

# Getting hitched to a cause

A couple from Navi Mumbai on their reception day will not just spread happiness by a celebration but are also conducting a social cause of blood donation by installing a kiosk at the wedding reception, so that they could give their bit to society

By Sonali Telang

While weddings in India are pompous affairs, a couple from Navi Mumbai has decided to make it memorable with a good cause. The couple, Bilal Behji and Rokaya Manihar will be tying the knot on May 20 with a special blood donor booth at the reception and have requested guests to become lifesaving blood stem cell donors.

Bilal, a teacher by profession has been a regular blood donor for years. Along with Datri organisation, a nation wide registry for adult unrelated blood stem cell donors, Bilal also took up the cause for creating awareness about the donation of blood stem cells.

"It all started back in 2010 when I

Datri is India's largest adult unrelated blood stem cell donors registry. It has more than 2.11,000 registered voluntary donors, has facilitated 257 stem cell donations including 30 donations for international patients. DATRI works with 15 collection centers and has serviced 59 Transplant Centers across the world.



started donating blood regularly. I used to see posts on social media platforms where people urgently need specific blood types. I came in contact with Datri Organisation, which worked for the cause of donating blood stem cells. I thought to take up the cause as well," said Bilal Behji.

At the reception, a kiosk will be placed where volunteers will explain and registered guests as blood stem cell donors. "We are trying to build a database of stem cell donors and will provide the matched stem cell to the patients who need them. For the same,

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we will collect the sample by buccal swab, which is rubbing a dab of cotton on the volunteers' inner cheeks," said Swati Yadav, Donor Drive Coordinator, Datri Organisation.

For people suffering from severe blood disorders like blood cancer, thalassemia etc., the only hope of cure is a blood stem cell transplant from a donor. According to ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) and Indian Red Cross Society, there are more than 1,00,000 people suffering from fatal blood disorders in India. There is a low probability of finding a match for an Indian patient. Only 1 in 10,000 to 1 in 2 million Indians find a donor.

"Since our wedding will be graced by many people, I thought it would be the best time to create awareness about the issue. We have invited more than 1,000 guests for our wedding and even if 10 of them are willing to donate the blood stem cells, we could save 10 lives," added Bilal Behji.

## Misplaced Priorities?



Isn't it funny that the things which matter to us the most are discussed the least. We're guffed with Bieber because he lip-synced, we're super upset with the Snapchat CEO, because he apparently called India a poor nation (a secret that no one knew till then) and we're really upset with our neighboring

nation because they've encroached on some of our land in an Indian state which most of us don't even know the capital about.

But do most of us even complain that it's getting hotter with every year and there is nothing being done about it? Do most of us even bother to find out that the forest cover, ocean life and animal kingdom are facing extinction threats in most cases and it's directly affecting us? And by complain, I don't mean angry FB statuses or feeling irritated! I meant questioning governmental and environmental policies.

Not many may be aware that while we were busy bashing up Bieber, Snapchat and other countries, the local government has petitioned the Bombay High Court to give them permission to cut down over 5,000 trees to make space for the upcoming city Metro! Yes infrastructure is important to us but at what cost? And where does this stop? With the heat anyways becoming unbearable year after year thanks to rapid



## Escalation in garbage generation to cost civic body dearly