



CityMatters

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International

Empowering Muslim Women to Reach New Heights



Breaking ground on your terms and voicing your opinions has never been easy. All genders are created equal, but the negative impacts of patriarchy count solely on women's shoulders. However, women are emerging stronger than ever, vocalising against the unfair societal norms holding them back.

Muslim women require the backing of the global community to maximise their capacity for success. This can help them access resources and tap into opportunities that would otherwise remain out of reach.

Recently, Muslim women in Iran and Indonesia have been protesting against oppressive laws that limit their rights. From the hijab (Islamic headscarf) protests in Iran to the anti-sexual harassment rallies in Indonesia, these demonstrations have highlighted the need for greater gender equality and justice in these countries. The protests have also brought attention to issues, such as the lack of access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities for women in both countries. Muslim women are sending a powerful message through their actions that they will no longer accept being treated as discarded citizens.

The Taliban's restrictions on Muslim women have been a significant issue in Afghanistan for decades. The Taliban has implemented many unfair laws that limit Muslim women's freedom, including bans on education and employment outside the home and restrictions on dress and other forms of expression.

Afghanistan's Taliban regime in 2022 saw a major setback in women's rights, especially with the restriction of visiting public recreational places, such as gyms and parks. Such abhorrent discrimination was deplorable and caused extreme damage to gender equality across the country.

A nerve-wracking example of gender-based brutality could be seen in Iran when 22-year-old Mahsa Amini's death fuelled the biggest-ever protests. She was visiting Tehran with family when Gasht-e-Ershad (Iran's morality police unit, which imposes stringent dress rules) detained and beaten her ruthlessly for allegedly violating the mandatory hijab law.

This unfortunate incident sparked protests involving young girls and women who rebelliously removed their hijabs in standoffs with Iran's security forces. On September 18, 2022, Twitter witnessed 1 million tweets containing videos of Iranian women chopping off their tresses to protest Amini's death.

India has voiced its disapproval of Taliban restrictions on Muslim women. It supports UN efforts to promote women's rights in Afghanistan. India has also pointed out that the US is violating its obligations under international law by continuing to provide financial and military aid to Afghanistan, which practices discriminatory laws towards women.

It is time to take action to ensure that these restrictions are lifted and that Muslim women can exercise their rights without fear or discrimination. Many brave individuals are pushing for change and finding ways to empower Muslim women despite such restrictions. Through education programmes, economic freedom initiatives and support networks, they are making it possible for Muslim women to take back control of their lives and live with dignity.



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Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Miscellany

Bar-tailed godwit sets world record

A juvenile bar-tailed godwit – known only by its satellite tag number 234684 – has flown 13,560 km (8,435 miles) from Alaska to the Australian state of



Tasmania without stopping, appearing to set a new world record for marathon bird flights.

The five-month-old bird set off from Alaska and satellite data showed that it did not stop during its marathon flight which took 11 days and one hour.

(TG, 26.10.22)

On its Way to 100% Hindi Literacy

In South India, where a sizeable population does not speak Hindi, a small non-descript village, Chelannur in Kerala, is fast changing into being declared a 100 percent Hindi literate village.

Septuagenarian Janaki Amma relishes her newfound love for Hindi in a small Kerala village and repeats the brief sentence taught to her as part of an effort by a *panchayat* to achieve 100 percent Hindi literacy.

(OI, 23.10.22)

Laxmi-Ganesh photos on currency

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urged the Centre to put the photo of Lord Ganesh and Goddess Lakshmi on fresh currency notes to “get the economy back on track”.



Citing the example of Indonesia, he appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take similar steps in India. Indonesia is a Muslim country with 85 percent Muslims and only two percent Hindus, but there is a picture of Shri Ganesh Ji on the currency.

(HT, 26.08.22)

Kota remained in panic for 3 hours

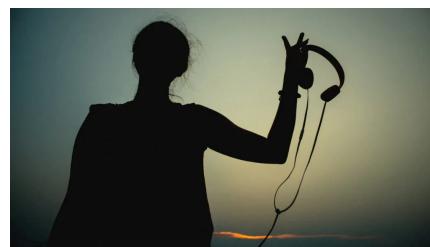
In the coaching city of Kota, Rajasthan, India, a panther created such an uproar that the residents' breath remained stuck for three hours. This panther attacked and injured three or four people and slept with his tail on the gas stove lying on the slab in the house's kitchen.

Seeing the panther, the circles of that family dried up. Later, after hard work, the panther was rescued and put in the cage. Until the panther was not caught, the city had an atmosphere of panic.

(DB, 06.11.22)

Music therapy save you from bad dreams

Sometimes, people have such dreams that some dreaded animal follows them at night. They are running,



but their legs are not moving. They are lost in a maze from where there is no visible way out. These types of nightmares are common, but some people get so upset that they start having insomnia, anxiety and stress.

If this situation continues, the mind feels delusional that something wrong is happening. During a recent study at the University of Geneva, Switzerland, music therapy was discovered to reduce nightmares.

(DB, 29.10.22)

Erase the two-finger sex assault test

The Supreme Court of India said those conducting the ‘two-finger test’ on alleged rape victims would be held guilty of misconduct.

The so-called test is based on the incorrect assumption that a sexually active woman cannot be raped. Nothing could be further from the truth — a woman's sexual history is immaterial while adjudicating whether the accused raped her.

This is not the SC's first expressed disapproval of the two-finger test. The Centre's guidelines on examining victims of sexual assault also forbid it, but the practice continues.

(IE, 01.11.22)

Chittorgarh Fort to be illuminated

Chittorgarh Fort in Rajasthan, India is on the verge of becoming the first Indian fort to remain illuminated year-round. This spellbinding fort dates back



to the 8th century and is also a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation World Heritage Site.

The Rajasthan government claims that the purpose of this decision is to enhance tourism in the region and provide visitors with unique experiences.

For visitors to view the fort in all its glory, vantage points will be provided. The longest wall in the project will be four kms and visible from a distance of 20 km!

(ET, 06.11.22)

Renaming all places with a British tone

A day after, it was reported that the Defence Ministry of India had sought British-era names of locations in the cantonment areas of Uttarakhand to change them. CM



Pushkar Singh Dhami directed government departments to make a list of all locations, roads, and buildings with a colonial influence so that they can be altered.

There are several locations in Kumaon and Garhwal, especially in Dehradun, Mussoorie, Landour, Nainital and Almora, where the British either stayed or had their defence forces stationed, leaving the names they had given to the places and structures behind.

(Tol, 30.10.22)

Emerald hub set to glitter

The emerald trade is getting a renewed impetus as supplies from global miners like Gemfields increased significantly in the past few years. The industry in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India, the emerald hub of the world, expects the exported coloured stone to gain further momentum.

After diamonds and rubies, emeralds enjoy the place of pride in the pantheon of coloured stones. Rajiv Jain, honorary secretary of JJS, said, "No place has such cutting-edge for cutting and polishing emerald as does Jaipur. The increased and secure supply of the stone has expertise given a tailwind to the sector, thanks to Gemfields and others."

(Tol, 26.12.22)

300km on a wheelchair

It has been almost 10 days since Amangattuchalil Kannan began his pilgrimage from Malappuram to



Sabarimala in South India, and he is determined to do it the hard way — all 300km in a wheelchair.

Kannan lost his left leg in an accident several years ago and his other leg is partially paralysed. The motive of his pilgrimage is to seek Lord Ayyappa's blessings for the Muslim teacher, M P Sameera, an Assistant Professor at Government College in Kondotty, who helped him get a roof over his head when he had almost given up on his future.

(Tol, 25.12.22)

Lost ring found 21 years later

A diamond engagement ring accidentally flushed down the toilet of a Florida home was returned to its owners after being found lodged inside the commode 21 years later.

Nick and Shaina Day said they were not yet married when the ring went down the toilet 21 years ago at Nick's parents' house.

However, two decades later, when Nick's mother, Renee, hired a plumber to replace the toilet, he discovered the ring lodged inside.

([www.upi.com](https://UPI.com) / 29.12.22)

Celebrating 80th wedding anniversary

A Pennsylvania couple who both are 102 years old celebrated an even



rare milestone — their 80th wedding anniversary. Robert and Edith Mae Schaum, who met in high school in 1936 and married in 1942, celebrated that anniversary on December 26.

The Guinness World Record for the longest marriage stands at 86 years, 290 days. It was set by Herbert and Zelmyra Fisher, whose marriage lasted until Herbert Fisher died in 2011.

([www.upi.com](https://UPI.com), 30.12.22)

World's 20-year-old chicken

A woman from Michigan is seeking Guinness World Record recognition for her pet chicken, Peanut, who is believed to be the oldest in the world at 20 years old.

Marsi Parker Darwin of Waterloo said a friend urged her to apply online to have Peanut recognised as the world's oldest living chicken. She received a response with instructions on gathering evidence, including photos and videos, witness statements and media coverage.

([www.upi.com](https://UPI.com), 19.12.22)

Book returned after 50 years

A library in England said a book on the Dewey decimal system was recently returned and found to be just shy of 50 years overdue.

The Nantwich Library in Cheshire, England, said that the book, 'Introduction to Dewey Decimal Classification for British Schools,' was checked out in late 1972 and was due on January 30, 1973.

The library said the tome had been borrowed by the headteacher of a local school, although it was unclear why it took so long for it to be returned.

([www.upi.com](https://UPI.com), 27.12.22)

Conversation with strangers

lifts your mood

A new study suggests that people who talk to strangers, family, and friends are happier. It is well known that there is a link between happiness and social connection. Still, researchers from Harvard University wanted to know which type of relationship and how many interactions with each type are best for one's well-being.

The study found that those who branched out had greater well-being, satisfaction, and quality of life. It turned



out that talking to a broader range of people was more important for one's happiness than the total number of interactions or the amount of time spent interacting.

(BBC, 18.10.22)

Ban lifted on imported sex dolls

South Korea has formally lifted a ban on the import of full-body sex dolls, ending years of debate over how much the government can interfere in private life.

Although there are no laws or regulations banning the import of sex dolls, hundreds, and perhaps thousands, have been seized by the customs, which cited a clause in the law that bans the import of goods that "harm the country's beautiful traditions and public moral."



Upon the complaints of the importers, courts ordered customs to release the sex dolls, stating that they are used in people's private spaces and do not undermine human dignity.

(<https://APnews.com>, 26.12.22)

World first 'Supermodel Robot' café

Dubai's Donna Cyber-Cafe will be the first cafe in the world to be completely run without the help of humans in 2023. It will be open 24 hours and employ a lifelike robot modelled after the Eastern European model, Diana Gabdullina, to serve customers.

Robot arms will also operate many self-serve ice cream machines and coffee. Customers must pay at a self-service terminal.

The supermodel robot will also be able to understand human emotions and indulge in real conversations with people at the cafe. It can also walk like human beings.



(FE, 20.12.22)

Artist creates paintings using own blood

Philippine artist Elito Circa has blood on his hands, but only to create art with. Using blood taken from his own veins, the 52-year-old produces



canvas paintings that have drawn praise and criticism because of his unusual choice of medium.

Born in a low-income household with little access to school supplies and art materials, Circa explored different mediums, including plums and tomatoes, but it was when he scraped himself as a young boy that his fascination with using blood began.

(Reuters, 16.12.22)

Reusing human hair to protect environment

Coiffeurs across Belgium are sweeping up and bagging hair clipped from their customers and then handing it over to an NGO that recycles it to protect the environment.

The Hair Recycle project feeds locks and tresses into a machine that turns them into matted squares that can be used to absorb oil and other hydrocarbons polluting the environment or made into bio-composite bags.

(Reuters, 28.12.22)

Ancient designs in Peru's Nazca lines

More than a hundred new designs discovered in and around Peru's ancient Nazca plain and surrounding areas

could bring new information to light about the mysterious pre-Columbian artworks that have intrigued scientists and visitors for decades.

Following two years of field surveys with aerial photos and drones, Peruvian and Japanese researchers from Yamagata University reported the discovery of 168 new designs at the UNESCO World Heritage site on Peru's southern Pacific coast.

(Reuters, 19.12.22)

'Floating train' a big hit

Tickets have been selling out fast in Thailand for rides on a special "floating



train", where passengers have been enjoying the illusion of aquatic rail travel due to a post-monsoon rise in water levels.

The route starts in the capital Bangkok and passes through the Pasak Jolasid dam in Lop Buri province, six hours away on an elevated track just above the water level. The train runs only at weekends between November and February.

(Reuters, 07.11.22)

Husband forgets wife after bathroombreak

Husbands have a reputation for forgetting things. Whether it is a birthday or an anniversary, they usually miss the dates. But a husband from

Thailand made a mistake that can not be forgotten. He accidentally left his wife behind during a pee stop on Christmas Day, which forced her to walk over 12 miles (20km) to seek help.

(<https://news.abplive.com>, 29.12.22)

Man hung ornaments from his beard

Joel Strasser of Kuna, Idaho, has smashed the Guinness World Record for the most ornaments ever hung from a beard in the shape of a Christmas Tree.

Strasser first hung an ornament on his beard in 2019. Since then, he has been breaking his Guinness World Record each year. The latest effort took him 2.5 hours to attach the ornaments and an hour to take the all off!

(HT, 22.12.22)

Bride calls off the wedding!

A woman in the Sambhal district of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, India called off her wedding after the groom kissed her on stage in front of nearly 300 guests to win a bet with his friends. The bride is, therefore, "doubtful about his character." She did not appreciate the move and immediately called the police. The incident led to the wedding being called off and the guests returning home.

(IT, 01.12.22)

Woman marries Lord Vishnu

A woman in Jaipur Rajasthan, India, has been making headlines for her bizarre marriage. The 30-year-old woman named Pooja Singh, a Political Science graduate, had a very unusual marriage ceremony as there was no groom at the wedding. Instead, she married Lord Vishnu and shocked everybody with her actions.

Since childhood, she constantly witnessed fights between her parents, which made her bitter towards marriage.



Another factor was the continuous questions people asked about her marital status.

(DNA, 16.12.22)

City Briefs

Parking policy yet to be implemented

Despite Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) having proposed a six-point policy for vehicular parking in Jaipur in the Jaipur Master Plan 2025,



nothing has yet been done to implement this policy in the pink city.

Besides the construction of parking facilities at strategic locations, the policy includes – a ban on on-street parking on critical commercial streets, construction of parking facilities alongside Metro and railway stations and bus termini, toll-free parking to reduce the usage of private modes and construction of parking complexes on government agencies and lands.

(Tol, 31.10.22)

Trial for waste collection

JMC-Greater conducted a trial for a waste collection system by scanning RFID tags installed outside houses in the Malviya Nagar zone.

In both zones, there are over 1.10 lakh houses where the waste collection will be done by scanning the tags, which will help in the real-time monitoring of the system. The same system will be used to collect garbage. In this, the waste collector will scan the tag and an assistant will collect the waste from the houses. (Tol, 29.10.22)



Smart cards offer discounts

In Jaipur City Transport Services Limited (JCTSL) board meeting, it was decided that from April 01, 2023, students need to carry a smartcard offered by JCSTCL to avail concessions. As per the rule book, students need to apply for a smart card with JCTSL and the JCSTCL official would issue the smart card only after pre-verifying the identity of the applicants.

"The new system will actually solve both the problems. Since only pre-

verified students will get smart cards, there would be no need to determine the students' identity. Second, conductors must swipe the card and generate concession tickets from the swiping machine. So, they won't be able to manipulate any concession fare.

(Tol, 20.10.22)

Free sanitary napkins distributed

The state government is running various schemes for the sustainable development of girls and women. Free sanitary napkins are being distributed under the UDAN scheme through 62,000 anganwadi centres operated under ICDS, which is an innovative step in the whole country.

The state government is running different schemes for the round



development of girls. The aim is to end gender discrimination with these schemes so that girls across the state are empowered. (Tol, 12.10.22)

Rural Livelihood Loan Scheme

Rajasthan Rural Family Livelihood Loan Scheme has been launched for rural people who depend on non-agriculture activities for their livelihood. Under this new scheme, one lakh families will be given interest-free loans of ₹2,000 crore for non-agricultural works.

Families residing in the state's rural areas for at least the last five years will be eligible for loans under this scheme. This loan will be available through commercial banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks and small finance banks. The state government will provide an interest subsidy of ₹100 crore for such loans. (Tol, 11.10.22)

Launch of QR code for hospitals

Rajasthan Health Department is launching QR code for giving details of empanelled hospitals under the Chiranjeevi Swasthya Bima Yojna.

The QR code scanning will give the details about the available treatment of

Nationwide drive to end child marriage

With the support of around 70,000 women from across



the country, a nationwide Child Marriage Free India campaign was launched from Navrangpura village in Jaipur district.

Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation spearheads the campaign along with Nobel Peace laureate Leymah Gbowee. The campaign will work towards stopping child trafficking and marriages, empowering girls, and ensuring they continue with education, among other social evils.

(Tol, 17.10.12)

different specialities such as gynaecology, orthopaedics and other specialities in the empanelled hospitals under the scheme. It will make it easy for the patients to choose the hospital for their treatment according to their needs. (Tol, 02.10.22)

Tata Power to build 10k MW plant in Raj

The government has rolled out investor-friendly policies in several sectors and the MoUs and Lols worth ₹10. 44 lakh crore, signed during the roadshows ahead of the summit, reflects the positive developments in the state.

Speaking at the summit, Adani said, "While we already have three cement plants and limestone mining assets, a significant part of our capacity expansion will continue to happen in Rajasthan. We anticipate investing another ₹7,000 crore to double our cement manufacturing capacity in the state."



(Tol, 08.10.22)

City Briefs

Raj top in reducing maternal deaths

Efforts in preventing deaths of women while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy have borne fruit. In Centre's two successive reports on maternal mortality ratio (MMR), Rajasthan has reported the highest decline of 28 points in MMR in the country.

A special bulletin on maternal mortality in India, 2019-20, released by the Ministry of Home Affairs shows that MMR in Rajasthan has reduced to 113 deaths per 1 lakh live births, however, the state has a long way to go as it has to bring the MMR to 70 or below by 2030, which is the target.

(Tol, 30.11.22)

CM launches free uniform

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot launched the much-awaited Mukhya Mantri Bal Gopal Yojana and Mukhya Mantri Free Uniform Distribution



Scheme, terming it as fulfilling the prime objectives of the government to provide quality education and better health for students.

The government has distributed the fabric of two school uniforms to every student with ₹200 for stitching. The stitching amount will be credited to the parents' account linked with Jan Aadhar Card.

(Tol, 29.11.22)

Learn about Financial Cyber Crime

Financial cybercrime has become a big challenge for banking industries and Law Enforcement Agencies. Cybercriminals are using various types



of *modus operandi* for committing cyber financial fraud.

Nowadays, fraud messages are being circulated by fraudsters to update the electricity bill. Some messages contain fake mobile numbers and phishing links also. Once the victim discloses his payment credentials, like debit card or credit card number, expiry date, CVV and OTP etc., to the fraudster through a phone call or phishing link, his account gets debited.

(www.the420.in, 18.09.22)

38. Hike in airport parking fees

Jaipur International Airport, one of the country's major airports, has again started cutting the pockets of common travellers.

The parking fee at the airport has been increased by about one and a half times. Taxi minimum parking fee increased from ₹50 to ₹80 for 30 minutes, followed by ₹150 for two hours, parking fee for private cars increased from ₹30 to ₹50.

The same parking for one to two hours was done at ₹100, and for the first two hours, ₹85 was charged. Similarly, the bus parking fee increased from ₹50 to ₹200 for 30 minutes.

(DB, 20.11.22)

JDA to soon build two rotaries

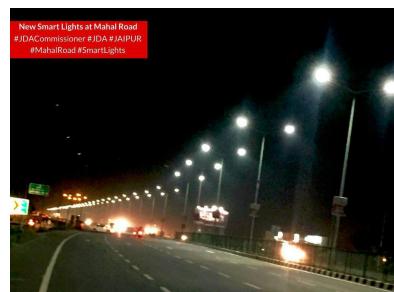
Keeping in mind the increasing land disputes near the OTS intersection along the JLN Marg, JDA has shelved constructing a cloverleaf structure. As an alternative, JDA will now construct the cable bridge over JLN Marg with two rotaries, one on the Gopalpura Bypass Road and the other on the Sansthan Path.

The sole purpose of constructing a four-lane cable bridge was to end traffic congestion at the OTS intersection by making it signal-free. Moreover, an underground pass at all four ends of the intersection will also be constructed, offering pedestrians a safe passage.

(Tol, 22.12.22)

Smart street lights illuminate Jaipur

To curb energy wastage and keep maintenance costs low, the JDA is all set to replace the existing streetlights with 'smart, intelligent lights'.



The advantage of these lights is that they can be controlled from one room. One can switch to auto mode to switch on these lights and switch them off at a fixed time. The brightness of these lights depends on the number of cars plying on the roads.

If on a particular road, there are many cars with headlights on, the brightness of these streetlights would automatically reduce, and the wastage of energy can be checked. (Tol, 13.11.22)

5G connectivity in Rajasthan

Here is some good news for the residents of Rajasthan state as the Central Government plans to connect every village and town with 5G connectivity. For this, the work of installing towers in villages is going to start soon.

Akash Ambani started Jio's 5G service from Nathdwara in the state. However, the 5G service will be available only up to 1 kilometre in and around the temple premises of Nathdwara. But next year, the 5G network will spread throughout the state.

About 5,500 new towers have been approved for 7,100 villages in Rajasthan, and the work of upgrading the 4G towers with 5G equipment has already underway.

(www.catchnews.com, 23.10.22)



No Honking in Residential Areas

Pursuant to a case filed by CUTS, the Central Zone of the National Green Tribunal issued a landmark order, directing the Rajasthan government to enforce a 'No Honking' policy in residential areas between 10 pm and 6 am, except in exceptional circumstances. The Central Bench of the NGT, headed by Justice Sheo Kumar Singh, directed the government to seize any noise pollution sources exceeding permissible limits.



Domestic gas facilities through pipelines

Expanding domestic gas facilities through pipelines in the cities is the priority of the Rajasthan government. In such a situation, Rajasthan State Gas, a joint venture of the state government, will have to speed up the infrastructure and CNG-PNG work by coordinating with other agencies working in the state.

Additional Chief Secretary, Mines and Petroleum Subodh Agarwal said that along with speeding up the PNG connection work, new CNG stations should be set up so that people can easily get cheap and better gas services.

(RP, 23.12.22)

Police survey to verify tenants

After an elderly businessman received a threatening call for extortion for a sum of ₹2 crore in Bajaj Nagar, the Jaipur police have launched a special door-to-door survey for houses.

The police are conducting a major verification survey at all houses and checking if students living as tenets have given authentic information. If a student claims to be studying at a coaching centre, the police team checks that centre's records for verification. (Tol, 15.12.22)

App to monitor waste collection

To improve the door-to-door waste collection system in the city, JMC-Greater launched a Swachhta App, which will help in the real-time monitoring of waste collection processes. This mobile application aims to strengthen the user feedback system and improve cleanliness facilities in the city based on the complaints received.

This facility has been started in Malviya Nagar and Murlipura zones, where RFID tags have been installed on houses and business establishments. Residents can download the applications from Playstore, with the names Malviya Nagar Jaipur SWM and Murlipura Jaipur SWM. (Tol, 15.12.22)

This family of organ donors keeps the tradition alive in Jaipur

Shiv Hari Vyas, a retired government teacher, was not the only person in his family who donated organs. His daughter-in-law's eyes were donated when she passed away in 2009, and his 6-month-old granddaughter's body was donated to AIIMS, Delhi, in 2005. So when Vyas died, three days after meeting with an accident, at age 72, his family kept that noble tradition alive.



His family donated his skin and eyes after he was declared dead at a private hospital in Jaipur. It was only the second donation of skin received by the skin bank at SMS Hospital after it was set up in June.

(Tol, 15.12.22)

Metro Updates

Govt okays Metro expansion

Although the state government issued financial approval for the extension of Jaipur Metro Line I from Mansarovar to Ajmer Road, Metro officials say approval for the extension of the line that would make Metro more sustainable is still pending.

The proposed extension of the present line on the other side of the city – from Badi Choupar to Transport Nagar – is more feasible and would help Metro sustain itself.

As per the project's blueprint, Metro will be extended from Badi Choupar to Transport Nagar for another 2.85 km, and again it will be extended from Mansarovar to Ajmer Road (200-feet Bypass) for another 1.3 km. (Tol, 30.10.22)

Metro to earn ₹10cr for 1st time

Jaipur Metro Rail Corporation (JMRC) expects revenue earned from ticket sales to reach the ₹10 crore mark for the first time in 2022.

Officials claimed this would be a major boost for the corporation after it witnessed a low revenue yield in the last two calendar years. Metro services were closed for almost four months owing to the pandemic. This year Metro is in a position to earn around ₹10 crore for the first time after Metro ran for the full year without any hindrance.

(Tol, 26.12.22)

Line 2 is a must for mass transit

Although there has been no such progress in Line-2 of Jaipur Metro since 2021, Principal Secretary of Urban Development and Housing (UDH) Kunji Lal Meena feels that phase-II of Jaipur Metro is important to implement the Integrated Mass Transit System that has been planned for the city.

The 23.51km Line-2 is scheduled to connect India Gate (Sitapura Industrial Area) with Ambabadi, passing through the city's main commercial areas on Tonk Road. (Tol, 17.12.22)



FoPL Regulation Needs Wider Consultation

By George Cherian and Simi TB*



The regulation to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from the food supply and the recent efforts through proposed front-of-pack labelling (FoPL) regulation all aim to encourage the production of such healthy products within the country.

The global pandemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is perceived to threaten sustainable development. Recognising this looming threat, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included the need to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by one-third by 2030. While educating the population on food and nutrition to bring visible change within the next decade would be a herculean task, the government, through the use of a broader set of laws and regulations, can come up with suitable nutrition policies and food regulations to encourage food and beverage manufacturers to reduce the consumption of unhealthy food products.

The regulation to eliminate industrially-produced trans-fatty acids from the food supply and the recent efforts through proposed front-of-pack labelling (FoPL) regulation aim to encourage the production of such healthy products. Such policies will significantly help improve the food environment and therefore plays a key role in achieving the government's ambition to reduce deaths due to NCD by a third by 2030.

An Attempt to Introduce a Toothless Tool

The draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling & Display) Amendment Regulations, 2022, related to FoPL, is just a confusing piece of regulation. There are many reasons for this – First, as per the proposed regulation, the food manufacturers are given the power to decide whether to have a nutrition rating on their products or not because it is voluntary for an unacceptably long period of four years.

Second, as per regulation, the way nutrition ratings are calculated is by assessing the overall nutrition value of the product, which means positive nutrients of a food product against the negative nutrients. This means that foods high in sugar can still receive a high rating since the healthy ingredients cancel out the unhealthy ones. Thereby defeating the very objective of FoPL and making it a toothless tool.

Besides, by introducing a nutrition rating, the food regulator would merely act as a promoting agent of otherwise unhealthy products. Consumers need a tool that easily helps them identify food products that are high in critical nutrients, which health practitioners generally advise to refrain from consuming in excess.

Regulator Failed to Consult States or Sensitise SMEs

Ensuring all key stakeholders are equally aware and consulted during the policy development process is critical to ensuring a well-drafted regulation. The regulator designed this draft regulation merely by consulting food manufacturers and consumer organisations, whose voices often went unheard in the crowd. Not just the states, the regulator even failed to sensitise and convince the small and medium enterprises about the need and importance of such a regulation in the country.

Unnecessary Fear of Impact on Traditional Foods

One of the main arguments against the regulation is its potential negative effects on businesses, particularly small businesses that manufacture and sell traditional Indian foods. Their arguments are focused particularly on the expected increase in production costs, change in taste due to changing the composition of their products, and required labelling and packaging modifications.

Moreover, businesses should realise that today more and more consumers worldwide are looking for ways to reduce the amount of sugar, salt and fat in their diets. FoPL regulation is not exclusively introduced in our country. In fact, more than 40 developed and developing countries have already brought in similar regulations and are implementing it without many bottlenecks, and many are in the process.

Conclusion

Consumers have the right to be correctly informed to choose what is needed and what is not, and a warning label does help in this process. It does not rate food products, it does not force upon us any decision, it does not say what is good or what is evil, it just informs and warns the consumers when critical nutrients are more than the prescribed WHO level. There is also a need to educate and sensitise all stakeholders and gather their support to implement a regulation like FoPL successfully.

* Director and Analyst at CUTS International. Abridged from an article that appeared in The Bureaucrat, December 16, 2022

Sources: BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation; DB: Dainik Bhaskar; DNA: Daily News & Analysis; ET: Economic Times; FE: Financial Express; HT: Hindustan Times; IE: Indian Express; IT: India Today; Ol: Outlook India; RP: Rajasthan Patrika; TG: The Guardian; Tol: Times of India

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CityMatters is a quarterly newsletter published by Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302016, India, Phone: 91.141.228281, Fax: 91.141.2282485, Email: cuts@cuts.org, Web site: www.cuts-international.org, and printed by MS Printers, Jaipur, India. CUTS offices also at Kolkata, Chittorgarh and New Delhi (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Accra (Ghana); Hanoi (Vietnam); Geneva (Switzerland) and Washington DC (USA).