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ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE-27
V SEMESTER BA-EJP: END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION: OCTOBER 2019
WRITING FOR JOURNALISM & CREATIVE WRITING
Indian Politics and Society for Development Journalism: JN 5213

Time: 2 ½ HOURS

Max Marks- 70

Instruction:

- 1. This paper is meant for V semester students of BA-EJP course who have opted for the Development Journalism elective.**
- 2. You are allowed to use a Dictionary.**
- 3. You will lose marks for exceeding the suggested word-limit.**
- 4. This paper contains SIX pages and THREE sections.**

I. Read the following article by Rohini Mohan in the NYR Daily on the 14th of December, 2018 and answer the questions that follow.

New Delhi, India—Tens of thousands of farmers marched through the city in the last week of November. They came on trains and buses from all over India, and spent a cold night in a convention ground named for the dramatized Ramayana epic it annually hosts. The next day, their stomachs half-full on roti and tea that Delhi's Sikh temples and student unions donated, they walked to Parliament Street. In a city choked with unbreathable air, they spoke in eight languages of failed crops, erratic rains, and their precarious lives.

Agriculture in India relies heavily on rain and temperature in the growing season; farmers here are highly sensitive to climate. They have already felt the beginning of the apocalypse in the form of dried-up wells, declining yields, and mass migrations of people. Costs are mounting, while real farm income per cultivator has grown less than half a percent annually. An Indian farmer today earns under 20,000 rupees (about \$280) a year on average, a quarter of India's per capita annual income. According to official statistics available up to 2016, more than 320,000 farmers and farm workers have committed suicide since 1995.

Average rainfall has decreased in India and extreme events have become more frequent. Floods and cyclones devastate crops, but the seasons are also getting drier and drier. The monsoon comes later, and departs sooner. Studies show that the extent, duration, and intensity of monsoon droughts in India have grown since the mid-1950s. This is connected to reduced rainfall, which in turn is due to the narrowing temperature difference between the Indian Ocean and the Indian landmass. More farmers than ever are killing themselves over damaged crops.

More than two thirds of Indian farmland is irrigated by groundwater, which is fast running out. Taking a water break outside the Mahatma Gandhi memorial on the way to Parliament, Mallikarjun S. Doddamani said that every farmer in his village had dug at least two borewells in the past decade. Most are dry. He was from a southern district seeing its third year of drought. "The land is now like a beggar's shirt—full of holes," he said. After investing in four borewells in his six acres, Doddamani is now left with a 400,000 rupee (\$5,500) loan he can't repay.

Food insecurity, indebtedness, water scarcity, and depressed incomes underscored nearly every farmer's story. Ramsingh Bharadwaj had traveled for thirty-six hours on foot, by bus, and finally by train from coal-rich central India to demand land titles for his community of indigenous forest-dwellers who both forage and farm. "As coal mines expand, we have lost both the forest and our access to whatever is left," he said. On his phone, he showed me a picture of his lentil harvest, coated in black coal dust.

Climate change affects the rural poor the most. Karu Manjhi, an elderly Dalit farm worker from Bihar, had prepared a question for Prime Minister Modi: “How do you like it that a farmer in your country cannot feed his own grandchildren even one meal a day?” Manjhi’s two grandsons and three granddaughters ate rice with watery lentils at the government school, because he couldn’t afford to grow nutritious food in his one-acre homestead farm, now divided between two sons (63 percent of farmland belongs to marginal farmers owning less than 2.5 acres). “We all grow only one variety of rice because that’s the one the government guarantees a price for. One flash flood, and it’s all rotten.”

Each region and community had a different horror they couldn’t shake. They had waged their local battles, but the most generous state responses were short-lived fixes. Loan waivers to the drought-affected, flood relief, and insurance schemes do offer some assistance, but they don’t rethink what is grown, what farmers earn, and how water is used.

So the farmers had brought their bodies—ravaged by work, unaccustomed to television cameras after years of neglect, and weary from walking miles—to the seat of power. In a rare moment, landowning upper castes allied with landless farm workers; even if their interests often clash, they knew their destinies are linked. The farmers demanded a three-week special session in Parliament to discuss the agricultural crisis. Apart from laws on farm credit and remunerative prices, they wanted a debate on the water crisis and sustainable practices, in particular.

“We are the weather wanes, watch us closely,” said Laxmiprasad Verma, a farm worker from Varanasi who marched with his youngest son, eleven-year-old Naineeta. As thousands chanted “Marengne nahin, ladenge!”—we will not die, we will fight!—the farmers redefined themselves as the protagonists, not the fatalities, of the climate change story.

Around 200 farmers’ unions nationwide organized under the large umbrella of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, but each district had been mobilizing on its own since August. The leading group was the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), a farmers’ union with Communist roots, but many of them were non-political, helping village associations bargain for better prices, decide what to sow, how to access markets, and push for subsidies and land reform.

Rajkumari, from Sultanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state, is a member of All India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA), the women’s wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)—she called it aid-wah, pronouncing it like a Hindi word. This forty year-old has never heard of Marx; she panicked at the word “Maoist.” Politics, for her, is a form of self-actualization. “We women are taught to go hungry when food is scarce—that was the first thing I unlearned,” she said. “Then I realized, I sow and harvest paddy, I care for cattle, I collect pots of water for the house. Why shouldn’t I get equal wages and land rights?”

“We just keep working harder and harder, spending more and more on wells or seeds or technology. But does all this work?” asked Mukhtayar Singh from Punjab. As the protesters awaited police permission to march, Singh walked around trying to speak to farmers from other states. Perhaps they had found other ways to adapt?

Most farmers, though, aren’t really changing their methods to adapt to a warming climate and water scarcity. Instead, they are boring into the ground 200 feet to find water—but, even at that depth, they often find none. Or they’re growing conventional crops that have guaranteed government prices, even though they use too much water and provide fewer nutrients. Rice and wheat are seriously affected by climate change but still dominate cultivation.

When nothing works, the farmers scrape together their last pennies to send their sons and daughters to school, to college, to the nearest cities. Fifty-seven-year-old Rulda Singh prays that his sons will never have to wield a plough. Nearly 8 million people had quit agriculture in the decade ending in 2011, the year of the last Indian census. Indebted farmers and out-of-work farm laborers are pouring tar, carrying bricks, or cleaning mall floors—they’re fading into the anonymity of the vast urban working class. India is producing more food than ever, but has about 24 percent of the world’s malnourished, and is far from tackling chronic hunger. “I eat wheat, maybe my kids will eat steel,” said Rulda Singh, laughing.

“What do they do in America? On TV, all their farmers are plump and rich, and their department stores seem so full,” Mukhtayar Singh said. “Maybe I should just go to America.”

All public demonstrations in India need a police permit, and the Delhi police delayed granting one till the Sunday morning of the rally. They issued traffic advisories about routes to avoid during the two-day rally. About 3,700 police personnel and paramilitary forces lined the route. The sight of the yellow barricades and forbidding blue vans reminded forty-five-year-old Ramanamma from the southern state of Andhra Pradesh of the blast of water cannons on her back some years ago. At the time, her village had been demanding that the loans of tenant farmers like her be written off.

Farmers’ protests had almost doubled in two years—from 2,683 incidents in 2015 to 4,837 in 2016—and they continue to erupt. Tear gas and water cannons are regularly used against demonstrators. Last year, police firing with live ammunition killed six farmers at one protest. In March, about 35,000 farmers, most from indigenous tribes, walked more than 130 miles over seven days to Mumbai, demanding land entitlements. In north and west India, farmers dumped tractor-loads of onions and milk in town squares, showing their disgust for the prices they were forced to sell them at.

Women from southern Telangana walked with portraits of their fathers, brothers, or husbands who had drunk pesticide—the nearest available poison for a farmer drowning in debt. Banks tend to refuse loans to small farmers and farm workers, so they borrow from their friendly neighborhood moneylender at 300 percent interest. After her husband killed himself, Krishnamma received some modest compensation from the government. “The very next day, three debtors arrived at my doorstep—I gave them everything.”

The good news for Krishnamma is that she has held on to her three acres of land. The Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture, a nationwide informal network of 400 diverse farm organizations gave her training in sustainable farming. Today, instead of growing cotton and rice, she grows eggplant and chickpeas, which are more climate-resistant, or may even thrive in warmer weather.

Others from Karnataka practice “zero-cost farming,” in which they use hardier heritage seeds they can obtain for free. The Kerala government promotes share-cropping among marginal farmers, especially women, and incentivizes organic produce. At the Delhi rally, a handful of villagers from desertified Rajasthan were explaining watershed management to others from Bihar, which sees entire families of smallholders and farm laborers migrating. Even in the midst of the sloganeering and politicking, all that these protesters had on their minds was the future of their farms.

**I.A. Answer any TWO of the questions that follow in about 250 words each:
(2x15=30)**

1. The writer says ‘...the farmers redefined themselves as the protagonists, not the fatalities, of the climate change story...’ what is your understanding of this statement? Elaborate.
2. The writer says, ‘Loan waivers to the drought-affected, flood relief, and insurance schemes do offer some assistance, but they don’t rethink what is grown, what farmers earn, and how water is used.’ Draw from the article and your own readings to explain the statement.
3. Write a script for a 10-minute podcast drawing from Rohini Mohan’s article.

II. Read the following article in The Guardian, by Wade Shepard and answer the questions that follow.

People have been building new cities from scratch for millennia. From the foundation myths surrounding Athens and Rome, to the clearance of virgin forests in western New York state to create

the “garden city” of Buffalo, to scores of purpose-built capitals – Brasília, Canberra, Astana, Washington DC – building new cities is just something that humans do.

When countries rise up, when markets emerge, people build new cities. Today, though, we are taking it to unheard-of levels. We have never before built so many new cities in so many places at such great expense as we are right now.

New dots have been popping up on the maps of countries such as China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and India with unprecedented frequency since the late 1990s, and more than 120 new cities are currently being built in 40 nations around the world.

Avant-garde developments like Shenzhen and Pudong blazed new economic trails until they eventually widened into the boulevards of a new status quo for the emerging markets of the world. We are standing on the precipice of a new city building boom unlike anything we’ve seen before. These shiny new metropolises hold the dreams and aspirations of people and nations from east Asia to the Middle East to Africa. Will they deliver a bright new urban future or a debt-fuelled bubble of historic proportions?

Brasilia was founded in 1960 to move the capital from Rio de Janeiro to a more central location. The new city has been sold as a one-stop cure-all for an array of urban and economic issues facing emerging markets around the world: overcrowding, pollution, traffic congestion, housing shortages, lack of green space and economic stagnation, to name a few. By starting from scratch, governments hope to move on from their current clogged and dysfunctional urban centres and develop new economic sectors to help them leapfrog other nations. City building itself can also be a highly profitable endeavour for some.

At first glance, many new cities appear to openly defy economic fundamentals. What are emerging markets – “poor countries” – doing building some of the most technologically advanced, expensive cities on earth? Why is the dusty, remote Kazakh border town of Khorgos turning into what is claimed will become a “new Dubai”? How come oil-dependent Oman is erecting Duqm – a metropolis twice the size of Singapore – in the middle of the desert?

“The major reason for new cities is that there is so much migration,” says John Macomber, a senior lecturer at Harvard Business School who has studied new city development in depth. “People are moving to cities all over the world to seek opportunity.”

According to the UN, 68% of the world’s population will be living in cities by 2050. This means 2.5 billion more city dwellers, with 90% of the uptake happening in Asia and Africa. Half of the urban area that will be needed hasn’t been built yet. We would need scores more Delhis, Shanghais and Lagos.

“The sad thing is that we’re going to develop more urban area in the next 100 years than currently exists on Earth,” says the Nobel prize-winning economist Paul Romer of New York University. “If we stick to business as usual most of it is going to be disorderly and less functional than the stuff we already have.”

It doesn’t take a Nobel winner to see that many of the existing cities of Asia and Africa are simply not able to handle this onslaught of urbanisation. Cairo was built to house 1 million people, not the 20 million who live there today. Cities such as Mumbai, Kolkata, Lagos, Nairobi and Rio de Janeiro are crowded by rings of informal developments. Retrofitting these cities with modern infrastructure and utilities is more complicated and expensive than clearing out a swathe of land and starting all over again.

As Macomber says: “If you build a new city you don’t have to relocate or work around existing roads or rivers or factories or houses. You also don’t have to work around existing political processes, community groups, civic organisations ... or even existing regulations and rules.”

As well as being less complicated and cheaper than retrofitting old cities, building new cities is seen by many leaders as more profitable – and sexier. At the height of China’s new city building boom in 2011, land sales accounted for roughly 74% of the revenue stream for the country’s municipal governments and plots of urban construction land were selling at a 40-fold profit. Emerging markets that are actively reconstructing themselves – both physically and in terms of their global image –

tend to have economies that are driven by the real estate and construction sectors. For them, building an entirely new city is the pinnacle of projects.

“Neoliberalism and deregulation have created a wild west atmosphere that facilitates the circulation of footloose capital globally,” says Sarah Moser, a geography professor at McGill University and the author of the upcoming *Atlas of New Cities*. “It is easier now than in previous decades to acquire vast tracts of land and to then use that land for any purpose, including urban and commercial.

“Technology companies, construction companies, and the real estate industry are leveraging the many challenges facing cities in the global south to convince people that new cities are an important solution rather than fixing existing cities, which is not as profitable.”

Development firms such as New York’s Gale International and South Korea’s Posco are peddling copies of Songdo LINK around the world. Architects such as KPF and Arup are drawing up attention-grabbing masterplans lined with skyscrapers, parks and shopping malls reminiscent of New York, London and Dubai. And big tech firms such as Cisco, Alibaba and Tencent are keen to provision these new cities with cutting edge IT networks and public surveillance gizmos.

The money being thrown at new cities is staggering. Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah Economic City comes at a price tag of \$100bn (£78bn), while the country’s Neom megalopolis is slated to cost five times that. Malaysia’s Forest City had its price initially pegged at \$100bn, while Ordos Kangbashi cost a hulking \$161bn. Adding up the costs of more than 120 new cities around the world means a mountain of investment that can be measured in the trillions of dollars – but the returns are far from given.

“Too often a best-case scenario of potential economic rewards is presented and the project is rushed through when decision makers are on a utopian high,” says Moser. “The reality is that new city projects can only move forward with massive loans, often from foreign banks, with no guarantee that the city will be profitable enough to repay the loans.”

“Cities have to have a purpose,” Macomber says. “It’s a common mistake that has been made for centuries where a ruler will say ‘Let’s build some buildings and palaces and some things will happen’ or ‘Let’s put up a couple big office buildings and now we’re going to have a Dubai on the Indian Ocean’. Not necessarily. The new cities that struggle are the ones that are pushing against what market forces want to do.”

New cities that work have built-in economic drivers that give them their impetus and reason for being. Khorgos on the China-Kazakhstan border was sparked to life by a transportation hub along the New Silk Road; Cyberjaya in Malaysia was built as a concentrated hub of hi-tech firms, startups and educational facilities; South Korea’s Songdo is one of the best examples of an “aerotropolis” – a city built around an airport.

Other new cities could be described as superfluous – custom-built cities for the rich. “Some of these developments are imagined as the gated communities of privilege,” says Romer. “Like Brasília: ‘The place where we will be able to drive really fast in our cars. We’ll just not let any poor people come here.’ Those things are doomed to fail.

“They’re also an inappropriate response to the real need, which is not for the rich to have a place to retreat to but for people who want to get a first position on the kind of urban, modern escalator that can help lift them and their kids to a better life.”

Many new cities that are currently being built in Asia and Africa are clearly being designed for emerging middle classes. If provided with the right opportunities, this well-educated, big spending and highly mobile sector of society can be a boon for just about any country. If those opportunities are not provided they are especially prone to flight – emigrating to better jobs and lifestyles in the US, Canada and western Europe.

The new city building boom is nearly as much about maintaining and attracting high-value talent as it is about creating space for the droves of rural migrants searching for their first handholds in an urban environment.

“Many new cities are scrambling to attract these global elites through creating luxury properties that they can buy, luxury retail and restaurants, and infrastructure for their lavish hobbies: particularly docking facilities for yachts,” says Moser.

“The developer’s goal is to maximise profits and this is done in large part by creating luxury condos and villas. There is not much money to be made in affordable family housing, so developers are not interested.”

**II.A. Answer ANY TWO of the following questions in about 150 words each.
(2X10=20)**

1. The writer says ‘Retrofitting these cities with modern infrastructure and utilities is more complicated and expensive than clearing out a swathe of land and starting all over again.’ Do you agree/disagree with the writer? Elaborate
2. “Cities have to have a purpose,” What do you think is the purpose of a city? Draw from your experience of living in a city to answer the question.
3. “Neoliberalism and deregulation have created a wild west atmosphere that facilitates the circulation of footloose capital globally,” what is your understanding of this statement? Elaborate.
4. ‘Other new cities could be described as superfluous – custom-built cities for the rich. “Some of these developments are imagined as the gated communities of privilege,” says Romer. “Like Brasília: ‘The place where we will be able to drive really fast in our cars. We’ll just not let any poor people come here.’ Those things are doomed to fail.’ Why are they doomed to fail?

III. Write a pitch for a magazine that looks at development and social justice issues. Your pitch should include a profile and purpose of your magazine and five headlines of the stories that you would carry in your first issue.(1x20=20) (300-350 words)
