

With 'Gujarat - The Roadmap Ahead' as its theme, The Times of India - Anniversary feature aims at focusing the areas/sectors that have mattered in Gujarat's positioning as an investment hub.

It would be highly grateful if you could send us an article on Logistics - the current scenario, and also what would the scene be in 2015. A holistic perspective, focusing on the developments in all the major cities of the state, would certainly provide for an informative reading.

The piece could be of nearly 750-800 words, with a positive vibe.

The Road Map Ahead - Gujarat

In micro terms good infrastructure and logistics are equivalent to the way our body is equipped and functions. Arteries & veins are the highways; the glands and other organs are warehousing and distribution centres from where the right amounts of secretions are made at the right time. Any disturbance in this finely tuned system and soon failures appear in various parts of the body.

In the outside world things should ideally be the same. Smoothly coordinated movements within a city, state and country are therefore necessary and required to ensure progress to all. All the modalities (water, road, rail & air) to make this possible should be utilised optimally.

Per month about 2,000 cars and 10,000 two-wheelers are added to the roads of Ahmedabad alone. This amount does not include the number of three-wheelers or medium to heavy transport vehicles. The ratio of the vehicular population should be balanced with road availability, if not, then we can expect major trouble in our transport and supply chain management in the very near future. The available solutions are road widening, removing encroachments, adequate parking and warehouses, better civic sense from the users, and most importantly, more and better public transport.

In a body the arteries & veins cannot be added to the system to relieve overburdening or constraints. These can only be solved by controlling the intake. So we must understand this basic fact and plan accordingly to be able to enjoy our environment at home, work & play.

Gujarat has been gearing up, keeping these constraints in mind; city roads are being expanded to their maximum and divided to make the flow of various users easier. Soon the BRTS (Bus Rapid Transit System) will appear ringing in a new era of public transport. The ring roads have improved connectivity with and within the city. Plans for transport-nagars for various major cities are in place. The city limits have been extended and large vehicles are banned from entering city limits during working hours. State highways are becoming express-ways and connectivity with major cities, industrial hubs and ports is progressing rapidly. Airports are being expanded, railways extended and there is talk of linking the inland waterways / canals.

Nowadays the buzzwords are “just in time” and “time to market”. Both these terms directly address issues of infrastructure and logistics. Those able to meet these

requirements with no extra cost to operations / product / services will be able to survive in today's quality, price and speed conscious global market.

In this process planning is of the utmost importance. A long-term vision that is based on exact figures and statistics will help. At this moment that data is not easily accessible, or not known if it is available at all.

Two years ago we saw a wonderful presentation on Bogota city (Columbia, South America), the introduction of BRTS (TransMillenio) and the changes it brought with it in terms of urban planning. The message was very clear: to create a city for people and not traffic. A city where children & adults, rich & poor, can meet as equals in public spaces. The Dutch model is also very interesting. Especially as the country is quite small and, yet, has managed to meet all the demands of being the "Gateway to Europe", catering to the supplies of the European hinterland. It is a country that has been completely man made. Not a tree is left to chance and their sparsely available land is put to optimal use. The rest, existing of water, is also put to maximum use. Something else that Dutch companies have started doing is strictly segregating the tasks of core business and logistics. For example Philips will produce electronics and then hand over warehousing & supply to someone who does nothing but that.

We have made a start in the right direction, now it is a matter of consistently taking the next steps forward. As long as it is done with the right understanding, using the correct figures and without wastage of the meagre funds at hand, we can expect great things in the coming years. Gujarat definitely has the potential of being this "Gateway to India".

Imagine green public spaces with fresh air, adults & children healthy and free to cycle where they wish. Shopping as a social happening and not a crowd in some mall, where you cannot even find underground parking and where half of it is being used as store or repackaging centre. Imagine travelling long distance by road or sending your cargo with no fear of damage to goods and vehicle. People parking correctly in parking bays, services for truck drivers, etc.

If you wish for all this, your small contribution would be to strictly obey traffic rules and regulations; they are for your progress.

Word count: 796