**Home and away: On rumours and fake news about migrant workers in TN**

The[rumours and fake news about migrant workers in Tamil Nadu](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/fact-check-fake-posts-fuel-safety-fears-among-migrant-workers-in-tamil-nadu/article66586550.ece) being attacked have seen the quick intervention of the authorities, assuring the workers of their safety. Many workers, most from Bihar, have been seen at railway stations waiting to leave for their home State after a video clip of violence between two groups of migrant workers was interpreted as an attack on migrant workers by locals. In any case, some of the workers were planning to be home for Holi festivities. Even before the problem could snowball, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin did well to contact his Bihar counterpart Nitish Kumar. There has been quick follow up elsewhere too. The Tamil Nadu police filed cases against those spreading rumours, which included the editor of the Dainik Bhaskar, under various sections of the Indian Penal Code. A person has been arrested in Jamui district of Bihar for sharing a misleading video clip. The Bihar police have also found some videos and news reports to be misleading and fake. Officials from Bihar and Jharkhand have visited the migrant hubs of Coimbatore and Tiruppur, and industry representatives are doing their bit to reassure the workers.

The issue has, unfortunately, paved the way for chauvinistic politics in Tamil Nadu and Bihar. The role that migrant workers play in different fields of economic activity in Tamil Nadu, particularly real estate, is well known. According to CREDAI Tamil Nadu, the migrant community oversees 85% of the work in big projects and 70% in medium-scale projects. It also has a visible presence in manufacturing, textiles, construction, and hospitality. A Tamil Nadu Labour Department survey in 2015 estimated that the State had around 11.5 lakh migrant workers. The episode has only highlighted the need for politicians to exercise caution and restraint when commenting on issues regarding migrant workers. Under the garb of protecting the interests of local people, many leaders have often denigrated migrant workers or held them responsible for problems such as locals facing unemployment. The message, as Mr. Stalin highlighted in his conversation with Mr. Nitish Kumar, that workers “who help in the State’s development are our workers”, should be internalised by all political parties across the spectrum. At the same time, the government, which has been rolling out welfare measures for the community, should include the supply of pulses and edible oil at concessional rates under the Public Distribution System, supplementing what is being given under the ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ scheme. An exclusive wing can be formed to address the issues and problems migrants face. The government can also institute a fresh and comprehensive study of migrant workers and help in their integration with the local community, to make them feel at home.