

Centre for Roma Studies and Cultural Relations

ROMA NEWSLETTER

Roma: Connecting with Indian Roots

ANTAR-RASHTRIYA SAHAYOG PARISHAD

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ISSUE : 1

I am extremely happy to welcome you to the inaugural issue of Roma Newsletter from Centre for Roma Studies and Cultural Relations (CRSCR). This Centre has been established by Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP) with the support of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to understand the importance of Roma community and its socio-economic, cultural and linguistic conditions. This Centre is one of its kinds in India with singular mandate for developing long term relationship with Roma community, its civil society organizations and Romani institutions. During its operation for around two years, the Centre has initiated research studies on different aspects of Roma community, encouraged academic and scholarly exchanges as well as worked to raise awareness about Roma community among Indians.

As you may be aware, even during the current difficult times of COVID 19 pandemic, the Centre had continued with activities to fulfill its objective to better understand Roma community by organizing three virtual conferences with the participation of reputed Roma and Indian academics/scholars/activists. Additionally, we are in the process of developing a directory of important Romani organizations/institutions/NGOs/scholars/academics/companies/individuals. We request for your cooperation in helping us with inputs to expand the Romani directory. We encourage you to forward your suggestions for activities, which we should consider to undertake to reach out to Roma community globally.

One such initiative is fortnightly issuance of this Roma Newsletter, which covers a brief summary of few important news items of relevance to Roma community globally and also provides link to concerned news story in full. We believe that this exercise would be helpful in creating awareness of Roma community and issues of their concern among interested Indians. For the success of this initiative, we would be grateful for your assistance in sharing relevant news stories with us.

Your suggestion/comments/ news stories may kindly be forwarded to romaarsp@gmail.com.

Amb. Rajesh Kumar Sachdeva,
Chairperson- CRSCR

Europe's marginalised Roma community hit hard by Coronavirus

Europe's largest minority, the Roma people, are being particularly hard hit by the Coronavirus pandemic in many countries, because they face a combination of health risks, economic deprivation and increased stigmatization. Roma neighbourhoods in Bulgaria and Slovakia have been cordoned off amid fears of the virus spreading. Police checkpoints were introduced outside two large neighbourhoods in Sofia, and people were only allowed to leave the area if they could show a work contract or prove another urgent reason for doing so.

Read More at

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/11/europes-marginalised-roma-people-hit-hard-by-coronavirus>

The hidden impact of Coronavirus on Gypsy, Roma & Travellers

It is clear that Corona Virus heightens existing inequalities. Some of the most marginalized people in the UK are Gypsy, Roma Travellers, yet they are often left out of research and outreach programmes. The true impacts of COVID-19 on Roma, Gypsy and Travellers could remain dangerously hidden. There are increased challenges for those living in Caravans during the pandemic, including accessibility of gas bottles, sewerage and obtaining fresh water. Roma and Gypsy living on unauthorised sites experience the most significant problems, especially in accessing suitable sanitation and waste disposal.

Read More at

<https://theconversation.com/the-hidden-impact-of-coronavirus-on-gypsy-roma-travellers-141015>

Covid-19 and Roma Community

The webinar on "Covid-19: Its Impact on Roma Community" was hosted, on 20 June, 2020, by Centre for Roma Studies & Cultural Relations (CRSCR)-ARSP. The webinar was attended by a number of scholars, community representatives, diplomats, social workers, activists, professors and students. The aim of the webinar was for taking a holistic view of the impact of COVID-19 on Roma, particularly on parameters like health, housing, employment, education, discrimination, humanitarian aid, governmental support and social impact of the epidemic on Europe's largest minority.

Read More at

<http://www.arspindia.org/pdf/ARSP%20Bulletin%202020-JULY-AUGUST-2020.pdf>

Council of Europe Recommended, Schools should include Roma and Traveller history in teaching curricula

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted a Recommendation that for the first time ever calls on its 47 member states to include the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials. The Recommendation emphasizes the importance of teaching the Holocaust, as perpetrated by the Nazi regime and its allies as well as other acts committed against Roma and Travellers across Europe. It calls on governments to integrate activities related to the remembrance of the Roma Holocaust into formal and non-formal education, in connection with the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (2 August) or with a date more adapted to the historical context of the country concerned, for example local anniversaries connected with the imprisonment or deportation of Roma to concentration camps.

Read More at

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/-/schools-should-include-roma-and-traveller-history-in-teaching-curricula-council-of-europe-recommendation?fbclid=IwAR37Kw1shbdO6aUSo2WBJjo6mEpZxeqLuWl2OV3xzwcmTie0CyrPFGIEQs>

Europe's Roma people 'left behind' during Coronavirus pandemic

The European Commission is set to release a new Roma strategy in October this year, but there are no plans to make it a binding directive to the European Union States. "The strategy will better reflect the diversity among Roma, including by paying more attention to fighting multiple discrimination of Roma women, youth, LGBTI people, mobile citizens, migrants or stateless Roma," Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality stated. Romeo Franz, a Member of European Parliament of Romani descent, says it is not enough. He has submitted his own proposal urging Brussels to create binding rules and a supervising mechanism.

Read More at

<https://www.euronews.com/2020/07/08/europe-s-roma-people-left-behind-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

Interface of Roma Community with Mainstream Societies in 20th& 21st Century

Centre for Roma Studies and Cultural Relations (Antra-Rasthriya Sahayog Parishad) organized a Virtual International Roma Conference on Interface of Roma Community with Mainstream Societies in 20th& 21st Century on 5th August, 2020. The major focus of the

deliberation was on integration policies of the different countries and present socio-economic situation of the community.

Read More at

<http://www.arspindia.org/pdf/ARSP%20Bulletin%2020-JULY-AUGUST-2020.pdf>

Coronavirus: Roma, Gypsy and Travellers 'disproportionately' affected

Romani Cultural and Arts Company (RCAC), working closely with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in Wales, has sent a letter to First Minister Mark Drakeford and warned that a second wave of Corona Virus would make the community even more isolated and marginalised. In his letter, RCAC's director Isaac Blake said that the pandemic "can only exacerbate the obstacles that Romani and Traveller communities face in accessing hospitals and doctors' surgeries".

Read More at

https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-politics-53742653?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cr0pw0nq39nt/roma-community&link_location=live-reporting-story

I'm a Romany Gypsy – why is racism against us still acceptable?

I grew up facing prejudice against Roma, Gypsies and Travellers. Now the Conservative government and media are still failing us. Growing up in a small town in Lancashire, I was surrounded by others who looked and sounded like me. It was a three-bedroomed, semi-detached, 2.4 children sort of working-class normality. Except my family are Romany Gypsies. I remember from a very young age being acutely aware of my difference from the other children in my school. My dad had instilled in us that it was important to be cautious when it came to divulging our ethnicity. Having suffered many instances of poor treatment due to his race while growing up, he was trying to protect us.

Read More at

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/15/romany-gypsy-racism-britain-prejudice-roma-travellers>

Leaving No Roma behind during a pandemic

Roma people in Europe face widespread discrimination in many areas of life, including housing and health. In this opinion piece, Francoise Jacob, the UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia, explains how the UN is helping Roma communities, many of which have no access

to safe water or electricity, to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. In the true spirit of Leave No One Behind, it is our duty to ensure that this particular group of people gets a fair deal in the face of COVID-19 and the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and blossom on their own path.

Read More at

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1069331>

Europe's Roma Already Faced Discrimination: the Pandemic Made It Worse

Roma people in a Bulgarian town are barred from leaving their neighborhood. Officials cite a medical risk, but residents and advocates say it's yet another form of bigotry. In Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, the Netherlands and North Macedonia, there have been 15 incidents of police violence against Roma since Europe's lockdowns began, including against young children, according to research shared with The New York Times by the European Roma Rights Center, a Brussels-based watchdog. The deputy prime minister of Bulgaria, Krasimir Karakachanov, called them "unsocialized gypsies," a term that critics said echoed the Nazi term "asocial gypsies."

Read More at

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/06/world/europe/coronavirus-roma-bulgaria.html>

Romania: Discrimination against Roma in the time of Corona Virus

Romania's Roma minority are facing increased discrimination because of the Coronavirus. In some regions, tensions are rising between local residents and Roma seasonal workers who have returned home.

Read More at

<https://www.dw.com/en/romania-discrimination-against-roma/av-53746623>