

Dikshit on China visit to study BRT, Olympics preparation

With the Commonwealth Games just two years away, Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit is paying a visit to China later this month to see how Beijing has prepared for the Olympics. And while she is there, Dikshit will also study the successful Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor for a few tips on improving the fledgling one in Delhi.

Dikshit will visit the Chinese capital and Tianjin, the largest coastal city in northern China and the lifeline to Beijing's economy, from May 26 to 30. She is scheduled to see the preparations for the Beijing Olympics to be held in August this year.

'In Beijing, I would certainly like to see how the preparations for the Olympics are being done by the local administration,' Dikshit told IANS. 'If necessary, we will also replicate the good things in our preparation for the Commonwealth Games 2010.'

Asked if she would also see how the BRT corridor in Beijing is being run for the past several years, Dikshit promptly said: 'Why not? What is the harm in seeing the corridor?'

A high-level delegation comprising top government officials, including Delhi Chief Secretary Rakesh Mehta, is likely to accompany Dikshit during her Chinese visit.

The officials would hold meetings with their Chinese counterparts on tips to make the BRT corridor in Delhi equally smooth and commuter friendly. The Delhi government has been facing flak over the traffic pileups on the 5.6-km BRT stretch in south Delhi.

An official, unwilling to disclose his identity, said: 'In view of the several snags that have crippled traffic flow on the BRT ever since the test run began April 20, we will certainly like to discuss those issues with our Chinese counterparts. It will give us an idea where we erred.'

Beijing as well as several Latin American countries have been using BRT corridors for several years. The system, with separate corridors for buses, cars, scooters and cyclists and pedestrians, is being taken to other Chinese cities too. The experiment in Delhi has, however, proved nightmarish for the planners as well as commuters.

Sheila Dikshit is visiting Tianjin at the invitation of New York-based Asia Society, which has organised an international discussion on governance of cities and chosen Delhi among others. Dikshit will speak on how her government has been able to provide effective governance to the city.

'Delhi has seen overall infrastructure upgradation and significant improvement in governance. There is hardly any area where there has not been remarkable qualitative change in delivery system right from health to education facilities, transport and the empowerment of women,' she said.

She will speak on how her government has successfully introduced key initiatives like Bhagidari, where people have been given a chance to join in to improve governance. From creating awareness about greenery to sanitation, Bhagidari also takes care of the city's other concerns like water harvesting, rationalizing water tariffs, and power reforms.

'The Bhagidari movement has played a key role in changing Delhi's face in more ways than one. It

means an accountable, efficient and citizen centric administration, where the people have active participation,' Dikshit said.

A brainchild of Dikshit, Bhagidari was launched in 2000 with a small number of 20 resident welfare associations (RWAs), and has today become a vibrant interface between the government and around 1,900 citizen groups. Bhagidari won the prestigious United Nations Public Service Award 2005 in the category of 'Improving Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in the Public Service.'

Dikshit's over nine years' rule has seen several flyovers coming up - the most prominent being at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Dhaula Kuan, Srinivaspuri, Punjabi Bagh, and Akshardham Temple. Around 30 flyovers were constructed in the nine years.

In view of the coming Commonwealth Games, the city government has drawn up a mega action plan for upgrading roads and introducing around 200 new high capacity low floor buses.

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