



BASAI News Updates

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Tackling post-Covid suicidal distress

Covid-19 has had a ruinous impact on people's mental health. New data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) last week captures the depth of the problem and the challenge it poses for the public health system. According to NCRB, 164,033 people died from suicide in 2021, an increase of 7.2% from 2020. At 120 deaths per million, 2021 saw the highest rate of deaths from suicide since 1967, the earliest year for which this data is available. Among professions, self-employed people and those engaged as daily wagers registered the biggest increase in deaths by suicide, followed by salaried workers and students. The fastest increase in deaths by suicide in 2021 was among students and small entrepreneurs; a similar trend was seen in the 2020 edition of the report.

It is not difficult to understand what prompted this surge in deaths by suicide: Restrictions on physical movement and social contact, lockdowns, economic insecurity, job losses, and school and business closures contributed to a steep rise in cases of depression and anxiety across the world. Tackling it will not be easy because detection is often hampered by social stigma, and there is an acute shortage of mental health professionals. The country must add financial muscle and human resources to the National Mental Health Programme and craft a multipronged approach, involving the creation of social, psychological, and economic safety nets to tackle the challenge. In addition, the State must start a large-scale public health campaign to sensitise people about mental health, suicide prevention, and the kind of support needed from families and communities for those battling the scourge.

In 2021, every fourth suicide victim was daily wager

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TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

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Every fourth person of the total 1,64,033 people who died by suicide in India in 2021 was a daily wage earner, according to the latest report made public by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). It also revealed that among the states, Maharashtra (with 22,207) reported the highest number of such deaths fol-

lowed by Tamil Nadu (18,925) and Madhya Pradesh (13,500).

The NCRB report revealed that among those who died by suicide, daily wage earners remained the biggest professional group in 2021 as they accounted for 42,004 victims, which stood at 25.6 per cent of total 1,64,033.

As part of the report, the NCRB has categorised the data into nine professional groups — daily wage earn-

DISTRIBUTION OF CASES

Profession category	2020	2021	% of total	% increase
Daily wage earners	37,666	42,004	25.6	11.52
Other persons	20,543	23,547	14.4	14.62
Housewives	22,374	23,179	14.1	3.6
Self-employed	17,332	20,231	12.3	16.73
Professional/salaried	14,825	15,870	9.7	7.05
Unemployed	15,652	13,714	8.4	-12.38
Students	12,526	13,089	8	4.49
Persons in farm sector	10,677	10,881	6.6	1.91
Retired persons	1,457	1,518	0.9	4.19
Total	1,53,052	1,64,033	100.0	7.7

NAT'L CAPITAL MOST UNSAFE FOR WOMEN

- The National Capital remained the most unsafe for women among the list of unsafe metropolitan cities
- The latest NCRB data revealed that two minor girls were raped every day in 2021.
- Delhi also recorded 13,892 cases of crimes against women in 2021.

ers, other persons, housewives, self-employed, professional/ salaried persons, unemployed, students, retired persons, unemployed persons and those engaged in the farming sector.

In 2020 as well, daily wage earners accounted for the highest share — 37,666 or 24.6 per cent people who died by suicide — of the total 1,53,052 such deaths, according to NCRB data.

Source T 30.08.2022 Delhi Edition

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A reality check from the farm

Climate and geopolitics have hit agri output. Don't be complacent about food sufficiency

The notion that India is not just food self-sufficient but also food surplus has been gaining traction in many quarters, including parts of the policymaking establishment over the past decade. That food grain output kept rising to record levels year after year helped propagate this idea. The experience this year — *Hindustan Times* reported on August 29 that India's food output is likely to fall for the first time in six years — offers a good reality check, which should ensure that policymakers do not get complacent on the food sufficiency front.

First, a premature and abnormally long heat wave seriously damaged India's wheat crop. Now, large parts of India's rice-growing region are staring at a significant shortfall in rice output, if not a complete crop loss. The reason, once again, is the climate. The headline figure on a normal monsoon notwithstanding, many rice-growing regions have had a deficient monsoon, hence the expected loss in rice output. Episodes such as the double whammy to India's rice and wheat output are likely to become the norm rather than the exception, given the manifestation of the climate crisis. Anybody who claims otherwise is in denial mode. What does this mean for India's food security? And what does it mean for the livelihoods of those who depend on farming? The two cannot be seen as separate challenges. There are three points of note here. One, the food security situation, especially in terms of affordability, would have been far worse if India did not have strategic food reserves far in excess of mandated buffer norms. This year's climate-inflicted loss has coincided with a geopolitical shock. These food stocks have been castigated by many in the past, but their utility is evident now. Two, even though the public distribution system will help prevent food shortages, including for the farmers who have suffered crop losses, their income loss will lead to economic pain. There must be serious thinking about developing response systems to such problems, given that they are likely to get more frequent going forward. Three, while farmers face the worst effects of the climate crisis, a large section of them are contributing to undermining the climate and the environment — even if this is done inadvertently.

Policymakers must find a way to achieve a synergy between the goals of supporting farmers' incomes and making them stakeholders in protecting environmental sustainability.

{ CLIMATE CRISIS } 'OMINOUS' IMPLICATIONS

Greenland already locked in to major sea level rise, warns study

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PARIS: Even without any future global warming, Greenland's melting ice sheet will cause major sea level rise with potentially "ominous" implications over this century as temperatures continue to rise, according to a study published on Monday.

Rising sea levels — pushed up mainly by melting ice sheets on Greenland and Antarctica — are set to redraw the map over centuries and could eventually swamp land currently home to hundreds of millions of people, depending on humanity's efforts to halt warming.

The Greenland ice sheet is currently the main factor in swelling the Earth's oceans, according to Nasa, with the Arctic region heating at a faster rate than the rest of the planet.

In the new study, published in *Nature Climate Change*, glaciologists found that regardless of any future fossil fuel pollution, warming to date will cause the Greenland ice sheet to shed 3.3 percent of its volume, commit-

ting 27.4 centimetres to sea level rise.

While the researchers were not able to give an exact timeframe, they said most of it could happen by 2100 — meaning that current modelled projections of sea level rise could be understating the risks this century.

The "shocking" results are also a lowest estimate because they do not take future warming into account, said lead author Jason Box, of the National Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland.

"It's a conservative lower bound. The climate has only to continue warming around Greenland for more commitment," he told AFP.

If the high levels of melting seen in 2012 became an annual occurrence, the study estimated sea-level rise could be around 78 cm, enough to swamp vast swathes of low-lying coastlines and supercharge floods and storm surges.

This should serve "as an ominous prognosis for Greenland's trajectory through a 21st century of warming", the authors said.

Allow the private sector into waste management

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a historic appeal for Swachh Bharat on August 15, 2014, he brought into sharp focus waste and waste management as never before. The complete and shameful lack of waste collection and mismanagement of waste disposal and treatment, over the years, have left this country with a legacy of dump sites of enormous proportions, seemingly impossible to get rid of. There are three legacy landfills in the Capital — Okhla, Bhalswa and the infamous Ghazipur — with fires and toxic chemical releases reported regularly. Rough estimates of removing these three mountains of legacy waste, along with the incoming fresh daily waste at the current rate, is 197 years. Other metros don't fare any better. Mumbai has the oldest landfill stretching across a mind boggling 326 acres. Chennai has two — Perungudi and Kodungaiyur — covering 228 and 270 acres, respectively. The Dhapa wasteland at Kolkata is 60 acres and we need to thank the Ganga river basin for the decreased land (waste) use. To add to the legacy woes are the new landfills coming up across the country, the conservative count for which is 3,000. Choosing to ignore the lessons from Delhi's mountains of waste, the two upcoming metros of Gurugram and Faridabad have chosen to dump their collective garbage in an equally unsanitary landfill right next to the Gurugram-Faridabad expressway. The dumpsite is about five-six years old and already a mini mountain of waste. Hill towns face the double whammy of development and tourist onslaught, with waste being dumped into rivers and picturesque mountain sides.

This belies the premise of Swachh Bharat, with no apparent learning and no interest in adopting advanced technological solutions to treat waste. Time and money seem to have been invested without seeking expert advice and exploring the possibility of using technological solutions. The overwhelming neglect of expert advice is a deterrent for putting into place available technologies and solutions, adopted across the world for cleaning polluted cities. The government needs to adopt flexible procedures and processes for acquiring knowledge and technology — this



Shailja Vaidya Gupta

is paramount if impactful results are to be expected. Business as usual will continue sub-optimal utilisation of the huge budgetary allocation for the Swachh Bharat Mission. To give an indication, in the year 2015-2016, a budget of about ₹3,625 crore was set aside for Swachh Bharat, amounting to approximately \$500 million. An unbelievable outlay of ₹1.41 lakh crore (approximately \$20 billion) for the financial years 2020-21 to 2025-26, was allocated for Swachh Bharat alone. This is over and above the budget for municipalities and the department of drinking water and sanitation of the Jal Shakti Ministry.

The return on investment for the government seems low when we compare this to the United States (US), or any other country. In the US, it costs about \$1.5 million to \$1.7 million to construct, operate and close a landfill because of this "high investment", many private companies have replaced municipalities and now own and operate landfills in the US. The investment in the construction and operation of a sanitary landfill seems conservative by Indian standards, considering the budget allocated for waste management in India. Also important to note that the US is one of the most wasteful countries, generating 239 million metric tonnes of garbage, compared to India's 64 million tonnes per year.

It is evident that a prudent and thoughtful approach for fresh (daily) waste management is needed in this country. The municipalities are hamstrung by lack of access to technology, expertise and the will to manage waste. Therefore, the solution lies in allowing the waste management industry to take over the management of waste in India. Municipalities must be handed over to the private sector specialised in waste management. If waste is managed well, this industry promises to be a profit-making enterprise. The mountains of legacy waste need advanced environmental engineering to rehabilitate and reclaim the land and environment damaged and locked by them. An innovative high throughput design can reclaim the Ghazipur landfill within four years, unlocking huge potential. Fast track rehabilitation of the Ghazipur dump site can potentially result in the mitigation of approximately 25,000,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equal emissions and reclaiming valuable land in the heart of the Capital. A combination of high rate bio-mining, extensive processing by recycling and up-cycling of waste materials, leachate treatment and landfill gas water management, could be a globally unprecedented approach to manage the biggest landfill in the world.

Detailed and comprehensive solutions for rehabilitation of the Ghazipur landfill are available, all that is needed is strong political will combined with trust in the private industry to deliver on the challenge. Public-private partnership is the only way to reclaim these wastelands, unlocking precious land and establishing a major milestone in the Swachh Bharat Mission.

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The municipalities are hamstrung by lack of access to technology, expertise and the will to manage waste. PARVEENKUMAR/HT PHOTO

Govt standardises process to issue int'l driving permit

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NEW DELHI: The government has introduced a uniform format for international driving permit (IDP) issued in the country, said a statement from the ministry of road transport and highways (MoRTH) on Monday. The document will now be issued in the form of a booklet and will also have a QR code for all driver-related information that authorities in the country being visited can review, said the ministry.

The new standardised format of the IDP will be issued by respective state authorities and it will be valid for a period of one year from the date of issue.

Data from the MoRTH, seen by HT, shows that about 75,000-100,000 IDPs are issued by states and Union territories in the country annually. In most states, including Delhi, one can now apply for an IDP online.

"Currently, the format, size,

NEW FORMAT OF THE IDP WILL BE ISSUED BY RESPECTIVE STATE AUTHORITIES AND IT WILL BE VALID FOR ONE YEAR

pattern, colour etc. of the IDP being issued was differing across states in India. Due to this, many citizens were facing difficulties with their respective IDP in foreign countries. Now, through this amendment in the Central Motor Vehicle Rules 1989, the format, size, colour etc. for IDP has been standardised for issuance across India, and in adherence to the Geneva Convention," said MoRTH statement issued on Monday.

The IDP is valid in as many as 102 countries, including the US, UK, Canada, UAE, Australia, Ireland, South Korea, Russia, South

Africa, Thailand and New Zealand, among others. The uniform format is expected to iron out any issues people face in foreign countries regarding verification by local authorities, ministry officials said.

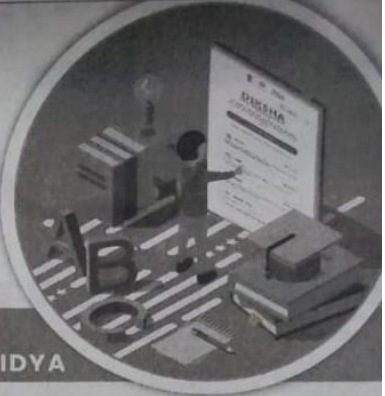
Being a signatory to the Convention on International Road Traffic of 1949 (Geneva Convention), India is required to issue IDPs for acceptance of the same on a reciprocal basis with other countries.

Some countries where the IDP will not be valid include China, Pakistan, Germany and Nepal. These countries are not signatories of the convention.

"The ministry issued a notification on August 26 to bring the changes to effect for greater facilitation of citizens in the issue of International Driving Permit (IDP) across the country," it added. Also, the IDPs will have a provision for a QR code that will link the permit with the driving license of the holder.

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