

**Shri Rajpal Singh Shekhawat, Hon'ble Minister for Urban Development Housing, Local Self Government, Government of Rajasthan**

**MAKING NORTH INDIAN STATES COMPETITIVE: PATH TO INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

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His Excellency Mr. Richard Verma, Ambassador of the United States of America to India, Mr. Pradeep Mehta, Mr. Arun Maira other dignitaries, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very pleased to be here today at the inauguration of this seminar on State's Competitiveness towards inclusive and sustainable growth.

India is in the midst of a major cleanliness drive. Whether it is the Ease of Doing Business for cleaning business environment, Swachh Bharat for cleaning our physical environment or the Recent Measures to clean the fiscal environment. To be and stay competitive, we need to identify and systematically correct inefficient policies and practices from the governance ecosystem. This will also help ensure that benefit of growth reach the poorest and future generations as well.

Focus on ease of doing business began about a decade back when the World Bank brought out its first report on 'Ease of Doing Business'. A lot of ground has since been covered. The scope of the report has expanded to cover more processes and countries. Some issues on the methodology still remain. Be that as it may, this has brought much needed focus and attention on Government to business interface leading to a wide range of measures encompassing the entire spectrum of G2B transactions.

Reforms pertaining to competitiveness could be broadly categorised in two buckets: legislative/regulatory reforms, and implementation/execution reforms. The former deals with putting in place optimal rules, regulations, policies and procedures for interaction between government and external stakeholders. These include setting up of single window clearances, passing of flexible labour and environment related legislations, adopting schemes to enable access to finance for small and medium enterprises.

Most states have fared reasonably well in this regard, I can proudly say that Rajasthan was one of the first states in the country to usher in legislative reforms related to land, labour and single window clearance. We also undertook the 'Rajasthan Law Review programme' one of the most ambitious overhaul of outdated and obsolete statutes undertaken in the country.

For us in Rajasthan ease of transacting with government, be it business or citizen, is at the centre of governance reforms. While for the business related transactions, Rajasthan Single Window Act provides the legal framework for time bound decisions on 56 services, Rajasthan Guaranteed Delivery of Public Service Act provides for time bound decision on 153 citizen related services.

Single Window system in Rajasthan provides for on line filing of all approvals related to starting business. An improved version of the portal was launched from 1 June 2016. During the last five and a half months, over 2000 applications have been filed out of which over 85% have been decided and only 5% are pending with the departments.

In the last Business Reform Acton Plan, government of India identified 340reform actions. Rajasthan completed 324 of the 336 action points which were applicable. Thus, the State completed 96.43% of the identified reform actions. This is nearly double the national average of 48.93%. Our implementation score has increased by over 55% compared with the last exercise. The State is now recognised as a leader with four of the reform activities recognised as national best practice.

On the Government to Citizen Services, I would like to highlight two initiatives which have changed the way citizen interact with Government.

In a first of its kind e-governance initiative, Rajasthan has created a pioneering IT infrastructure of a state-wide network to deliver citizen services and e-governance initiative through over 36,000 e-Mitra service delivery kiosks, two third being in the rural areas. 269 services are available through e-Mitra kiosks with nearly 2 lakh transactions and revenue of Rs. 11 crore per day.

With the objectives of financial inclusion, empower the women and for effective service delivery, Bhamashah Scheme was launched in 2008. Now we have over 1.3 crore households and 4.6 crore people enrolled and mapped under the scheme with bank accounts in all cases and debit cards in most cases. This is used to avail both cash as well as non-cash benefits. Under cash benefits wages under MNREGA, social security pension and scholarships are covered and served through over 23000 Micro ATMs and Banking correspondents' besides bank branches. Under non-cash benefits ration distribution under PDS and health insurance are covered through over 25,000 point of sale devices. Over 45 lakh cash and 85 lakh non-cash transaction are being undertaken under Bhamashah every month.

Being and staying competitive is an ongoing process. We have to continue innovating. Such cleaning up exercise cannot stop here and harder part to ensure implementation forms part of our 'Unfinished Agenda'.

Some of the areas we are focusing on are the strengthening of the Single Window System. We will now extend it to cover the life cycle of business and not just starting business. We are going to launch the Rajasthan Payment Platform soon. This will allow extending on line payment facilities to all Government departments without the requirement of separate payment gateways.

Another area which we will be actively pursuing is digitisation and back end computerisation of the remaining processes for business related approvals which have not yet been completed. This fits well within our objective of promoting transparency, accountability and promoting efficiency.

To ensure legislations and procedural reforms have stakeholder buy-in and enable mid-course correction, we appreciate the value that regulatory impact assessment bring, and look forward to actively working with relevant stakeholders to institutionalise this practice.



There is also a need to build capacity to promote competition, identify and correct ant-competitive practices. We look forward to working with relevant stakeholders to promote pro-competitive and transparent governance ecosystem.

I believe there is a lot of scope for all of us to learn from each other in terms of workable solutions. Thus, it is important for like-minded stakeholders to come together on forums such as this, to discuss good practice and lessons learnt. I appreciate the efforts of CUTS and the Embassy of the United States of America in organising this symposium, and wish it success.

With these remarks, I declare the Symposium Open.