

Minutes of Meeting of NCHSE Environment Helpline held on 31st January 2017

The meeting was held on 31st January 2017 to discuss the issues related to pedestrian, proper facilities and road safety provisions in urban areas in India with special focus on Bhopal city and prepare a clear paper with suggestions on planning, designing, engineering and awareness aspects of road safety. Participants of the meeting included academicians, environmentalists, Architect and Town Planner, Engineers, officials of concerned government department, Traffic Police, social activists, former senior bureaucrats, and common citizen. The list of participants is at Annex –I.

Mrs Nirmala Buch, Chairperson, NCHSE in her opening remark highlighted the need for pedestrian friendly facilities and raised question as to how to incorporate the proper road design in city development plans. She stressed the need for educating the policy makers and the elected representatives of the local bodies to ensure that pavement facilities are properly developed, maintained and put to use for which they are meant. Further she said that the citizens should also raise their voices demanding pedestrian facilities to ensure safety of the citizens on the roads.

This was followed by a presentation which highlighted the magnitude of road accidents involving pedestrians in India and in Madhya Pradesh, grey areas in road design and the guidelines prepared by the Indian Road Congress for developing pedestrian facilities. Referring to a report entitled “Road accidents in India-2015” published by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, GOI (2016) it was pointed out that pedestrian accounted for 9.5 % of road accident victims in 2015 in India, and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 14.1% of those victims, which is second highest after Tamil Nadu with 18.8 % of all pedestrian fatalities. It was further pointed out that pedestrians constitute a higher share of total fatalities in cities where pedestrian facilities do not meet the demand. The lack of foot-paths and traffic calming measures was found to be the major cause of accidents and its severity. It was pointed out that despite having guidelines for developing pedestrian facilities in urban areas, the facilities are either not being created or are not as per the demand and even if they are present, they are being encroached upon for various reasons.

This was followed by open discussion, wherein observations/suggestions by the experts on the ongoing situation on road design and road safety were received. During the deliberation need for following action points were emerged:

1. The local bodies and the development agencies never take pains to invite suggestions from the citizens while planning road development works. Consequently often the road safety measures especially for the pedestrians are missed out causing inconvenience to the citizens. Therefore, it is necessary on the part of Urban Development Department to issue appropriate directives to the local bodies and to other development agencies to organise consultation with the citizens and experts prior to finalising any road development plan.
2. It was revealed that usually the Traffic Police is not consulted while preparing road development plan for the city. The ongoing works for stay Cable Bridge at Kamala park-

Retghat was cited as the recent example. It was revealed that the traffic police has raised objection on the project citing possible bottlenecks at retghat end. It was stressed that it is necessity to evolve a system of prior consent of the traffic police for any road development works and the process should involve Mayor and Commissioner of Municipal Corporation.

3. Considering the IRC guidelines (IRC-103, 2012), one finds that there are innumerable deficiencies in road design, which include designing rotaries in the city. It was suggested that either these rotaries should be removed or redesigned. Other deficiencies include signage for stops for school buses and public transport, pedestrian crossing, parking of private vehicles, taxies (Ola, Uber, My Cab, etc.) and auto-rickshaws, automatic signals for controlling vehicle movement etc. These deficiencies need to be removed to make the city pedestrian friendly.
4. It was informed that over 150 new bus stops have been created in Bhopal under the smart city mission, but their location and design are not appropriate as per the local conditions. This needs to be addressed to. Besides, there are innumerable unmarked bus stops all over the city. Therefore, bus operators take the advantage of these lacunae and stop the buses as per their will. This needs to be done away with and provision for marking the bus stands with proper signage have to be made.
5. Experts opined that the location and design of multi level vehicle parking being built in Bhopal are not proper. This should have been designed in consultation with various stakeholders.
6. It was observed that whenever a new major residential area is developed within the city limit, the residential facilities along the roads connecting them are spontaneously converted for commercial use without provision for visitors parking. Consequently often the private vehicles are parked on the roads as per the convenience of the driver. Similarly due to the lack of designated spaces for parking of commercial vehicles, taxies, auto rickshaws and even the heavy vehicles, they are parked on the road sides, often blocking the way for pedestrians. Therefore, separate spaces for private vehicles and stands for taxies (Ola, Uber, My Cab, etc.), auto rickshaws and heavy vehicles should be created especially near the commercial areas and marked with proper signage.
7. The representative of the Urban Development Department informed that the State Government is preparing the vehicle parking policy, which will be finalised after incorporating suggestions received during public hearing, which is a welcome step.
8. Vendors, small shops, outlets of milk dairies etc are obstruction for the pedestrians. It was suggested to adopt the mechanism of making the footpaths vendor free as adopted in Jaipur, and as per Guidelines of Indian Road Congress (IRC-103, 2012), locations for vendors could be decided without affecting the movement of pedestrians. It was also suggested that face of vending shops should not face the carriageway to prevent blocking of carriageway due to parking of vehicles of peoples standing. Another way is to create vendors corners away from the main carriageway with limited number of vendors in each corner.
9. It was pointed out that there is an increasing trend of conversion of residential facilities into commercial facilities within the residential colonies in Bhopal. This leads to parking of more visitors vehicles on the walkways within the colonies. Therefore, there should be some restriction on commercial use of residential areas, and wherever, residential areas are

permitted for commercial use, proper parking space for the visitors is provided, so that pedestrians are not suffered.

10. It was decided that a team of experts associated with Environment Helpline and a representative of Urban Development Department will jointly prepare a report based on a pilot study on pedestrian related issues in Bhopal and suggest remedial measures to improve pedestrian facilities and the system. This report will be shared with the state government for appropriate action, including specific advisory to BMC to address the issue pedestrian safety on priority.

Meeting ended with vote of thanks to all.



Coordinator,

NCHSE Environment Helpline

Annexure –I

List of participants of the meeting held on 31st January 2017

1. Mrs Nirmala Buch, Former Chief Secretary, Madhya Pradesh & Chairperson, NCHSE, Bhopal
2. Shri Narendra Prasad, Former DGP, Madhya Pradesh
3. Shri G.S Palnitkar, Former E-n-C PWD, Madhya Pradesh
4. Shri Sameer Yadav, ASP(Traffic), Bhopal
5. Shri Rajendra Kothari, Social Activist
6. Shri Ajai Kataria, Architect
7. Shri Awnish Saxena, Architect, Bhopal
8. Prof. Savita Raje, Architect, MANIT, Bhopal
9. Dr. Sudesh Waghmare, Forestry Expert
10. Shri Basant Kaul, Police Officer, Bhopal
11. Mr. Karia Parth, Urban Transport Planner, UAD, Bhopal
12. Mr. Jamal Ayub, Correspondent, TOI
13. Ms. Rashmi Saraswat, General Secretary, Mahila Chetna Manch, Bhopal
14. Shri Raghuraj Singh, MCM, Bhopal
15. Dr. Pradip Nandi, Environmentalist, NCHSE, Bhopal
16. Shri Avinash Shrivastava, Dy Director (Computer expert), NCHSE