

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

**A New Passage to India:
An Interview with the Lt. Governor of New Delhi- Mr. Tejinder Khanna**

A country that had hibernated at a steady pace for centuries has suddenly overtaken itself in the national as well as the international arena, catching both in surprise.

The banner of India Shining has been unfurling across one international arena after another, as India hitches a ride on the coattails of its fast moving economy, powered by the energy of Information Technology. And yet, even as sector after sector gets devoured and converted into IT, already there are signs of scarcity. Can India sustain itself?

In this series, Charu Saxena looks at some of the core issues, emergent and existing, through conversations with many of the people in the capital city of New Delhi, who are at the helm of this change. From saving the environment to building the infrastructure; from basic education to creating manpower for its various sectors, from corruption to transparency, from health of the body to that of the mind, the country needs to meet many challenges in a relatively short time to sustain its boom.

Host: Today we begin our series A New Passage to India with an interview with the Governor of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, as he looks at the issues and challenges of governing one of the largest metropolitan cities in the world, while getting it ready for the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Charu Saxena talks to him about issues ranging from mass in-migration to transportation to environment to managing a fractious multi-party administrative structure for bringing about change.

Saxena:

There is one river, the Yamuna that provides New Delhi with its drinking water and collects its effluents. There are more than fifteen million people in the city itself and thousands more fill the train network from far flung states, cities and villages of India, and arrive each day looking for work. As a result of this mass in-migration, there is an inordinate amount of stress on the entire infrastructure which for the large part has been in considerable disrepair already. There are issues of housing, water, sanitation, schools, jobs, health as well as security, with crime steadily on the increase. Today, windows of houses are increasingly barred with iron, communities are putting up gates and homes have hired guards sitting outside. There are a thousand more cars on the roads each day causing traffic jams, parking problems and road rage, but the highly efficient Metro is zipping through the city, tunneling steadily outwards on its way to connecting the city with even its outlying towns. And, the city is getting ready to host the upcoming 2010 Commonwealth games in October.

There are four levels of Governance to manage all this in the National Capital Territory of Delhi: The Municipal Corporation of Delhi which looks after ninety five percent of urban Delhi and two sister agencies which look after the other five; An elected Government of Delhi headed by a Chief Minister, the Central Government itself and the Lt. Governor who co-ordinates all these levels. Mr. Tejinder Khanna, is the current Lt. Governor, nominated to his second term in office.

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

Saxena: How hard is it, Governor Khanna, to coordinate these various levels of governance?

Khanna:

It's do-able. That's why I am here.

Saxena: What are some of your major challenges in Delhi today?

Khanna:

Delhi faces a lot of in-migration. It's not like those cities in the European or even American context which have stable populations, and in some cases the populations tend to move away from the central part of the cities into the suburbs. Here, it's the reverse picture. A lot of continuous in-migration has increased the population of the national capital from about half a million at the time of partition in 1947 when India became independent to about fifteen million today, and expected to rise to twenty three million by 2021.

So when the population is rising so rapidly, naturally there is a sharp increase in the load on the civic infrastructure. So everything to do with solid waste management, portable water supply, waste water disposal, transportation in the city, housing for people drifting in with no place of their own, moving into squatter settlements on the fringes of the city- so all of this poses a huge challenge in continuing to increase the capacity of the civic infrastructure.

Add to that the problems of a large number of people sharing a very limited amount of urban space and encroaching on each other's rights in some way, so socially deviant behaviors or criminal activities pose a challenge also.

Then, being the national capital, any problems relating to anti-establishment movements in any part of the country tend to have an echo here. So anything in the southern fringes, in Punjab, in the North-Eastern States, In Jammu and Kashmir- that also tends to complicate the law and order situation here, so one has to maintain a high level of security alertness as well.

So essentially the thing is keeping a handle on the law and order and security, which is the basic requirement and then coping with the problems I just talked about.

So, now with liberalization, the number of vehicles on the roads in the national capital has shot up very sharply and is more than the three Metropolitan cities of Bombay, Chennai and Calcutta combined. Increasingly as incomes are improving, people are shifting from two wheelers to their first four wheeler- smaller cars and all. So road space being limited... we have a densely populated city- we can't just ask people to move away because we have to widen the roads. There's a legal procedure you have to follow. It's not like China that you can just draw a line and say that basically in fifteen days the bulldozers are moving in and rest is left to people to scurry around and retrieve what they can. Here it's a slower process for obvious reasons.

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

So, now parking requirements have suddenly gone up because of the number of cars, and many of them are coming into the space that should be left clear for vehicular movements on the carriageways, and this kind of thing complicates situation on the ground and this can lead to traffic jams and gridlocks and also then people tend to lose their tempers when they are caught up in a jam- so road rage.

And now we are going in for the hosting of the commonwealth games in October of 2010, and this means a lot of infrastructure upgrade throughout the city so flyovers are being built, and stadia built and renovated and games village- housing for the athletes and officials- and connectivity between the sites by dedicated or fast moving traffic systems needs to be built. So all this poses a lot of challenges.

And then water supply is a big constraint. Fresh water has become scarce globally now. Since Delhi receives most of its water from the Himalayan rivers there are many upstream states that use more of the water for irrigation and so on, so what is being received comes under more pressure- so to maintain minimum flows, to treat the water adequately and to utilize it to meet the basic requirements of the people in the city poses a continuous challenge.

Then of course power supply. We have 75 percent dependency from outside the capital and we are trying to augment it with local power generation with liquified natural gas based generation, and hopefully that happens in the next couple of years and the degree of dependency would go down from 75 to say 50 percent. So would make us a little more self sufficient in the next couple of years.

So, what I am saying is that all of these civic systems are under continuous stress and the reason is obvious: You haven't even solved yesterday's problems and you have a lot more problems being added today and in the tomorrows to come. So, in absolute terms, it's like being in an escalator that's moving in the reverse direction and you are trying to move forward at least to keep still.

Saxena:

Lets look at the issues point by point if we can. Somebody said water- can stop India. What do you think? The Yamuna River Action plan is in its 2nd phase of cleanup. How big a challenge is it to supply water and clean the Yamuna?

Khanna:

You know the thing is in our part of India, most of the rainwater precipitation takes place during the 3 months of the monsoon, which is about July to September. So our challenge is that we have to hold the water which is coming down at that time and impound it and then maintain a certain minimum flow in the river in the so called dry season. Now in the rivers of the Himalayan system which have already been dammed, like I come from Punjab, all 3 rivers- Byas, Sutlej and Raabi have been dammed. Their snow melt plus rain water precipitation is impounded for the year and then it's available for gradual and planned discharge for irrigation, for power generation etc.

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

Water supply is a big constraint. Since Delhi receives most of its water from the Himalayan rivers there are many upstream states that use more of the water for irrigation and so on, so what is being received comes under more pressure- so to maintain minimum flows, to treat the water adequately and to utilize it to meet the basic requirements of the people poses a continuous challenge. Government has thought of three projects in the mountain areas where dams can be constructed, and these are currently under interstate discussions. I think what they are probably waiting for is an interstate agreement, but in my view, an impoundment structure should already have been built by the Central Government putting in funds, and I'm going to recommend that to the honorable Prime Minister. The sharing can wait, but why lose the five six years required for building the dam? Once we've built the dam we will be able to keep a certain minimum flow which is required to keep the river alive.

Secondly, so far as the quality of effluent discharge in the river is concerned we have already gone over this matter in the last couple of months and now a very large project, evaluation with close to 400 million US dollars has been awarded to a firm on a turnkey basis. One of our very leading consultancies to make sure than not an iota of untreated sewage goes into the river. So they will be trapping this effluent and taking it through Sewage treatment plants and only after proper treatment the water will be discharged into the river system. So our expectation is by about mid 2010, which is 3 years- 2.5 years, we will have only clean water, there will not be any untreated water going into the river. The whole river quality will change dramatically for the first time in 60 years.

Saxena: Why will it happen now when it hasn't before?

Khanna:

We will get there, because once I have decided in my mind we are getting there, there is nothing that can stop it.

Saxena: What about the other agencies involved: The MCD, the Jal board...

Khanna:

They are all on board. They have nothing to do. Project has been awarded by the Jal Board to the company that I'm talking about and we'll get it done. No question about it. No doubt. You come back in the middle of 2010 and you can review this.

Saxena: How proactive are you compared to the other governors?

Khanna:

I have no comment about how proactive I am- but I know there's a job to be done. I am going to see that it is done. Finished. Very simple. I have enough executive experience on my back to say that it can be done.

Basically, the thing is you are able to use your mental resources for problem solving. One is of course good coordination because whether in the corporate sphere or anywhere if you are going to provide effective organization, leadership, you should have very good abilities to create teams and bring people on board.

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

Saxena: There are different parties in MCD and the State Govt. How will you get them to work together?

Khanna:

Today the MCD has the BJP in majority. So the mayor belongs to that party. The state govt- the chief minister is from the congress party, but we've had meetings dealing with say the solid waste management problem in Delhi where 3 and a half hours the chief minister sat to my right and mayor to my left and we said we are looking at issues that concern the whole of Delhi, which is to keep the city clean. Let us focus on the issue and not the political part of it. So you happen to be elected as the CM, you as Mayor, we have to see that we are advancing in common good, which is having a clean city.

Pursuant to that I'm very happy to say last Friday we had a very good representation by the mayor of MCD who came with her entire team and it was a presentation based on what we talked in June- a complete war plan on tackling solid waste in Delhi. I have seen it. It's a very do-able plan. Every kind of waste will be looked after and it will be done on a very time bound basis. By 2009 we should see a dramatic change in the quality of sanitation and cleanliness.

Saxena: You have faith in the MCD?

Khanna:

No- if you are able to see the team work, and you should talk to the mayor- she was so enthused and so energetically committed. and I said if people don't deliver- if they outsource and contract the services and people don't deliver, I said I'm going to put them in jail because I don't believe that if they are taking the money from the public exchequer to do something they better deliver! I am very clear in that.

Saxena: Let's talk about Habitation and Sanitation for a minute: How do you provide habitation to so many people, who stand at about 15 million today and are increasing everyday?

Khanna:

Of these 30 percent or so are in the squatter settlements. Last time ten years ago when I was in this office for a year and 3 months, we had looked into this issue then, and had taken up a successful project to build this prefabricated low cost housing flats. Each flat to have its toilet and kitchen facility built in. Now we are going for a very large number of low cost housing projects across the city. Lots of in-situ development, which means people in squatter settlements would be moved to one part of it, while the other part will be constructed into some kind of high rises also. But each flat to have its on built in facilities for its own wash room and kitchen.

So the whole quality of civic support will improve, and some projects have already been launched 15th September on this site. The CM(Chief Minister) is doing it on her side. We are doing it from the DDA (Delhi Development Authority) also. We think close to a million units will have to get built. But as we know that while we build those million units which would pick up 5 million people we will keep on having more demand because people will keep on drifting in. But at least we will be able to cope with a substantial part of the back log if not the fresh arrivals.

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

Saxena: What is being done to not have such a large influx every day? Is there a larger plan?

Khanna:

We talk about the National Capital Region. It has now been in place for twelve years or so. NCR planning board which has the CM's of the neighboring states also and the idea is that a hundred kilometer radius from the national capital, in this area all the satellite towns and should be encouraged to improve their infrastructure and quality of life, so people can voluntarily choose to live there. They commute into the National capital for work and then get back.

That is why a lot of effort is now being made to provide good rapid transport connectivity between the national capital and the suburban satellite towns. So Delhi Metro is being extended to Gurgaon. It's being extended to Noida. We're now talking about extending it to Sonipat on the northern side.

So the strategy is quite clear. Delhi alone can't absorb everything and cope with the huge demands on the civic system. We should encourage the development of the satellite towns. So the national planning board actually provides funds, in terms of grants and loans to the neighboring states to build up the infrastructure in the satellite towns. It is happening. Just recently the CM of Haryana said that there should be more allocation of funds to neighboring states so they can continue this upgrade of the urban settlements and facilities in their own states and thereby lessen the load on Delhi. So, I think this is very much on board as part of strategy and thinking also. Everybody recognizes that problems can't be solved just in the Delhi context.

Saxena: How does it help, if say Delhi moves to CNG as it as, but the neighboring states don't? How will the pollution improve?

Khanna:

By and by some of the states will also shift over to CNG. Actually Delhi shifted to CNG as part of a Supreme Court directive because there was a public interest petition saying that the air quality was very poor and it needed to be improved. So they gave a mandate that by a certain date people will have to move away from diesel fuel and move to CNG which leaves much less of the particulate matter in the emissions. There is no such directive from the Supreme Court for the other neighboring states. So for them its a matter of choice.

But I believe some of them are also now beginning to face similar problems of pollution, and are volunteering to shift to you can say, cleaner fuel. But to be able to do so, you would need a whole infrastructure of distribution points for CNG, so that when the buses are plying into those areas, they can also be refueled. So this will happen gradually. But vis-a-vis other aspects of coordination we have the Cabinet secretary who heads the civil services, who calls the chief secretaries of neighboring states to sort out interstate problems at that level to the extent possible. In the event they can't be resolved at the civil service level, he does take it up to the political level so that the hon'ble PM or one of the senior ministers designated by him can call chief ministers of other states and try and work out a solution.

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

Saxena: Small economic zones---Development vs. Environment... Lots of small Economic Zones have been developed in and around Delhi, and a lot of green has been destroyed. Where do you stand on the issue of Development vs. Environment?

Khanna:

For Delhi itself we have a very clear objective that from all this land area so much has to be maintained as Green. Public parks and all that- there's a requirement in our planning system that a minimum green cover has to be maintained. That's why out of 74000 acres of land developed by DDA , since its inception in 1957, its 50 years now, around 9000 acres have been maintained as green. We have kept up that ratio whether it comes to about 12 percent or whatever. And this is going to be continued. Satellite images show that in the last couple of years green cover of Delhi has actually increased. So plantation programs- fresh tree plantations, and replacement plantations, when you build and you cut off 1 tree, there's a ratio, if you cut off 1 maybe you have to plant 5. So the actual picture of green cover over the national capital has shown a distinct improvement.

We will have no further small economic zones in Delhi. In neighboring states what they do, I can't really speak for them. This is a matter for the National Environment Ministry to see how they will allow certain guidelines to be observed and complied with by the other states. But definitely in Delhi we realize the significance of maintaining adequate green cover.

Saxena: What are the Ecological and Environmental concerns in relation to building on the Yamuna plains, especially in regards to the building of the Commonwealth Games village that is planned to be built there? The environmental lobbies have been quite concerned about it. Where do you stand on that?

Khanna:

No, what we had said was that we are keeping the Yamuna flood plains under an embargo for future development. But this thing about the games being sited on one edge, the left bank, which we call the eastern bank, actually they had carried out some surveys in the late 90s and the national environmental research institute in Nagpur was consulted, and they were looking for some land for this Akshardham temple which is a very nice temple complex which has come up. They located around a hundred hectares of land at that time at a point where the Jamuna river was at its widest- 3 and a half kilometers from bank to bank, and this was on one edge and they said yes you can develop hundred hectares for institutional purposes. So 30 hectares was given to Akshardham temple and 60 was left. Out of that, 11 hectares we will now assign for the commonwealth games village.

The part which will be built upon will only be 30 percent of that. So it will amount to 3 hectares of concretization of the bed. The total Jamuna bed comes to 9900 hectares. So, what I am saying is a decision that was taken in 2003, 2002 rather to site this particular game village , and then it was shown to the commonwealth games federation, all the authorities that came saw the site. They approved it.

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

Now the environmentalists have started saying No, no you should shift the games site to other location. But people at that time, then Lt. governor Mr. Vijay Kumar who looked at six different options and he said this is the best one, and now the games village is coming up there. But I told these people - the environmental lobby that if you take a ratio between 3 hectares and close to 10,000 hectares, it is such a small percentage that to argue that it is going to cause irreparable damage to the recharge of the Jamuna bed, flood waters etc. is not a tenable argument in terms of pure science or mathematics. Yes, but if we were to continue along the entire embankment and taking away a very large chunk of land and concretizing it, the argument would hold, which is not the case.

That is why, in our recent plan exercises which we are laying out for the next fourteen years, up to 2023, we are insisting that the Jamuna bed will not come under any alternative zoning until certain studies that we've embarked upon are completed, and it is quite likely that even at the end of those studies, it would just be gardens and parks that people can walk about in which would really not disturb the rainwater absorption and recharge of groundwater aquifers. So, we've really put an embargo- but again the Metro, there was again allotment done for it in 2005, this is 2007- they allotted some 30 hectares of land to DMRC again on the same eastern edge for rolling stock turnaround maintenance and related activities.

So what I say to my environmental friends is that I have come now, I can't start putting the clock back 2 years. You should have raised this issue then when they were making these allotments. So I have full sensitivity and sympathy to the points made by the environmental lobby and most certainly we respect that. We've had very very open discussions and the Prime Minister has constituted the Jamuna River Development Committee which I chair and I have invited the lobby and they have made three hour presentations on their points of view. We said yes, let the technical people look into the things and whatever is their conclusion we will abide by it.

Saxena: There is a huge issue of female feticide in the country today. Is there anything being done to change that?

Khanna:

Essentially there are ten police districts now. Each one is headed by a deputy commissioner of police, and there is a women's cell- crime against women cell in each of these police stations, headed basically by a lady. So there is a woman police officer there so they can interface with anyone who has a complaint.

Thereafter the Police Commissioner and I are really on the same wavelength. If somebody says that some kind of violence has occurred and people are being forced to undertake some kind of abortion or something, then we intend to take action, in the sense book those fellows who are abetting this kind of wrong action.

Saxena: I don't feel comfortable telling my children to go ask the police for help in this country. Is there anything being done to change the culture or train the police?

Khanna:

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

I am very clear in my mind- if people come here. I have on my staff a retired senior joint director from CBI. He sits here and a lot of people come here with complaints about police harassment or violation of citizen rights. He gives a very patient hearing and we take strong action against the concerned people in the police, because I'm quite clear in my mind that any sort of illegal activity even within unfortunately the precincts of the home - so I've said if the younger generation also does not treat the elders with due regard and respect and somehow want to out them from their paternal home, then I said I'm going to make sure in 30 days I'll ask the young couple to pack up and leave. The elders will retain the house and stay there. I'll not let the young people misbehave. So, I've said you have to come and knock my door. If they do, I'll certainly see that redress is given.

Saxena: How accessible are you?

Khanna:

Very accessible. Because we have virtually open house, and we also started a listening post- 24hours at the beginning of May. And last time when I was here in 97 and 98, Kiran Bedi was here with me at that time, the well known first lady Police officer, and we had open house. People used to come with their complaints. We received in a year about 65 and a half thousand complaints. We were able to deal with most of them. Signal is very clear to the people that they better do something quickly about things requiring redress, because if they delay or malingering, or put it on the waiting mode- yellow light- I'm going to take action.

Saxena: When you leave office at the end of it what would you like to say you've accomplished?

Khanna:

Basically, we want more humane governance, you know. More purposeful and more humane governance. Purposeful- We have to head towards some objective. Humane means we have to be able to safeguard the dignity of our citizens however rich or poor- also give them justice and redress if they have a just cause of action we should look after that. And institutional arrangements where the institution will continue to deliver irrespective of the persons who may come or go. So institutions so strong that they continue to add value and run the system
It's like being on autopilot, you know.

Ultimately, it's a global thing, any organization you take it, GM, or GE or any fortune 500 company... World Bank- leadership does make a huge difference. The caliber of the leader, the objective clarity, teamwork, communication skills, vision- all of these things. So you can't say any organization will be completely impervious to the leadership - either availability or deficit thereof, you know, the performance is bound to bring some change.

But still if you have proper systems in place, like you have the judiciary, you have a free press, you have a parliament- that means the basic institutions of open democratic polity are in place and they continue to deliver. Some party will come they will misuse the system for some time, then the electorate will throw them out. Then another party will come. So the system as a whole, the socio political arrangements we have, continue to function and deliver in the larger common good. If the executive overshoots its powers,

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

the judiciary is there to make a correction. If the legislature tends to ignore something the political pressure will build up through the ballot box.

Saxena: Is politics above law or law above politics?

Khanna:

My sense is, law is ultimately above politics. And definitely in my office I've said very clearly to everyone that I'm not concerned what political party you belong to, whether you have money bags or not, but if you cross the double yellow line which is laid down by our laws and regulations I will not spare you. Therefore it is politically neutral. And I've done that on my previous stint. I am doing it now. I've told that whether it's the ruling party or people in the opposition, *don't cross the double yellow line*. I'm giving you a fore warning- to the citizens of Delhi and to the political people also. Because if you do the proper desserts under the law will be brought to bear on you. So, you'll have to face the consequences. It's a question of your personal commitment and determination.

Saxena: What would you exchange with America, say with the Governors, what would you like to say?

Khanna:

We are looking for all kinds of solutions to complex problems of running a metropolitan city which has massive in-migration coming a therefore a lot of pressure on all our systems. Some of these are amenable to technical solutions also, like a french delegation came and they said you have a lot of pressure on your overground space. Let us build underground parking. Now we need parking for millions of vehicles. Hundreds of thousands in any case. We have issues about traffic management on our roads.

So, I have even told Ambassadors here- I make you honorary citizens of Delhi while you're here- in the next 3 or 4 years if you can propose based on your own experience in your home country some solutions which might be pertinent to solving the issues in Delhi. Like low cost housing, public transportation systems upgrades, dedicated bus corridors and this and that.

Then we are very happy to engage with those people who can provide those kinds of solutions. Agenices, organizations- so I am really looking for problem solving for Delhi. Can somebody help to solve Delhi's problems in a more cost efficient way, more scientific way, so here's somebody - who can say okay, I can study your problem and give you a solution. If its do-able, we will certainly see that it is done.

Then I've told my town planners- we are a global city. We hope to be upgraded to higher standards, that the town planner should be in close communication with town planning agencies of other major cities in the world. How they do their forward planning- and land use and changes and all that. How they handle those issues, because the ground requirements here require flexibility. Vision but also flexibility on a real time basis. So some of these things where people can make a contribution, that would be great.

And other thing is finally, yes we want Delhi to become a city of innovation, of higher learning and also a city for global cultural exchange. So anybody who thinks they would

Saxena Charu
saxena@usm.maine.edu

like to benefit from presentations of Indian cultural expression or share their own cultural expression with our city we will be happy to welcome them and the other way around.

And for knowledge and innovations, setting up these technology parks, incubators- we have a Delhi vision group which I constituted- very eminent people from media, from art and culture, from environment, from town planning- and we have excellent interface for almost 3,4 hours.

So everybody said that the vision for Delhi- its a heritage city- it should be a city where knowledge and culture should be. Plus of course a humane city, where people are treated as decent human beings whether they are visitors or our own people- we deal with them in a very humane and sympathetic way.

Saxena: Thank you Governor. It was a pleasure talking with you.

This is Charu Saxena from New Delhi, India in conversation with Mr. Tejinder Khanna, the Lt. Governor of New Delhi.