Editorial

The shocking incident of Sunita Narain’s accident has made the media and government officials take note of the vulnerability of the cyclists on roads. The AIIMS junction where she was hit is one of the black spots of the city, which is highly inaccessible to pedestrians as well. In a recent survey that we did in Delhi, almost all cyclists wanted separate cycle tracks for better safety, which was followed by safe parking spaces and slower vehicle speeds (of motorized modes). On one end we have - Kolkata, which is, continuing the ban on cycles despite widespread protests and on the other end we have cities like -Bangalore, which celebrated a cycle day, (and will follow suit last Sundays of every month). One of the highlights was that the event had the strong support of the public bus corporation, BMTC, as people were allowed to carry cycles onboard, (free of cost) which has been unheard of in the past. Gurgaon is also set to follow soon with a ‘Raahagiri’ day. Interestingly, these events were initiated by civil society groups and NGOs and had the backing of the government departments. We see hope in such a movement, when people rise to claim their space and their rights, instead of waiting for change to happen.

A stronger push now needs to happen with improving air quality in our cities. While most talks happen around Diwali and then die down, a more comprehensive approach has to be created to make civil society to aspire for cleaner air, the benefits of which are immeasurable to health and longevity. The very recent case of a Chinese 8 year old being diagnosed with lung cancer due to pollution is certainly a wakeup call for all of us. Air pollution has no physical barriers and the conditions are similar in both Beijing and in Delhi and we have to get our act together if we are to continue having our cities livable.

Happy Reading!

Parthaa Bosu
Interview with Stefan Bakker

Stefan Bakker is a transportation and climate change specialist working in South East Asia. As the team leader for energy efficiency and climate change mitigation in the land transport sector of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) region for GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation), Mr Bakker is well versed with the transportation problems facing the highly populated and congested cities of Asia. Though based in Thailand’s capital of Bangkok, he travels extensively in the region as well as around the world looking for ways to make urban life better. Mr Bakker talked to NMT Times on wide-ranging issues that have direct reference to India.

1. What is a sustainable transport model for Asian countries and what is the role of non-motorised transport (NMT) in the model?

For me a sustainable transport model lies in planning road and public space and resources for people rather than cars. The question is whether sustainable transport can be achieved without a large role for NMT. NMT or active transport, is fast and convenient for trips up to at least 5 km, which means for many or even most trips. It also provides a sense of community, different experience and view of your environment than other modes and it’s very flexible as you stop anywhere for buying fruit or a coffee. For longer trips, NMT provides access (and last-mile) to public transport. High quality (fast, comfortable and reliable) public transport, both rail and road-based, is the second pillar. Thirdly, in proportion to the users and the benefits it provides the society, convenient facilities for private vehicles, especially in the less-central parts of the urban environment. (Semi) car-free zones can provide a more liveable environment.

2. Can such a transport model be ever implemented considering the chaotic conditions on the roads of the cities in these countries with huge populations and heavy volumes of motorised vehicles?

Hong Kong and Singapore have high quality public transport and also relatively good walking conditions, and are investing in cycling infrastructure. Other cities may take examples from this, and improve transport planning to slow down the growth in traffic by facilitating NMT and public transport. High population density can be an advantage for the viability of public transport.

3. What is the role of the government in supporting sustainable transport?

The government has a key role to play by improving the urban planning and public space, investing in infrastructure that facilitates NMT and public transport, giving incentives to such modes and disincentives to private modes, and improve safety and convenience for NMT.
4. What about the role of the people, because we have seen in ASEAN countries in the past two decades how economic growth and development have led to skewed transport models where people have bought millions of motorcycles and cars in place of their bicycles?

I believe in giving choices to people, nobody should be forced to use any mode, as they all have their pros and cons. So I feel people simply need to start riding rather than talking, and experience, especially in the cooler months, how convenient and fast it is. For me as a Dutch native, where everybody including the Prime Minister cycles simply because it's a smart way to get around, I only realise now that cycling is the epitome of freedom on the road, and would encourage anyone to just giving it a shot for a few months, first in smaller streets and for visiting close-by friends or small errands, to gain first-hand experience.

5. Do we need more anti-motor and NMT and mass transit champions in Asian countries or more sensible transport policies and implementation principles?

It looks like we may require visionary champions to implement these principles.

Read the rest of the interview: [http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/11/07/2528/](http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/11/07/2528/)
**Delhi's famous garden stands by cyclists**

On September 16 this year, Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit inaugurated a dedicated cycle track inside the Garden of Five Senses, a 20-acre government-owned park in New Delhi that is visited by more than half-a-million people every year. “Bikes are allowed from 7.00 in the morning,” says Mr. Vinod Kakkar, the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation official, who is in-charge of the garden. “The cycle track is a contribution of the garden to the health of the public while keeping the environment intact,” he adds.

Cyclists are not charged any extra fee for entering the garden, which lies in the historical Said-ul-Ajaib village in Saket close to the Mehrauli heritage area. The garden authorities are also planning to keep some bikes for those who arrive without them. “I don't think there is any park in the country that allows cyclists inside,” says Mr. Kakkar while emphasizing that “we need cycle tracks on the streets for people to use cycles freely without depending on motor vehicles”.

Scores of cyclists have arrived in the garden since it opened the dedicated cycle track a month ago. The garden authorities say most of the cyclists arrive on weekends though there are a few who visit during the weekdays.

Building a city safer for pedestrians and cyclists

The shocking incident, in which leading Indian environmental activist Sunita Narain was seriously injured after being hit by a car while cycling in New Delhi, has raised several questions about the safety of pedestrians and cyclists in the country. According to the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a Delhi-based and highly respected public advocacy organization for sustainable development, headed by Ms Narain, five people are killed and at least 18 more injured every day in road accidents in the national capital of New Delhi. The statistics are part of the road accident data for 2012 released by India's Road Transport and Highways Ministry.

“It is shocking that every hour one person is either killed or injured in road accidents in Delhi. This adds to the disability related public health burden of the city enormously,” says Anumita Roychowdhury, CSE’s Executive Director (Research and Advocacy). In a press statement issued on the day Ms Narain was discharged from hospital after eleven days of treatment, CSE said it was also an occasion to send out a grim reminder that the road and urban design of Indian cities is also responsible for the increasing accident risk.

Read more:

Ecomobility Readiness Assessment: Vijayawada

Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh’s third largest city with a population of 10,48,000 (2011), is located on the banks of the Krishna River and is bounded by the Indrakiladri Hills on the west and the Budemaru River on the north. It is a prominent trading and business centre.

With a desire to reverse the trends of increasing motorization and making the city roads more bicycle-friendly the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) went ahead with dedicated cycle lanes on the wider roads of the city. Although these cycle lanes are not physically segregated from the main traffic flow, lanes are clearly demarcated along the most important corridors in the city which at least separates the NMT users from motor vehicles. Read more: http://ecomobilitynmt.blogspot.in/2013/10marked-cycle-lanes-vijayawada.html
Kochi: More skywalks planned for the city

The National Transportation Planning and Research Centre (NATPAC) has recommended skywalks or foot overbridges in multiple points in the city. The recommendations find a place in a report on the pedestrian friendly urban public transport for Kochi drawn up by NATPAC at the instance of the State Town Planning Department. NATPAC had also considered a skywalk between Ernakulam boat jetty and the Maharajas College ground metro station. But the Hospital Road was found too narrow to accommodate a pillar for the proposed skywalk. Read more: http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/10/11/more-skywalks-planned-for-kochi-city/

Chennai: Old city to get promenade

For pedestrians in the city, there's finally some good news. Mylapore, one of the oldest and most crowded of localities, is set to become semi-pedestrian. At the first public consultation on the issue held on Monday by the Chennai Corporation, a chunk of Mylapore residents and other stakeholders supported the proposal to limit the number of vehicles in the area, and to create a promenade for a heritage walk on Luz Church Road. Read more: http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/09/25/chennai-old-area-of-city-to-get-promenade/

Bangalore kick starts monthly ‘cycle day’

Bengaluru (Bangalore) kicked off the Cycle Day campaign with its first event, Feel Bengaluru Cycle Day at Cubbon Park. With close to 1200 cyclists in attendance, the Mayor of our city opened the event by ceremonial inauguration of a new cycle stand at Cubbon Park. He then led all the cyclists off on a 1-km ceremonial kick off ride till the Central Library. After this, all the cyclists rode together on a 5-km rally around Cubbon Park touching several heritage spots along the way. Read more: http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/11/11/bangalore-kicks-off-cycle-day/

Cycle rickshaws save over a million liters of fuel in Punjab

A common man’s transport mode, more than 3 lakh cycle rickshaws help 6 million people commute to their destinations everyday without spewing any toxic emissions. The cycle rickshaw is a source of income for 16 lakh persons and 3.2 lakh urban poor families of Punjab. Of the 5.5 crore commuter trips recorded in the state, 6 million are by the cycle rickshaws. It is undoubtedly the safest mode of transportation with the least number of accidents as compared to other modes. Read more: http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/10/20/cycle-rickshaws-save-almost-a-million-liters-of-fuel-in-punjab/
**Suwon: Residents applaud car free month**

Residents in the South Korean city of Suwon have just spent a month without cars. Organizers and participants say the project could be a model for city life in the future. A joint initiative between the Germany-based International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the city of Suwon, the EcoMobility World Festival is forcing residents here to go car-free for a month. It’s a project aimed to show the world that you don’t really need a car to survive in a city. Read more: [http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/09/30/in-suwon-citizens-applaud-car-free-month/](http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/09/30/in-suwon-citizens-applaud-car-free-month/)

**Makati presents plan for walkable streets**

The 33 barangays of Makati City are proposing a consolidated plan aimed at making the city’s streets walkable or ‘pedestrian friendly.’ The city’s Liga ng mga Barangay presented the plan at the recently concluded Makati Transport and Traffic Summit 2013. Among their proposals submitted were the construction of wider sidewalks, designation of bike lanes, tree-lined streets, multi-modal transport systems, pedestrian malls and public parks. Makati Mayor Jejomar Erwin Binay expressed his support for the vision of barangay officials to make the streets in every barangay safe for pedestrians and convenient for motorists as well. Read more: [http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/11/12/makati-barangays-present-plan-for-walkable-city-2/](http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/11/12/makati-barangays-present-plan-for-walkable-city-2/)

**Reduced day light a risk for pedestrians**

Police say that both pedestrians and drivers should take extra care in the days ahead, as they adjust to evening darkness arriving sooner than they are currently used to. Toronto police will be conducting a six-day pedestrian safety blitz, zeroing in people who are committing traffic offences in pedestrian zones. The blitz comes just hours after the clocks were rolled back, with police also reporting that the month of November “has traditionally been the month when pedestrians are involved in the most collisions.” Police say that 31 pedestrians have lost their lives in Toronto this year, including 18 seniors. Read more: [http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/11/12/reduced-daylight-greater-risk-for-pedestrians/](http://walkabilityasia.org/2013/11/12/reduced-daylight-greater-risk-for-pedestrians/)

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**PARAMETER 7: Obstructions**

Obstructions are one of the most common hindrances to walking, where walkways are available. This is more prevalent in commercial areas than residential. Most obstructions are temporary in nature, like parked vehicles, while some are permanent such as transformers, sign boards; and then there are encroachments, where shops and businesses, hawkers take over the space available, to display their ads, wares and boards. Better designs and regular enforcement are the ways to keep obstructions in check and make for uninterrupted flow of movement for pedestrians.