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CityMatters

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International

What about migrants from Cooch Behar in this crisis?



Our Tribute on Her
Death Anniversary on 29th July.



As the nation witnesses a largescale reverse migration induced by the lockdown, one wonders whether readers in Jaipur are aware of a large group of migrant workers who are calm and restful. They are what is called Rajbanshis from Cooch Behar, a small district in northern West Bengal, situated just over Bangladesh. Their journey to Jaipur began when Princess Gayatri Devi married Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II of Jaipur in 1940.



With her wedding, Gayatri Devi brought five maidservants in her trousseau as was the custom. That number multiplied manifold. Today the Rajbanshis are about 500,000 in the number living all over Rajasthan, though the majority live in Jaipur. What began as a spillover effect of conjugal ties soon became a trend, instigated by the lack of economic opportunities and the plight of a land ravaged by the channel-shifting Torsa River.

A study by Aajeevika Bureau reveals that West Bengal, especially Cooch Behar, is one of the four states from which the major proportion of migrants working in Jaipur hail from. Women from that district have, over the years, dominated the domestic help market. Their male counterparts have taken up different informal jobs ranging from being hotel and restaurant staff, pulling rickshaws to skilled construction labour.

Given the magnitude and historical connotation of their presence, there arises a pertinent question. How is this community tackling the current crisis?

To explore that, the first thought that crosses the mind is, where do they belong? A conversation with Hari Narayan Burman and Kamal Burman, who work as office boys at CUTS office in Jaipur, reveals that they migrated to Jaipur close to 20 years ago and now call it their home. There is a clear distinction between their 'desh' or native place, and their 'ghar', where they have settled down.

While they like to visit their native place, once in a year, for special occasions or spending time with extended family, their home is in Jaipur. Many find their matches locally among their community and get married. Some have married outside their community but no objects to it. When asked if they too are disturbed like many other migrant communities in this pandemic, their answer is in the negative. Thus, they don't feel the need to travel back to Cooch Behar to feel at home.

A closer look into the economics of the situation, however, shows a difference of views. When asked about migrants flocking to their homes, through harsh conditions and several uncertainties, Kamal says that their contemporaries, some of who were employed in factories and have been out of work since the lockdown was implemented, have been forced to go home. On the other hand, his situation is better given the continuity in his income, even though his wife who works as domestic help, has been out of work. Thus, while survival is difficult, for this community, it has not reached a level where they need to panic and leave for Cooch Behar.

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Pradeep S. Mehta
Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General

P.S. Our gratitude to esteemed subscribers.

Meet the world's smallest cat

With lockdown in place due to COVID-19 which has brought tourism



to a standstill, many species of wild animals which were rarely spotted in the national parks in Rajasthan have been venturing out fearlessly due to lack of human presence.

The rusty-spotted cat species listed as 'near threatened' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature was captured in the camera at Ranthambore National Park.

Rubiginosus is the world's smallest cat and found only in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. It was last spotted in Sariska Tiger Reserve around three years back.

(Tol, 24.04.20)

UP 'princess' photo goes off-menu

A restaurant in China has removed the photographs of a former Indian princess from its menu card after Indian Ambassador to that country Vikram Misri took up the matter following protests from her family in UP.



Princess Nawabzadi Mehrunnisa Khan is the daughter of the last nawab of Rampur. Misri pursued the matter saying that the Masala Art restaurant did not take permission from the erstwhile royal family or from Mehrunnisa to use her photo.

(www.ndtv.com, 15.06.20)

'Order of the Red Star' for Indian Soldier

The photograph and citation of an Indian soldier, Hawaldar Gajendra Singh, a native of village Badalu in Pithoragarh district, has been included in the Russian army museum's gallery of gallant soldiers in Moscow.

Singh was awarded the 'Order of the Red Star', a Soviet military decoration, for his bravery in the Second World War in 1944. The Indian Embassy in Moscow informed the family of the dead soldier about the felicitation. (Tol, 29.06.20)

When Deepak became Deepika

He danced like a woman, walked like a woman, and even behaved like a woman. Deepak, who was one a famous dancer in western Rajasthan, recently underwent a sex change surgery and became Deepika.



His fascination to become a woman started during cultural programmes where several men used to dress as women to entertain the crowds.

His inspiration is late dancer Harish Suthar of Jaisalmer who became famous by the name of Queen Harish and had a huge fan following in India and abroad. He, too, used to dress like a woman and dance.

(Tol, 06.06.20)

Bhindranwale portrait sparks row

A huge portrait of the fifth Sikh guru has appeared next to another large poster of the slain militant chief Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale on the exterior of the largest gurdwara in the UK, sparking controversy amongst the Sikh community.

The 20-foot by 10-foot image of Bhindranwale went up on the exterior of Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Southall in view of the anniversary of Operation Blue Star.

Yards away is a portrait of the fifth guru to mark Sri Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom day. It is a disgrace to equate Bhindranwale with the fifth guru.

(www.indiadaily.com, 05.06.20)

Sikh Officer Makes History in US

Second Lieutenant Anmol Narang will create history by becoming the first observant Sikh to graduate from the prestigious US Military Academy at West Point.

US President Donald Trump delivered remarks at the 2020 US Military Academy at West Point graduation ceremony. Narang will complete her Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) at Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma.

Following the successful completion of BOLC, she will then head to her first posting in Okinawa, Japan, in January of 2021, according to the non-profit organisation Sikh Coalition.

(ET, 14.06.20)

Bring giraffes from Africa

While we wait for Gir lions to be shifted to Madhya Pradesh, why not get some giraffes from Africa?

Director of Madhya Pradesh Lions project, Mohan Meena, a senior IFS officer, has recommended to the State



Wildlife headquarters to consider translocation of giraffes to Kuno.

Kuno, in Sheopur district, would be ideal to let giraffes roam wild in India. The proposal to translocate giraffes to India comes at a time when its population in Africa has declined by almost 40 percent over the past three decades and it's listed as a 'vulnerable' species.

(Tol, 04.06.20)

Keralite loves bees so much!

Even the thought of a swarm of bees is enough to give most people nightmares. One man in Kerala, however, loves bees so much that he has no qualms letting them sit on his face for hours on end.

Nature MS is a beekeeper who has earned a world record for spending the longest duration of time with his head covered in bees. According to Guinness World Records, the 24-year-old spent four hours, 10 minutes and five seconds with his head completely submerged in bees to earn the record.

(NDTV, 22.06.20)



Special species of Babool tree found

After 68 years, a species of Babool tree has been found on a hilltop in Dhaar village in Udaipur district. *Acacia Eburnea* tree was last recorded in the north-western part of Rajasthan in the Botanical Survey of India in 1951.



After that, no written record of this species was present in Rajasthan until now, when five such trees have been found.

The specialty of this tree is that its stem is yellow while other varieties of Babool tree in Rajasthan are either of white stem or black. (Tol, 06.06.20)

Male or female dinosaurs?

A lot of mistakes have been made when it comes to distinguishing between male and female dinosaurs, new research suggests.

The debate over whether paleontologists have been accurately identifying the sex of dinosaur fossils has been rumbling on for many years.



The team analysed the skulls of modern-day gharials, an endangered crocodilian species, to see how possible it is to distinguish males and females based only on fossil records. (https://news.sky.com/, 12.05.20)

Mysterious 'radio bursts' from space

Astronomers have detected a mysterious fast radio burst coming from a dwarf galaxy three billion light-years away. The burst — known as an FRB — appears to be transmitting signals that reach Earth in a repeating, 157-day pattern.

FRBs are bursts of radio waves in space that last just a millisecond. Some have been traced back to their home galaxies, but astronomers have yet to figure out what causes them.

(www.cbsnews.com/news, 09.06.20)

Human urine, a useful ingredient

The European Space Agency said that human urine could one day become a useful ingredient in making concrete to build on the moon.

The agency said researchers in a recent study it sponsored found that urea, the main organic compound in urine, would make the mixture for a 'lunar concrete' more malleable before it hardens into its sturdy final form.

(www.huffpost.com, 08.05.20)

Man fined for 'provocative' fart

A man in Vienna has been fined nearly £500 for farting provocatively in front of police officers. Austrian police were forced to defend the penalty after the *Österreich* newspaper revealed the man had been punished for 'offending public decency'.



Officers argued that the offender was uncooperative and behaving provocatively with officers leading up to the incident. The man can appeal the fine. (www.metro.co.uk, 17.06.20)

Lost ring found after 18 years

A Georgia woman who lost her class ring on a Florida beach in 2002 has the ring back on her finger after a man with a metal detector found it 18 years later.

John Porcella said he often uses his metal detector to comb the beach near the pier at Jacksonville Beach, and on a recent search in the sand, he uncovered a 2001 class ring from Collins High School in Suwanee, Ga.

Porcella contacted the school, which identified the ring as belonging to a graduate named Amy Goetz. (UPI, 24.06.20)

20-year-old Golden Retriever

A 20-year-old Golden Retriever in Tennessee is being hailed as the longest-living dog of her breed after becoming the first on record to surpass the milestone age.



The GoldenHeart Golden Retrievers Rescue said Augie, who was adopted by Oakland residents Jennifer and Steve Hetterscheidt at the age of 14, celebrated her 20th birthday, becoming the first golden retriever known to have reached the third decade of life. The breed has an average lifespan of 10 to 12 years. (UPI, 24.06.20)

Glove to initiate translation

A team of University of California, Los Angeles, scientists have developed a glove that translates American Sign Language into speech in real-time.

They said the glove contains sensors in the digits that identify each word, phrase, or letter in American Sign Language (ASL) and transmits them wirelessly to a smartphone app that translates them at a rate of one word per second.

The device also includes optional sensors attached to a user's face to register facial expressions used in ASL. (UPI, 30.06.20)

Marriage cancelled over 'no toilet'

Almost three years after Akshay Kumar- Bhumi Pednekar starrer Bollywood film *'Toilet Ek Prem Katha'* hit the screens, a 22-year-old girl Reena Singh Gurjar's video protesting against her marriage in a house which does not have a toilet has gone viral.

She did not even hesitate to appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, and Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot to help her in getting the marriage cancelled.

A science graduate, the girl is the daughter of a police sub-inspector posted in Dholpur. After the video went viral, Harsaura police reached her house and requested her parents not to get her married off.

(Tol, 17.06.20)



Stepping towards digitisation

Taking a step towards making the entire system online, the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) added options of sub-division and reconstitution of plots on its website.

This would not only maintain transparency but would also benefit thousands of plot owners who are forced to make several trips to JDA for this tedious task.

Applicants can apply for subdivision and reconstitution only on the plots after the service number is generated by the assistant town planner (ATP) of the zone. (Tol, 10.06.20)

No masks: Lockdown norms mocked

On a day Karnataka's COVID-19 count suffered its third record jump in three days, former CM HD Kumaraswamy's son Nikhil got



married at the family's farmhouse in Bidadi, giving a wide berth to social distancing and lockdown norms.

Photos from the ceremony showed the groom and bride, family members, and dozens of guests huddling together, no one wearing a mask.

Social media was questioning if lockdown norms were only for common citizens and not VIPs.

(Tol, 18.04.20)

Kitchen garden gaining popularity

Vegetables are one of the most essential items to run the kitchen. But, buying vegetables during the lockdown period has become difficult. However, not many are worried about purchasing vegetables during this period as they have turned into their kitchen gardens.

To avoid contact with the outside world, many residents in the city have started growing their vegetables at home. Few have developed kitchen gardens on their terraces, while some are growing it in open areas of the house that remain unutilised so far.

(Tol, 22.04.20)

Jaipur to go tobacco-free

On the occasion of World No Tobacco Day 2020, efforts would be made to make the city tobacco-free by strictly adhering to Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) and its effective implementation.



The implementation of the Act will be closely monitored and offenders will be dealt with strictly. In Jaipur, tobacco use will be prohibited in and around public places, workplaces, educational and public health institutions, etc.

(Tol, 01.06.20)

Getting a flood control hub

The district administration has ordered the setting up of a flood control centre for eight zones of Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC) at Bani Park fire brigade office.

Monsoon is here and JMC officials have been given charge of control centres in different zones and a special helpline number has been issued. The public can call on that number for waterlogging issues.

Each zone will have at least two community buildings with necessary resources where people can be rescued in an emergency and to do mapping of all community buildings.

(Tol, 26.06.20)

'Light Metro' to roll out

The Rajasthan government is now planning to roll out 'Light Metro' on the BRTS Corridor and take the Metro from Mansarovar station to Ajmer Road-Delhi bypass.

Initially, the Light Metro will run from Mansarovar station to New Sanganer Road. After this, it can be



considered to take it further to Sanganer, Haldi Valley, Pratap Nagar.

The estimated expenditure on the entire project is believed to be around ₹1,800 crore. The government will take a final call only after inspection and the DPR.

(www.urbanrailways.com, 26.06.20)

Differently Aabled Women on a Mask Mission during COVID-19 pandemic

Due to face masks steadily vanishing from the market due to COVID-19 pandemic, CUTS Centre for Human Development, Chittorgarh started a small initiative led by Persons with Disabilities-Self-help Groups (SHGs). The SHGs are making masks that are 100 percent cotton material and can be reused after home sterilisation.

Sweta Garu in Dagla ka Kheda, Salma Bano in Bassi Gram



Panchyat, and eight members from Chittorgarh, Rajasthan who have some form of the orthopedic impairment or the other, are on a mission to complete the order of 20000 masks for the district administration, NGOs, and other social groups.

The SHG has an order of 16000 masks to be supplied to various government departments, NGOs, in Chittorgarh and Bhilwara districts of Rajasthan. They have been engaged in making cloth masks and getting decent earning.

This SHG was provided with sewing machines and training by CUTS centre in Chittorgarh with the help of NABARD and other such sectors. This is another area where the organisation is proud of its contribution to the massive drive to save lives.

Street vendors to get ID cards

Around 12,000 street vendors in Jaipur will now be provided with identity cards. Recently, the Centre



has introduced a scheme under which street vendors will be able to get a loan of ₹10,000.

Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor Atma Nirbhar Nidhi Scheme was announced by the Central Government for them who have been hit by the national lockdown. It will be valid until March 2022.

(Tol, 27.06.20)

48 special trains likely from July

Though the railways have decided not to operate regular superfast and express category trains till August 12, the North Western Railway (NWR) is likely to run some more trains as 'specials' from July 01, 2020.

These trains will not have general class bogies and passengers only with confirmed reservation would be allowed to board. NWR is waiting for a nod of the railway board to get these trains to operate.

(Tol, 28.06.20)

Parents unhappy with online classes

Guidelines issued by the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights to schools for conducting online classes have been termed incomplete insufficient by private school principals, experts and parents.

Most principals and educators feel that the guidelines miss out on advocating activity-based learning, advisory for parents, no two-day offs, and does not focus on measures to reduce the screen time for children.

(Tol, 28.06.20)

Star of a vanishing tribe

The daughter of a couple that collects sal leaves for living in Chhattisgarh has become the first girl in the vanishing Birhor tribe to pass Class 12 as a regular student.



Battling poverty, dogma, and stiff opposition from her tribe, Nirmala scored 58%, and now aims to step into a college — perhaps the first girl in her tribe to do so. The Birhors are believed to number less than 10,000 in the country.

(Tol, 28.06.20)

Inline baggage screening at airport

Flyers using Jaipur airport do not have to queue up near the X-ray machines to scan their baggage before check-in. Jaipur airport got the inline baggage screening (ILBS) system which will decongest the



check-in area and passengers can straightaway visit the check-in counter.

This system will save the time of passengers. They can directly visit the check-in counter and will get the baggage at the destination. The cost of this system is around ₹18 crore.

(Tol, 30.06.20)

Indira Rasoi Yojana for poor

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot announced the launch of Indira Rasoi Yojana (Indira Kitchen Scheme) to fulfill its promise of 'no one sleeps hungry' in the state.

Under this scheme, the needy will be provided nutritious food twice a day on concessional rates. The



government would spend ₹100 crore in a year for the scheme. Local NGOs will also be lined up to run this scheme and effective monitoring be done with the help of IT.

(Tol, 23.06.20)

RSRTC adds more vehicles

With the continued demand for buses, the Rajasthan State Roadways Corporation (RSRTC) increased the frequency of buses and added additional routes.

Besides, now the buses will ply to various cities in Haryana. At least 568 buses were operated across the state which completed 1,349 trips. Also, buses to Agra, Bharatpur, Dausa, Karauli, and Gurugram started operating from Narain Singh Circle.

(Tol, 24.06.20)

Dravyavati river project failed

The Dravyavati river rejuvenation project, which aimed to revive the city's receding groundwater, has allegedly failed to serve its purpose as cementing has prevented natural recharge resulting in fast depletion of water-table along the river.

The 47.5-km river originates from the Nahargarh hills in Amer Panchayat Samiti and passes through the city areas including Jhotwara Panchayat Samiti, Sanganer Panchayat Samiti before merging with Dhod River in the south.

(Tol, 22.06.20)

Muslim couple performs kanyadaan

Against the backdrop of the lockdown, a Muslim couple in Ludhiana made the wedding of a Hindu couple possible.

The family from Bhatian in Ludhiana stepped in to solemnise the marriage of 22-year-old Pooja with Sudesh Kumar from Sahnewal according to Hindu rituals and carried out her Kanyadaan (giving away a daughter's hand in marriage) as her parents could not return from UP due to the lockdown.

(www.shethepeople.tv, 04.06.20)



How India can transform education in the post-coronavirus world?

Jyotsna Joshi

While online learning appears to be a panacea for these times, there are many pitfalls observed with it.



With governments around the world imposing school closures nearly 70 percent of the world's student population is impacted. In India alone, 32 crore learners across the segments of pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary are hit because of countrywide school closures. The stay-at-home period for students carries high social and economic costs for all the stakeholders involved in the domain of education. With interrupted learning, it is anticipated that more children will be forced to join the labour force, leading to a severe form of child labour and greater dropout rates from schools.

Also, there is found a surge in unintended social outcomes like violence against children, an increase in psychological disorders like stress and anxiety, and teenage pregnancies. Educators, on the other hand, struggle to overcome this paradigm shift from the traditional chalk-talk methods to the e-learning model, prepare online lesson plans, and upload them.

Additionally, the work from home and online teaching mechanisms are taking a toll on their mental health by blurring the professional versus personal boundaries.

According to UDISE data, India has a humongous network of nearly 15 lakh schools, 25 crore students, 94 lakh teachers at the school level, and 50,000 higher education institutions. This presents manifold challenges in transcending from the physical delivery of education to online teaching methods.

Initiatives by the government

The national institutions of UGC and MHRD are at the forefront of provisioning technology-enabled learning through audio-video mode or e-books and journals.

Second, the Swayamprabha initiative intends to address the problem of non-uniform internet penetration in the country, by offering 32 high-quality educational channels through DTH (Direct to Home) across the nation, 24x7. The content for these channels is provided by esteemed educational institutes of the nation like IIT, UGC, NCERT, etc.

Third, there is a provision of a digital repository of journals and books which can be accessed by the learners at one place in the National Digital Library of India (NLDI).

MHRD has also ensured the provisioning of virtual labs that simulate an environment to perform experiments.

At the school level, a major challenge is the absence of a robust monitoring method to gauge the activities of the students remotely.

Consensus

It is a debatable statement whether e-learning will facilitate high-order learning skills such as creativity, problem-solving, inquisitive questioning, etc. However, e-learning does contribute to the capacity-building of all the stakeholders involved in the education gamut. The role of governments at this juncture will be critical in ushering benefits from this digital disruption.

*Abridged from an article that appeared in
www.dailyo.in/ on May 18, 2020*

Sources: ET: The Economic Times; NDTV: New Delhi Television Limited; ToI: Times of India; UPI: United Press International

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