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CityMatters

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Is Modern Life Making us Lonely?



www.google.com

Recently, UK appointed a 'Minister for Loneliness'. The decision comes in the wake of the 2017 report, published by the Jo Cox Commission, set up by late British MP Jo Cox on 'loneliness'. The report indicated that nearly 14 percent of the UK's population, often or always feel lonely.

Before her death, Cox had identified 'loneliness' as serious problem plaguing her constituents and wished to initiate "start a conversation" and to combat it.

The harsh reality of today's modern life is that loneliness has become pervasive in recent decades in our increasingly disconnected society. Some believe loneliness – a health crisis, some even call it an epidemic.

In India, we are often eager to dismiss emotional health issues as being problems peculiar to the West. We fail to understand that collectivism is not the remedy to isolation, and surrounding oneself with friends and family does not actually ensure mental well-being.

In the past several decades, the sudden boom of global technological advancement has created gatherings of more unlike people, such as from different cultural backgrounds.

The social structures of modern society have created large cities full of people who are physically present but emotionally disconnected. Increasing globalisation and digitisation has formed a society plagued with loneliness and isolation.

Consequently, this produces more potential for social stress and higher barriers to inter-personal relationships. Social isolation can aggravate a person's feeling of low self-worth, frustration, depression and other mental health concerns.

Moreover, a number of studies have found a link between social media use and declines in well-being. Though social media allows us to be connected to our near and dear ones 24x7, a new study carried out by the University of Pittsburgh in US, has discovered that the increasing use of social media is making people feel lonelier.

Although it is not clear whether social media causes loneliness, or whether it is just that already lonely people are more likely to spend longer on social networks. Unsurprisingly, isolation can have a serious detrimental effect on one's mental and physical health.

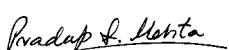
Sadly, India ranked a lowly 122, on a list of the world's happiest countries, dropping four slots from last year in the 2013-2015 report, which ranks 155 countries by their happiness levels.

"The World Happiness Report continues to draw global attention around the need to create sound policy for what matters most to people – their well-being", stated Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Columbia University, producing the report.

Nevertheless, to ensure a better quality of life, we should think about how space around us is designed and constructed, and should constantly explore that what makes us happy in life?

At its best, anticipation of loneliness might motivate a person to reach out and cultivate friendships, which is the healthiest thing to do if s/he is stressed, depressed and alone.

One should always remember: "We are not **al-one**, we are **all-one**".


Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

WWI Indian Soldiers Statues

France-based Interfaith Shaheedi Commemoration Association has announced that statues in the memory of Indian soldiers, who sacrificed their lives in World War I (WWI), would be installed at Neuve-Chapelle, Richebourg in France.



The Association Head, Ramesh Chander Vohra said that the statues would be featuring soldiers of four major Indian faiths – Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Vohra was flanked by France-based Punjabi activist Iqbal Singh Bhatti, apart from other members of the Association. The statues would be installed just outside a memorial raised in the memory of Indian soldiers who fought and lost their lives in WWI.

(Tol, 23.01.18)

Obsession for GM Messages

According to American newspaper 'The Wall Street Journal', there 'has been' a 10-fold increase in the number of Google searches for 'Good Morning (GM)' images over the past five years.

A survey by data-storage firm 'Western Digital' found that one in three smartphone users in India run out of space daily compared with one in 10 in the US.

WhatsApp said more than 20 billion New Year's messages were sent in India, a record, and more than any other country. Inexpensive smartphones and data plans have brought thousands of people online.

(BL, 23.01.18)

Air Traffic Doubles

India's domestic air traffic nearly doubled to 117 million passengers in 2017 with 100 flights taking off every hour compared with 67 in 2011, revealed a data released by Aviation Regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). India's airlines flew 117.18 million passengers in 2017, compared to 59.87 million in 2011. They also registered an 18 percent growth over the 99.88 million passengers who flew in 2016.

Data showed airlines like Air India, InterGlobe Aviation Pvt. Ltd.-run IndiGo, SpiceJet Ltd., Jet Airways (India) Ltd. and GoAir were able to fly fuller flights in 2017 – flights were 86.1 percent full in 2017, compared with 75.5 percent in 2011.

(Mint, 24.01.18)

WOMEN'S SPECIAL

Jaya Bachchan could be Richest MP

Renowned Indian actress and Samajwadi Party (SP) Member of Parliament (MP) from Uttar Pradesh, Jaya Bachchan could well be the country's richest MP with declared assets of ₹1,000 crore. Jaya, who recently filed her nomination as an SP candidate for the Rajya Sabha polls, had declared assets worth ₹493 crore in 2012.



According to her affidavit, Jaya and her husband Amitabh Bachchan have immovable assets worth more than ₹460 crore, which is over twice of the ₹152 crore they owned in 2012. The value of their movable assets too rose from around ₹343 crore in 2012 to around ₹540 crore.

(Tol, 14.03.18)

Ageless Goddess

A 44-year-old Yang Dan has been a weather girl at China's state broadcaster CCTV for over 22 years, but what is most remarkable about her long career is that she does not seem to have aged a day during that time.



Everyone started calling her an 'ageless goddess' after the producers of her weather programme released a compilation video of her 22-year career for 'International Woman's Day'. The video shows clearly that why people came up with that pompous nickname as Yang Dan looks presently as young as she did, when she was 22.

(<http://www.odditycentral.com>, 13.02.18)

Introducing 'Jane Walker' Women

Johnnie Walker, a brand of scotch whisky is now owned by Diageo that originated in the Scottish town of Kilmarnock, East Ayrshire (UK). The brand was first established by grocer John Walker, is rolling out a female version of its iconic logo to draw more women to the world's best-selling scotch and acknowledge a broader push toward gender equality.



Brand owner Diageo Plc is hoping the move widens the appeal of the product while celebrating women, stated Stephanie Jacoby, Vice President of Johnnie Walker.

(Mint, 27.02.18)

SC Reversed its Order

India's Supreme Court has reversed its previous order that the national anthem must be played in every cinema before a film is screened. The Supreme Court order came in response to a government request to reconsider the controversial ruling.

The film club had argued that forcing cinemas to play the national anthem and insisting people to stand, while it was being played "infringes fundamental rights", and talked about the false equivalence between an "outward show of respect" and an "actual sentiment of respect".

(<http://www.bbc.com>, 09.01.18)

Impact of Jyoti Parsi Scheme

Over 130 babies were born since the Indian government launched the Jyoti Parsi scheme in 2013, to address the Parsi community's declining population, states a foundation associated with implementation of the initiative.

The population of Parsis plunged from 1.14 lakh in 1941 to 57,264 in 2011. The average of Parsi children born annually over the last two decades was around 200, stated Shernaz Cama, Director, Parzor Foundation project, which aims to reverse the downward trend.

(Tol, 22.01.18)

Representing Voice of Youth

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has selected four Indians to represent the voice of youth at the forthcoming annual meeting at Davos in Switzerland. They include Kanika Kumar, Associate Vice-President at Intellecap; Dipika Prasad, Co-founder, Lakeer; Jaideep Bansal, Leader, Energy Access, Global Himalayan Expedition; and Karanvir Singh, Chairman, Visionum group.

All of them are members of the Global Shapers (a WEF initiative), which is a youth-led organisation with 7,000 members across 150 countries working to bring about a positive change in their communities. (BL, 08.01.18)

Artificial Heart with Rocket

Chinese scientists have developed an artificial heart using rocket technology, and it is currently undergoing testing after thorough experiments on animals, stated a media report.



The artificial heart has been sent for testing and inspection after thorough experiments on animals, 'Science and Technology Daily' reported, citing Li Hong, Former Director of *China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology (CALT)* from the state-owned China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. The artificial heart uses magnetic and fluid levitation from a rocket system. (Tol, 15.03.18)

Sharing Tweets 470k Times

Russian-linked automated Twitter accounts shared US President Donald Trump's tweets almost half a million times during the final months of the 2016 election, Twitter stated in a submission to Congress.

The automated programmes, or bots, retweeted the Republican candidate's @realDonaldTrump posts almost 470,000 times, accounting for a little more than 4 percent of the retweets he received from September 01 to November 15, 2016.

American politician Hillary Clinton's account got less than 50,000 retweets

by the Russian-linked automated accounts during the same period of time, the company said in documents by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

(DNA, 31.01.18)

'Unwanted' Girls in India

The Economic Survey presents the first ever estimate of the number of 'unwanted' girls in India – girls whose parents wanted a boy, but had a girl instead – at 21 million. The number has been arrived at, by looking at the sex ratio of the last child which is heavily male-skewed.

The biologically determined natural sex ratio at birth is 1.05 boys for every girl. The Survey points out that in India, the sex ratio of the last child is skewed towards male all throughout – for first-born, it is 1.82, 1.55 for second born, 1.65 for third child and so on.

(IE, 30.01.18)

Nominees for Worst of Hollywood

Adventure Hollywood movie 'Transformers: The Last Knight' led nominations for the Annual Razzie Awards for the worst films on list packed with previous Oscar winners



Jennifer Lawrence, Tom Cruise, Mel Gibson and Russel Crowe.

'Transformers: The Last Knight', the latest in the action franchise based on toys that change from robots to vehicles, earned nine nominations, comprising worst acting nods for many of its star-studded cast, including Anthony Hopkins and Wahlberg. Despite lacklustre reviews, the 5th film in the series earned a healthy US\$605mn at the worldwide box office in 2017. (Tol, 23.01.18)

Human Organs in Animals

Researchers from the US and Japan have succeeded in using stem cell and genomic editing technologies to transfer human cells into freshly generated sheep and goat embryos. They said that the chimeras, which contain cells from both species, developed for up to three weeks.

Hiro Nakauchi, who pioneered the research at the University of Tokyo, grew a mouse with a rat pancreas, and a rat with a mouse pancreas. When cells from the rat-grown mouse pancreas were transplanted into a diabetic mouse, they made enough insulin to cure the condition without being rejected.

(FT, 19.02.18)

Chatting with the Dead

A funeral agency in Sweden is currently seeking volunteers for a project that it hopes will offer people comfort by allowing them to speak to their deceased loved-ones.



Swedish scientists are not trying to create robots or androids that are fully conscious copies of dead relatives. This is actually about a Swedish funeral agency called Fenix wanting to create bots (computer programmes not robots) powered by artificial intelligence that can offer comfort to living relatives of the deceased.

(<http://www.odditycentral.com>, 27.02.18)

Pune Tops Urban Governance Survey

Pune came on top in the fifth edition of the Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS), edging out Thiruvananthapuram, which had topped the previous two editions of the survey. Bengaluru was ranked at the bottom.



Thiruvananthapuram dropped two ranks to be placed third out of 23 cities spread across 20 states in the survey done by urban governance watchdog Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, which evaluated the quality of governance in India's cities by assessing laws, policies and institutional processes currently in place. (Mint, 15.03.18)

Airport 'Lands' at 11th Spot

Jaipur airport has reached 11th position in the country in daily scheduled flight operations. Everyday, 69 flights operate from here leaving many peer cities behind. Of these, 60 flights are domestic while nine are international.

Recently released figures from Airport Authority of India have revealed that Jaipur is now on 11th place in the list in which Delhi and Mumbai are top two airports in that order. Goa is ahead of Jaipur due to international connectivity, but Jaipur is ahead of the coastal city in terms of growth rate. (DNA, 27.02.18)

Pink City Running on CNG

If things move in right direction, Jaipur will soon be joining the league of cities like Delhi, Gurgaon, Ahmedabad and few others city. Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has selected Jaipur among cities for announcements bid for the city gas distribution (CGD) in coming weeks.

"PNGRB is in the process of identifying cities for ninth round for CGD. Jaipur is one of them", stated an official. The availability of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) gas network will provide a cleaner and cheaper fuel option and CNG. (DNA, 14.03.18)

Digitisation of Historical Records

With an aim to protect old and fragile documents, the Rajasthan government is digitising 10,000 pages daily to preserve administrative and historical records of Rajputana's princely states.

The move will further boost the state governments effort to use technology to improve the lives of people. These initiatives include a dedicated start-up policy and various E-governance measures.

The online records will help research scholars, administrative departments of state government, judiciary and general public. Further, it will be helpful in a variety of research uses including teaching purpose, building plans, publications and legal proceedings. (IT, 10.01.18)

Best Performing State

After playing host to the launch of the pan-India expansion of the *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* programme earlier in March 2018, Rajasthan is all set to lead the way in the Centre's plans to overhaul the primary education in the country.

The Ministry is expected to release a state-wise index soon which follows a district-wise report of all 700 districts released in January 2018. Senior officials at the HRD Ministry conveyed that the state has been one of the best performing states (including Karnataka and Chhattisgarh) in the National Assessment Survey (NAS) conducted by the NCERT in 2017. (ET, 16.03.18)

Panthers in 'State' of Danger

Is the Rajasthan Forest department sitting on a time bomb. It was only a week ago when the body of a panther – with its paws and head chopped off – was recovered from near Beawar city of the state.

Another panther's body without its canines and claws was found recently the hills near Kerapura village near Bali in Pali district, prior to which the mutilated body of a panther was found in the Bisalpur hills also raising a serious question – are the rosetted felines being made targets by an organised poaching gang? (DNA, 05.03.18)

Infra Projects on Fast Track

Administrative hurdles in the way of the *Dravyawati* riverfront project were removed while the proposed Shividaspura airport got further impetus as Chief Secretary of Rajasthan N C Goel held meetings with top officials of concerned departments. The riverfront project is thus could now be dedicated to public this Independence day.

"The Chief Secretary reviewed the *Dravyawati* riverfront project and many inter-departmental issues were resolved. On completion, the ambitious riverfront project will be a 47-km long eco-tourism site, integrated with water treatment facilities and entertainment facilities.

(DNA, 20.01.18)

Pushing for Network Expansion

Jaipur Metro is bound for a new destination with work of new Phase IB (2.4 km) of the network likely to be completed by the end of 2018, making Phase-I (12.07 km) of the project fully operational. The Jaipur Mero Rail Corporation (JMRC) has got going on the detailed project report (DPR) for its next phase of expansion.



Rajasthan Bags Top Slot

Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), which is engaged in improving the ranking of the city in *Swachh Survekshan*, has added another feather in the cap. In the Citizen Feedback under *Swachh Survekshan-2018*, Jaipur has reached number five position among 4041 cities across the country.

Whereas, Rajasthan has reached the number one position among states. Mayor Ashok Lahoti and JMC Commissioner Ravi Jain gave this information. He said that Rajasthan has reached number one rank throughout the country in the feedback through the mobile app of the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD). (DNA, 20.01.18)



**SWACHH
SURVEKSHAN**
4th January to 10th March 2018

As part of a joint venture with EGIS India Consulting Engineers Pvt. Ltd. and Feedback India Pvt Ltd., French firm EGIS Rail is reviewing the DPR prepared by the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) for the 24-km-long Phase-II corridor. (FE, 19.01.18)

Smart' Cycles for Metro Riders

The JMRC will soon introduce eco-friendly smart cycles at Jaipur Metro stations for its passengers to provide last mile connectivity. Passengers commuting between 9.25-km corridor – *Mansarovar to Chandpole* can hire these Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled cycles after downloading a mobile app.

The JMRC will fix ₹5 for half an hour. Initially, these services would be provided at *Chandpole* and Railway station areas. Besides, a GPS tracking, cashless and under public sharing scheme, five scooters (Activa) and four motorcycles will be made available to the public by the JMRC at *Mansarovar* Metro station parking.

(Tol, 30.01.18 & 28.03.18)

Govt. Seeks Public Opinion

Before presenting the proposed Rajasthan Regional and Urban Planning Bill 2018 in the ongoing state assembly for approval, Rajasthan government has sought suggestions and objections from the public till February 22, 2018 on the draft.

“The proposed draft lets the government follow an existing master plan, or ‘direct to prepare a fresh master plan under the provision of this Act and on and from the date on which the fresh draft master plan is published, such master development plan shall ceased to be in operation’, states the draft of the Regional and Urban Planning Bill.

(Tol, 12.02.18)

Govt. Revokes Dress Code

On March 04, 2018 the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Rajasthan, had announced a dress code in state-run colleges from the academic year 2018-19, drawing protests from students and opposition Congress, which dubbed it as an attempt to ‘saffronise’ institutions.



Buckling under widespread protests, especially by students, Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje's

dispensation in state revoked its recent controversial order on implementing a dress code for government-run colleges in the state.

Raje said the Directorate of College Education had issued the order to introduce uniforms in government colleges based on suggestions by student representatives. (IE, 13.03.18)

Achieving 'Digital Inclusion'

Rajasthan is one of the first states to embrace E-governance. Currently, at position #6, the state government is working to make 'digital' a welcome phenomenon in the urban areas and rural parts of the state.

Rajasthan aims to become a leading start-up hub in line with the existing start-up hubs like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, etc. Bhamashah Yojana, E-Mitra, Rajasthan Single Sign On, E-Sign, E-Sanchar, RajNet, Raj Payment Platform, using E-Learning apps for audio visual-based smart studies in schools.

There have been countless initiatives implemented by the state government at the ground level to minimise corruption and increase transparency in the state residents.

(<https://linc42.com>, 22.03.18)

Posting to Transgender Cop

For the first transgender cop of the state, the wait is finally over. After a three-year-long legal battle, 25-year-old Ganga Kumari has been given a posting as a constable in Jalore district of Rajasthan. “When I came here, everyone congratulated me at the barrack”, said Kumari.

The posting comes three years after she cleared the constable recruitment examination in 2015. Ganga is to undergo one-year training in Jaipur. “In the medical test, I was declared a transgender and denied posting”, she added.

(Tol, 18.03.18)

Pat on the Back

The central government Urban Development & Housing (UDH) Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra commended Additional Chief Secretary of Local Self Governance Manjit Singh for rolling out the central government's funded schemes, in an exceptional manner.

Mishra said that performance of all the central schemes in Rajasthan have been outstanding. Mishra reviewed Smart City, Swachh Bharat Mission, HRIDAY, AMRUT, 'Housing for All' and other schemes along with the Chief Secretary N C Goel. He also praised Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, Urban Development Minister Shrichand Kriplani and Manjeet Singh for the results Rajasthan has shown.

(DNA, 17.03.18)

State at 6th Rank in EoDB

Rajasthan's ranking in 'Ease of Doing Business (EoDB)' has slipped from top five positions as local bodies and urban improvement trusts lag in implementing business reforms. The state's real-time ranking was third till January 2018, but now it has slipped to sixth position.

The yearly state-wise ranking will be based on assessment of implementation of the 'Business Reforms Action Plan' in 2017. According to the data on Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP's) website, Rajasthan stood at sixth place as on February 01, 2018, with an implementation score of 89.97 percent.

(Tol, 11.02.18)

All-Women Railway Station

Jaipur's Gandhi Nagar Railway Station has become the first non-suburban station in the country to be completely operated by women.



From selling and checking of tickets to security, all the operations will be controlled and operated by the 40 women. Neelam Jatav will be first woman station superintendent.

Of 40, four will look after train operations, eight will do bookings, six will handle reservations, six will check tickets and make an announcement, 10 will look after Railway Police Force (RPF) while remaining six will take up other small work. The staff will work in three shifts of eight hours.

(BS, 26.02.18)

Raje Announces Sops for Students and Women



The Rajasthan 2018 Budget emphasises greatly on women, farmers the youth, employment, development, infrastructure and poverty

Replying to a debate on the state budget 2018-19 presented by her in the Legislative Assembly, Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje expressed deep concern over crime against women, and said the government had decided to amend Indian Penal Code (IPC) for making provisions for stricter punishment. The Rajasthan government will amend IPC for stricter punishment for offenders in cases related to crime against women, said Raje.

The Raje government also announced several schemes and sops for women. The Chief Minister announced that a women's wing will be opened in 28 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) institutes in the state to improve opportunities for women. Moreover, the government also announced that all women workers will be entitled to a total of two years of childcare leave. Class XII girl students who score more than 85 percent in Board exams, will be given free scooters by the state government.

Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje announced a one-time loan waiver of up to ₹50,000 for small and marginal farmers, at a cost of ₹8,000 crore to the exchequer.

Besides, 28 primary health centres, free travel for people above 80 years of age and one attendee on half fare in the state roadways buses, were also announced. The Chief Minister also declared hike in honorarium to Anganwadi workers and an underpass from Ramniwas garden to Delhi road for a better traffic management.

Meanwhile, the government's flagship *Annapurna Rasoi* scheme, on the lines of Tamil Nadu's *Amma Canteens*, to provide low priced meals to the poor, also found a mention. Raje promised that all 500 *Annapurna* kitchens would be functional by 2018.

After drawing much flak on a press gag order last year, the Raje government announced subsidised home loans for journalists for up to ₹25 lakh. The government also announced camera insurance schemes for photo and video journalists.

This comes amid the uproar over a controversial Bill, the Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Bill, 2017, which seeks to shield both serving and former judges, magistrates and public servants in the BJP-ruled state from being investigated for on-duty action without the government's approval and bar the media from reporting on allegations against them without its prior sanction.

The Rajasthan government announced that it will recruit 54,000 Grade-III teachers, 9,000 Grade-II teachers across state government schools. Raje also said that the enrolment rate in state government schools have increased and 12 lakh more students have registered for education. The government announced an increase in the grants given to *Aadarsh Schools*.

The state will also start the first 'Skills University' in the country to train over 2 lakh youth in various skills for better job opportunities; eight new ITI's will also be opened to this effect. The government also announced free Wi-Fi facilities in all state universities.

The Raje government announced ₹25 lakh to cricketer Kamlesh Nagarkoti for his exceptional showing in the Under-19 Cricket World Cup. The government also declared a 'youth icon' scheme to promote participation in sports.

Besides, the government also announced several infrastructure projects in the state. "In the last four years, we have completed the construction and repair of 49,878 km of roads", mentioned Raje.

This has been adapted from a news published in FIRSTPOST on February 12, 2018

Sources: BL: The Hindu Business Line; BS: Business Standard; DNA: Daily News and Analysis; ET: The Economic Times; IE: The Indian Express; FE: The Financial Express; FT: Financial Times; IT: India Today; Tol: The Times of India