivisions. They were demanding hefty bribes from a contractor of an approved highway to start the project. Pushkar was happy with ₹5 lakhs but dear Pinki demanded ₹10 lakhs. Their deal was that they will ensure that no obstacles are placed in the way to carry out the approved project. Mind you, they were cashing on their nuisance value which meant that even during construction they could stop it. What does this tell us?

Firstly, the Ease of Doing or Running Business is a farce when faced with such situations. Secondly, so many discretionary powers are given to officials that they can stop or hinder even legal acts by finding faults, which is so easy. Often our laws and regulations are ambiguous and corrupt officials take advantage of the same to make illegal money. Then they know how to use the system and get away with murder also.

In such a case the state government should review this as a case study and find a good solution which should include disincentives for officials who hinder projects.

In late December, an Indian Administrative Officer, Inder Singh Rao, Collector of Baran was arrested after his assistant was caught red-handed collecting a bribe of ₹1.40 lakhs on his behalf. If one looks at the history of Rao, he had joined RAS in 1989 and got promoted into IAS later. This meant that he must have been good to get such a push in his career and posting as a Collector, usually reserved for directly recruited IAS officers. Nowadays even they are not reliable as told to me by a senior officer.

Newspapers report that Rao had a history of corruption for which he received 'awaiting posting orders' eight times and was suspended twice for charges of corruption and irregularities. It was also reported that he owned eight properties in Jaipur, Ajmer, Gurugram and Saharanpur. In 2004, his case of being caught and ready for termination, but Rao could manage to stay on.

In the instant case, the complainant was awaiting a NOC for his proposed petrol pump for nearly one and a half months, while the State government had already given a nod to the proposal. Once again, we see how difficult it is to do business while the government is desperately trying to promote so that our economy does better and more jobs are created. Alas, it is the termites in the system like Rao, Mittal and Meena who will ensure that our economy is mortgaged to their selfish interest, let the nation go to hell.

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Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

P.S. Our gratitude to esteemed subscribers.

Col Gill turns 100

In his 28 years as a defence man, Colonel Prithipal Singh Gill (retired) saw it all – from World War II to the India-Pakistan War of 1965. The only surviving officer to have served in all three wings of the armed forces turned 100.

"I was fortunate. Today, I would have been thrown out had I switched so many times," Gill stated amid celebrations with his family and the regiment he raised.

From scanning the skies to manning the high seas, his career was a unique one. It started in 1942, when he joined the Royal Indian Air Force as a pilot, without his family's consent.

(Tol, 12.12.20)

Indian-American in moon mission

Raja Jon Vurputoor Chari, an Indian-American with roots in Telangana, isn't



just over the moon. Four years from now, he could be walking on it as part of Nasa's 18-member Artemis team, becoming the third Indian-American in space after Kalpana Chawla in 1997 and Sunita Williams in 2006. In 1984, Rakesh Sharma became the first Indian to enter space.

When US vice-president Mike Pence announced the 43-year-old astronaut's name for the Artemis programme at Nasa's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, it marked the fulfillment of more than just a childhood flight of fancy.

(Tol, 12.12.20)

One of the youngest councillors

Asman Khan, a 21-year-old woman Congress candidate from Ward No. 81 in Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), Heritage, is one of the youngest to become a councillor.

Yet to take her final year undergraduate exam from Muslim Girls Degree College, Jaipur, Asman has won the seat in her first attempt.

Asman is the first politician from her family although her father Salim Khan has been a Congress party worker for a long time. She received immense support from her family. (Tol, 04.11.20)



Beggars given a second chance at life

The 39-year-old K Venkataraman was an alcoholic and his family had given up on him. His life changed at the start of the lockdown when a young college professor found him near a temple grabbing at a food packet and asked him about his life.

For six years now, Naveen Kumar, a professor has been rehabilitating the homeless, and those begging on the streets.

Sometimes beggars would come to him for money, so he would buy them dinner and go to bed hungry. The idea is to give them a chance at life.

(Tol, 08.11.20)

UAE relaxes Islamic laws

The United Arab Emirates announced a major overhaul of the country's Islamic personal laws, allowing unmarried couples to cohabit,

loosening alcohol restrictions and criminalising so-called honor killings.

The broadening of personal freedoms reflects the changing profile of a country that has sought to bill itself as a skyscraper-studded destination for Western tourists, fortune-seekers and businesses despite its legal system based on a hard-line interpretation of Islamic law.

(www.thekashmirmonitor.ne, 08.11.20)

Ancient artifacts have carbon nanotubes

Scientists have discovered the oldest known human-made nanomaterials in the 'unique black coatings' of ancient pottery shards – dated to 600 BC – unearthed from an archeological site in Keeladi, Tamil Nadu.



The research, published recently in the journal Scientific Reports, revealed that these coatings are made of carbon nanotubes which have enabled the layer to last more than 2,600 years, raising questions on the tools used during those periods to achieve high temperatures for making earthenwares.

According to the scientists, including those from the Vellore Institute of Technology in Tamil Nadu, the coatings are "the oldest nanostructures observed till now".

(TH, 21.11.20)

Maybe the first, but not the last

A lotus has bloomed in the mud pond that is American politics, long dominated by mostly white men. Kamala Harris' election as the first female vice-president of the US was celebrated wildly across a country that now has more women voters than men, with the winner herself recognising the turning point in redressing the gender imbalance in history.

Harris said that "while I may be the first woman in this office, I won't be the last...because every little girl watching tonight sees that this is a country of possibilities."

(Tol, 09.11.20)

UK to honour Saragrahi heroes

The UK is set to install the 9-foot tall bronze statue of Havildar Ishar Singh as a mark of gratitude to the courageous hearts of 'Battle of Saragarhi' who led 20 Sikh soldiers in the battle against more than 10,000 Afghan in September 1897.

The 9-ft bronze statue has become the UK's first-ever monument honouring the fallen heroes of 'Battle of Saragarhi', one of history's greatest battles ever fought.

The Battle of Saragarhi was fought between the Sikh Regiment of the British Indian Army and Afghan tribesmen on September 12, 1897, in Saragarhi.

(TS, 10.11.20)



Lockdown named word of the year

Lockdown, the noun that has come to define so many lives across the world in 2020, has been named 'Word of the Year' by Collins Dictionary.



The 4.5bn-word Collins Corpus, which contains written material from websites, books and newspapers, as well as spoken material from radio, television and conversations, registered a 6,000 percent increase in its usage.

In 2019, there were 4,000 recorded instances of the lockdown being used. In 2020, this had soared to more than a quarter of a million. (TG, 10.11.20)

Odisha girl lodges complaint

A class 6 girl in Odisha stood for her rights and walked down 10 km to file a complaint against her father for stealing her midday meal benefits.

Earlier, the girl filed a written complaint against her father that came to the notice of Kendrapada collector Samarth Verma, who thus directed that the midday meal benefits transfer should be done to her bank account.

He also ensured her that the money and rice that her father had in the past will be claimed and handed back to her.

(www.thelogicalindian.com, 17.11.20)

Priceless treasure comes from the sky

An Indonesian man became a millionaire overnight after a meteor crashed through his roof. Josua Hutagalung is a coffin maker from Sumatra who became astronomically richer after he recently sold the meteorite for over 1 million pounds - or roughly 9.8 crores.

He was working outside his home in August when the 2.1 kg space rock smashed through the tin roof in his veranda. The meteorite is carbonaceous chondrite - an extremely rare variety estimated to be 4.5 billion years old.



(NDTV, 19.11.20)

Bond forever: The name is Connery

Sean Connery was a multi-layered person full of life. And not surprisingly, his life was a full one. And there is a lot that many folks do not know about him.

He passed away in his sleep. But to repeat a cliché, Connery is fated to live forever. The man who first essayed the role of secret agent James Bond on the silver screen, remained for many people, the best to ever get a Licence to Kill onscreen.

But while he was best known for his James Bond portrayal, there was a whole lot more to Connery than just portraying a cynical, single eyebrow-raising, charismatic secret agent with a penchant for getting into trouble. (IE, 31.10.20)

Meet first vegan's butcher shop

On World Vegan Day, the UK's first permanent vegan butcher, Rudy's opened to sell meat-free versions of traditional products such as bacon, soysage and turkey.

Demand for vegan products has surged in recent years in the UK, with increasing numbers of people cutting out animal-derived ingredients completely, while others reduce the amount of meat and dairy they consume each week.

In addition to being cruelty-free for animals, a vegan diet has also been touted as one of the most effective ways individuals can reduce their carbon footprint. (HT, 02.11.20)

Breast Cancer Awareness Initiative

Jaipurites witnessed a jaw-dropping scene as a man stood in the public wearing a red bra. RJ Mohit initiated this awareness campaign as the commemoration of international breast cancer awareness month.



In his message, he wrote '*nazarandaz nahi, parwah karo*', encouraging a change in the perception of breast cancer. Breast cancer can be treated well through early detection, education and support devices, only if we develop acceptance and a sense of awareness.

(DB, 31.10.20)

The top surgeon of Ethiopia is illiterate

Mamitu Gashe's (who lived in Ethiopia) child died during pregnancy and left wounds in her body, i.e. a disease known as Obstetric fistula, in which small holes are formed between the vagina and rectum.

She was treated by the Australian doctor Catherine Hamlin who became his mentor, surrogate mother and lifelong friend. Mamitu could not recover completely despite 10 operations.

Dr. Catherine opened the Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia after witnessing the disease that became a curse for women. She started taking Mamitu to the operation theatre. Seeing her passion and ardor, Catherine taught her the process of treatment.

By this practice, Mamitu became the top surgeon of fistula in Ethiopia. The resolve to save sick women like herself made the illiterate Mamitu Gashe the 'Future of African Medicine'.

She is part of a unique group, fondly called 'Barefoot Surgeons'. In 1989, the Royal College of Surgeons of London gave Mamitu a gold medal for surgery. The BBC ranked her 32nd in the 2018 prestigious 100 women's list. (DB, 02.11.20)



Where couples pray to Maa for a beti

Balram Rajwar was among the first to reach the temple of Siddhidatri Durga. As Durga Puja began across the country, Rajwar was there early with a special prayer – a girl child for his sister-in-law.

He was soon joined by dozens of couples at the 170-year-old temple in Chakulia village of Jharkhand's Bokaro district. Village elders said couples flock here, especially during Durga Puja, with the belief that praying at this temple would get them a daughter. Rajwar lives nearby Ramdih and his sister-in-law's family has three boys and they wanted a girl. (Tol, 24.10.20)

'Lost' river ran through Thar desert

Researchers have found evidence of a 'lost' river that ran through the central Thar Desert, near Bikaner, as early as 172 thousand years ago, and may have been a life-line to human populations enabling them to inhabit the region.

The findings, published in the journal Quaternary Science Reviews, represent the oldest directly dated phase of river activity at Nal Quarry in the central Thar Desert. (PTI, 21.10.20)

Legal recognition of gay marriage

Kavita Arora, a psychiatrist, and Ankita Khanna, a psychologist, who has been in a relationship and lived together for eight years, approached a marriage officer in Kalkaji to formalise their bond under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

Their request was turned down. They filed a petition in the Delhi High Court because this rejection was discriminatory and that the right to choose a marriage partner was enshrined under Article 21.

(Tol, 23.10.20)

A soldier is a soldier first

Indian Army is considered one of the world's most professional and ethical forces, and this was yet again evident after it showcased its commitment to its motto 'a soldier is a soldier first and anything else later' by restoring the damaged grave of a decorated Pakistani

officer in Jammu and Kashmir's Naugam sector.

The grave is of late Major Mohd Shabir Khan, who was killed by the Indian Army soldiers in 1972 at a forward location along the Line of Control (LoC). Khan was a recipient of Sitara-e-Jurat, the third-highest military award of Pakistan.

(www.timesnownews.com, 16.10.20)

Penalty for taking mask-less selfie

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera was slapped with a US\$3,500 fine after



posing for a selfie on the beach with a bystander without wearing a mask as required during the coronavirus pandemic.

Chile has strict rules on mask-wearing in all public places and violations are punishable with sanctions that include fines and even jail terms.

Pinera apologised then turned himself in shortly after the selfie surfaced on social media in early December.

(Reuters, 19.12.20)

Breaking the Taboo

"Women are flying fighter jets now. I wanted to break the taboo that only men can drive buses" said Pooja Devi, J&K's first woman bus driver. The mother



of two undertook her first trip on the Jammu-Kathua route. (Tol, 25.12.20)

Hawker culture gains UN recognition

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) approved Singapore's bid to have its street food included on a list of intangible cultural heritage, which also includes yoga, Chinese calligraphy and flamenco.

In the past being a hawker was a job that was looked down on, it was seen as a beggar's business, which sells traditional deep-fried delicacies from his small stall. And now it is not, now the hawker culture in the country is globally recognised. (BR, 18.12.20)

Heart of Surat child to beat in Russia

A two-and-a-half-year-old boy from Gujarat (India) became the youngest cadaver donor, giving a new lease of life to seven children, including two from Russia and Ukraine after his parents donated his organs.

Jash's heart, liver, lungs, both kidneys and eyes were donated after his parents Sanjeev Oza and Archana agreed for the noble cause.

The heart was transplanted to a four-year-old Russian boy and the lungs to another four-year-old boy from Ukraine at MGM hospital in Chennai.

(DB, 18.12.20)

The doctor behind mid-air delivery

Not every child ends up being born in hospitals, some of them



take birth in mid-air too. The mother flying from Delhi to Bengaluru (India) will always remember the flight she took and the doctor who gave birth to her baby in flight.

Shortly after the Indigo flight took off a pregnant woman had prematurely gone into labour, and she was experiencing pain and discomfort. That was when Dr Sailaja Vallabhaneni, Consultant Foetal Medicine, Cloudnine Group of Hospitals, Old Airport Road, Bengaluru stepped in.

Since she was already wearing gloves, a mask and a face shield, Dr Vallabhaneni jumped into action and helped the woman deliver the child in the bathroom! (IE, 10.10.20)

WORLD

First person gets Pfizer jab in UK

A UK grandmother has become the first person in the world to be given the Pfizer COVID-19 jab as part of a mass vaccination programme.



Margaret Keenan, who turns 91, said the injection she received at 06:31 GMT was the 'best early birthday present'.

It was the first of 800,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Up to four million more are expected to get it by the end of December 2020. Hubs in the UK are starting the rollout by vaccinating the over-80s and some health and care staff. (BBC, 08.12.20)

Oxford vaccine receives a nod

In a big boost for the war against COVID-19, the UK authorised the emergency use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, making it the first country to approve the vaccine that is expected to be the mainstay of India's inoculation programme early in 2021.

The committee will analyse the updated data submitted by the Serum Institute of India and also the indigenous vaccine candidate of Bharat Biotech.

SII has said it has already stockpiled 40-50 million shots of Covishield and is augmenting this number every week.

Reports said Covishield could become the most widely used shot given its moderate pricing of US\$3 to US\$4 a dose and that it can be transported and stored in normal refrigerators. (TH, 30.12.20)

Moderna's vaccine is 94.5% effective

US-based biotech giant Moderna's vaccine, created with the National Institutes of Health, is being studied in 30,000 volunteers who received either the real vaccination or a dummy shot.

Moderna said its shots provide strong protection, a dash of hope against the grim backdrop of coronavirus surges in the US and around the world.

Its vaccine appears to be 94.5 percent effective, according to preliminary data from the company's still ongoing study.

Sometime back competitor Pfizer Inc. announced its COVID-19 vaccine appeared similarly effective – news that puts both companies on track to seek permission for emergency use in the US. (TH, 16.11.20)

Hetero to make 100mn Sputnik shots

Sputnik V is also expected to be tested in mid-to late-stage clinical trials in India by Dr Reddy's Laboratories, another Hyderabad-headquartered drugmaker, said the Russian Direct Investment Fund.

Hetero Drugs, through its biologics arm, will be producing "over" 100 million doses of Russian COVID-19 vaccine Sputnik V starting 2021.

The firm, through subsidiary Hetero Biopharma, is expected to produce these doses over the year. The vaccines produced here may also be used to fulfill the demand from other countries. (IE, 27.11.20)

Journalist jailed for COVID coverage

Zhang Zhan, a 37-year-old former lawyer and citizen journalist who was arrested while reporting from Wuhan, has been sentenced to four years in jail.

Zhang was arrested for 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' – an accusation commonly used against dissidents, activists and journalists – with her video and blog reports from the Wuhan lockdown. She was charged with disseminating false information. Zhang's lawyer said she had been sentenced to four years in jail. (TG, 28.12.20)

RAJASTHAN, INDIA

Raj leads in COVID battle

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked states to bring the COVID death rate down to one percent. He said that the cause of death of patients should be analysed and all efforts should be made to keep the positivity rate below 5 percent. He said the number of testing be increased and adequate oxygen supply for patients be ensured.



has remained consistently below one percent.

He said like Rajasthan, all other states should adopt 100 percent test by RTPCR method instead of rapid antigen test. Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu are the only two states in the country where 100 percent testing is being done RT-PCR method. (ToI, 25.11.20)

Modi was holding a video conference with the chief ministers of eight states including Rajasthan regarding Covid management. Chief minister Ashok Gehlot apprised the PM that the state was ahead on all the parameters in the battle against COVID. He informed that due to the efforts of the state government, the death rate in the state

A three-tier system for vaccination

Amid the spurt in COVID cases, the state government has given a ray of hope by kicking off preparations for the vaccine campaign.

While it is planning to administer the COVID vaccine first to healthcare workers, the state government has formed a three-tier system for the vaccination campaign. It includes a state steering committee, state task force and district task force for effective policymaking, implementation, monitoring of vaccination.

The three-tier system will ensure proper transportation, availability, ensuring the availability of resources and implementation of vaccination programme at ground level. (ToI, 25.11.20)



Pedestrians to walk on busy roads

Jaipur will soon become a city with no footpaths as encroachments are taking place at a rapid pace due to the callousness of civic officials.

The JDA revealed in 2019 that over 72 percent of the roads in the city do not have footpaths while 77 percent of existing ones were pedestrian-unfriendly.



Despite the survey, in the absence of any action, encroachments continue to increase majorly on 80 to 100-foot-wide roads. Hence, pedestrians are forced to walk along the roads amid fast-moving traffic. (Tol, 09.11.20)

NATIONAL CONSUMER DAY 2020

The theme of the National Consumer Day, 2020 is “New Features of the New Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and Emerging Challenges”. To commemorate the occasion, CUTS is organising a series of talks on CUTS Adda (a YouTube channel) from December 24, 2020, to March 15, 2021, i.e. from National Consumer Day to World Consumer Rights Day.



In this series, the first interesting conversation was between Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International and Urvashi Dev (a senior journalist). The link to access the interview is <https://youtu.be/hLpTB2YrCaY>.

‘CUTS Adda’ is an outreach YouTube channel of CUTS International that intends to cater information and a fair perspective from experts on topical and important issues.

RU profs in list of top scientists

Two Indian scientists and professors of the University of Rajasthan (RU) – (Late) R C Mehrotra and I P Jain – have been made it to the list of top two percent scientists in the world by the renowned Stanford University of US after conducting a high-level independent study.

Mehrotra, Department of Chemistry, RU, has been ranked 450th in the world ranking in organic and nuclear chemistry, while Jain, Physics Department, currently working at the Centre for Non-Conventional Energy Resources, has been ranked 1,574th in the world ranking. (Tol, 25.11.20)

Waste management project to take off

Additional Chief Secretary (Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department) Rohit Kumar Singh has informed that solid and liquid waste management will be taken up in 8,653 villages of the state for ₹2,256 crore.

Under the project, bio-degradable waste will be converted into organic manure which will not only ensure cleanliness but also help organic farming.

The participation of village organisations and self-help groups should be ensured in the clean village campaign in the state. (Tol, 25.11.20)

‘Ring Road’ transport corridor opens

Nearly one-and-a-half years after inauguration, the transport corridor of the 47-km southern Ring Road, which connects Ajmer Road, Tonk Road and Agra Road, has been made operational after making temporary arrangements.

To avoid traffic conflicts at entry and exit points, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will also make alterations till the time structures are not constructed.



On Ajmer Road, which is the busiest highway comparatively to Agra Road and Tonk Road, the NHAI has decided to close a road cut on divider at Mahapura junction to avoid merging of urban traffic with highway traffic (Ring Road traffic). (Tol, 19.11.20)

Prefix ‘0’ for landline-to-mobile calls

From now onwards, callers will have to dial numbers with the prefix “0” for making calls from landline to mobile phone.



The move would free up sufficient numbering resources for future use, and nearly 2,539 million numbering series are expected to be generated as a result.

There will be no change with respect to dialing numbers for fixed-to fixed, mobile-to-fixed, and mobile-to-mobile calls. (ET, 26.11.20)

Panel to resolve sewerage complaints

The JMC-Heritage administration has decided to form a committee to resolve sewerage choking complaints in the city.



The sewerage lines laid in the Walled City more than 50 years ago are posing severe problems for the people. Every day, people are filing complaints about choked lines, dirty water being supplied at home due to pipeline leakage.

JMC-Heritage will soon purchase 20 sewer jetting machines, which will be distributed in different wards.

(Tol, 30.12.20)

Quality of rickshaws not up to the mark

Newly appointed councillors in JMC Heritage have been given cycle rickshaws for door-to-door garbage collection. However, councillors are complaining about the poor quality of vehicles.

At present eight cycle rickshaws are functioning in the city. There is also a demand to increase the number of such rickshaws to increase the efficiency of garbage collection. (TGI, 29.12.20)

Award for promoting green buildings

The Urban Development and Housing (UDH) department has bagged an award from the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) for taking innovative initiatives to promote green buildings in the state.

The Department has recently amended township policy and bylaws to promote green buildings and townships in the state. Moreover, it is also considering the exemption of urban development tax.

In recent amendments, green cover provision has been made instead of green space to promote dense plantation against the increasing building footprints in the cities. (Tol, 09.11.20)

Jaipur's vision towards 2050

The JDA will initiate an exercise to prepare a land use and development master plan, a document that will guide how land in the state capital will be used for the next 25 years, up to 2050.

The document will boost the optimal use of land to spur economic transformation in the Pink City. As per the 2025 master plan, ₹65 lakh is the projected population by 2025 of the Jaipur region. However, at present, more people are staying in Jaipur district. (Tol, 08.12.20)

Jaipur-Delhi electrified rail route

Union Minister for Railways Piyush Goyal inaugurated the newly electrified Dhigawara-Bandikui section of North Western Railway and flagged off the first train on this newly electrified route.

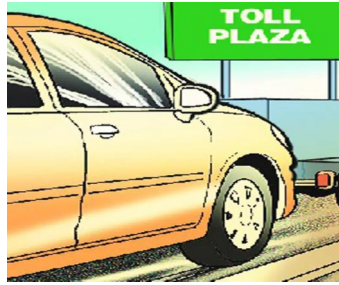
After running these trains, the diesel trains will be stopped, which will eliminate pollution as well as the



dependence on the fuel imported from outside. These trains will be operated from the electricity produced in self-reliant India, and will also save significant revenue, the ministry said. (Tol, 29.11.20)

Cash-free toll plazas

All cash lanes at the toll plazas will be converted into FASTag lanes from



January 01, 2021. Hence, there will be no cash payment at the toll plazas.

The NHAI will introduce pre-paid touch-and-go cards at the toll plazas. These pre-paid cards will serve as an alternative to cash transactions. If they use these cards instead of FASTags, they will not be charged double the amount.

Even the FASTag holders can use these cards if they fail or forget to recharge their tag or if their tag has been blacklisted. (IE, 29.11.20)

Making Jaipur beggar-free

As a part of the beggar-free Jaipur scheme, around 700-800 beggars will be given skill development training



by the Rajasthan Skill and Livelihoods Development Corporation, and later they will be provided jobs.

Meanwhile, the corporation is in the process of identifying transgenders so that could also be trained and provided jobs.

It is a special project which has been designed for the beggars. Live counselling, food, hygiene and stay will be ensured for them. As a part of the project, they will be trained and given stipends by opening bank accounts. (Tol, 20.12.20)

Sanitisation must at wedding venues

With the winter marriage season kicking off, both the civic bodies, Greater and Heritage, have asked wedding garden operators to carry out sanitisation before and after the ceremony. Sanitisation machines have been made must at all wedding venues.

If more than 100 guests are found at a wedding venue, the organiser has to shell out ₹25,000 fine. The government has also made it clear that



if marriages are held without permission or if guests are found without masks and social distancing, ₹5,000 fine will be imposed. (Tol, 27.11.20)

First organ donors' memorial

Rajasthan's Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot inaugurated the country's first organ donors memorial through a virtual platform. On the eve of the National Organ Donation Day, all the prominent historical buildings were illuminated with green, a symbol of organ donation.

The memorial has been built near Central Park on SMS Hospital Road. The sculpture, which has been inspired by Jaipur's iconic Jantar Mantar, portrays life looking towards the cosmic heavens in gratitude, compassion and love.

The donors' memorial will highlight the precious gift of life given by donors to patients suffering from organ failures such as kidney, heart and liver. (Tol, 27.11.20)

Heritage project a model for South Asia

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) expressed that the Jaipur world heritage project will be seen as a model for other Indian and South Asian historic towns.

The Jaipur project is the first-ever initiative in the South Asian region to protect an urban landscape covering an expansive property of 710 hectares.

The document uploaded on the subject at the UNESCO website says that this novel project in India is one of the largest in magnitude. (Tol, 05.12.20)

Adding an 'E' to your 'Vehicles'

Prospects of Electric Mobility in Rajasthan

Sarthak Shukla*

In the Indian context, as well as across the globe, policymakers are actively considering this idea and undertaking relevant steps to facilitate the adoption of Electric Vehicles



On a lighter note, if one asks you about your favourite moments from the COVID-induced lockdown, what would your answer be?

For many residents of bustling cities like Jaipur, the response will most likely be clean air, blue skies and deserted roads apart from the comfort of staying at home.

This simple statement highlights a core problem that has been normalised over the years now. This is the problem of an increasing number of vehicles of all types and sizes congesting the city roads and releasing emissions that add to the already lethal levels of air pollution.

An initiative to solve this problem sustainably is the electrification of the transport sector by introducing Electric Vehicles (EVs). In the Indian context, as well as across the globe, policymakers are actively considering this idea and undertaking relevant steps to facilitate the adoption of EVs. More than half of the Indian states have already prepared a draft or finalised a State EV policy, with others proactively planning to roll out one. Rajasthan, falling under the latter group, is to take up this task on priority.

At this juncture, it is crucial to understand certain basic arguments related to this disruptive transformation in the way we commute.

Firstly, the need of having an electrified transport sector is of prime importance in designing the means to achieve it. For example, if traffic congestion is the problem, then electrified public transport that caters to the need of daily commuters should be a priority and undue focus on private vehicles might dilute this endeavour.

Given that local bus transit used to cater to around 2 lakh Jaipurites daily before lockdown, an EV policy should factor in such ground-based needs and demands to identify 'fit for purpose' vehicle segments. Such demand-side insights can provide the fodder for the market signals or intelligence reports that usually dictate the strategy of vehicle manufacturers and corporates in the mobility sector.

The next fundamental issue that acts as a barrier to EV adoption is the economics around these vehicles. For most EVs, barring a few low-cost 2-wheelers, the upfront cost of purchasing them is higher than their conventional counterpart, while the cost of operating them is significantly low. Thus, an initial viability gap when bridged leads to long-term financial savings for consumers using battery-operated vehicles.

The prerogative of the policymakers should be to not just bridge the viability gap of priority vehicles through a slew of incentives and subsidies, but also to scale the financial incentives optimally to balance state revenues and purchasing power of targeted consumers.

Finally, given that demand-side dynamics inherently requires a fragmented and decentralised approach by taking perceptions from end-consumers, a supply-side scenario essentially requires economies of conglomeration and the development of clusters that compete with each other to produce quality products at competitive prices.

Rajasthan does enjoy the strategic advantage of being situated close to the mega automobile manufacturing cluster in Manesar and nearby major markets like Delhi. These can be facilitated to also enhance the domestic manufacturing capacity of electronic goods, cells and batteries and other EV components and sell these outputs in the emerging markets domestically.

Although the idea of EVs seems a no-brainer given the pertinent environmental and health emergency we are in, however, it is the political will, investor confidence, business viability and most importantly, the consumer's behavior that will determine the future of EVs.

Thus, it is a collective opportunity which calls for coherent actions from all stakeholders, if we wish to sustain the clean air and blue skies.

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Sources: BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation; BP: Bangkok Post; DB: Dainik Bhaskar; ET: Economic Times; HT: Hindustan Times; IE: Indian Express; NDTV: New Delhi Television Ltd; PTI: Press Trust of India; TG: The Guardian; TGI: The Greater India; TH: The Hindu; Tol: Times of India; TS: The Sentinel

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