

CUTS IN ACTION

25 YEARS
1983 2008
CUTS
International

January-March 2008

For the attention of road authorities in Jaipur



A few years ago, an old couple in Lucknow were found painting white stripes on a road bump. Their son was killed on the road as his motorcycle went flying after hitting the speed breaker, because it was built newly and did not carry white stripes.

Rather than cursing the municipal authorities for not highlighting the speed breaker, the old couple volunteered to do what the authorities did not do. Their reason was that they may have lost their son due to negligence, but did not want others to suffer the same fate.

I am not aware if the municipal authorities were shamed into taking action, but even if they were, I wonder whether this has become a routine affair.

Many would be surprised to know that there are ISI Standards which require the road construction agencies to build speed breakers of a particular dimension, paint them with white stripes like the zebra crossings, and put signboards a few metres before the bump to warn road users. Even if the bumps are painted with white stripes, they do not last long and have to be repainted on a regular basis.

In Jabalpur, I once saw something innovative and simple, environmentally friendly and long lasting. They used broken white ceramic chips to create stripes on the road bumps. Rains would wash away the grime and dust on it, thus they remained in operation for a very long time.

Speed breakers are good regulators for speeding vehicles, particularly dare devil two wheeler riders. Road safety experts believe in them. But how do municipal authorities behave? An example from Jaipur will tell you the sordid tale. I often travel between Queens Road and Prince Road to reach my house off the Kings Road. New speed breakers have been installed on various crossings at perhaps the same time, well and good.

The one on Prince Road at the entry point on Queens' road has white stripes, while the one at the end of the road where it culminates on the Ajmer Road there is no white stripes. At the entry point on Kings Road there are no white stripes, and it is a car breaker...a huge one. In any event all these speed breakers are too close to the turning points hence wrongly placed, and vehicles have to gun their brakes



Traffic now slows down a lot without any accidents, after we painted the road with white stripes

to negotiate the bumps. As a result, many a vehicle coming from behind has crashed into the one ahead which has had to break suddenly to cross over the speed breaker. Some two riders have been thrown off their vehicles and road rage has also been witnessed. Fortunately, no one has been carrying a weapon to intimidate the other person.

I have not been to other new locations of newly installed speed breakers in Jaipur, but am sure the scene will be as lackadaisical as the one narrated above.

I do not even know who is responsible for this: is it the Jaipur Development Authority or the Jaipur Municipal Corporation or the State PWD? The roads in Jaipur are divided among them and hence there is a multiplicity of agencies who are doing the same job.

If a well informed person like me is ignorant, imagine the plight of the less informed person either living in Jaipur or visiting it from outside.

Can the authorities put up some helpline phone numbers around the city to let us know, so that we can at least call up and report such issues?

On the top of it, these helpline numbers need to be manned by responsive and responsible persons, so that efforts made could result in action. Otherwise people will just become apathetic. Are the authorities listening?

Pradeep S Mehta

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

Stocktaking of PTAs

CUTS International organised a panel discussion on 'Preferential Trade Agreements and India: Where are we and where to go?' in New Delhi, on January 29-30, 2008.

The panel took stock of the progress in PTAs, both bilateral and regional, signed so far and likely to be signed in near future by India and to assess the likely effects of such arrangements. More than 40 participants, ranging from government officials, business representatives, diplomats, academics, civil society representatives, development agencies and media participated in this meeting.

www.cuts-citee.org/pdf/Report-PTAs_India.pdf

War on Poverty

CUTS London Resource Centre (CUTS LRC), with the support of the Department for International Development, UK organised the third debate in the series, entitled, 'Does War on Poverty = War on Terror?' under the Soho to Soweto project in London, on February 04, 2008.

The debate attracted 120 people to quiz an expert panel from

government, academia, the NGO sector and the media on the links between poverty, terrorism and conflict and debate how the international community should respond to these challenges.

www.cuts-london.org/events/SecurityandDevelopment.htm

Pre-UNCTAD XII CSO Forum

On the eve of the forthcoming quadrennial meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII) to be held in Accra, Ghana on 20-25 April 2008, CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS CITEE) organised two-day international conferences in Hanoi, on March 06-07, 2008 and in Nairobi, on March 13-14, 2008, respectively.

The conferences sought to formulate a set of key messages to be fed into the Civil Society Forum, to be held during the UNCTAD XII.

www.cuts-citee.org/events-archive-mar08.htm

Promoting Competition

CUTS International jointly with the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Botswana; and the Botswana

Council of NGOs, organised an international competition conference entitled, 'Promoting a Healthy Competition Culture in sub-Saharan Africa' in Gaborone, on February 14-15, 2008.

This conference brought together regional and international participants from over 20 countries to diagnose competition regimes in the region and identify key elements needed to promote a healthy competition culture therein.

www.cuts-ccier.org/Gaborone/index.htm

Effective Regulation

A Panel Discussion on "The Political Economy of Regulation in India – What do we need to do" was organised by CUTS Institute of Regulation & Competition (CIRC) with four Parliamentarians from both the ruling party and the opposition.

The objective of the event was to evolve a consensus on implementation of an effective regulatory regime in India.

The discussion was also a follow up of the report under a project executed by CUTS International entitled 'Competition & Regulation in India, 2007'. The report takes stock of how competition and regulation prevails across sectors in the country and comes out with recommendations as to what still needs to be done.

www.circ.in/PPD.htm

Electricity Reforms

CUTS International with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) is implementing a pilot project over a span of two years (2008-2010) in Bangladesh, India (West Bengal and Rajasthan) and Nepal.

The project aims to enhance the capacity of consumers to make them understand the issues involved, take-up action oriented research and carry out advocacy with policymakers and regulatory agencies on electricity regulatory/policy issues.

The project was formally launched in Kolkata, on March 13-14, 2008, in which the project partners along with various stakeholders such as policy makers, regulators, etc., participated.

www.cuts-ccier.org/RESA/events-archive-mar08.htm



CUTS, in active partnership with the Department of Technology and Society, Lund University, Sweden that is being supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), New Delhi organised the launch of the project entitled, 'Traffic Calming Strategies to Improve Pedestrian Safety in India', in Jaipur, on March 03, 2008.

The study aims to highlight the key flaws in the design of Indian roads and develop a manual, first of its kind in India. The manual will contain suggestions/recommendations on 'remedial traffic calming strategies' for concerned policy/decision makers, primarily in the departments of Police, Transport, Municipal Corporation, Development Authority and Public Works. About 24 sites out of six locations would be studied for a detailed investigation of road crashes involving pedestrians.

www.cuts-international.org/pdf/RoadSafety_LaunchReport.pdf

Enhancing Capacity Building

Alice Pham of CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre (CUTS HRC) attended the Consumers International's (CI) Asia Pacific Regional Members Meeting, organised by CI Kuala Lumpur Office in Kuala Lumpur, on March 18-20, 2008.

The objectives of the meeting were to finalise the CI Kuala Lumpur Office's Strategic Plan 2007-2011 for the Asia Pacific region; to develop a two-year capacity building programme for CI members; and to conduct a capacity building session for CI members. Alice made a presentation on 'Competition & Consumer Protection'.

New Merger Notification

Sonia Gasparikova and Souvik Chatterjee of CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS C-CIER) attended the International Conference on India's New Merger Notification Regime in New Delhi, on March 15-16, 2008.

The objective of the conference was to present and analyse amendments and the 2008 draft regulations relating to India's new merger notification regime from Indian and International perspective.

Right to Information



George Cheriyan of CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) attended the national Colloquium on 'The Right to Information Act: Impact on Governance and Service Delivery' organised by Centre for Good Governance (CGG), Hyderabad and Yashwant Rao Chavan Academy of

Development Administration (YASHADA), Pune under the project entitled 'Capacity Building for Access to Information' in Hyderabad, on February 26-28, 2008.

He made a presentation on 'Impact of RTI on Service Delivery: Rajasthan Experience'.

Gender and Trade

Sonja Blasig of CUTS CITEE attended an International seminar held under the UNCTAD India Programme on 'Moving towards Gender Sensitisation of Trade Policy' in New Delhi, on February 25-27, 2008.

The seminar provided a forum to discuss gender concerns in the context of trade liberalisation by international trade and gender experts, policy makers, academia and civil society.

PPP in Health & Education

Ramrao Mundhe of CUTS C-CIER attended the Focus Group Consultation Meeting on 'Public-Private Partnership in Health and Education sectors in India' organised by the Department of Economic Affairs, Government of India, Asian Development Bank and KPMG in Ahmedabad, on February 23, 2008.

The objective of the meeting was to get feedback on the draft report prepared by KPMG on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in Health and Education sectors in India and identify steps towards developing a framework for delivery of PPP programmes across states.



SHORT CUTS

- Rajesh Kumar of CUTS C-CIER as a panellist participated in the 'Consumer Awareness Programme on Telecom Issues' organised by the Indian Merchant Chamber and Mumbai Telecom Users' Association in Mumbai, on March 25, 2008.
- Uday S Mehta of CUTS C-CIER attended the 56th Antitrust Law Spring Meeting organised by the American Bar Association, in Washington D C during March 24-28, 2008.
- Vibhor Bansal of CUTS Delhi Resource Centre (CUTS DRC) attended the orientation programme on 'Capacity Building of Consumer Advocacy Groups' organised by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, in New Delhi, on March 13-14, 2008.
- Pradeep S Mehta, Alice Pham and Thanh Mai of CUTS attended the launch meeting of the joint project between the Swiss Competition Commission, CUTS and the Vietnam Competition Administration Department (VCAD) entitled 'Strengthening the Vietnamese Competition Authorities' in Hanoi, on February 29, 2008. Mehta made a presentation on 'Engaging Civil Society to Promote Competition Reforms in Developing Countries'.
- Dr Keya Ghosh attended a seminar on Farmers' Rights and Protection of Plant Varieties organised by Society for Equitable and Voluntary Action and Development Research Communication and Services Centre, in collaboration with West Bengal National Institute of Juridical Sciences, in Kolkata, on February 23, 2008.
- Angela Mwape Mulenga of CUTS Africa Resource Centre (CUTS ARC), Lusaka attended a consultation meeting entitled, 'Non State Actors and local Authorisation in Development' organised by the European Union delegation office in Lusaka, on February 22, 2008.
- Pradeep S Mehta of CUTS presented a paper on 'The Role of Consumers in Promoting Pro-Competitive Reforms' at the Seventh Global Forum on Competition (GFC), in Paris, on February 21-22, 2008.
- R K Sharma of CUTS CART attended a workshop on 'Development Initiatives Led by Older People and the Way Forward' organised by *Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti* and Help Age International in Jaipur, on February 19, 2008.
- Madan Lal Keer of CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS CHD) attended a consultation workshop on 'Safe Motherhood' organised by Action Research and Training for Health, Jaipur, in Udaipur on February 13, 2008.
- Shashi Shikha of CUTS CITEE participated in the National Consultation on Agricultural Livelihoods organised by Oxfam-International in New Delhi, on January 15-16, 2008.

Opening Ceremony of CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre



L to R:
Alice Pham,
Pradeep S
Mehta,
Lal T. Muana,
Bach Van Mung,
and
Patrick
Krauskopf

CUTS HRC was formally launched in Hanoi, on February 29, 2008. This is the fourth overseas centre of CUTS International, opened with the aim of promoting trilateral development cooperation on a range of trade and economic policy issues.

CUTS HRC will be providing technical assistance to the VCAD, under the Ministry of Industry & Trade, over the period 2008-10 with support from the Government of Switzerland, in a capacity building project on competition policy and law. CUTS is also planning to provide support to the VCAD in the drafting of a law on consumer protection for Vietnam, bringing in its 25 years of experience working on the issue from India and other countries in the world.

Attending and speaking at the reception were Alice Pham, Director CUTS HRC; Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS; Lal T. Muana, the Indian Ambassador to Vietnam; Bach Van Mung, the Director General of VCAD; and Patrick Krauskopf, representative of the Government of Switzerland. Also present were representatives from foreign embassies in Vietnam, CUTS' long-time partner organisations, local and international governmental and NGOs as well as press agencies.

M R Pai Memorial Award for Pradeep S Mehta

The Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will present the M R Pai Memorial Award to Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International in a function organised by All-India Bank Depositors' Association in Mumbai, on April 08, 2008.

The award carries a citation and a cheque of Rs 51,000. The citation read: "The splendid work done by you and your organisation in educating the public on competition and regulation over the years is exemplary. You are one of the foremost crusaders for consumers and we take this opportunity to wish you strength in your endeavours".

The citation read how he had voluntarily given up his family business more than two decades ago to devote full time attention to bringing discipline, methods and systems to the consumer movement in India.

Mehta used his corporate acumen and non-conventional wisdom to create a global level modern organisation, which has incessantly been working for an enabling environment for the benefit of consumers – both at the grassroots as well as policy level.

VISITORS

| Name | Comments |
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| Kishan Rana, Former Ambassador of India and Course Director, CIRC | CUTS is a model of forward looking NGO that serves a huge national purpose. My warm appreciation for the work conducted. Best wishes for continued success. |
| Massimiliano Cali Overseas Development Institute, London | Fascinating organisation, keep up with the good work! Best of Luck! |
| Christen Hyden, Department of Technology and Society, Lund University, Sweden | Looking forward to nice and efficient cooperation. |
| Geza Feketekuty, President, Institute for Trade and Commercial Diplomacy, US | Congratulations on the launch of the series of training programmes for the University of Commerce. This time trade capacity building in action. |
| Sreekumar N & Tejal Kanitkar Initiatives in Health, Energy, Learning and Parenthood, Pune | Good to meet the key people and gain a macro perspective of voluntary work. |