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The INDIAN PANORAMA

Will bring out a special edition to mark Mother's Day which falls on May 9 this year.

Articles and advertisements are invited from readers. The last date for submission is May 2, 2021.

Please email articles and advertisements by May 2 to salujaindra@gmail.com

Indian envoy interacts with U.S. business community on COVID-19 relief efforts



India's ambassador to the United States Taranjit Singh Sandhu.

File Photo / courtesy Indian Embassy

WASHINGTON (TIP): India's Ambassador to the U.S. Taranjit Singh Sandhu held an interaction with members of the business community on the current COVID-19 pandemic situation in the country.

The virtual meeting was hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on Thursday, April 29. During the talks, Mr. Sandhu appraised the business community of the items that India is trying to identify and source,

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India sees record 3.79 lakh new Covid cases, 3,645 more deaths

Registering a steady increase, the active cases have increased to 30,84,814
Caught unawares, India accepts aid from the world for the first time in 17 years



NEW DELHI (TIP): India saw a record single-day rise of 3,79,257 new coronavirus infections pushing the total tally of Covid cases to 1,83,76,524, while active cases crossed the 30-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday, April 29.

The death toll increased to 2,04,832 with a record 3,645 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Registering a steady increase, the active cases have increased to 30,84,814, comprising 16.79 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid

CONTD ON PAGE 40

<< They die for want of Oxygen!
Picture for Representation only

Covid-19 surge: Indiaspora raises USD 1 million for India in less than 48 hours

WASHINGTON (TIP): Indiaspora, a non profit community of global Indian diaspora leaders, has raised USD 1 million towards COVID-19 relief efforts within the last 48 hours as the organization announced on Friday to launch the "Help India Breathe" fundraiser campaign.

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New York mayor envisions full reopening by July 1



"We are ready to bring New York City back fully on July 1," de Blasio told a news briefing, April 29. "Now we can see that light at the end of the tunnel." - File photo / Twitter

NEW YORK (TIP): New York City aims to "fully reopen" on July 1 after more than a year of closures and capacity restrictions, Mayor Bill de Blasio said on Thursday, April 29, citing satisfactory progress in its vaccination campaign.

"We are ready to bring New York City back fully on July 1," de Blasio told a news briefing. "Now we can see that light at the end of the tunnel."

De Blasio said he had not discussed the city's reopening date with Governor Andrew Cuomo, but his announcement comes a day after Cuomo lifted restrictions that would clear the way for a revival of the city's nightlife.

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U.S. to restrict travel from India starting May 4

The entry restrictions do not apply to lawful permanent residents



WASHINGTON (TIP): Due to the very high numbers of COVID-19 cases and multiple strains of the virus in India, the United States will restrict travel of non-citizens from the country, starting Tuesday, May 4 Eastern U.S. time. U.S. President Joe Biden issued a proclamation on Friday, April 30, afternoon prohibiting the entry of non-citizens (the administration has done away with the term 'alien') who have been physically present in India for 14

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TV journalist Rohit Sardana dies of cardiac arrest after testing positive for COVID-19

Read story on page 14



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-: GUEST COMMENTS:-

Promises to keep: On Joe Biden's first address to U.S. Congress

Biden is on course to fulfilling agenda despite opposition at home and challenges abroad

In his first address to a joint session of Congress, U.S. President Joe Biden made clear that his administration would continue pressing forward with promises made during his election campaign last year, including vigorously meeting the health challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, kick-starting the engines of the U.S. economy to provide sustainable job opportunities in the digital era, and reasserting the position of his country as a driving force for democracy worldwide including pushing back on China's aspiration to be a regional hegemon in Asia. Mr. Biden's first 100 days in office have been coterminous with arguably the most fraught times in recent U.S. history, given the devastation wreaked by the coronavirus on life and economic activity - making the U.S. the worst performer worldwide until recently surpassed on this grim scale by India. However, the Democrat has risen to the challenge posed by the virus, when compared to his predecessor Donald Trump's response, in terms of signing into law a \$1.9

trillion pandemic relief bill and funneling direct payments of \$1,400 per person to more than 160 million households. Reports suggest that this shot in the arm could boost economic growth this year to 6% or higher and revive the nearly 8.4 million jobs lost to COVID-19 by 2022. Whether this will be enough to mollify the likely anger of wealthy Americans for the tax hikes he proposes to slap them with is unclear. Yet, it is not the economy but the wounds of racist hatred that he will have to work even harder to heal. The recent conviction of the police officer responsible for the death of African-American George Floyd represents but the first step toward bridging the chasm between prejudiced, overzealous law enforcement and racial minorities.

Notwithstanding the considerable progress made by the Biden administration in domestic politics, it is in the international arena that much work remains unfinished to repair the damage wrought by his predecessor, an isolationist who prioritized transnationalism and bilateral quid

pro quo over strengthening the U.S. as a global voice for plurilateral cooperation and regional engagement. Mr. Biden, contrarily, has thrown down the gauntlet to China, assuring its President Xi Jinping that Washington would continue to maintain a strong military presence in the Indo-Pacific "not to start conflict, but to prevent one". Recognizing the multi-dimensional character of Beijing's challenge to the rules-based international order, Mr. Biden has also vowed to stand up to "unfair" trade practices, including disallowed subsidies for Chinese state-owned enterprises and industrial espionage, as well as speak out on perceived violations of fundamental freedoms and rights relating to, for example, Beijing's aggression in the South China Sea and in Hong Kong and the Xinjiang region, respectively. Whether facing conservative opposition to domestic policies or hostile pushback on the global stage from geopolitical rivals, Mr. Biden must hold fast to the values that saw him elevated to the White House. *(The Hindu)*

Election Commission of India in the dock

Constitutional body is being held responsible for Covid surge

The Madras High Court has pulled no punches in holding the Election Commission of India (ECI) 'singularly' responsible for the spread of the second wave of Covid-19 in the country. The court has even said that ECI officials may be booked on murder charges. This is a scathing indictment of the poll panel's conduct of the elections in four states and a UT over the past month amid the devastating pandemic. Sadly, the strictures have shown the ECI in a poor light because of its decisions, though the polling staff had accomplished the Herculean task of holding elections during a health emergency.

There is no doubt that polls are a constitutional obligation that the ECI

has to fulfil, come what may, but the sheer chaos they unleashed could have been avoided with foresight and planning. The poll schedule for West Bengal - eight phases spread over 34 days - had come under fire from the outset. Such a long-drawn-out exercise was a recipe for disaster as the virus was getting uncontrollable by the day. Even as Covid cases kept rising in recent weeks, the ECI refused to club the remaining phases, citing logistic challenges and legal constraints. Though the specter of large gatherings becoming superspreaders of infection loomed large, the commission allowed crowded roadshows and rallies. It was as late as April 22, with only two phases of polling left, that the ECI imposed a ban on roadshows and

vehicle rallies in the state.

The poll panel has now prohibited all victory processions and celebrations after the counting of votes on May 2. The move is welcome, but it will all boil down to enforcement. It remains to be seen what action, if any, would be taken against the offenders. There is a growing perception that the ECI is reluctant to act against certain big fish. The credibility of this constitutional body has repeatedly come under a cloud as doubts have been raised about its neutrality. The ECI needs to go the extra mile to dispel such notions and reaffirm its commitment to remain Indian democracy's watchdog.

(Tribune, Chandigarh)

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Indian-origin British MP Dhesi Urged his government to help India



Indian origin MP in the UK, Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi has urged his government to help India in its fight against Covid

LONDON (TIP): India-origin Labour MP in Britain, Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, has urged his government to help India as Covid-19 situation worsened.

"Many are extremely anxious about loved ones in India, terrified after seeing the apocalyptic scenes of people dying on the streets for want of oxygen, a collapsing health system, and crematoriums and cemeteries overwhelmed with thousands of people dying everyday," he said in the House of Commons.

Many of us are extremely anxious about loved ones in India, terrified after seeing apocalyptic scenes of people dying on the streets for want of oxygen.

India is registering highest ever Covid cases globally, so we must take the lead and help Indian people in their hour of need. pic.twitter.com/ybagKTWIZw

- Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP (@TanDhesi) April 28, 2021

In an Urgent Question on this matter, the MP for Slough highlighted to Foreign Office Minister Nigel Adams the need for the UK to take the lead and help the Indian people in their hour of need, considering India is registering the highest ever Covid cases globally.

Indians in Australia hold prayers in solidarity with people back home battling Covid-19 surge

MELBOURNE (TIP): Hundreds of Indians here in Australia on Wednesday, April 28, held prayers and a candlelight vigil in solidarity with the people back home as India battles a harsh second wave of coronavirus infections.

The vigil was held at the iconic Federation Square building and attended by hundreds of Indian community members, who held posters and placards saying, "Australia stands with India" and "Prayers for India".

Karthik Arsu, one of the organizers, said: "We have organized the candlelight vigil today (Wednesday) to send our best wishes and prayers for the people of India".

"We don't want to lose hope and want to show our solidarity with the people of India. We are sending our prayers and positivity and hoping India will come out of this COVID-19 crisis soon," he said.

India currently is battling an unprecedented wave of coronavirus



Indians in Australia offered prayers for their brethren in India

which has crippled the healthcare system in the country as several hospitals have run out of oxygen supplies and ICU beds with ventilators.

On Wednesday, April 28, India saw a record single-day rise of 3,60,960 coronavirus cases, which pushed the total tally to 1,79,97,267, while the death toll crossed two lakh following 3,293 fresh fatalities, according to Union health ministry data updated.

The Australian government on Tuesday, April 27, announced a ban on direct flights from India for at least three weeks, as part of measures to prevent the new strain of virus from entering the nation.

"We recognize the challenging COVID-19 crisis that India is currently battling, and we stand ready to provide more support to our friends in India and Indian Australians during this difficult time," Prime minister Scott Morrison said.

The initial package of support was also announced which includes rapid deployment of 500 non-invasive ventilators, with capacity to deploy up to a total of 3,000 ventilators.

"Our Government is also supplying a significant package of personal protective equipment (PPE), including one million surgical masks, 500,000 P2/N95 masks, 100,000 surgical gowns, 100,000 goggles, 100,000 pairs of gloves and 20,000 face shields, Morrison said.

Indian-Origin Gupta Brothers in South Africa named in UK Economic Sanctions List

LONDON (TIP): Three Indian-origin brothers from the influential Gupta family in South Africa have been placed on a new list of 22 people sanctioned by the UK government on Monday, April 26, for their alleged involvement in some of the world's most serious cases of corruption and to block them channeling money through UK banks or enter the country. Brothers Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta are sanctioned for their role in a "long-running" South African corruption scandal, alongside Russian tax fraudsters, individuals linked to Latin American bribery cases and a Sudanese businessman.

They fall under the first wave of measures under the new Global Anti-Corruption sanctions regime, which gives the UK unprecedented power to stop corrupt actors profiting from the UK economy, imposes asset freezes and travel bans against individuals. "Corruption has a corrosive effect as it slows development, drains the wealth of poorer nations and keeps their people trapped in poverty. It poisons the well of democracy," said UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab.

"The individuals we have sanctioned today have been involved in some of the most notorious corruption cases around the world. Global Britain is standing up for democracy, good governance and the rule of law. We are saying to those involved in serious corruption: we will not tolerate you or your dirty money in our country," he said. On the sanction list



The UK government on Monday, April 26, placed the Gupta brothers on a new list of 22 people sanctioned for their alleged involvement in some of the world's most serious cases of corruption

of 22, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) includes Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta and their associate Salim Essa, for their roles in serious corruption.

"They were at the heart of a long-running process of corruption in South Africa which caused significant damage to its economy," it notes. The businessmen have all previously denied allegations of corruption.

The family, originally from Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur, is now in self-exile in Dubai as South Africa continues extradition efforts for questioning in their alleged role in state capture involving billions of South African Rands from state-owned institutions. In 2019, the US treasury department imposed sanctions on the three Gupta brothers and Essa for their involvement in corruption in South Africa.

Others on the list include those

involved in the diversion of USD 230 million of Russian state property through a fraudulent tax refund scheme uncovered by Russian lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who died in 2009 having uncovered one of the largest tax frauds in recent Russian history.

Sudanese businessman Ashraf Seed Ahmed Hussein Ali, widely known as Al Cardinal, is sanctioned for his involvement in the "misappropriation" of significant amounts of state assets in one of the poorest countries in the world.

"This diversion of resources in collusion with South Sudanese elites has contributed to ongoing instability and conflict," the FCDO notes.

The remaining individuals on the sanction list are said to be involved in serious corruption in Latin America, including facilitating bribes to support a major drug trafficking organization and "misappropriation that has led to citizens being deprived of vital resources for development".

The FCDO said the measures are deliberately targeted, so the UK can impose sanctions on corrupt individuals and their enablers, rather than entire nations. They are being taken partly in tandem with the US, which is also announcing further corruption sanctions this week. "Acting together sends the clearest possible signal that corruption comes with a heavy price," the FCDO said.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)



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Indian American physicians, artists offer India support in Covid-19 crisis

PARAMJIT AUJLA

SACRAMENTO (TIP): For Indian Americans living thousands of miles away from the country of their origin, the past few weeks have been nothing short of harrowing.

As India continues to be in the grip of a deadly second wave of Covid pandemic, relatives in America are often at a loss wondering how they can come to the aid of India in its hour of crisis.

While many organizations are creating fundraisers, some others are using creative outlets not only to cope with the worries, but to also create awareness and raise funds.

California-based Indian American artist Sujata Tibrewala spent the past few days completing a new painting she titled, "Sick Mother India."

From her San Jose home, the artist explained to a news outlet, why she resorted to the creative medium to help her calm down as distressing news continues coming out of India.

"I started to paint a traditional kalamkari art to take my mind off all the happenings in India," she said. "But halfway through I saw the goddess having difficulty breathing due to all Covid around and I felt compelled to give her oxygen."

The artist-activist thinks that it is calamities such as these that make us realize how futile our differences and



California-based Indian American artist Sujata Tibrewala who spent the past few days completing this painting she titled, "Sick Mother India", thinks that it is calamities such as these that make us realize how futile our differences and divides have been

divides have been.

She says, "In the recent past, there have been conversations (in India) around mandir and masjid. But those who are affected are people from all religions."

"Corona does not care. If Hindus go for a congregation, they will get affected. Same is the case with Muslims or any political

party," Tibrewala says.

"My country, the melting pot of all cultures has been reduced to this fighting in the name of religion, caste, political ideology. This is cruel reminder that instead we should be all fighting the common enemy - Covid."

The artist however stresses that her

painting is not just a creative outlet for healing for her, but through it she also intends to encourage fellow Indians in America to raise funds.

"I am amplifying my request to raise funds for India through my painting," she says urging everyone to donate to any charity of their choice for Covid relief and send her a proof of donation.

"As a Thank You gesture, I will send them a digital print of this painting or my Mandala artwork if they are within US. If the contributors are outside of US they will get an online print."

If art is serving as a medium to help some, many other organizations have come together to raise funds - an important in fact acute urgency during these times.

American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin are also collecting funds. The money raised would be used to send oxygen concentrators to India. Readers can go to <https://events.aapiusa.org/donation-oxygen/> for donating.

Another fundraiser by Asha for Education, an NGO that works for education of underprivileged children in India will go towards purchasing medicine and hygiene kits, pulse oximeter kits and oxygen concentrators.

Readers can go to <https://www.facebook.com/donate/318833112965921/10159189122663187/> for details.

"India deserves our attention right now": Sundar Pichai

SAN JOSE (TIP): Witnessing the "heartbreaking" Covid-19 crisis in India amid a deadly second wave, Google's Indian American CEO Sundar Pichai would like other US companies to also come forward to help in a coordinated way.

"India deserves our attention right now," Pichai told media Wednesday, April 28 discussing how his company is responding and what others can similarly do to lend support.

Pichai, who became head of Google's parent company Alphabet in 2019, and Microsoft's Indian American CEO Satya Nadella publicly pledged Monday, April 26 to help battle the surge of coronavirus cases.

"The situation there is dire, and it's been heartbreaking to see. I think the worst is yet to come," he said on witnessing the unfolding crisis in India from afar."

"Being here, seeing the attention here, I realize at the highest levels from President (Joe) Biden, Secretary (of State Antony) Blinken - there's been focus on seeing how we can help India and the other countries being affected."

"From our side, we really focused on providing the most helpful information," he said noting there are 600 million people connected to the internet and they're looking for information about vaccine and testing.

"So, working with the Ministry of Health in India, making sure we can get the right information on the ground has been a big focus for us."

"As for us partnering with NGOs and public health organizations to get the messaging out," Pichai said, "It's important that people are able to stay home and mask and stay safe. So, we're helping get the message out in partnership."

Other companies can similarly take their expertise where they "can and being ready to help in a coordinated way is going to be helpful," he said. "The second, it's very possible to provide cash and other resources to organizations on the ground I think can make a big difference."

Asked about vaccine supply and a possible intellectual property waiver, Pichai said he was more involved in the conversations around providing raw

materials, supply access so India can begin manufacturing its vaccines.

"I'm not familiar enough around the issues around IP to weigh in on them" he said. "I was encouraged by the AstraZeneca doses to India."

"This pandemic will involve us tackling it globally. The US, we're very fortunate. We need to work hard to make sure we can get access to vaccine supply around the world as soon as possible," Pichai said.

On Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's handling of the pandemic, Pichai said, "If you look around the world, Covid has been humbling in the sense that, when you think you're on top of it, there can be a surge back."

"I think encouraging good public safety measures and paying attention to crisis is the only thing you can do in the short term. That's the effort I'm seeing," he said adding, "As a company, we stand by ready to help."

Commenting on recent take-down requests from the Modi government over critical pandemic posts on Twitter, Facebook, Pichai said, "Normally we do



"India deserves our attention right now," Pichai told media Wednesday, April 28 discussing how his company is responding and what others can similarly do to lend support.

comply with local laws, particularly in democratic countries which through their norms and processes have passed laws." "I think one of India's strengths is a deeply rooted democratic tradition, based in freedom of expression and allowing for diversity of viewpoints," he said. "That's a strength."

"We haven't had any requests," Pichai said, "In the past we've been able to work constructively with governments around the world, and we'll continue that approach here."

Former New York Governor David Paterson Endorses Alfonso Quiroz For City Council



Former Governor backs Quiroz's candidacy to replace outgoing Councilman Danny Dromm in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst seat



QUEENS, NY (TIP): City Council candidate Alfonso Quiroz has earned the endorsement of former New York Governor David Paterson, who praised Quiroz's passion for public service and his commitment to community. Paterson served as the state's top executive from March 2008 to the end of 2010.

"I have come to know Alfonso Quiroz over the last 15 years and truly believe he will be a stellar public

servant because he cares about his community and his city," said Governor David Paterson. "Alfonso is driven by both his heart and his head in his continuous pursuit of solutions to improve the lives of others and ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed."

Quiroz said he was honored by the endorsement because Paterson was an early supporter of marriage equality measures in New York and paved the way for state legislation legalizing same-sex marriage. Moreover, his agenda as governor focused on expanding economic, healthcare, educational and housing opportunities for everyone and took strides to end discrimination on all fronts. These goals are more important than ever as New York City and State try to emerge from the pandemic, he said.

"It is a great honor to have the endorsement of Governor Paterson, who served our State with integrity and dignity," said Alfonso Quiroz. "Countless New Yorkers gained access to new opportunities and lead better lives due to his leadership. Over his decades-long career, Governor Paterson was a fierce advocate for the people, and I hope to continue his legacy in the City Council for my neighbors and community."

Quiroz is a long-time New Yorker who lives in Jackson Heights with his husband, Jeff Simmons.

He has a long record of civic involvement. He is a former president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Queens. He currently serves as vice president of the JFK Democratic Club and is a former board member of Queens Theater, the Stonewall Democratic Club and active in the Jackson Heights Beautification Group. As the founder of the 37th Avenue Sidewalk Cafe Coalition, he was an instrumental and early voice in the expansion of outdoor dining in Jackson Heights.

Quiroz has served as deputy chief of staff to former Councilmember Helen Sears and as Democratic district leader in Queens. He was a White House intern when President Clinton was in office and served as a field organizer for Al Gore's 2000 campaign.

Koshy Thomas Candidacy for District 23 of NYC Council is gaining momentum



QUEENS, NY (TIP): Koshy Thomas Campaign is gaining momentum as the Asian Indian Queens community gathered to throw their full support to him in his efforts to become the first New York city council member in the upcoming elections on June 22nd. The meeting took place in Santoor Restaurant in Floral Park and was attended by community leaders and activists. The meeting was convened in light of increasing endorsements and enthusiastic reception from voters for his candidacy. The challenge for Koshy Thomas is to translate the newly created enthusiasm into votes in the days ahead!

Mr. Koshy Thomas, in his speech, talked about his involvement with the community for the last 27 years and said he knows the community well and their concerns and aspirations. "I consider this upcoming election as a great opportunity to serve the people in the District. There is so much to be done in terms of helping the community and the small business in these COVID times. "If you walk around this District, you may see so many small businesses are closing down, and they are truly hurting. They need help with tax breaks and other financial incentives to survive in this economic downturn", he said.

Dr. Annie Paul, Legislator from

Rockland county, called for unity among us and encouraged everyone present at the meeting to get involved. "when I ran for the election, people from all over the country extended help. I am expecting the same for Koshy's campaign. This District has so many Asian Indians, and if we come together, victory is certain". She said. She also offered whatever assistance in this effort and urged the community to join her in this great endeavor to elect the first Asian Indian to the NYC Council.

Mr. Aniayan George, President of FOMAA (Federation Of Malayalee Associations of Americas), characterized Koshy Thomas as someone who identifies with the community regardless of their background and someone who has the energy, willingness, and capacity to elevate his contributions further as an NYC Councilman. "I believe Koshy Thomas can win this election, and he will be our first Asian Indian representation in the City Council," he added.

Father John Thomas, Vicar of the Orthodox Church in Jackson Heights, reminded the people of our duty as responsible citizens to participate in the elections and specially to vote. (Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Dan Quart Joins Lawmakers and Community Leaders to Denounce Hate Towards Asian Americans and Demand Justice for Yao Pan Ma

MANHATTAN (TIP): Candidate for Manhattan District Attorney Dan Quart, on April 27, joined lawmakers and community leaders in East Harlem to denounce hatred towards Asian Americans and demand justice for Yao Pan Ma. Yao Pan Ma was brutally attacked Monday night and remains in critical condition at Harlem Hospital.

"The vicious attack on Yao Pan Ma was unacceptable, and the problem of Anti-Asian hate goes even deeper than what we're seeing because so many crimes go unreported," said Quart. "There is a valid conversation to be had about the root causes of the attack on Yao Pan Ma, but this is a moment where accountability and justice is required, and that includes aggressive



Lawmakers and community leaders denounced hate crimes against Asians in East Harlem on April 27.

prosecution."

Dan Quart is one of NYC's top pro bono attorneys and a New York State Assembly member representing Manhattan's East Side. A Washington Heights native who grew up in subsidized housing with working-class parents, Dan was raised by a public-school teacher and a social worker who taught him the value of public service. Since graduating law school, he has dedicated his career to standing up for tenants' rights and advocating for criminal justice reform.

As Manhattan's next District Attorney, Dan will fight to end mass incarceration, hold law enforcement accountable for police brutality, and ensure that all Manhattanites feel safe. Learn more at DanQuart.com.

SARDAR MANMOHAN SINGH DHALL PASSES AWAY

LONG ISLAND, NY (TIP): Sardar Manmohan Singh Dhall, a well-known Sikh community leader, has passed away on April 26. He was 89. His funeral, attended by hundreds of relations, friends and admirers, despite Covid restrictions, observed in letter and spirit, took place on April 29 at Moloney Funeral Home in Ronkonkoma.

As is customary among the Sikhs, prayers for the eternal peace of the departed soul, were offered at Gurdwara Plainview where rich tributes were paid to Sardar Manmohan Singh by Varinder Singh Sikka, President of the gurdwara on behalf of the gurdwara management, Mr. Sikka described Sardar Manmohan Singh as a perfect gentleman, always smiling and ready to help anyone. He took keen interest in the gurdwara affairs and helped greatly in the construction of the new building of the gurdwara.

Vikas Singh Dhall, one of the sons of Sardar Manmohan Singh, and chairman of Gurdwara Plainview, described his father as his mentor who guided him in every way. He felt sad that he has now been deprived of the wise counsel of his Dad. He thanked all for their presence at the funeral and at the prayers.

Grandchildren of Sardar Manmohan Singh also paid rich tributes to their



grandfather.

Sardar Manmohan Singh Dhall is survived by his wife Sardarni Pritpal Kaur Dhall. Children Inderpal Singh, Harinderpal Singh, Gurinder Kaur and Vikas Dhall. Father-in-law to Manmohan Singh Bhasin, Daman Kaur, Gogli and Indu Dhall. Grandfather to Simardeep, Raymon, Kinsi, Jasmine, Sherry, Angelica, Gurtej, HarSahib & Raunak Dhall. Great-Grandfather to Aarna, Noor and Pavan Singh.

Speaking with The Indian Panorama, Vikas Singh Dhall gave a brief life story of his father. At the Age of 15, Manmohan Singh witnessed the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. He joined Army at the age of 17 and took an early discharge to further his professional career and joined Gestetner Duplicators (A British Firm), served there for 20 years.

While working in the company, he married Pritpal Kaur and had four children. During the massacre of 1984 in Indore, India, he had massive financial losses.

In 1987 he decided to move to the US and to fulfill his dream for a better life with his family. After his arrival in the US, he became very active in Local Sikh Community. One of his very passionate things to do was, SEWA (service to community), and he always distributed left over langer (food) to the Sikh and non-Sikh working class youth. Raising a family with Sikh values was his number one priority and he has set an example for many families across the tri-state area of New York.

"Sardar Manmohan Singh Dhall leaves us on a path to being humble, working hard and taking care of family", said Vikas Singh Dhall.



GOPIO Thanks President Biden and Appeals to Release AstraZeneca Vaccines to India

NEW YORK (TIP): Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) thanked US President Joe Biden for his announcement of USA sending raw materials for COVID-19 vaccines, medical equipment and protective gear to help India respond to a massive surge in coronavirus infections.

India is going through a grim situation now in Covid Pandemic infection and deaths. The latest report says that the new infections are about 350,000 and deaths about 3,000 per day.

GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham said that in the last three months, India acted as a global leader in sending vaccines to many countries. However, with the sudden unexpected Covid-19 outbreak, India needs an enormous quantity of vaccines for its 1.3 billion population. As a close ally of India, our country must help India in this grave situation.

"We appeal to you to send AstraZeneca vaccines which are stored by US manufacturers in their warehouses since the US is yet to authorize its use here while it has been used in India," Dr. Abraham appealed in his letter to President



GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham said that India needs an enormous quantity of vaccines for its 1.3 billion population. As a close ally of India, our country must help India in this grave situation.

Biden.

GOPIO also requested President Biden to facilitate manufacturing of other vaccines in India so that the global demand can be met sooner.

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AS I SEE IT

Gasping for air, gasping for answers



BY VIKRAM
PATEL

The struggle to breathe, or asphyxia, is the most terrifying human experience. Something one takes for granted, which we do more than a dozen times every minute, suddenly becomes an ordeal. I know how this feel having lived through tormenting bouts of asthma in my younger years and, more recently, when I found myself trapped under a raft in the freezing, raging, Zaskar river in Ladakh. The memories of gasping for air and the fear of dying are seared into my brain. Death typically comes as a relief from the terror; as multiple organ systems collapse due to the lack of oxygen, a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas which we are not even aware of until we cannot get enough of it. Oxygen. A word which should signify vitality and exuberance, but which in recent weeks has become synonymous with death and suffering. Who would have ever imagined that the India of 2021 which boasts sending rockets to the stars and manufactures oxygen on an industrial scale, would one day be unable to supply oxygen to save her own people?

The trauma of asphyxia

The word 'trauma' typically evokes extreme events such as rape, sexual abuse and war-related violence. This is not surprising given that the word gained currency as a medical condition in the aftermath of the Vietnam war when tens of thousands of soldiers from the United States returning from the brutal conflict exhibited a range of distressing symptoms, giving birth to the diagnosis of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). But the truth is that trauma can occur in

The people of India are entitled to a full and honest account of what led more than a billion people into a catastrophe

many more diverse ways, and it is only now, with COVID-19 sweeping the world, that gasping for air has been recognized as a traumatic event. What ties these seemingly unconnected experiences together is that they all evoke the same intense emotions: a toxic brew of extreme fear and utter helplessness. These experiences, especially when sustained over hours or days, literally leave an imprint in the brain so that the hallmark features of PTSD symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks and feeling on edge, recur at any time, sometimes triggered by a totally unrelated event which bear similarity to the trauma.

A recent study from the United Kingdom of over 13,000 survivors of COVID-19 reported a strong correlation between the severity of the infection and subsequent PTSD. While just over 1% of the patients reported breathing problems or hospital admission, the prevalence of PTSD in the months which followed were staggering: 35% of the sickest, and 15% of even those who only needed home assistance. The most prominent symptoms were frightening intrusive images of being breathless or ventilated. Thus, for those who do survive these nightmarish moments on the edge of life, the ordeal is far from over. Even as we struggle to keep those gasping for air alive, we must simultaneously attend to the long-term mental health consequences of survivors, a task even more daunting in a country where trauma-related mental health problems are barely even acknowledged.

A traumatized country

But there is also another kind of trauma which is sweeping across India, as millions of stories of suffering, despair and death percolate into the consciousness of every

person. There has been a feverish rise of anxiety and fear across the population, twinned with helplessness as the comfort of knowing that there is a government which they can rely on has evaporated. India has been engulfed, in a matter of a few weeks, into the world's most serious humanitarian crisis, fueled not just by a more infectious strain of the virus, but also a stunning level of arrogance, greed, incompetence and complacency. The terror reminds me of the weeks that followed the brutal lock-down imposed on the same population a year ago, without any warning or preparation. A year on, the horrors have returned to their lives, only this time for exactly the opposite reason: the state did nothing at all as tens of thousands, and then hundreds of thousands, of people were getting infected every day, watching millions congregate at religious festivals and election rallies, oblivious or uncaring about the inevitable cataclysm this would lead to.

The concept of collective trauma has emerged only in recent times, in the aftermath of terrifying events which have affected entire populations, such as following the 9/11 attacks in New York or disasters such as the tsunami in 2004. These events were followed by a dramatic increase in symptoms of psychological distress, including the cardinal features of trauma, for months and years after the event itself had passed into history. And so we also must prepare the country for healing from this mass traumatic experience and we can draw upon lessons from other humanitarian crises to guide our actions. Most immediately, we must find a place to park our anger and rage, as justified as these reactions may be, and search for the compassion lurking beneath it, and support in any way we can the



efforts of the thousands of civil society organizations to support those who are gasping for air, not forgetting the continuing support they will need after they can breathe again. The outpouring of community action we are witnessing is a soothing balm for the anxiety many are experiencing as they fear that the state seems to have collapsed.

Healing through truth

But, long-term recovery of the collective trauma will need resolution of the pent-up rage that is burning a hole in our souls. This will need the equivalent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions which have served to heal the collective traumas of events which affected entire populations, such as apartheid in SA. Such an independent Commission would document the facts behind the tragedy unfolding across India, hold individuals and institutions accountable, and offer a path towards restorative justice to heal a deeply wounded nation. Last week, when the Delhi HC issued an order to the Central Government to ensure the supply of oxygen, I was puzzled by its statement that "As it stands, we all know this country is being run by God." I will never know who was being referred to as God, but I am assuming it must be the spiritual being we pray to in our myriad places of worship. If so, then we must ensure that this is not the final judgment of the apocalypse that has befallen India. The people of this country are entitled to a full and honest account of what led more than a billion people into a catastrophe, if only to put at rest our troubled minds, restore the fractured trust between the people and the state, and be better prepared for the next pandemic.

(The author is The Pershing Square Professor of Global Health at Harvard Medical School, and a member of the Lancet Citizen's Commission on Re-imagining India's Health System)

A timely warning: On Supreme Court intervention against clampdown on information

SC's caution against harassing those needing help will deter ill-advised action

The Supreme Court has issued a timely warning to the States against any attempt to clamp down on the dissemination of information about the serious health crisis besetting the country, or calls for help through social media from citizens affected by COVID-19. The comment, obviously in response to the utterly despotic threat issued by U.P. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that those "spreading misinformation" or "rumor" would be detained under the National Security Act (NSA) and their property seized, will surely help prevent ill-advised action by the police and the administration to treat appeals concerning shortage of

GUEST COMMENT

hospital beds, medical oxygen and vital drugs as attempts to bring the government into disrepute. The police in Amethi registered an FIR against a man who appealed on Twitter for an oxygen cylinder for a family member for allegedly circulating a rumor and seeking to cause fear and alarm. Mr. Adityanath appears quite convinced that complaints about oxygen shortage in his State are either imaginary or, worse, malicious, and wants to treat them as attempts to "spoil the atmosphere". While it is entirely in order that the government has directed the police to crack down on the profiteering on medicines in the black market, it is quite a different matter if the administration starts seeing all appeals for help in a grave crisis as nothing more than activities aimed at tarnishing the government's image.

Given the propensity of such leaders to treat the voicing of grievances by citizens as a personal affront to their administrative capabilities, the Court's warning that any attempt to stifle the people's voices would attract action for contempt of court is quite timely and

necessary. As Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, who heads the Bench, remarked, any clampdown on information is contrary to basic precepts. He underscored the significance and necessity for the free flow of information during a grave crisis by recalling the role it played in containing a famine in 1970. The Court was apparently drawing inspiration from the theory, articulated by economist Amartya Sen, that the fundamental attributes of democracy - such as a free press and the need to face the people at elections and respond to political criticism - help prevent famines. However, how far the present regime feels itself accountable to the people at large is now unclear. It faces criticism both within the country and from the international media that a major cause of the crisis is its reluctance to acknowledge its own failure to prepare for a calamitous second wave. Questions fired at it by High Courts are also on these lines. Any move to stifle such criticism or believe that this is a problem of managing perceptions will be of no avail if the infections and body count keep rising alarmingly and the health system draws close to a collapse. *(The Hindu)*

Arrogant Modi-Shah Regime Dismissed Scientific Warnings



BY BRINDA KARAT

IN THE CURRENT CRISIS, OF IMMEDIATE CONCERN ARE THE DISASTROUS OMISSIONS AND COMMISSIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE BUILDING OF HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING, CRUCIALLY, THE PROBLEM WITH OXYGEN SUPPLIES AND ITS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED VACCINE POLICY.



Modi-Shah regime's policy paralysis is responsible for the Covid misery and deaths

George Floyd's last words, "I can't breathe", resonated across the world to symbolize the brutal reality of a racist police force in the US. Today in India, there is a different context: these tragic words are whispered across homes and outside hospitals as Covid patients struggle to breathe, deprived of life-saving oxygen. "I can't breathe", symbolizing the arrogance of a chest-thumping central leadership of the government of India, a leadership that dismissed warnings of the coming Covid tsunami from experts, based on scientific research and concrete data, a leadership mesmerised by its own self-serving propaganda of being the vishwa guru who would save the world, a leadership which led the way in breaking every single rule of Covid-appropriate behavior and encouraged others to do so too, a leadership that promoted a platform of fake nationalism to hide its failures. And echoing the tone and tenor of the top two leaders of the present regime, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, are their minions across the country who exist because they obey.

In the current crisis, of immediate concern are the disastrous omissions and commissions of the government concerning the building of health infrastructure, including, crucially, the problem with oxygen supplies and its recently announced vaccine policy. As far as the oxygen supply situation is concerned, much is being made of the data put out that there is no shortage of oxygen which is mainly used by industry, but of transportation. The bottom line is that because of lack of planning and execution, people are dying. A few days ago, the Prime Minister made a grand announcement that an additional 150 oxygen plants would be set up - with no explanation as to why the earlier decision

taken a year ago to set up 162 oxygen plants is still not implemented. An investigation by the website Scroll showed that till April 2021, only 11 were installed and just three were functional. In response, the Health Ministry claimed that 33 were installed, an official admission nevertheless of the non-implementation of the decision. Take the case of Delhi, the capital of India, which has the highest number of deaths due to oxygen supply shortages. In its recent affidavit in an ongoing petition in the Delhi High Court, the union Health Ministry admitted that of seven oxygen plants to be installed in Delhi, only one oxygen plant had been installed. The government counsel could not say whether it was functional or not. If the central government had acted as it should have, many of the precious lives lost in the capital could have been saved.

By mid-March, there was an alarming rise in cases in Delhi. The central government had usurped all the powers of the elected government in Delhi through the amendments pushed through in the recent session of parliament. Having got the power, where were the central agencies at the time? Was the Lieutenant Governor waiting for instructions from the Home Minister, who was busy campaigning for votes? Why were no preparations made for the inevitable increase in infections and the need for hospitalization? If such assessments had been done, the emergency measures of bringing oxygen through tankers to Delhi would have been in place much earlier.

But equally importantly, the privatization of the health care system has taken its toll. Why do top private hospitals in the capital for example not have their own captive oxygen plants? They charge obscene amounts for medical treatment, including



Delhi's premier hospitals have flagged oxygen shortage amid spurt in Covid cases.

during Covid. Setting up oxygen plants would cut into their profits. Privatization of health care has been a key "reform" measure of successive government since the decade of the 90s. This is reflected in low budgetary allocations. India is paying the price today with the collapse of the system in almost all its states.

Kerala is an exception. For oxygen supplies, Kerala used to depend on other states; today, Kerala has been transformed into an oxygen-surplus state, helping others with oxygen supplies. From March 2020, its government was monitoring the use of oxygen and estimating requirements. The government had invested in state public sector undertakings to increase oxygen production capacity. The state-owned KMML set up an oxygen plant in October last year which produces 70 metric tons a day. Oxygen plants in the public and private sectors have been set up over the past two years which now have a production of 207 metric tons a day. Given the expected increase in oxygen demand with the fast-growing cases in the state, the government is preparing itself to deal with all emergencies. The key has been investment in public health infrastructure.

Just as in its failure to build health infrastructure, including oxygen plants, in the last year, the vaccine policy of the government is going to create havoc and lead to another disaster. The Cowin dashboard shows that from January 2021 till April 24, only 139 million doses of vaccines had been administered. Of these, only 22 million people had been administered their second dose. 117 million people had taken their first dose. This is much below the official first phase target of 300 million to be completed by July.

The current combined numbers of vaccine production is around 7.6 crore doses a month, which, according to recent

announcements by manufacturing companies, will be increased to about 13 crore by the end of May. Taking the population as 140 crore people and a projected 60 per cent as eligible, the requirement is of 168 crore doses. Even taking the optimistic and unlikely projections of production as the base, and assuming the entire production will be for domestic use, it will take over a year to vaccinate the adult population.

The central government policy, while opening up the criteria for eligibility, has declared that it will be responsible for providing free vaccines only for those over the age of 45 years and will take control of over 50 per cent of the production for this purpose. States and private hospitals will have to make their own arrangements to divide the remaining 50 per cent between themselves at prices fixed by the companies. The country and indeed the world has watched with dismay and concern the tensions created between states to "capture" oxygen tankers passing through their territories marked for a different destination, the most recent example being that of UP and Madhya Pradesh. This will happen on a much larger scale for vaccines, given the shortage of supplies and the license given to the companies to decide their priorities. Only they will benefit, while India gets divided by a vaccine war initiated by the central government's policy.

There is a two-fold solution. First, the central government has to withdraw this divisive, market-oriented policy of vaccine access and ensure a universal, free vaccination programme with a scientific method of distribution to each state. It is estimated that the entire cost will be less than one per cent of GDP.

Secondly, public sector vaccine units which were virtually destroyed by "reform" policies have to be swiftly revamped through urgent government

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When govt fails its people



BY NEERA
CHANDHOKE

Deep anguish, deeper desolation, and immeasurable sadness defeat us as we witness death after death. Death is no longer a stranger, it has become familiar: a neighbor, a visitor, even family. We have looked death in the face and found it merciless. We do not personally know the people who died, we only know how many died. But we do know they left a part of themselves with us and took away a part of us. 'No man is an island', wrote English poet John Donne, '...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.'

Sadly, our civil society has been pulverized, courts abdicate their responsibility, and the rule of law is missing.

This is a moment of unending grief. It is also a moment for asking hard questions. There is nothing more tragic than avoidable death. Who is responsible? We asked for statesmen, wrote Wole Soyinka, we were sent executioners. Indians asked for statesmen, we got politicians for whom democracy is reducible to elections; a route to grab power and privilege.

Democracy has disappointed democrats across the world. We had hoped for democracy because this is the form of rule that recognizes the political competence of ordinary people to participate in decision making. Democracy is of value not because of its outcomes, whether peace, increased GDP, or world-class infrastructure, but because of its presumption that every citizen is equal.

The onus of protecting lives in the middle of death & destruction is on the citizen

Democrats realized early enough that no one can be equal if she is poor, non-literate, malnourished, unemployed amidst opulent affluence. Political equality has meaning only when the holders of power recognize that people should not be poor/ non-literate/malnourished/ unemployed because that compromises the fundamentals of democracy. A well-conceived educational system, a functioning health infrastructure, jobs, housing and a regular income represent the core of redistributive justice.

This notion is not new to India. The Constitution draft, authored by a nine-member committee, with Motilal Nehru as the chairman, conceptualized an integrated system of rights from universal adult suffrage to the right to liberty. Prominence was given to social rights. Motilal Nehru observed that political power could be justified only when it was used to ameliorate poverty, ill health and education through the grant and implementation of social and economic rights. The report obliged a future Parliament of independent India to make suitable laws for the maintenance of health and fitness for work for all citizens, for securing a living wage for all workers, and for the protection of motherhood, welfare of children, and to counter economic consequences of old age, infirmity, and unemployment.

In the Constituent Assembly, the integrated list of rights was split between the Fundamental Rights Chapter and the Directive Principles of State Policy. Many decades thereon, social rights were given attention only in 2004-2009 by the UPA government headed by PM Manmohan

Singh. Aided by a Supreme Court anxious to reclaim its image after its sorry record during the Emergency, and by civil society groups, the UPA-I legislated several social rights. The RTE was made a part of the right to life and granted the status of a fundamental right. However, the right to health was left out. Article 21, which guarantees the right to life, has been interpreted to cover the right to health. The right is thus derived rather than couched in terms of a specific good that all have a right to.

In 1946, the committee on public health chaired by Sir Joseph Bhore had recommended that a web of primary health centers be established to focus on preventive and curative measures. Our public health system has functioned poorly. Since 1991, the private sector, promoting health tourism, has stepped into the field in a major way. Dominated by a few corporates, private hospitals are driven by profit. The private sector is uninterested in the concept of delivering health to all through preventive measures and is unconcerned about equity. The present government has devolved responsibility for health to the private sector. Consider the pricing policy of vaccination for the 18-44 age group. The onus of protecting lives in the middle of death and destruction has been placed on the citizen.

That the focus on curative health has resulted in inadequate health services, is made painfully evident today. Preventive healthcare is related to the establishment of supportive infrastructure: networks of free or reasonably priced services, high literacy rates, exposure to information, social movements, and, above all, political will, as is the case of Tamil

Sadly, our civil society has been pulverized, courts abdicate their responsibility, and the rule of law is missing.



Burning funeral pyres of covid victims in India

Nadu and Kerala. Social activists and scholars have suggested a move away from a policy-oriented approach to health, towards a human rights approach which might manage to secure universal access to health.

Today, we are paying heavily for privatization and commercialization of a basic precondition to life. The leadership is content with demoting democracy to elections, and to mandates secured by elections. The ruling class might do something about the lives, liberties, education and health of citizens. It might not do anything. The presumption of democracy can be belied by the outcome. Important as elections are, they are not sufficient for ensuring democracy and well-being. Democracy has to be protected by citizen activism in the space of civil society, by the judiciary and by the rule of law. In India, civil society has been pulverized, courts abdicate their responsibility, and the rule of law has gone missing.

So, when the pandemic massacres, the only agent that can hold a mirror to overweening power is the foreign media, a few newspapers and some online news portals. Leaders continue to lust for power, as those who voted for them gasp for breath. This is not the democracy our forebears fought for and conceived of. *(The author is a political scientist)*

Arrogant Modi-Shah Regime Dismissed Scientific Warnings

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investment and involved in the manufacturing of vaccines. Multiple PSUs producing quality vaccines is an urgent necessity. Patent monopolies used by big manufacturers to make super-profits cannot be permitted.

It is important to emphasize that Covaxin was developed by the Institute of Virology, a public sector institution under ICMR, in collaboration with a private company, Bharat Biotech. Why did ICMR not include PSUs in this collaborative exercise? India had excellent facilities in at least seven public sector undertakings to produce vaccines which were the driving force behind India's universal immunization programs for decades. Logically, given the intensity of the pandemic, the central government should have invested funds in these idle units to help them prepare for manufacture of vaccines as part of a private-public partnership. PSUs could have been used as critical platforms to ramp up vaccine supplies.

Even today, there are provisions of compulsory licensing in the Patents Law which make transfer of technology to PSUs possible. Under Section 92, pursuant to a notification issued by the central government, if there is either a "national emergency" or "extreme

urgency", or in cases of "public non-commercial use", such technology transfers are permitted. This clause can and must be used to include PSUs to ramp up manufacture vaccines.

However, instead of showing the political will to reboot its approach and policy framework, the Modi Government has resorted to its default mechanism - suppress the facts, the truth, dissent in the name of spreading anti-national fake news.



A cremation ground in Delhi

The Modi-Shah regime has already sent out warnings to Twitter to delete posts which they describe as "fake

news." Critical views are equated with fake news and are being taken down. The RSS, through a statement by its second-in-command, warned of a "conspiracy" by "destructive and anti-Bharat forces (who) can create a feeling of negativity and mistrust" against the government. Veiled threats were made to be "more restrained and positive on social media." This has been implemented in UP by an official warning from the Chief Minister and police officials that property would be seized, and the NSA and the Gangster Act used against those "spreading rumors and fake news." An unnamed hospital that had reported a shortage of oxygen was cited as an example. The message is clear enough: suffer in silence, allow the court jesters the stage for their grotesque competitions in praise of the rulers, or face the consequences.

Truth telling is not a blame game. It is not "playing politics when people are dying." When people die due to wrong policy decisions, then it is the patriotic duty of every citizen to point it out, to fight and resist it, to force change, to hold governments responsible for omissions and commissions which take people's lives so as to save others.

(The author is a Politburo member of the CPI(M) and a former Member of the Rajya Sabha)

Pak PM Imran Khan announces Rs 370 billion development package for Gilgit-Baltistan

ISLAMABAD (TIP): Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday announced a development package of Rs 370 billion for Gilgit-Baltistan to help its youth through skill development initiatives and transform the region into a top tourism destination.

Khan visited the region's capital Gilgit along with Cabinet ministers and addressed a gathering attended by lawmakers of Gilgit-Baltistan and supporters of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf party to unveil the package.

"We are announcing a package of Rs 370 billion for Gilgit-Baltistan to be reimbursed over the next five years," he said.

Khan said the investment in tourism could transform the region of Gilgit-Baltistan as it was twice the size of Switzerland and more beautiful than the small European country known as a haven for tourists.

"By developing infrastructure for tourism, Gilgit-Baltistan would not only become rich but would be in a position to support the rest of the country instead of looking towards Islamabad for help," he said.

Khan said Gilgit-Baltistan was the best place for food processing factories and hydropower projects, promising to invest in these sectors. He said the package will also focus on skill development and scholarships for the region's youth.

He said the government would build



facilities to start operations of international flights to the region.

Khan visited the region last year during the election campaign for its legislative Assembly and had promised to give the status of provisional province to the region and initiate development. His party won the polls and is now ruling the region.

India has previously slammed Pakistan for its attempt to accord provincial status to the "so-called"

Gilgit-Baltistan, saying it is intended to camouflage the "illegal" occupation of the region by Islamabad.

Spokesperson in the Ministry of External Affairs Anurag Srivastava had said India "firmly rejects" the attempt by Pakistan to bring material changes to a part of Indian territory which is under Islamabad's "illegal and forcible occupation" and asked the neighbouring country to immediately vacate such areas. PTI

Pak lawmaker arrested in treason case

LAHORE (TIP): A Pakistani lawmaker was arrested here on Tuesday on charges of treason.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's close aide Javed Latif was arrested by the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) of Lahore Police after a sessions court rejected his pre-bail petition in the treason case.

ACCORDING TO THE FIR, LATIF DEFAMED STATE INSTITUTIONS AND PASSED HATEFUL REMARKS AGAINST THEM. HE IS ALSO ACCUSED OF TALKING ABOUT DISMEMBERMENT OF PAKISTAN IN CASE ANYTHING HAPPENS TO SHARIF'S DAUGHTER MARYAM NAWAZ.

"If anything happens to PML-N Vice



President Maryam Nawaz, the PML-N will not say Pakistan Khappay (stay united). PPP had made this slogan of Pakistan Khappay after assassination of Benazir Bhutto but the PMLN will not say this if anything happens to Maryam Nawaz," Latif had said in a TV talk show.

He was talking in the backdrop of alleged "life threats" being given to

Maryam for taking on the military establishment.

On March 20, Latif was booked on charges of treason and a case was registered against the Member of National Assembly (MNA) on the complaint of a private citizen, Jameel Saleem.

During the court hearing, Latif's told the judge that a "plan to assassinate Maryam" had been prepared and his client had talked about it in this context. He said even Sharif had said that a message to "smash" Maryam was conveyed to her.

The court rejected his bail plea observing that "the man who speaks against the mother land doesn't deserve any concession".

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif condemned Latif's arrest. "The arrests of party workers and political leaders show the government's bewilderment," he said in a statement. PTI

CAR BOMB KILLS 30 IN AFGHANISTAN'S EASTERN LOGAR PROVINCE

KABUL (TIP): A huge car bomb blast killed at least 30 people and injured dozens more in Afghanistan's eastern Logar province on Friday, officials said.

The car detonated in Logar's capital of Pul-e Alam near the home of the former head of the provincial council and not far from a hospital, Didar Lawang, the spokesman for Logar's governor, said.

It was not immediately clear who was behind the blast.

Violence in Afghanistan has escalated in recent weeks after US President Joe Biden announced the US would withdraw troops by September 11 to end two decades of foreign military presence.

That decision angered the Taliban who had signed a deal with previous US President Donald Trump that specified troops would be gone from the country by May 1 subject to certain security guarantees.

Interior ministry spokesman Tariq Arian said that the death toll from Friday's blast could rise.

Around 60 people were wounded, according to the head of Logar's provincial council, Hasibullah Stanekzai. A ministry of health spokesman said around 40 people had been taken to hospital, some in a critical condition. Reuters

ARMY BIGGEST LAND GRABBER, SAYS PAK COURT

LAHORE (TIP): The Lahore High Court has called Pakistan army the country's "biggest land grabber" and said its uniform was for the service to the nation and "not to rule as a king".

Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Mohammad Qasim Khan, while hearing a land grabbing case, said he didn't want to say anything wrong about the army, but the way it occupied the properties of people was nothing but land grabbing.

He said so while hearing petitions of three citizens seeking an order against the Defence Housing Authority to not disturb their lawful possession of the land they had obtained on lease from the Evacuee Trust Property Board. Regretting that the Army had also grabbed a piece of land owned by the High Court, Justice Khan said that he would instruct the LHC registrar to write to the army chief. — PTI

82 KILLED IN BAGHDAD HOSPITAL BLAZE

BAGHDAD (TIP): Iraq's Interior Ministry said Sunday that 82 persons died and 110 were injured in a catastrophic fire that broke out in the intensive care unit of a Baghdad hospital tending to severe Covid patients. AP

Indian American Lawmaker Welcomes US Government Decision



The Biden administration's commitment that it will export raw materials for the Indian manufacturer of the Covishield vaccine is a welcome decision," Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

WASHINGTON (TIP): An Indian American Democratic lawmaker on Monday, April 26, welcomed the US government's decision to provide material and healthcare help to India in its fight against a spike in COVID-19 cases, but said this is "no time for symbolism" or "lip service" and the Joe Biden administration must act now.

India is struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 3,00,000 daily new coronavirus cases being reported in the past few days, and hospitals in several states are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds. "The Biden administration's commitment that it will export raw materials for the Indian manufacturer of the Covishield vaccine is a welcome decision," Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi said.

"However, this is no time for symbolism, half-measures or lip service. We must act

now," he asserted.

The Biden administration had come under criticism from several quarters, including from members and supporters of the Democratic Party, for not releasing surplus COVID-19 vaccines to India when the country was experiencing its worst-ever public health crisis. India had urged the US to supply the raw materials for manufacturing the Covishield vaccine.

Following the criticism, US National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan in a telephonic call with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval on Sunday affirmed America's solidarity with India.

After the phone call, Emily Horne, spokesperson of the US NSA, underlined that America is "working around the clock" to deploy available resources and supplies and has "identified sources of specific raw material urgently required for Indian manufacturer of the Covishield vaccine that will immediately be made available for India".

Mr Krishnamoorthi, who is also the chair of the Oversight Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy, said it is imperative that the US government double down on its commitment by exporting these materials expeditiously, by opening its stockpile of AstraZeneca vaccines currently sitting unused on shelves.

He said the US government should also follow the actions of other countries this weekend by shipping medical supplies, including oxygen concentrators, to help treat COVID-19 victims in India and other nations hardest-hit by the deadly virus.

India logged a record of 3,52,991 new coronavirus infections in a day on

Monday, taking its total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,73,13,163. The death count increased to 1,95,123 with a record 2,812 daily new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

"The Lend-Lease Act of World War II states that America could lend or lease supplies to any nation deemed vital to the defense of the US. This is no different. We are fighting a war together with India, Argentina and others. We can only defeat COVID-19 by defeating it everywhere. Our success in ending this pandemic hinges on the leadership of the US and our ability to help allies in need," said Krishnamoorthi, who also serves on the House Oversight Committee and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Meanwhile, Ro Khanna, another Democratic Indian American Congressman, said international cooperation and humanitarian assistance are the hallmarks of a truly progressive foreign policy. "In the face of apocalyptic numbers of COVID-19 cases and new variants exploding in India, I applaud the Biden administration's decision to put people over profits and provide additional Personal Protective Equipment, oxygen and other medical supplies to India," he said.

Mr. Khanna said he is pleased to see the USAID's (United States Agency for International Development) work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to expedite the mobilization of emergency resources for India through the Global Fund.

"This must be done with the utmost speed and urgency," he said, adding that

the Biden administration can still do more, like give India its stockpile of AstraZeneca vaccines that won't be used in the US.

The government should facilitate the Indian community in America to help assist hospitals in India. It can also call on Pfizer and Moderna to provide an intellectual property waiver for six months to a year as India grapples with this health crisis, Mr. Khanna said.

"The White House should also convene Indian business leaders to make the case for why this is in these companies' long-term strategic interest. Many Indian American business leaders such as Vinod Khosla are happy to make the case to them why this is a good business decision," he said.

The Democratic lawmaker noted that Khosla has committed to financially help any hospitals in India in need of supplies and will also be speaking with the India Caucus leadership to discuss what else can be done to assist.

"This is a very tough time for the Indian people and underscores the continued threat of COVID-19. These new strains of the virus are gravely alarming and could pose a threat here in America and across the globe if we do not do all we can to contain the virus and its new variants," Mr Khanna said.

US Surgeon General Dr Vivek Murthy said the aid extended by the US to India includes raw material for vaccine production, therapeutics, rapid diagnostic kits, ventilators, oxygen generation and related supplies, financial support for vaccine manufacturing expansion and deployment of American public health teams.

"This is an important step forward," Indian American Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said, thanking Joe Biden for recognizing that "our fates" are all tied together.

Indian Americans Physicians body AAPI to ship 200 oxygen concentrators to Covid-19 hit India



200 Oxygen concentrators costing around \$500 each will be delivered direct to hospitals in India with the help of SEWA International with Indian missions in the US helping with shipping and customs, AAPI President Jonnalagadda said.

CHICAGO (TIP): Amid a devastating second Covid-19 wave in India, American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), plans to send 200 oxygen concentrators to Indian hospitals with the help of non-profit SEWA International.

The largest ethnic medical organization in the US also plans to offer tele-Consult services in India in local languages and organize webinars to educate AAPI members and their counterparts in India on zoom.

AAPI has also identified three telehealth platforms that would offer free service to physicians from India/US and patients.

"In the past week, we have been receiving nothing but mind-numbing news from many countries around the world, particularly in India, the land of our birth," stated AAPI President Dr. Sudhakar Jonnalagadda.

Pointing to the chilling statistics, Jonnalagadda also urged AAPI members and the general public to step up and donate generously as India, our motherland is facing one of the most serious health crises in decades, according to an AAPI press release.

"This is the time for immediate AAPI action. As doctors, we all share a visceral urge to do something about it," he said.

200 Oxygen concentrators costing around \$500 each will be delivered direct to hospitals in India with the help of SEWA International with Indian missions in the US helping with shipping and customs, Jonnalagadda said.

Describing the current spike in Covid cases in India as "the worst nightmare" Dr.

Sajni Shah, Chair of AAPI Board of Trustees pointed out, "This is a far cry from the picture a few months ago about our motherland India, which depicted the virus to be on the decline."

Dr. Anupama Gotimukula, President-Elect, who is leading the AAPI Initiative to help and support plans to help the physicians and the people in India thanked hundreds of AAPI members at the conclusion of a brain storming session on how to help India.

Dr. Gotimukula announced following steps to help India.

Groups of physicians will form smaller groups with Indian physicians in their own state/region, and do it yourselves in their own language for Tele-Consult. The Google sheet prepared by AAPI has a list of volunteers that would be updated regularly. AAPI has identified three Telehealth platforms that would offer free service to physicians from India/US and patients: 1. EglobalDoctors.com; 2. <http://Mdtok.com>; and, 3. Click2clinic.com. Apps are available on iOS and Android.

In addition, with the purpose of educating AAPI members and their counterparts in India, AAPI is organizing educational webinars with small groups of doctors on zoom.

Dr. Gotimukula urged the physician fraternity to educate their communities on the need to double masking and everyone taking "the vaccine to reduce the intensity of disease if we become Covid positive."

AAPI is offering MD-To-MD zoom chats and discussions about one's patients, disease, course of medicines, and progress daily 7-8 am IST/9:30-10:30 am EST.

Dr. Ravi Kolli, Vice President of AAPI noted that AAPI members have risen to "the occasion and are offering the much-needed services to their motherland in several ways, individually and collectively."

Dr. Amit Chakrabarty, Secretary of AAPI giving details about covid tele-consulting services for Indian doctors said, "We are extremely delighted about the overwhelming response to this."

Dr. Satheesh Kathula, Treasurer of AAPI thanked all the volunteers and tele-health platform companies for sharing platforms and offering services at no cost to AAPI members, Indian doctors and patients for treating Covid-19.

For more details, please visit: AAPI website: <http://www.appiusa.org>

Indian American organizations thank Biden for helping Covid-19 hit India

WASHINGTON (TIP): Leading Indian American community organizations have thanked the Biden-Harris administration for helping India hit by a devastating Covid-19 surge and urged it to send its surplus US vaccine to beat the pandemic.

"We applaud the decision by the White House to donate the US government's 60 million surplus vaccine doses to fight the pandemic globally," Neil Makhija, Executive Director of IMPACT, stated.

"We urge the White House to send at least half of our vaccine surplus stockpiles to India, where half of the world's new infections are currently happening," he wrote.

Noting that the deadliest wave of Covid-19 is currently emerging in India with nearly 350,000 new cases daily, Makhija said, "This heartbreaking tragedy must be met with swift action from allies across the globe led by the United States."

IMPACT also thanked "the South Asian members of Congress and our allies - such as Reps. Raja Krishnamoorthi, Pramila Jayapal, Ro Khanna, and Andy Kim - for being the leading voices in the fight to help India."



President Joe Biden has received much praise from Indian American organizations for his decision to help India overcome the dire situation caused by Covid in India

"But Congress and the White House still need to hear our collective voices to make sure the surplus vaccines are donated to India, where they are needed most," Makhija stated.

The current surge in India will prolong the global crisis without a swift global response, he said. "This massive humanitarian crisis cannot be met with charitable efforts alone, and requires leveraging the resources of the US Government." IMPACT also asked people to add their names to call on President Joe Biden and Vice President

Kamala Harris to send a majority of the US vaccine surplus to fight against the Covid-19 crisis in India.

The Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) has also thanked Biden for his announcement of the US sending raw materials for Covid-19 vaccines, medical equipment and protective gear to help India respond to a massive surge in coronavirus infections.

GOPIO Chairman Dr. Thomas Abraham said that in the last three months, India acted as a global leader in sending vaccines to many countries.

However, with the sudden unexpected Covid-19 outbreak, India needs an enormous quantity of vaccines for its 1.3 billion population. "As a close ally of India, our country must help India in this grave situation," he said.

"We appeal to you to send AstraZeneca vaccines which are stored by US manufacturers in their warehouses since the US is yet to authorize its use here while it has been used in India," Dr. Abraham appealed in a letter to Biden. GOPIO also requested Biden to facilitate manufacturing of other vaccines in India so that the global demand can be met sooner.

Texas Based Indian American Foundation shipping 50 ventilators to India



The US India Chamber of Commerce (USICOC) Foundation and its partner organizations are shipping 50 ventilators to India, besides other medical supplies, to help the country fight the deadly second wave of COVID-19, the USICOC said in a press release.

HOUSTON (TIP): The US India Chamber of Commerce (USICOC) Foundation and its partner organizations are shipping 50 ventilators to India, besides other medical supplies, to help the country fight the deadly second wave of COVID-19.

The foundation made arrangements to ship 20 ventilators on Tuesday. It will send 30 more in the next few days.

These ventilators will be released to the Indian Red Cross Society in New Delhi for distribution to hospitals and field teams in hard-hit areas, the USICOC said.

It added that the ventilators are battle-tested and are in use in several countries throughout the world.

The Chambers of Commerce, which normally facilitates trade between the two countries, joined forces with the Texas Indian-American population to help the humanitarian crisis back home.

Neel Gonuguntla, president of the USICOC DFW, Jagdip Ahluwalia, founding secretary and executive director of Indo-American Chamber of Greater Houston (IACCGH), and Padma Shri Ashok Mago, founding chairman of the USICOC, teamed up to lead the efforts through the USICOC Foundation.

They raised funds from the Indian-American community to provide critical medical equipment like oxygen cylinders, concentrators, generators and ventilators to India.

"We are happy to help India in every way that we can during this time of extreme need," said Mago, who helped to coordinate many of the necessary funds for the effort.

Ahluwalia said they were coordinating with hospitals, NGOs, medical schools and government bodies in India to make sure the equipment was reaching trained professionals, who can put it to immediate use.

Consul General of India in Houston, Aseem Mahajan, has been guiding and facilitating with the logistics part, Ahluwalia said.

Spearheading the project on behalf of the USICOC Foundation and the broader community, Gonuguntla said, "This collective community effort on behalf of dozens of individual donors, community organizations, businesses like DFW International Airport, PGL Logistics, American Airlines, and others, came together like a beautiful symphony of genuine compassion to rise up and meet the need of the hour which is to help save lives and get the pandemic under control in India." The USICOC Foundation is a non-profit organization founded by members of the US India Chamber of Commerce in 2008 to support community initiatives throughout North Texas and to support projects in India that are aligned with the foundation's initiatives.

Indian American Doctor on the Only Way to Address Covid-19

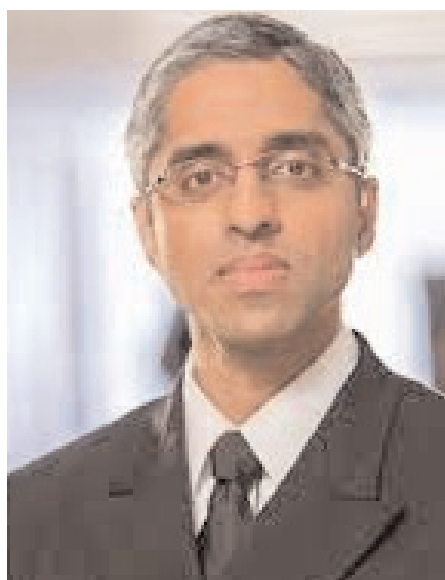
WASHINGTON (TIP): Indian American physician Vivek Murthy, the 21st Surgeon General of the US on Sunday, April 25, said that the only way to address a global COVID-19 pandemic is global cooperation and mutual support.

Confirming his above statement, Mr. Murthy announced that the US has taken steps to support India during its unprecedented second wave of COVID19 infections.

"Today, the US announced steps to support #India during its unprecedented wave of #COVID19 infections. It has been painful to watch the suffering and loss that so many have endured. The only way to address a global pandemic is global cooperation and mutual support," tweeted Mr Murthy.

Earlier in the day, the US's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke on the phone today with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, expressing deep sympathy for the people of India following the recent spike in COVID-19 cases.

Talking about, Jake Sullivan and Ajit Doval meet he said that it was heart-breaking and horrifying toll of COVID-19 in India in recent days and added,



Mr. Vivek Murthy, Surgeon General of the US, announced that the US has taken steps to support India during its unprecedented second wave of COVID19 infections.

"Today's statement outlines concrete steps being taken by the United States to help address the crisis. The uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 anywhere presents a threat to all nations."

To help treat COVID-19 patients and protect front-line health workers in India, the United States has identified

supplies of therapeutics, rapid diagnostic test kits, ventilators, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that will immediately be made available for India.

The United States also is pursuing options to provide oxygen generation and related supplies on an urgent basis.

The US Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is funding a substantial expansion of manufacturing capability for BioE, the vaccine manufacturer in India, enabling BioE to ramp up to produce at least 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2022.

Additionally, the United States is deploying an expert team of public health advisors from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and USAID to work in close collaboration with the US Embassy, India's health ministries, and India's Epidemic Intelligence Service staff. USAID will also quickly work with CDC to support and fast-track the mobilization of emergency resources available to India through the Global Fund.

Moreover, the two National Security Advisors agreed that the US and India would stay in close touch in the coming days.



Ex-attorney general Soli Sorabjee dies due to Covid

Former Attorney General Soli Sorabjee, one of India's finest legal minds, died of Covid this morning. He was 91. A senior lawyer and Padma Vibhushan recipient, Soli Sorabjee was being treated at a private hospital in Delhi.

Soli Jehangir Sorabjee was born in Mumbai in 1930. He started his law practice in 1953 with the Bombay High Court. In 1971, he was designated senior counsel by the Supreme Court.

Sorabjee became Attorney General first in 1989 and then from 1998 to 2004.

A passionate human rights lawyer, Sorabjee was appointed a UN Special Rapporteur for Nigeria in 1997.

He joined the UN Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and was its chairman from 1998 to 2004. He was also a member of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

Sorabjee served as a member of the UN world court or the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague from 2000 to 2006.

In 2002, he became a member of the Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution of India.

The legal titan was involved in many landmark Supreme Court cases and argued for free speech and press freedom, limiting the police power of the state and a vibrant democracy protected from overreach by Prime Ministers and Governors.

SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19

Madras HC raps EC, refuses to gag media on oral observations

CHENNAI (TIP): A day after questioning the Centre on its preparations over the last 10-15 months for tackling the second wave of Covid-19, the Madras High Court on Friday, April 30, refused to entertain a petition by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday seeking to restrain media from publishing the court's oral observations blaming the poll body for the rise in Covid-19 cases.

Earlier, the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy came down heavily on the ECI for "not stopping political parties from violating the Covid protocol" in their rallies for Assembly elections. It was hearing a petition by AIADMK leader and Tamil Nadu Transport Minister MR Vijayabhaskar which sought directions for the ECI to follow specific measures during counting on May 2 in his constituency Karur. As many as 77 candidates contested are in the fray for the Karur seat.

The court had told ECI on Monday that "you should be put on murder charges probably", that "you are the most irresponsible over the last few months in not stopping political parties from wanton abuse of the Covid-19 protocol" and that "you are the only institution responsible for the situation that we are in today."

On Friday, the ECI said these oral observations had caused it grave prejudice and that police complaints were being filed against it seeking action for criminal offence. Rejecting requests by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing ECI, to direct media houses to confine their reports to written orders and to refrain from reporting oral observations of judges during the court proceedings, the court said the Commission can anyway approach the courts "if any frivolous complaints are made". A day before, on Thursday, the Madras High Court was irked at the poor preparedness of the Central government in handling the second wave of pandemic.



The court had told ECI that "you should be put on murder charges probably", that "you are the most irresponsible over the last few months in not stopping political parties from wanton abuse of the Covid-19 protocol" and that "you are the only institution responsible for the situation that we are in today."

India receives first emergency Covid relief supplies from US

NEW DELHI (TIP): India on Friday, April 30, received the first supplies of Covid emergency aid from the United States. Two US military aircraft arrived on Friday morning, a third will arrive on May 3. In the first consignment meant for the Indian Red Cross, the US is sending from its own stock 36 millipore filters, each of which will enable the manufacture of five lakh

doses of Covishield vaccines in India and 17 oxygen generator plants.

The Gulf countries are also sending supplies. The first shipment of 140 MT (metric tons) of liquid oxygen from the UAE is expected to land in the early hours of Friday. Bahrain is sending 40 MT of oxygen as gift through Indian Navy ships that are already in the region.

On a suo motu public interest writ proceeding initiated to check the preparedness of the state to tackle the second wave besides assessing the availability of oxygen, beds, drugs and ventilators to treat Covid patients, the first bench of CJ Banerjee and Ramamoorthy asked the Centre what they were doing for the past 10 to 15 months.

"Why are we acting only now in April, this will help only in July. Despite having almost a year-long lockdown, see the situation we are in," the court said.

When the Additional Solicitor-General

R Shankaranarayanan representing the Centre said the government did not expect a second wave in the country, the court said: "Do you even consult experts on such issues? We did not mean to disrespect anyone..."

CJ Banerjee said he was yet to meet "a respectable doctor who advised" him "to drop the guard" and reminded that there cannot be ad-hocism in dealing with a pandemic. "The Centre should have acted in a planned and informed manner with expert advice," the court said.

Source: Indian Express

Journalist Rohit Sardana dies of Covid; PM says 'huge void in media'



Rohit Sardana

NOIDA (TIP): Senior journalist and Aaj Tak anchor Rohit Sardana has passed away. The 41-year-old died of cardiac arrest while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Noida on Friday (April 30).

Rohit Sardana is survived by his wife, two daughters, and his parents.

The 41-year-old Aaj Tak anchor had recently tested positive for Covid-19 but he was active and on his way to recovery. Rohit continued to encourage his colleagues and was amplifying Covid-related posts on Twitter till late Thursday night.

His situation, however, deteriorated on Thursday night, following which he was rushed to Metro Multispecialty Hospital in Noida. He died of a heart attack on the morning of April 30.

The star anchor of Aaj Tak, Rohit hailed from Kurukshetra in Haryana. Rohit was a recipient of the NT Award and ENBA Award for the best anchor as well as the prestigious Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Award for Hindi journalism.

In his career that spanned over one-and-a-half-decade, Rohit Sardana started as an announcer in All India Radio after which he made a name for himself as he

anchored shows in ETV, Sahara Samay, Zee News and then Aaj Tak.

Rohit Sardana was considered one of the most powerful anchors in Hindi. As the anchor of Aaj Tak's prime time show, Dangal, Rohit achieved a milestone in TV anchoring which only a few have got.

Prior to this, he was the anchor of a popular show on Zee News.

Rohit never shied away from asking tough questions to politicians. In fact, he would often stop talking to leaders of the ruling party and those in Opposition due to this.

He had millions of followers on social media.

Before making the news of Rohit's death public, it was the responsibility of the India Today Group to inform his family. The group first informed Rohit's family of his demise after which the news was shared with the public.

"Rohit Sardana left us too soon. Full of energy, passionate about India's progress and a kind hearted soul, Rohit will be missed by many people. His untimely demise has left a huge void in the media world. Condolences to his family, friends and admirers. Om Shanti," tweeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Will treat action against pleas on social media as contempt: Supreme Court

NEW DELHI (TIP): A clampdown on messages for help on social media is the "worst way" to deal with the Covid-19 crisis, said the Supreme Court on Friday, April 30, warning all state governments against taking action against people using online platforms to make desperate appeals for oxygen, essential medicines, and other help.

Any such action by governments or state police would be treated as a contempt of court, the top court added.

"It is a matter of grave concerns to us. If citizens communicate their grievances either on the Internet or on social media, there cannot be a clampdown. We don't want a clampdown of information. That's the worst way of dealing with a crisis," observed a bench headed by justice Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud.

The bench, which included justices L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat, gave examples of various social media posts, asking for help when somebody needed an oxygen cylinder, or a bed in a hospital, or the drug



remdesivir.

"To act against someone who is seeking help for oxygen or a medicine is against the basis precept," said the bench, adding it wanted to caution all the state governments and their director generals of police (DGPs) against any action against those seeking help.

"Let this message go very clearly to all states and their DGPs, we will treat this as a contempt of this court of they want a clampdown on communication. Let everyone understand that we are not projecting anyone in a bad light but looking out for help," remarked the court.

The bench concluded its discussion

on the issue by making it unequivocal: "Let information flow freely. Let us hear the voices of our citizens and not a clampdown on them."

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Central government in the matter, agreed with the court, saying there could not be any action people who were already in distress, asking for help.

The court's observations assume significance in the wake of a recent case lodged in Uttar Pradesh's Amethi district against a 26-year-old man for allegedly spreading "false information" on social media over the supply of oxygen. Shashank Yadav made an appeal on Twitter for an oxygen cylinder for his critically ill grandfather, which the police later claimed was false. Earlier this week, Yadav was booked under the charges of the Epidemic Act and the Indian Penal Code for spreading false information with an intent to create panic in society. Yadav was taken to a police station for questioning, but was later let off.

Source: HT

Modi visits Gurdwara Sis Ganj on 400th Parkash Purab

P rime Minister Narendra Modi visited Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib to offer his prayers on the occasion of 400th Parkash Parab of Guru Teg Bahadur on Saturday, May 1. Modi visited the gurdwara without a security route and special security arrangements, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

PM Modi also extended his greetings to the citizens on Twitter. "On the special occasion of his 400th Parkash Purab, I bow to Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. He is widely respected globally for his courage and his efforts to serve the downtrodden. He refused to bow to tyranny and injustice. His supreme sacrifice gives strength and motivation to many," he wrote on the microblogging site.



18 Covid-19 patients die in hospital fire in Gujarat's Bharuch

BHARUCH (TIP): At least 18 coronavirus patients died after a fire broke out at a hospital in Gujarat's Bharuch in the early hours on Saturday, May 1.

Gut-wrenching visuals of the tragedy showed remains of some patients roasted alive on stretchers and beds.

There were around 50 other patients at the four-storeyed Welfare Hospital when the fire broke out in the Covid-19 ward at 1 am. They were rescued by locals and firefighters, an official said.

"As per information at 6.30 am, the death toll in the tragedy stood at 18. Immediately after the fire, we had confirmation of 12 deaths," a police official told PTI.

The 12 patients in the Covid-19 ward died due to the fire and resultant smoke, Bharuch SP Rajendrasinh Chudasama said.

It is not clear if the remaining six also died in the Welfare hospital or while being shifted to other hospitals.

The Covid-19 designated hospital is situated on the Bharuch-Jambusar highway, around 190 km from the state capital Ahmedabad and is being run by a trust.

The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, the official said.

The fire was controlled within an hour and around 50 patients were rescued by locals as well as firefighters, a fire official said. They were shifted to nearby hospitals, he added.

Armed forces given emergency financial powers to fight Covid-19

NEW DELHI (TIP): Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday, April 30, granted emergency financial powers to top officers of all the three armed forces to fight the Covid-19 surge.

These are in addition to the emergency powers delegated to the medical officers of the armed forces last week, a Defence Ministry statement said.

Invoking special provisions, Rajnath Singh granted the emergency powers to empower the armed forces and speed up their efforts in tide over the current Covid-19 situation in the country.

"These powers will help formation commanders to establish and operate quarantine facilities/hospitals and undertake procurement/repair of equipment/items/material/ stores, besides provisioning of various services and works required to support the ongoing effort against the pandemic," the statement said.

Vice chiefs of the three armed forces, including the Chief Of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs Of Staff Committee (CISC) and General Officer Commanding-in-Chiefs (GOC-in-Cs) and equivalents in all three services have been given full powers.

"The Corps Commanders/Area Commanders have been delegated powers up to Rs 50 lakh per case and Division Commanders/Sub Area Commanders and equivalents have been delegated powers up to Rs 20

lakh per case," the ministry said.

A senior government officer said the step will augment the efforts of the civil administration.

These powers have been devolved initially for a period of three months from May 1 to July 31.

Stay in touch with people, gather feedback: PM Modi tells ministers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged Union ministers on Friday to stay in touch with the people of their respective regions, help them and keep getting their feedback on the situation.

Chairing a meeting of the Union Council of Ministers, Modi also stressed upon the "need to ensure that issues at the local level are promptly identified and addressed", according to an official statement.

The meeting was held virtually to discuss the situation arising out of the second wave of COVID-19 in the country. It noted that the pandemic has led to a "once-in-a-century" crisis and thrown a big challenge to the world, the statement said.

The council was briefed about the steps being taken to ramp up the number of hospital beds, oxygen facilities and resolve issues related to the availability of oxygen and essential medicines, it added.

The support measures for the vulnerable population in the form of free foodgrains and financial support to Jan Dhan account holders were also discussed at the meeting, the statement said.

Can't roll out 18+ vaccine drive, say 13 states

NEW DELHI (TIP): Ahead of the adult Covid inoculation drive which is scheduled to begin on Saturday, May 1, several states said they did not have the vaccine stocks to roll out the plan even as the Centre acknowledged that any new programme took time to stabilise.

Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal categorically stated that while they had placed orders with the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech, the doses were not yet available for May 1 rollout.

More than 2.5 crore people in the 18-44 age group have already registered on CoWIN platform and are awaiting appointments even as India witnessed another high of nearly 4 lakh daily cases.

The inoculation drive started on January 16 with the target of covering 30 crore priority people at the earliest.

The coverage has been much less with Prime Minister Narendra Modi today telling a meeting of the council of ministers that over 15 crore doses had been given.

The meeting took note of Covid as "once-in-a-century crisis" that has challenged the world. The PM urged union ministers to stay in touch with people of their respective regions, help them and keep getting their feedback on the situation.

Source: TNS

Gross mismanagement of pandemic and a failed govt in denial

Barely two months ago in February the Government and the Bharatiya Janata Party declared victory over Covid. BJP adopted a resolution hailing Prime Minister Modi's dynamic leadership as an example to the world. The Union Health Minister exulted that the endgame was close. Overconfidence was such that the Election Commission announced an expansive poll schedule; the Government gave the go ahead to the richest cricket tournament to go ahead on schedule.

The overconfident government permitted the once-in-12-years Kumbh Mela to be advance from 2022 to this year. Precious resources, manpower and energy were diverted to manage elections, the religious festival and cricket matches. The Government which had failed to arrange trains for migrant workers last year went ahead to arrange for 25 special trains to ferry the pilgrims.

While the Prime Minister continued to solemnly ask people to stay indoors, put on masks and maintain social distance, he himself and his ministers sent out mixed messages by claiming that India had overcome the pandemic and holding road shows in poll-bound states without masks. New facts are tumbling out daily over the past few weeks, which call the government's bluff on good governance and its gross mismanagement of the pandemic. It encouraged irrational and unscientific cures with the health minister himself promoting Baba Ram Dev's magic cure branded as Coronil.

The Government encouraged research on the efficacy of Gayatri Mantra and Yoga on Covid-19 patients while withholding funds for genome sequencing of samples. Despite being aware of the country's vaccine manufacturing capacity pegged at seven Crore doses against the requirement of 180 Crore doses, it did nothing to secure vaccines from manufacturing companies abroad unlike other countries. License to manufacture vaccines were denied till this month to public sector companies with past experience.

While it boasted of having ramped up hospital beds, the second surge of Covid has exposed its complete unpreparedness with two to three Covid patients forced to share beds in Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Hospital in Delhi. It had the time to set up oxygen plants in hospitals and increase the storage capacity but once again it was complacent and took its eyes off the ball.

The government, one suspects, has used emergency provisions to spend enormous sums of money on advertisement and communication. That is why its failure to disseminate credible information about the pandemic and the failure to contain panic are so glaring. While police in the national capital and in several states went berserk, beating the daylight of people found without a mask, the uniformed force turned their eyes from ruling party workers taking out rallies, organizing roadshows and seeking donations for the Ram temple without masks.

The WHO dropped Remdesivir last year from its approved list of medicines



A woman is consoled by her children in Delhi after her husband died from the coronavirus. Source: Reuters

to cope with Covid. But the government created an artificial shortage of the medicine and allowed its hoarding and sale at exorbitant prices. It failed to communicate to the people that 99% of the Covid patients can get well at home. It failed to convey that only around one percent of Covid patients ran the risk of death.

It is a different matter that it botched up the treatment of even these one percent of the cases, just as it botched up the vaccine rollout. Even more amusingly, a government which calls for 'one country-one tax-one election' and so on has now allowed private vaccine manufacturers to charge multiple prices from different users. An all-party meeting and a short session of Parliament need to be convened urgently to lay the road map ahead.

Global press turns guns on India, blames Modi for failure to tackle second wave

For image-conscious Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the foreign press's reviews of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic must make devastating reading. Modi has gone from hero to minnow in fighting Covid-19 in the eyes of the world press as daily infections have soared to successive new records. After appearing to have skilfully ridden the first Covid wave with one of the world's strictest national lockdowns, Modi has been engulfed by the second, according to the verdict of the foreign media.

Headlines like: "Modi flounders in India's gigantic second wave," in The Times, London, have been typical of the coverage that the Prime Minister has been receiving as the daily count of new

Covid cases has barrelled past 300,000. The Times has blasted the government's response to the latest coronavirus wave, saying it has "underscored the air of complacency and denial that have dogged his government's response to the crisis."

"The system has collapsed: India's descent into Covid hell," said an equally blistering headline in The Guardian, which led its main story with a photo of flames soaring high in a crematorium. The newspaper added: "Many falsely believed that the country had defeated Covid. Now, hospitals are running out of oxygen and bodies are stacking up in morgues."

International coverage which had focused on Brazil as the global Covid disaster zone has now zeroed in on India as the place where the pandemic is raging out of control.

The global press has turned its guns especially on the Central government for having been complacent and not being prepared for the second wave. Also, the government has been castigated for holding mass election rallies in West Bengal that may have worsened the situation. The decision to allow the mega Kumbh Mela to go ahead has also been roundly denounced as reckless. International newspapers have splashed their front pages with pictures of huge crowds of mask-less devotees pressed against each other and accused the Indian government of lacking the courage to call the gathering off for fear of alienating their Hindu supporters.

The Times which makes a ferocious attack on the Central government says: "The speed and ferocity of the second wave have exposed a string of missteps at the start of the year, repeating the mistakes of 2020 and making new ones, to

leave Indians facing a tsunami of infection that has pushed the country to the brink of collapse."

It also talks about Modi, mask-less, at a West Bengal election rally attended by hundreds of thousands of voters, also not wearing masks, declaring that, "In all directions, I see huge crowds of people....I have never seen such crowds at a rally."

The Financial Times departed from its usual sober style to describe devastating sights of people dying while waiting for hospital beds, the disastrous oxygen shortage and apocalyptic scenes of funeral pyres on the banks of the Ganges. It said the latest wave was "sparking a health crisis and human tragedy in India that is far surpassing anything seen last year." FT also carried detailed charts about the wave of infections, including ones from each state showing rising positivity rates, which indicate the infections are likely to get worse.

FT, too, blamed the government for the devastating second wave, saying: "The devastation has sparked outrage at the lack of preparation among officials who believed the worst of the pandemic was over."

The Washington Post led one of its stories with an aerial shot of a Muslim graveyard in Uttar Pradesh showing a large number of freshly filled graves. It said: "In India, this surge is not a wave but a wall." It added: "In some cities, crematoriums are running their furnaces round the clock."

The Washington Post divided the blame between, "more contagious variants of the virus, as well as an early relaxation of restrictions and a slow-moving vaccination campaign." In another story, it also described damaging vaccine shortages in various states.

'INDIA PAYING THE PRICE FOR COMPLACENCY'

Govt failed to anticipate second wave despite warning

The Centre failed to anticipate the second Covid-19 wave despite warning signals and omitted to take steps that could have mitigated the devastation, a top government researcher has said, agreeing with other experts that India is paying the price for complacency.

The health researcher, a member of the Centre's national task force on Covid-19, said the surge and the nationwide bed and oxygen shortages had resulted from a complacency that ignored data from India and elsewhere suggesting "a big wave" was possible.

"It is frustrating and it is sad — what's going on cannot be just abruptly stopped," the researcher, who requested not to be named, told The Telegraph.

"There were indications a big wave could hit us, but that knowledge was not translated into more preparedness or strong public warnings."

"We can now ask among ourselves: who's responsible? Is it the health ministry, is it the Indian Council of Medical Research, is it the government? All I'd say is: collectively we have failed," said the researcher, accepting the blame that some health experts have hurled.

In contrast, the health ministry has been reluctant to discuss the subject.

"Today is not the time to go into why did we miss, or did we miss, did we prepare? Today is the time to jointly face the pandemic," health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said, when asked at a media briefing whether India had missed anticipating the second wave.

"Once we have faced it and emerged out of it successfully, then probably with the advantage of hindsight we would be able to deliberate on this. Today all the energies of the Union government and the state governments are focused in a collaborative manner to tackle this, to save precious lives, and to ensure that our health system is strengthened."

Several senior health officials have attributed the second wave to people's laxity in wearing masks and maintaining physical distance, but the health researcher said it would be unfair to point fingers at the public.

"You cannot blame people. People will do what they like to do and what they are encouraged to do. People need appropriate guidance, appropriate messaging," the researcher said.

"We were not able to translate the available data into strong enough cautionary messages for the public."

The researcher said an ICMR survey in January had found that only 25 per cent people had already been infected, implying that 75 per cent of the population was still susceptible to a future wave.

"We also knew from Europe and the US that second waves could be bigger than the first."

The researcher, echoing concerns



aired by other health experts, said that after the epidemic shrank between October and December and the daily counts of new cases fell steadily, the government did little to curb the crowding that occurred at election

rallies and at the Kumbh Mela.

As tens of thousands gathered at the Kumbh and at election rallies every day, health officials remained largely silent except for issuing cursory advisories about mask-wearing and

maintaining physical distance.

Amid the bed and oxygen shortages, at least two hospitals in Delhi on Thursday appeared so close to running out of oxygen that their administrators were considering asking critically ill patients to leave and look for beds in other hospitals.

"What we're seeing happen was not inevitable or unavoidable," said Ramanan Laxminarayanan, an economist and epidemiologist and founder director of the Centre for Disease Dynamics Economics and Policy, a research think tank in the US and India.

"Organising more oxygen should have been part of the preparedness process, and preparing with thousands of beds in stadiums was also possible."

Some health experts say it makes little sense to split hairs over who deserves more blame, the political leaders or the experts tasked with guiding them.

"This is not a government that tolerates dissent. If the experts don't tolerate (the official) line, they'd be out. The buck stops with whoever is elected," a health expert said, also requesting anonymity.

Deadly second wave spreads from cities to small towns

India's deadly Covid-19 second wave has devastated big cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Lucknow and Pune. Hospitals and crematoriums have run out of space, and funerals are taking place in car parks. But the pandemic has now firmly gripped many smaller cities, towns and villages where the devastation is largely under-reported.

Rajesh Soni spent eight hours taking his father from one hospital to another in a tuk-tuk in Kota district in the northern state of Rajasthan on Tuesday. He couldn't get an ambulance and the rickety vehicle was his only option. At 5pm, he decided to end his search for a hospital bed as his father's condition was deteriorating. He then "left everything to fate" and came home.

"I am giving him medicines at home, but I am not sure that he will survive. We have been left to die on the streets," Rajesh said. He says several private hospitals even "conned" him and took money to do tests, only to tell him later to take his father away as there were no beds.

"I am not a wealthy person. I spent whatever I had to pay the tuk-tuk driver and to hospitals. Now I am going to borrow some money to get an oxygen cylinder at home."

Such stories have become common in Delhi, the worst affected city in India, but similar accounts are now coming in from smaller cities and towns across the country, according to a BBC report.

Special on the occasion of the 400th birth anniversary celebrations of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR SAHIB A PROPHET AND A MARTYR



Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, the Ninth Guru (Revealer of the Sikh faith) of the Sikhs was born on Baisakh vadi 5, 1678 Birkimi i.e., April 1, 1621 in Amritsar, Punjab. He was the youngest of the five sons of Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib, the Sixth Guru of the Sikhs and Bibi Nanaki. His childhood name was Tyag Mal, tyag means 'giving away' or parting with what one possesses. As a small child he gave away his clothes to a poor child in charity. On being asked by his mother as to why he had done so, he promptly answered that no one else would have given 'that boy' any clothes whereas you will immediately give me new clothes. From his early childhood, he was very humble, religious and detached from worldly possessions. During his childhood, Bhai Buddha Ji, a very revered Sikh of the time, taught him the manly arts of archery and horsemanship and Bhai Gurdas Ji, another renowned Sikh was in-charge of his religious instruction.

At the age of 13 he took part in the battle of Kartarpur in District Jalandhar of Punjab fought by his father Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib against one of his own former warriors who had deserted him and subsequently invaded him. In this battle (Guru) Tegh Bahadur Sahib evinced so much bravery and valor that his father, Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib renamed him as Tegh Bahadur, tegh means sword and bahadur means brave. In his life to come he lived up to the 'meaning' implied in this name. At the age of 12 he was married to (Mata) Gujri Ji, daughter of Bhai Lal Chand Ji and Bibi Bishan Kaur Ji of Kartarpur in District Jalandhar of Punjab who had migrated from village Lakhnaur near Ambala in Haryana. After this, his father Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib, along with the whole family went to Kiratpur Sahib, a small township in the foothill of Himalayas in District Ropar of Punjab,

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib was a protector of the oppressed class. He fought against oppression and laid down his life to protect the right of the people to follow the religion of their own choice. His bani consists of 59 sabdas and 57 slokas. These sabdas and slokas essentialize the same spiritual experience and insights as does the bani of his predecessor Gurus.

where they lived for nine years. After his father left for his heavenly abode in 1644, he left Kiratpur Sahib alongwith his mother Bibi Nanaki Ji and wife Mata Gujri Ji and shifted to Baba Bakala in District Amritsar of Punjab, the ancestral village of Bibi Nanaki Ji's father.

On March 30, 1664 before leaving for his heavenly abode, the Eighth Sikh Guru, Sri Guru Har Krishan Sahib bestowed Guruship on him. Thus, on March 30, 1664 he assumed Guruship but was formally anointed Guru on August 11, 1664. After assuming this high seat of Guruship, he started preaching the message of the First Sikh Guru, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's that (i) God is one (ii) God is omnipresent and omnipotent (iii) God is the creator of the whole world and of all human beings (iv) all human beings are equal, thus persons of all religions and castes should be given equal respect (v) women should be given equal status (vi) we should recite the name of God Almighty (vii) we should earn our livelihood honestly and share it with the needy persons. The spiritual pathway as revealed by Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji is a pathway of gradual growth and leads to union with God.

After assuming Guruship, as a first step, with a view to establish a place for the congregation of Sikhs he bought some land at a place 8 kms. north of Kiratpur Sahib, from Deep Chand the King of Kahlur. He bought three villages Makhopur, Mataur and Lodhipur from Deep Chand at a cost of Rs. 2200 and in



Gurudwara Guru Ka Tal Sahib, Agra, U.P

June 1665 established the town Chakk Nanaki which later came to be called Anandpur Sahib (the City of Bliss). This town is now one of the five spiritual seats (Takhts) of the Sikhs, and this is where in April 1699, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Tenth Sikh Guru created the Khalsa. After establishing this place of pilgrimage, to further strengthen the preaching activity, he left for an extensive tour of Banger area which now partly falls in Punjab and partly in Haryana. During this tour he visited more than 120 places in the Districts of Amritsar, Ropar, Patiala, Jalandhar, Nawan Shahar, Fatehgarh Sahib, Sangrur, Bathinda and Mansa in Punjab. In fond memory of his visits, historical Gurdwaras have been established at all of the places that he visited. After his he

visited several places in the districts of Ambala, Kaithal, Kurukshetra, Mohindergarh, Narnaul, Rohtak, Yamuna Nagar and Jind in Haryana State. To commemorate his holy visits in Haryana more than 30 historical Gurdwaras have been established.

During his tour of Punjab and Haryana, in addition to conveying the message of Sikhism, he (i) got several wells dug in the areas which faced scarcity of water due to draught (ii) campaigned against drug addiction (iii) campaigned against growing of tobacco, and (iv) dispelled the miseries of sick and suffering population. Although, his tours were purely religious in nature, but they created many doubts in the mind of Aurangzeb, the emperor on the Delhi throne. Several false complaints to this effect were received by Aurangzeb and he sent orders for his arrest. Aurangzeb who had acceded to the Delhi throne in July 1658 after sending his father to prison and killing his brothers wanted to please Mughals by giving torture to non-Mughals. As part of his mission, he wanted to arrest Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib. But Raja Ram Singh, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh intervened and convinced the ruler that Guru Sahib's activities were religious and social and not any threat to his empire. Thus, his arrest was averted.

After this, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib started on an extensive tour of the eastern part of India to further spread the message of Sikhism. During this tour, he visited Agra, Mathura, Etawah, Kanpur, Fatehpur, Mirzapur, Allahabad, Jaunpur, Nizamabad and Banaras in U.P.; Gaya, Sasaram, Bhagalpur, Patna Sahib, Lakshmipur (District Katihar) and



Gurudwara Sisganj Sahib, Delhi

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Monghyr in Bihar; Sahibganj in Jharkhand; Calcutta in West Bengal, Dhubri in Assam and Dhaka, Pabna, Comilla, Sylhet and Chittagong (now in Bangladesh) and Sondip Island.

By the time he returned to Punjab, Aurangzeb's pro-Islam policies and programs were in full swing. Aurangzeb wanted to completely destroy the Hindu old civilization. Under his orders centuries old temples in Ayodhya, Banaras and Mathura in U.P. were demolished. A very renowned temple Vishwanath which had been built by Raja Nar Singh Dev at a cost of Rs. 33 lacs was destroyed. 'Mathura', the holy city of Hindus was renamed as 'Islamabad'. Ancient Hindu temples in Bihar and Orissa were also demolished. Ban was imposed on Hindu fairs and festivals. Aurangzeb had established a Jatha of Mullans consisting of horse riders who would go from place to place to destroy Hindu idols and temples. All Governors were directed not to give jobs to Hindus and wherever possible to dismiss them and replace them by Muslims. Employees in various sectors were issued orders to get converted to Islam up to a specific date or be prepared to lose their jobs. Aurangzeb had established a full-fledged Department for this purpose and appointed a Director General as its in-charge. Under his policies and programs thousands of Brahmins were imprisoned and put to torture to pressurize them to get converted to Islam. As per historical evidence, Aurangzeb would not eat any meal unless the janeu (sacred thread) taken away from the bodies of Brahmins weighing a quarter and a maund (one quintal) were presented to him. This means that thousands of Hindus were being converted to Islam.

It was part of this policy that Aurangzeb sent directions to Iftikhar Khan the Governor of Kashmir that all Hindus in Kashmir be converted to Islam. Within a few months more than half of the Brahmins adopted Islam. As a result of this, Kashmiri Brahmins became awe stricken. As reported by PNK Bamzai, a Kashmiri historian, in his book History of Kashmir when the cruelty became unbearable, some Pandits got together and went to Amar Nath for pilgrimage and praying. After that, under the leadership of Pandit Kirpa Ram, about 500 Brahmins decided to meet Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib for help. This desperate group met Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib at Anandpur Sahib on May 25, 1675 and requested for help. After listening to the woeful stories of Pandits Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib decided to sacrifice his life to dispel their tortures and save the Hindu Community from extinction. He resolved to lay down his life to uphold the people's right to practice the religion of their own choice. He told the Pandits to return to Kashmir and tell the Mughal Governor that if they convert their Guru i.e., Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib to Islam they would all get converted to Islam. Getting furious over this development Aurangzeb ordered that Guru Sahib be arrested, put to torture and executed.



Gurdwara Rikabganj Sahib, New Delhi

By that time, Guru Sahib himself had left Anandpur Sahib and was traveling towards Delhi via Agra. As per Aurangzeb's orders the soldiers arrested him at Sikandra, District Agra in U.P. At this place now stands Gurdwara Guru Ka Taal Sahib. At Sikandra he was put in an iron cage and then subjected to torture and then under a heavy escort brought to Delhi on November 4, 1675. At Delhi, he was bound in chains and as per Aurangzeb's orders was to be tortured until he accepted Islam. Thus, he was subjected to severe torture. But he firmly refused to abandon his religion. When Mullans became sure that he could not

be persuaded to abandon his religion, he was asked to perform some miracle, which he firmly refused. Finally, on November 11, 1675 he was brutally beheaded in Chandni Chowk, Delhi in public view. At this place now stands Gurdwara Sisganj Sahib.

At nightfall, a devout Sikh Lakkhi Shah Lubana Ji helped by three of his sons Nagahia, Hema and Harhi, not caring for the Mughal reprisal placed the headless trunk in a cart and took it to his home in Raisina village. To avoid direct confrontation with the Mughals, instead of an open cremation, he set fire to his whole house and thus cremated the

sacred headless body of the martyred Guru Sahib. At this spot now stands Gurdwara Rikabganj Sahib.

Bhai Jaita Ji, another devout Sikh alongwith Bhai Uda Ji and Bhai Nanu Ji secretly carried the severed sacred head in a basket to Kiratpur Sahib. On the way they stopped to take rest at Taraori, District Karnal in Haryana; two places in Ambala, Haryana and village Nabha which now falls in district SAS Nagar, Punjab. In village Nabha now stands Gurdwara Sis Asthan Patshahi Naumi ate Dasmi. After Nabha, Bhai Jaita Ji and his companions reached Kiratpur Sahib in District Ropar of Punjab. At the spot where the sacred head of the martyred Guru was handed over to his son (Sri Guru) Gobind Singh Ji, now stands Gurdwara Bibangarh Sahib. From here the sacred head was taken in a decorated palanquin by (Sri Guru) Gobind Singh Ji, who became the Tenth Guru, to Anandpur Sahib and cremated there on November 16, 1675. In fond memory of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Gurdwara Sisganj Sahib has been established at this place.

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib was a protector of the oppressed class. He fought against oppression and laid down his life to protect the right of the people to follow the religion of their own choice. His bani consists of 59 sabdas and 57 slokas. These sabdas and slokas essentialize the same spiritual experience and insights as does the bani of his predecessor Gurus.

Dhan Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib!

(The author is a Retd. Professor, Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab, India)



Gurudwara Sis Asthan Patshahi Naumi and Dasmi Nabha, Distt. SAS Nagar, Punjab

The Making of a Martyr: Guru Teg Bahadur and his Times

Tilak Janju Rakha Prabh Takka | Keno Bado Kalu Main Saka



Guru Tegh Bahadur -the pupil of Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas



BY RUPINDER S. BRAR MD FACC

Guru Teg Bahadur was preaching in faraway Assam when he received a short disquieting message from the Sangat of Burya, a small town near Sirhind, in Punjab. Some fanatic Muslims had taken it upon themselves to destroy a Sikh house of worship and erect a Mosque instead. They appointed a local dervish name Sayyed Muzaffar as its caretaker. The act so enraged the Sikhs living in the area that they not only destroyed the illegal Mosque but also killed the dervish in the ensuing violence. The matter reached the emperor of Hindustan and fearing harsh retribution the Sangat reached out to their Guru.

Guru Teg Bahadur heard the message calmly but understood the gravity of the situation. At the root of the seemingly insignificant local dispute lay a country wide imperial farman (order) issued on April the 9th, 1669 issued by emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir which informed all the provincial governors that Hindu temples and other non-Muslim houses of worship were to be destroyed and only Mosques could be built in their place. It was an unprecedented order that threatened the very basis of the communal harmony that the various Pirs, Sufis and the Sikh Gurus had created over the years. Fortunately, the order had been ignored at most places until then but now things seemed to be getting out of hand.

Many people were convinced that such policies were driven by Aurangzeb's puritanical zeal to create Daar ul Islam-an Islamic society but there were others who were not so sure. Among them was Guru Teg Bahadur's friend and benefactor, Kunwar Ram Singh Kachwaha, the Rajput prince of Amber. Like his father and forefathers before him, Ram Singh was an imperial Mansabdar and a close Mughal ally. He was present at the imperial court in Agra on May the 12th, 1666 when a certain unpleasant incident took place from which point onwards one could see in hindsight, began the slow but progressive hardening of royal attitude towards his Hindu subjects.

On that day, Ram Singh's father Raja Jai Singh brought with him to the court the Maratha chief Shivaji to meet with the emperor. Shivaji was known to be a fierce warrior who had fought the Mughals to a standstill. It was only after Jai Singh took command of the Mughal armies in the Deccan and forced him out of his mountain hideouts that Shivaji decided to negotiate. Jai Singh treated him with respect and prevailed upon him to make peace with the Mughals. He even offered to intercede on his behalf. The proud Maratha was reluctant at first but left with little choice eventually agreed to meet the emperor.

The meeting was a disaster.

Firstly, the free-spirited warrior felt stifled by the formal court etiquette.

Secondly, he felt humiliated at having to stand quietly in the back among minor officials to wait his turn. He decided enough was enough and ignoring protocol began to complain loudly. Ram Singh tried to calm him down but Shivaji was inconsolable.

"I am the chief of the Marathas and will not be treated thusly, he loudly wailed. "Even if you cut off my head, I will not stay here a moment longer."

Having thus created a scene, he angrily stomped out of the court. Offended at such insolence, the emperor had him placed under guard and put Ram Singh in charge of his captivity. Unfortunately for the prince, Shivaji easily escaped from his custody and was soon back in the Deccan, now a national hero where he resumed his rebellion with renewed vigor. The entire incident left Aurangzeb humiliated and bitter. He also felt politically outsmarted. A suspicious man anyway he decided to lay the entire blame on the father and son duo, Jai Singh and Ram Singh. Overlooking his own mishandling of the situation he convinced himself that the two had perhaps deliberately let Shivaji escape because they were all fellow Hindus.

Following the episode Aurangzeb never completely trusted the Hindus again. Within months his attitude towards the Rajputs too changed as he gradually began to seek favor with the orthodox Sunni elements instead. Ram Singh's rank was reduced, and he was sent away to fight on the Eastern frontier as a punishment.

Meanwhile, the imperial policies became decidedly anti Hindu. The Muslim orthodoxy were delighted further when Aurangzeb fell under the influence of Sheikh Masum, the grandson of the ultra-conservative Naqshabandi scholar Sheikh Ahmed of Sirhind.

Soon thereafter, the emperor banned the celebration of Navroj, the Shia new year festival and the popular Hindu festival of Holi. Next, maybe because it was reported that Shivaji had travelled incognito disguised as a Hindu pilgrim, the emperor vented his ire upon the respected Hindu centers of pilgrimage. In October of 1666 he issued a royal order to destroy the intricate marble railing around the landmark Hindu temple of Keshwa in Mathura that had been designed and paid for by his liberal brother Dara Shikoh. The following year he destroyed another famous Hindu temple, that of Kalkaji near Delhi.

The worst was yet to come.

In 1667 Aurangzeb invited five hundred Muslim religious scholars to write Fatwa e Alamgiri, a legal code based on Islamic Sharia that was to become the law of the land. It would be a first time in history that a non-Muslim majority country would be governed by Islamic Sharia. In 1669 came the infamous order to destroy the Hindu temples and build Mosques instead. The order was not only immoral it was also colossal political blunder. From the days of Akbar, the Great, internal stability of the Mughal empire had rested upon the twin pillars of religious tolerance socially and a Mughal Rajput alliance politically. Now Aurangzeb was messing with both and playing with fire.

Within months of the temple desecration at Mathura, Jats of that area rebelled and kicked out the local Mughal faujdar. When a large Mughal force was sent to capture them, they united under a charismatic Zamindar named Gocula and destroyed that force too. Though eventually Gocula and his supporters were captured and executed, the uprising encouraged others to follow suit. At other times the Muslim fanatics themselves began the trouble as they did in Punjab. It seemed the entire burden of holding together the communal consensus now fell upon the shoulders of one unassuming, mild mannered man-poet, philosopher, scholar and the ninth inheritor of Nanak-Guru Teg Bahadur.

He had never actively sought that role. As a child he had been tutored by two community icons, Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas. Between them the two men had lived through the entire Guru period from Guru Nanak onwards and embodied the Nanakian values of self-sacrifice, courage, patience, and high mindedness. Under their influence, the young Tyag Mal, as he was then known, grew up to be a quiet and introspective youth, almost too much so, perhaps which is why his father passed him over and picked his brother's son as the seventh Guru instead. While other relatives protested, Guru Teg Bahadur gladly accepted the verdict and went away from Kiratpur, to spend his days meditating in the relative obscurity of Bakala. However, the seventh and the eighth Gurus tragically died in quick succession leaving behind a vacuum and a shaken community, Teg Bahadur, now a mature scholar and a seasoned man, came out of seclusion just as easily and without much fanfare assumed his anointed calling as the ninth Guru.

His new role would require him to demonstrate all the patience, discipline, and resoluteness he had learnt from his two tutors and he would not disappoint.

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In one of his first acts as a Guru he travelled to Ramdaspur to pray at the Harmandir built by his grandfather but found the doors of the shrine shut in his face by a rival pretender. Undaunted, he sat on the doorsteps to say his prayers and then left without a fuss. When the supporters of another rival, Dhirmal shot and wounded him in the shoulder, the Guru refused to retaliate. When his own supporters ransacked Dhirmal's dera and brought to him the original copy of the Adi Granth that Dhirmal had taken away without permission from his grandfather's house at Kiratpur, the Guru had the Adi Granth restored back to Dhirmal. Let his wayward nephew keep the original copy-the Sacred Word was universal anyway.

Forgiving and non-confrontational he maybe but the new Guru was no pushover-something people close to him discovered around the Diwali of 1665 when he was preaching to mixed caste audiences at the village of Dhamtan near Jind. His sermons offended the upper castes of the area who threatened him with grave consequences, but the Guru ignored them. He was reported to the emperor at Agra as a troublemaker and a threat to social order. Aurangzeb promptly had him arrested and brought before him. The Guru still refused to backdown, but neither would he acknowledge any wrongdoing. He was almost executed on the spot but for the timely intervention by prince Ram Singh Kachwaha, who happened to be in the imperial attendance, and impressed by the Guru's fearlessness, became an instant devotee. Ram Singh interceded with the emperor and begged for a reprieve. The emperor reluctantly released the Guru into the custody of the Rajput prince, but the image of a stubborn 'troublemaker' would settle firmly in his mind.

Prince Ram Singh was headed for the eastern frontier as the commander of an imperial army and at his insistence Guru Teg Bahadur decided to join him. It was familiar territory for him anyway for no other Guru with the exception of Guru Nanak had travelled so extensively in Hindustan as he. Even before his investiture Guru Teg Bahadur had been up and down the Gangetic valley several times and knew the land and its people very well. He decided to use the opportunity to renew his links once again. Over the next four years he travelled through Agra and Awadh, Bihar and Bengal, to reach the far province of Assam. He preached to throngs of admirers along the way and wherever he went, he taught the Nanakian values of spiritual strength and personal humility, of introspection and meditation.

Now four years later, tensions were rising across the land and had reached Punjab. He quickly made up his mind, he was needed there and decided to head back. Within days the Guru household was on the road. His wife, Mata Gujri and his young son, Gobind Rai went separately in the care of a small group of retainers while the Guru himself took a slightly different route.

Over the next few months, he travelled once again through familiar towns and cities, Sasaram and Bodh Gaya, Benares/Kashi and Mathura and once again people flocked to see him and to hear him speak, to touch his feet and feed him and his companions. It was like the old times and yet the Guru could see firsthand, the violence that was being done to his people and his land. In Kashi he passed by the fresh heap of ruins that was once the ancient Vishwanath temple, its graceful pillars barely visible under a newly built Muslim shrine, the Gyanvapi mosque erected in its place on the imperial orders-a grotesque testament to the humiliation of one faith and the perversion of another.

Further west stood another new mosque in Mathura dominating the very place where the much-revered Keshava Dev temple once was. It seemed not only Hinduism but even the gentle Islam, of Sheikh Farid and Mian Mir was under assault for here it was told that to humiliate the Hindus further, the sacred idols from the temple had been carried away to Agra and buried beneath the steps of another mosque so that the feet of the Muslim faithful may walk over them every day.

The Guru and his party threaded their way slowly through the Indo-Gangetic heartland and reached Delhi by late June. By then the hot summer sun was upon them and they took a few weeks break from the journey there. The capital was rife with rumors and people as anxious as elsewhere. The Guru listened to one and all as he continued to propagate his message of kindness and compassion. Several holy men came to see him and pay respect. Among them were a group of men who arrived from the nearby town of Narnaul. They introduced themselves as Satnamis, a sect made up of low caste Hindus whose beliefs were very similar to the Nanakpanthis. Guru Teg Bahadur received them warmly and blessed them. Never threaten anyone nor be afraid of anyone or anything, he told their leader. Soon thereafter, he left for Punjab. The Satnamis too headed back to Narnaul. Aurangzeb Alamgir was in Delhi at the time but took no notice of the meeting.

Apparently, he had much more important things on his mind.

II.A Beleaguered Badshah

Even as Guru Teg Bahadur was passing through, a sense of siege was settling in the capital. Dissent and rebellion seemed to be everywhere. From the Subah of Kandahar came reports of a Pashtun uprising under a Yusufzai leader named Bhaku who drove out the Mughal officials. The emperor ordered fresh forces rushed from Lahore and Kabul. After some intense fighting the rebels were crushed but pockets of resistance remained. Then worse news came from the South. For a while, the spies had warned that the Marathas were restive once again. In February of 1670 they began a fresh offensive. In a night raid a handful of daring Marathas scaled the steep walls of Singhad fort and massacred its surprised Mughal garrison. The fall of Singhad was a singular disaster for it was a strategic outpost in the heart of enemy territory and its fall left Shivaji unchecked. Soon he began his punishing raids into Mughal territories including an audacious one on the rich port of Surat. The demoralized Mughals could only look helplessly on.

Stung by such reverses, Aurangzeb was forced to pour men and material into the troubled provinces. New Mansabdars were appointed, and new estates created and distributed among them. Such measures began to put an additional strain on the already seething heartlands. Now, fresh trouble began to brew, this time barely fifty kos from the capital, at a place called Narnaul where a new egalitarian movement had taken hold some decades ago among the lower caste Hindus. Exactly when and how that movement originated is disputed by historians but what is not disputed is its remarkable roots in the Nanakian philosophy.

Even the name of the community-Satnami-came from Guru Nanak's name for the Divine in his credal statement, the Mool Mantar. Like the Sikh Panth in Punjab the Satnamis eschewed caste, class or gender differences and believed in a formless God, Sat Naam that manifested itself in the form of the Shabad. They rejected empty rituals and asceticism, believed in hard work and simple living as householders. Like the Sikhs, they called their community-the Panth. Their commune was made up almost entirely of the low caste Chamars and like the early Sikh community at Kartarpur, men and women worked together all day and read their sacred Pothis in the evening.

Over time Satnami community began to insist on being treated at par with the upper caste Hindus, an assertiveness that was reinforced by their recent meeting with the Sikh Guru. Unfortunately, such assertiveness was considered an affront to the centuries old caste system and Mughal absolutism therefore a clash soon became inevitable. Trouble started in 1672 over a very ordinary event. A Mughal trooper finding a Satnami peasant too insolent for his liking, split his head with a blow from a stick. It was nothing unusual, such things happened all the time. Unfortunately, that day it turned out poorly for the trooper for in no time dozens of peasants surrounded him and almost beat him to death. Such audacity from low caste peasants was unheard of and could not go unpunished. The local shiqdār (petty revenue collector) sent a contingent of troops to drag the miscreants to justice.

The Satnamis however had anticipated such a move and were ready.

Aware that the flower of the Mughal army was far away in the Deccan they not only drove the troops away, but went on the offensive and after overrunning the neighboring town of Bairat marched on to Shahjahanabad (Delhi) itself. It was an audacious move. Believing that the Mughals were on the run, other peasants and artisans flocked to the Satnami cause and their ranks swelled into thousands. Too late, the Mughals realized that they had a full-fledged rebellion on their hands and the lightly defended city went into panic. People buried their valuables and the price of food grain shot up. Sensing the imperial weakness, even upper caste Rajputs and Muslim

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Zamindars around Delhi refused to pay revenue. Rumors flew. It was said that the Satnamis were backed by magic spells and were immune to Mughal arrows or bullets.

The dread reached such a level that emperor Aurangzeb himself had to step in. He announced that he would counter Satnami magic by inscribing the holy Koranic verses on green banners in his own hand that would dispel all evil spells. The banners were held high by foot soldiers and an army was hastily put together. Artillery pieces were stripped off from the city walls and desperately pressed into service. Ten thousand imperial troops were somehow gathered under a seasoned commander. The two sides clashed a few miles from the capital on Friday, the 15th of March 1672. Outgunned and outclassed, the Satnamis were wiped out but not before winning a grudging admiration of their adversaries.

As the news of this unusual uprising spread, rebels elsewhere took heart. From the Subah of Kabul came fresh news that the Pashtuns were on warpath once again, this time fueled by the fiery rhetoric of a warrior poet named Khushal Khan Khattak. Encouraged by Khattak the Afridi Pashtuns massacred a force of forty thousand men and the provincial governor, Muhammed Amin Khan barely escaped with his life. The alarmed emperor decided to take the field himself. In early 1674 he moved to a desolate military outpost of Hasan Abdal located on the North West frontier. By using a combination of deceit, coercion, subterfuge, and bribery, he somehow pacified the Afghan tribesmen but his absence from the capital took a toll elsewhere.

Far away in the Deccan Shivaji decided to take advantage of the imperial distractions to take on the emperor on equal terms. He announced the establishment of a new Hindu empire in the Deccan with himself crowned as its independent ruler.

The coronation was a grand affair that cleverly appealed to the Hindu sentiments by harking back to the pre-Islamic culture and extinct Hindu empires. The entire proceedings were carried out in Sanskrit and fifty thousand Brahmins were invited from all over Hindustan to preside over the ceremony. They were led by the venerable Gaga Bhatta of Benares, who declared Shivaji's bloodline the most noble in the land, surpassing even the Sisodhiyas of Mewar. Lavish gifts were showered over the Brahmins and elaborate feasts were provided to them and their families for four long months. On June the 6th, 1674 Shivaji woke up early after days of fasting and prayers for purification and mounted the auspicious throne of a Hindu Sawrajaya. The waters from all the sacred rivers of Hindustan, Indus, Ganga, Yamuna, Narbada, Tapti, Godavari, Krishna and Cauveri were poured over his head by his eight chosen ministers, his Ashtpardhan. Shivaji was given a new title-Kshatriya Kulavantas Chhtrapati Raje Shivaji, and a new Hindu golden age-the 'Shiv Rajyabhisheka Shaka,' was officially declared as literally tons of gold, silver and precious metals were distributed among the guests and the Hindu temples all over the land.

The symbolism of this grand spectacle was not lost on anyone, least of all on the shrewd emperor. Until that point, all the noble Hindu ruling houses were Rajputs from Rajputana and all of them had accepted Mughal suzerainty, Mughal service. Now by declaring himself as a blue-blooded Rajput and an independent Hindu ruler at that, Shivaji had staked a claim to the leadership of the entire Hindu population of the land. Moreover, by resurrecting the ancient Hindu imperial traditions he artfully bypassed the Mughal emperor's authority to confer kingship. Instead, he claimed legitimacy from the Hindu Shastras as the inheritor of India's ancient empires. It was high propaganda but a political masterstroke that challenged the very hegemony of the Mughal rule in Hindustan. To add insult to injury, Shivaji who was now nearly bankrupt thanks to his elaborate ceremonies, sent his generals to once again raid and plunder deep into the Mughal

territories to pay for the extravaganza.

The emperor was left seething but there was little he could do immediately about it. Around the same time, he received another intelligence report from the nearby Subahs of Lahore that caught his attention. Spies reported that the Sikh Guru was moving around in the countryside of Malwa and Doaba in Punjab with thousands of soldiers and horsemen in tow. That 'whosoever was refractory towards the officials took refuge with him.' The report warned the emperor that if no notice was taken immediately an insurrection was likely that would be extremely difficult to deal with (later)."

Aurangzeb was a suspicious individual anyway and surrounded as he was by insurgents and threatened by a new Hindu political revival in the land, he had every reason to assume the worst. The Satnami uprising was still fresh in his mind, and neither had he forgotten the support, limited though it was, that Guru Har Rai had extended to his brother and rival Dara Shikoh in 1658. Now with a new rival rising in the Deccan he could not risk another infidel uprising in Punjab. Thus, assuming the worst and sure that he was acting in the best interest of the empire, Aurangzeb Alamgir sent a secret message to the Subedar of Lahore. Guru Teg Bahadur was to be arrested immediately and executed lest he became a bigger threat to the empire.

III. The Protector of Hindustan

Guru Teg Bahadur had arrived in Punjab just in time for the festive season around the Dussehra of 1670. He caught up with his family at Lakhnaur near Ambala from where they all proceeded to Anandpur, then known as Chakk Nanaki. By 1672 however he was back again touring the areas of south east Punjab known as Malwa and Bangar. He met as many people as he could and listened to their concerns. The entire region was in an appalling state. Mismanagement and poor governance had driven the peasantry to the edge and many of them were in a sullen and rebellious mood.

Besides the obvious social and inter faith tensions generated by the imperial orders, another big problem

were carved out of them to pay for the expanding list of Mansabdars who lived off these estates. The matters were made worse by constantly rotating the Mansabdars among the estates. Sometimes a single estate changed hand more than once in a single year and the peasants were forced to pay the taxes twice. Because most able-bodied men were drawn away to serve in the Mughal armies, lawless elements could not be checked. Unfortunately, the imperial officers blamed the local peasantry for any crimes committed in their areas and punished their leaders.

Such pressures created a dangerous situation especially since the entire countryside in the 17th century was one large armed camp in which peasants everywhere carried arms. Many villages had fortified compounds and when the peasants were in a bad mood even a simple act of tax collection by the authorities had to be backed by force. Just like the Jats in Mathura and the Satnamis of Narnaul, the peasants in Punjab had grown bold and were but one incident away from rebellion. Banditry was endemic. In such trying times, it was the Guru who tried to calm tempers. In Assam, he had mediated a peace between the warring Ahoms, and the Mughal forces led by Ram Singh. Now back in Punjab, he did the same, acting both as their spiritual guide as well as their conscience keeper. Meditation and introspection alone, he preached, was the way to survive in the Kaliyug.

*Jagat bhikhari phiraat hai,
sabh ko daata Ram; he wrote;
(the world is full of beggars,
and yet there is only one true Giver).*

At another place he said:

*'One who is neither given to anger nor despair;
but considers both friends and foes alike,
know that person as truly liberated.*

*One who is untouched by pride nor greed,
know only such a person an image of the Divine.*

Unfortunately, the Guru's job was a difficult one. As the pressure on the land revenue continued unabated, the destitute peasants often abandoned their lands and turned to the only institution available to them for aid-



In 1675 a group of Kashmiri pandits despondent over forced conversions in their area approached the Guru to mediate with the emperor on their behalf.

haunting the peasantry was economic exploitation. Because the near constant imperial wars needed men and resources a huge burden fell upon the peasantry. Large Jagirs or estates were squeezed as smaller ones

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the house of Guru Nanak. Yet because the abandonment of the land was technically considered illegal, the Mughals looked upon many such followers of the Guru as criminals. The Guru however felt duty bound to help one and all, regardless of caste or class, region, or religion. He went about providing for the needy, digging wells and ponds in parched lands, providing cattle where there was need and feeding those who had to be fed. While social and political tensions rose and fell, the Guru preached nothing but patience, compassion and humility. However, it was these large crowds of disenchanted peasantry following the Guru that probably frightened the Mughal spies who dutifully reported their fears to the emperor with tragic consequences.

It was a false alarm.

The Guru had no political ambitions. His strength was chiefly spiritual, his weapons were his conscience, and his goals were Dharmic-wellbeing of all. There was never any thought of a rebellion in the Guru's mind.

It was not his style.

The key to living within the Hukam the Guru famously preached, was to never fear anyone nor to threaten anyone. Even as he watched the likeminded Satnamis rebel in Narnaul next door, he never encouraged anyone to take up arms.

According to oral Sikh tradition, in 1675 a group of Kashmiri pandits despondent over forced conversions in their area approached the Guru to mediate with the emperor on their behalf. It was not an unusual request; the Sikh Gurus had mediated on the behalf of the people before from time to time. For example, in 1598 Guru Arjan had met with emperor Akbar on the behalf of the peasantry suffering from drought and had their taxes remitted. Having seen the pain and suffering in the land, Guru Teg Bahadur probably meant to meet with the emperor anyway to appeal to his conscience and stop the brutalizing of his people.

Not wanting to wait any longer, he set out on July the 10th, 1675, on a peaceful mission to the capital accompanied by three close followers-the brothers Bhai Mati Das and Sati Das, and Bhai Dayala. The party had only gone a short distance when they were stopped by Mirza Nur Mohammed Khan near Ropar on July the 12th. Acting upon the royal instructions, the official arrested the Guru and his companions and sent them to the lockup in Sirhind.

Days turned to weeks and weeks to months, but the Guru remained in prison without any clear reason. Finally, it became obvious that he was unlikely to make it out of the prison alive. Guru Teg Bahadur accepted his fate calmly and took solace in two of his favorite activities-meditation and poetry. His writings reflected the urgency of the moment, yet he would not let the community despair.

"Strength departs, fetters remain; all remedies are gone.

You alone (God) remain a hope, as once you helped a trapped elephant," he wrote. But then he followed it by:

"Strength is restored, all fetters break, in your (God's) hands lie all remedies."

Four months later, the Guru was transported to Shahjahanabad (Delhi) under imperial orders. Reportedly attempts were made to get the Guru to confess and accept Islam, the usual option offered to the political prisoners, but the Guru rejected such pressures even as his companions were tortured to death in front of his eyes. Loyal followers in the capital were able to maintain some communication with the Guru but to them too he advised only patience and

submission to Divine will. Some of his most beautiful and poignant verses were composed during those final difficult months. The world was false, he observed, its petty attractions an entanglement, yet the only unchanging reality was the impermanence of life.

*"Chinta tan ki kijiye ja anhone hoye,
ehu maraag sansaar ko Nanak Thir nahin koye"
(Fear only that which is unexpected,
not the (changing) ways of the world-nothing stays forever).*

His words were read, repeated, and shared by anguished followers hoping for a miracle. Later generations would come to believe that the Guru perhaps used supernatural powers to leave the royal prison at will to visit the faithful yet the Guru himself eschewed all such talk when he lived. According to one account, when asked to perform a miracle, he agreed to do so but only on the day of his execution. He said he would tie a talisman around his neck that would allow



Gurdwara Sis Ganj at Chandni Chowk where on November the 24th, 1675 Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was executed.

him to defy death.

On November the 24th, 1675 he was brought out of prison at Chandni Chowk for the last time and seated under a large banyan tree. In front of a large crowd of spectators and wailing followers, the executioner's sword performed its ghastly deed and the piece of paper tied around the Guru's neck was opened and read aloud.

'I gave my head but not my creed,' it simply said.

Guru Hargobind had named his youngest son, Tyag Mal (hero of sacrifice) when he was born and renamed him Teg Bahadur (mighty hero) on account of his courage. The son did not disappoint. He lived and died an embodiment of both his names-a fearless hero while he lived and a sacrificing one until the very end. Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas would have been proud.

His body was ordered to be quartered and exposed to public view but according to oral accounts a fierce dust storm arose momentarily blinding all those present. In the ensuing confusion courageous followers, Bhai Jaita snatched the severed head and transported it to Anandpur where it was consecrated to the flames by his nine-year-old son and successor. Another follower, Lakhi Shah Banjara snatched the body of the Guru and hiding it in his wagon full of limestone took it home and cremated it by setting his house on fire.

Such heroism revived the spirit of the small Sikh community that became even more emboldened. A Mughal historian was to record that when the emperor returned to his capital 'Sikh miscreants' threw two bricks at him. One of these struck his movable throne.'

As the news of the martyrdom spread, the Sikh Guru and his principles became an object of admiration and

pride throughout the land. In faraway Deccan lived Samarth Guru Ramdas, the spiritual mentor to Shivaji. He recorded in his diary a chance encounter he once had with Guru Hargobind. In an answer to the question as to why the Guru dressed like a prince and carried twin swords, he was told the swords were to protect the weak.

"Batan faquiri Zahir Amiri,"

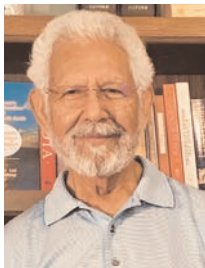
(Externally I look like a prince, but internally I am a hermit), the Guru had replied.

"I liked his reply very much," wrote Samarth Ramdas, admiringly of the Guru in his diary. Now his son had died a martyr for a similar cause and earned the admiration of millions. Guru Teg Bahadur was promptly given a new title by the people living in the Gangetic valley, Hind-di-Chaddar-the protector of Hindustan. In Punjab, his contemporary Bulleh Shah labeled him a Ghazi-martyr to the cause.

**Yet it was his son, Guru Gobind Singh who said it the best:
'To protect their right to wear tilaks and sacred threads, did he-in the dark age-perform the supreme sacrifice.
To help the saintly he went to extremes. His head he gave, yet uttered no sigh. For the sake of Dharma, he did this deed, His head he gave, yet not his creed. None could match such a deed.'**
Epilogue

On September 25th, 1857, a British officer named William Hodson led a contingent of Sikh troops to arrest the last Mughal Emperor and his three fugitive sons. Soon thereafter he shot the three princes in cold blood and ordered the soldiers to transport their bodies to the city kotwali and lay them at the same spot where Guru Teg Bahadur had been executed 182 years earlier. Ironically, in this way, another murderous imperial rationalized his own crimes by evoking the memory of a saintly man whose only fault had been to try to be the conscience keeper of his troubled land.

Lal Qila and Guru Teg Bahadur's 400th Anniversary: A Sikh History Perspective



BY SAJJAN SINGH DHALIWAL,
ROSHAN ATTREY & HARBANS LAL



Lal Qila has intimate connection with the course of Sikh history

On January 26, 2021, when Indian Republic Day celebrations were taking place at Rajpath, New Delhi - and the world Sikh community was preparing to celebrate Guru Teg Bahadur's 400th birth anniversary - a young Sikh farmer from Punjab's heartland was hoisting the Nishan Sahib on Lal Qila in Old Delhi. He was protesting, apparently, with the farmers' march against India's new agricultural laws.

Indian media, politicians, and numerous observers were shocked at the spectacle. Some thought this action a disgrace to the Red Fort; some considered it a desecration of the Indian Tiranga flying on this monument. And some saw it as tainting of the Republic Day and an embarrassment to the country.

We have a different take, however. The young Sikh's defiant feat was none of the above. He was seeking to achieve a very different objective unrelated to the farmers' rally.

In part I of this two-part article, we want to explore implications of his daring act beyond his role in the farmers' march - to reframe his deed as an expression of the Sikh community's grievances against authorities of the past and present. We focus on the role that Lal Qila as the Mughal Emperors' palace has played in Sikh history by citing events that are indelibly etched in the collective Sikh memory.

We also cite those events to remind India and the world of the sacrifices made by the Sikh Gurus and their followers for the religious freedom of all people. With these words, we especially dedicate this article to Guru Teg Bahadur on his quadricentennial.

In part II, we offer a few suggestions about how the Sikh community's grievances embedded in its history may be mitigated. Since the Sikh community is inevitably part of other Indian communities, its history can't be separated from their histories. Therefore, the suggestions we offer are for India to work on and apply as feasible, with the willingness and cooperation of all communities, since all Indian communities function within the Indian cultural, legal, and geographical boundaries geographical boundaries.

I. Lal Qila's History with Sikhs

It was no coincidence that on Republic Day, a Sikh - not a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Baha'i, or Parsee - climbed up the flagpole and, with other Sikhs and Hindus cheering from down below, hoisted the Nishan Sahib on Lal Qila.

Then, it would be relevant to ask: Is there something about Lal Qila that galvanizes Sikhs, in particular, more so than other Indians?

Most Indians may not know the Sikh connection with Lal Qila (also "Lal Kila," or "Red Fort" in English), rather two Lal Qilas, as the Mughal Emperors' principal residence, court, and seat of power. With the change of the Mughal capital, the first one in Agra was superseded by the second in Delhi. Both affected the course of Sikh history to a very great extent.

Lal Qila has been designated a national monument, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Indian prime minister's venue for the Independence Day celebration. It is also a significant part of the Muslim Indian legacy, contributing much to Indian terms of etiquette, dress, food, music, architecture, art, craft, language, and literature.

However, that legacy often overlooks the consequences and collective memories that most non-Muslims associate with this great monument. From Lal Qila, the Mughal Emperors deployed their might to subjugate the Indian subcontinent, and from there emanated the power wielded by their dominions. Hundreds of years later, Sikhs, Hindus, Parsees, and many others, while visiting Lal Qila, are reminded of the cruel oppression of their cultures and religions, violent takeovers of their lands, enslavement, mass genocide, and mass proselytization.

Indians visiting this monument while admiring its grandeur hark back to the Mughals proclaiming and committing atrocities - far back to Babar, first Mughal Emperor, much before Lal Qila. Babar (or Babur), a descendant of Timur or Tamerlane and a Sunni Muslim, invaded India and established his dynasty in 1526. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, refers critically and prophetically to the horrific acts committed by the first Mughal Emperor, describing him as "the Agent of Death," who ruthlessly massacred and pillaged Indians, causing endless suffering in the subcontinent.

Now we provide a brief outline showing the Lal Qila connection with the course of Sikh history. The instances cited below to provide context to better understand why this national monument and historic seat of the Mughals triggers horrible memories for Sikhs and does not let them forget the past.

Lal Qila - Mughal Court, Agra: Emperor Jahangir

Guru Arjan Dev, 5th Sikh Guru, executed in Lahore, May 30, 1606

Guru Arjan Dev was summoned to appear in Lahore court before one of Emperor Jahangir's representatives. He was accused of promoting a belief system contrary to Islam - the sacred Sikh scripture he had compiled did not conform to the Holy Quran. And it didn't help matters that the Guru was also friends with the Emperor's rebellious son Khusrav and that the new religion even was attracting many Muslims. Therefore, as dictated by the imperial protocol or desire, he was arrested at Lahore Fort, interrogated, asked to embrace Islam, and, on his refusal, executed most cruelly. Besides being subjected to other cruelties, the Guru was made to sit on a burning hot iron plate, and burning hot sand was poured on his head until he died.

Guru Arjan Dev, a prolific poet, philosopher, and visionary, compiled the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, in 1604. He inspired his followers to emulate divine attributes and gave a message of love, hope, justice, and prosperity for all.

Lal Qila - Mughal Court, Delhi: Emperor Aurangzeb

Guru Teg Bahadur, 9th Sikh Guru, and his devotees



Lal Qila, possibly during the later Mughal period

executed in Delhi

Aurangzeb ruled India for almost half a century (1659-1707). A devout Sunni Muslim, he declared and enforced Islam as the law and religion of his empire. His goal was to make India an Islamic state, meaning, according to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, "the conversion of the entire population to Islam and extinction of every form of dissent."

Aurangzeb viewed Hindus and Sikhs as his natural enemies. They were required to pay jizya tax for being Hindu or Sikh. He galvanized all his religious and secular powers to rule and convert them and, if needed, subjected them to unheard-of atrocities, culminating in death.

From Lal Qila, Aurangzeb announced the following orders that transformed Indian history in general and Sikh history in particular:

November 5, 1675

Three followers of Guru Teg Bahadur were executed in Chandni Chowk, Delhi, as ordered by Aurangzeb because they refused to embrace Islam:

- Bhai Mati Das was tied between two posts and sawed off into two halves from head to loin.
- Bhai Sati Das (Mati Das's brother) was hacked to death, limb by limb, piece by piece.
- Bhai Dyal Das was tied and thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil.

Guru Teg Bahadur was made to witness these gruesome killings of his followers.

November 11, 1675

Six days later, Guru Teg Bahadur was beheaded publicly within walking distance from Lal Qila.

Reason? He had petitioned the Emperor on behalf of helpless Kashmiri Brahmins, Satnamis, and other non-Muslims from India that their forced conversion to Islam and "the Quran or the sword" policy be stopped, and that they be allowed to live by their own religious beliefs. The Guru also said "No" to his own conversion to Islam.

Guru Gobind Singh, 10th Sikh Guru, and his sons

December 22, 1704

Subsequently, Aurangzeb deployed his vast administrative machinery to go after Guru Gobind Singh, 10th Sikh Guru, and his four sons. The Guru had to sacrifice his two older sons to battle to protect his faith and his people:

- Ajit Singh, 17 years old, died fighting the Mughal army in Chamkaur.
- Jujhar Singh, 14 years old, also died on the same battlefield.

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December 27, 1704

Five days later, the remaining family of Guru Gobind Singh was murdered in the custody of Aurangzeb's Governor of Sirhind, Punjab:

- Zoravar Singh, seven years old, was bricked alive and then beheaded in Sirhind.
- Fateh Singh, five years old, was bricked alive, along with his brother, and then beheaded.

Their crime? They said "No" to their conversion to Islam. Mata Gujri, the mother of Guru Gobind Singh, died along with her two grandsons.

Perpetuation of Aurangzeb's Atrocities

Aurangzeb, the last Great Mughal, died on March 3, 1707, but his laws and edicts didn't die with him. They were continued by his successors and those who derived power from the imperial throne. The tradition of Mughal atrocities remained unbroken for a long time.

Lal Qila, Delhi: Emperor Bahadur Shah I December 10, 1710

Bahadur Shah proclaimed a Sikh genocide - ordering that the Sikhs be murdered wherever they are found. Reason: The Emperor had issued a "capture or kill" order for Sikh general Banda Bahadur, but the great Sikh had disappeared despite all the Mughal forces hunting for him.

Banda Bahadur (earlier named Madho Das, a Hindu recluse) was anointed a Sikh warrior by Guru Gobind Singh before he died in 1708. He had pledged to fight against the oppressive Muslim rule.

Lal Qila, Delhi: Emperor Farrukhsiyar

Banda Bahadur, his family, and 714 Sikhs
February 29, 1716

Banda Bahadur was captured by the Mughal army and brought to Lal Qila, Delhi, along with his wife Sushila Devi (Princess of Chamba) and their 4-year-old son Ajay Singh. Sushila Devi committed suicide when she was forcibly separated from her son and ordered to submit to Emperor Farrukhsiyar's harem.

The same day a large number of Sikhs were massacred. Their heads were arranged in pyramids at the gates of Lal Qila. And he hung up the bleeding heads of the murdered Sikhs on Lal Qila's walls, as well as on trees and buildings leading to Chandni Chowk, Delhi.

714 Sikhs were beheaded publicly, 100 each day. Not a single person accepted Islam or asked for mercy.

June 9, 1716

The Moghul ruler brought Banda Bahadur to the Qutab Minar area. There, his 4-year-old son, Ajay Singh, was slain in front of him. And the executioner took out little Ajay's throbbing heart and entrails and thrust them into his father's mouth. Banda shut his mouth and remained unmoved.

Then Banda Bahadur was executed. Here is an excerpt from a witness account letter describing Banda's execution. C. R. Wilson, an East India Company representative and guest of the court, wrote to the British Viceroy:

First, with a dagger his right eye was removed.
Then his left eye was turned out with dagger.
Then his both feet were cut.
Both arms were chopped off.
Then with pincers, his flesh was cut off bit by bit.
Then his legs, nose, and ears were cut one by one.
Then his brain was blown out with sledge hammers, sledgehammer.

Last of all his body was cut to pieces.
Farrukhsiyar's Edict: Convert to Islam or die-1716
Emperor Farrukhsiyar ordered Sikhs to convert to Islam or die. He offered a reward for each head. Most Sikhs retreated to jungles. An East India Company envoy traveling from Delhi to Lahore saw pyramids of Sikh skulls along the highway. The Mughal government declared the Sikhs extinct.

Many more were the atrocities perpetrated by the

Mughals. The culture of cruelties, firmly established, continued its course, with Lal Qila as the ruling throne of Sunni Islam.

Lal Qila captured by Marathas in 1757 and Sikhs in 1783

It would be pertinent also to add that, during the long Mughal rule, c.1526-1857, two times the Sunni Muslim emperors lost Lal Qila to Hindus and Sikhs. Here is a brief account of both.

Saffron Hindu flag hoisted on Lal Qila: The Maratha Victory, 1757

The great Maratha King Shivaji posed the only other



La Quila during British times

notable resistance to Aurangzeb's tyrannic rule. He fought and won many wars against the Mughals. The Mughal-Maratha Wars or the Deccan Wars were fought from 1680 to 1707.

After Shivaji's death, his son Sambaji also stood up bravely against the Mughals until he was captured at Sangameshwar in February 1689. Sambhaji and his prime minister Kavi Kalash (a Brahmin) were tortured to death. It took over a fortnight to kill them.

The process of killing them included plucking their eyes and tongue, pulling their nails, and removing their skin. Sambhaji was finally killed on March 11, 1689, reportedly by tearing his front and back, beheading him, and then hacking his body to pieces at Tulapur on the banks of the Bhim river near Pune.

But after Aurangzeb's death, the Marathas rose again and started their expansion toward the north. They conquered the land up to Punjab and beyond as far up as the Khyber Pass. In 1757 they hoisted their Hindu saffron flag on Lal Qila, Delhi.

Nishan Sahib hoisted on Lal Qila: The Sikh Victory March 11, 1783

In 1783, Baghel Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia united their forces into a joint Sikh army, defeated the Mughal army, conquered Delhi, and hoisted the Sikh flag on Lal Qila.

Subsequently, once Delhi was under their control, they built seven historical Sikh Gurdwaras in Delhi, the most important of which are: Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, near Connaught Place, memorializing Guru Har Krishan; Gurdwara Sis Ganj, in Chandni Chowk, memorializing Guru Teg Bahadur; and Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, near Parliament House, all commemorating Guru Teg Bahadur.

Nishan Sahib vis-à-vis Lal Qila

Unmistakably, the above portrait of the Mughals, enthroned in Lal Qila, should propel us Indians to ask:

- How could a monument that reminds us of centuries of oppression, forced conversions, and destruction of our people be so respect-worthy? Respect worthy as writers, scholars, and politicians would have us believe?
- How does Lal Qila represent Indian culture and its values?
- And how did the hoisting of the Sikh flag by the young Sikh on Republic Day disrespect the Indian

Tiranga or the monument itself?

To clarify, the Nishan Sahib is not the flag of so-called Khalistan. It is the Sikh flag, the flag of Khalsa (the Sikh community), hoisted on all Sikh gurdwaras and numerous other memorable Sikh places in India and the world.

The Nishan Sahib is a symbol of bravery and protection of the persecuted. It is hoisted at the China border, Pakistan border, and wherever Sikh soldiers are protecting India. And this January 26, the Nishan Sahib - along with the Indian national flag - was hoisted in front of the Sikh battalion marching on Rajpath, New Delhi, and saluted by both Prime Minister Modi and President Kovind.

Furthermore, just a peek into history - the Sikh flag was hoisted all over Kashmir, Leh, Ladakh, and Aksai Chin when Sikh General Zoravar Singh conquered those areas.

And, finally, to return to the young Sikh farmer's act of hoisting the Sikh flag, it was a symbolic attempt at cleansing the Indian psyche, particularly the Sikh, of the gory past that harbors in it and haunts it. It was his protest against the nightmares of Sikh history in particular, and Indian history in general, associated with this national monument.

This unfortunate history brings us to the second part of the article.

II. Recommendations to Deal with the Intercommunal Baggage of History

That India is perhaps the world's most diverse country is not an overstatement. In its diversity - ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and religiously - India is more like a continent.

That Indians share a common history is true, but their religion, language, state, know their communities or ethnicity have their distinct pasts, too. And those histories - often shaped by self-centered/communal interacting, intersecting, and relating with one another - have primarily contributed to the making of numerous challenges facing modern India. The most severe challenge that India must contend with is the effect of religion and history on intercommunal relations.

As individuals, we all have to come to terms with our past - with what we have done and what has happened to us. Much in the same sense, India as one nation has to come to terms with its past, that is, its cumulative history. India's past is a mammoth story of its achievements and failures. It includes, too, what has happened to its communities and what the communities have done to one another, resulting in countless grievances against one another. In other words, India has to deal with its histories of various communities, especially the conflicting communal histories. Let us call it the intercommunal baggage of the past.

We believe that religion and history have shaped India's intercommunal relations over the centuries and are an essential part of Indian life. While Indian democracy is secular by and large, the practice of secularism is often at odds with people's religious sentiments and their politics. Unless one religious community is willing to respect another religious community with a divergent view of history, India will continue to be confronted - as it has been until this day - with challenges from any society based on their grievances. This confrontation will impede the progress India has made as a country and democracy.

Therefore, we would like to offer the following suggestions for India: the government, political leaders and reformers, civic and religious organizations, historians, academics, literati, and the media. If practiced, these suggestions will significantly lower socio-religious tensions and increase mutual understanding among religious communities, e.g., Hindu vs. Muslim, Muslim vs. Sikh, and Sikh vs. Hindu. And their practice, evolving continually, will create greater cohesiveness and harmony in Indian society and, on the whole, make the country a better and

CONTD ON PAGE 26

CONTD FROM PAGE 25

more prosperous democracy:

1. Provide an unbiased and updated version of India's cumulative history. Make sure it is free from the imperialistic biases traditionally built into it and the Indian education system. Incorporate in it the content/themes/areas previously neglected, disparaged, or understated.
2. Educate all Indians about India's cumulative history, as far back as feasible. Include in it the social, political, and religious history of each religious community. Thus, each community will know not only its own history but also other communities' histories. As a result, they will likely develop a new and positive understanding of one another.
3. Create awareness among people about the unsavory aspects of imperialism, Mughal as well as British.
4. Teach students to critically examine Indian histories written from the imperialistic point of view - which extoll the oppressors' cultures, arts, literatures, philosophies, and judgments, as well as their other contributions, and de-emphasize their atrocities.
5. Help minimize communal conflicts, mainly Hindu vs Muslim, Muslim vs Sikh, and Sikh vs Hindu, by spreading awareness that the ancestors of a considerable majority of Indian Muslims or Indian Sikhs were Hindus. Simultaneously, create awareness that many of those Muslim-convert ancestors, too, were victims of the Mughal power like other Hindus and that today's Indian Muslims shouldn't be blamed for what the imperialists did to Hindus, Sikhs, and others.
6. Create consciousness in the country that all Indians are equal before the law, irrespective of their religion or community, and must be treated equally and held responsible for their conduct, not that of their ancestors.
7. Launch a new tradition in schools to celebrate and learn community histories. Start with the Sikh History Month, for example, in which every year students will learn about Sikhs and Sikhism. Develop this tradition by choosing another month for another community. Thus, students will learn about other communities and religions in a positive spirit.



To conclude, most Indians carry the baggage of their history. How big their baggage is depends on who they are; that is, their baggage depends on their community, ethnicity, religion, and their perceptions. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Parsees, Jews, and others have all their unique histories that have shaped their communities. They tend to believe that they are significantly different from others because they belong to a different community. But the truth is that they all being Indian have so much in common, much more to connect them than to divide them.

We sincerely hope and trust that India - i.e., the Indian government and its opposition; leaders, writers, and media of the right, left, and center; all diverse religious organizations; and Indian society - will find our suggestions helpful in devising new ways to deal

with the divisive issues of history and religion.

And we believe that an updated cumulative history of India, which includes records of different religious communities, will enlighten Indians about themselves and, more importantly, result in alleviating the social and religious tensions amongst and between various communities. That will lead to a harmonious multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and secular democracy and a more progressive and prosperous society in India.

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Shahid Kapoor turns producer

Shahid Kapoor is one busy man. After Jersey and Raj and DK's next, Shahid was supposed to work on Shashank Khaitan's Yoddha but he walked out of the film at the last minute. He was also in talks for several other films, including the Hindi remake of Surarai Pottru, a Ram Madhvani film and the big budgeted Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra directorial Karna. Now, we can tell you that although he's making his digital debut on Amazon Prime Video, he has inked a huge deal with Netflix as well.

A source informed Bollywood Hungama, "Shahid has been paid to the tune of over Rs. 70-80 crore for a trilogy that he's going to star in. It's a period mythological war saga that will be adapted from Amish Tripathi's novel. Not just that, this will also mark Shahid's foray into production."

He had been waiting to set up his own production house for some time. "Shahid was almost kick-starting his own banner with the Dingko Singh biopic but it fell apart. Now, Netflix and he have signed a mutual agreement on this project. It will most likely feature him and is going to be an ambitious period venture designed on the lines of a Baahubali but only for the web.

Priyanka sets up fundraiser, urges all to donate towards Covid-19 relief

Priyanka Chopra urged everyone towards Covid-19 relief in India, as it battles a deadly second wave of the pandemic. She talked about the grim situation in the country, as hospitals are unable to accommodate patients. There is also a critical shortage of oxygen supplies and life-saving medicines.

In a video posted on Instagram, Priyanka said, "Why do we need to care? Why is it so urgent right now? I am sitting in London and hearing from my friends and family in India about how hospitals are at capacity, there are no rooms in ICUs, ambulances are too busy, oxygen supply is less, crematoriums having mass cremations because the volume of death is so much. India is my home and India is bleeding."

"We, as a global community, need to care. And I'll tell you why we need to care - because unless everyone is safe, no one is safe. So, please use your resources and focus your energy on helping stop this pandemic. Please donate. I understand a lot of people must be angry and thinking about, 'Why are we in this place in the first place? Why is this happening?' We will address that but after we stop the urgency. Please donate and please use your resources as much as you can. India needs you," she added.

Priyanka wrote in her Instagram post that she has set up a fundraiser with GiveIndia. "Whatever you can spare, truly makes a difference. Nearly 63 million people follow me on here, if even 100,000 of you donate \$10, that's \$1 Million, and that's huge. Your donation will go directly to healthcare physical infrastructure (including Covid care centres, Isolation centers, and oxygen generation plants), medical equipment, and vaccine support and mobilization," she wrote.

Priyanka said that she and her husband, Nick Jonas, have already contributed to the cause and 'will continue to'. She also talked about how 'heartening' it is to see so many people stepping up to do their bit to help.

Earlier this week, Priyanka sought Covid-19 vaccines for India, and tweeted about the US ordering 'more vaccines than needed'.



Ajay Devgn sets up emergency Covid-19 facility at Mumbai's Shivaji Park

Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn is doing his bit to help Mumbai in the time of the Covid-19 crisis. The Madaan actor and a few of his colleagues have joined hands with Hinduja Hospital to set up an emergency facility at Mumbai's Shivaji Park.

As per reports, BMC has converted a hall at Shivaji Park into a 20-bed Covid-19 facility equipped with ventilators and oxygen support. Devgn, Anand Pandit, Boney Kapoor, Luv Ranjan, Sameer Nair and many others have also joined forces to contribute over Rs 1 crore to BMC's "Smiley Account".

Shiv Sena corporator Vishaka Raut said, "It is great that Ajay Devgn supported BMC."

The Tanhaji actor has contributed the funds through his social service wing NY Foundations. Joy Chakraborty, COO, said, "It will be an extension of Hinduja Hospital." The foundation will also be helping with food and medicine.

In 2020, Ajay Devgn helped by donating ventilators to Mumbai's Dharavi as the area was badly struck by Covid-19.

On the work front, Ajay is looking forward to the release of Madaan, RRR, Gangubai Kathiawadi.



Arjun Kapoor loves how 'dignified' Malaika Arora is

Among the star couples who have been making it to the headlines, Arjun Kapoor and Malaika Arora always manage to light up the internet with their photos, every once in a while. The duo ensures that they back each other up and whenever they speak about each other, it is full of praise. Speaking of this, Arjun recently opened up about his ladylove Malaika in a chat and revealed what he learned from her. The 2 States actor even revealed what he loves about Malaika the most.

In a chat with HT Brunch, Arjun shared that he loves how 'dignified' Malaika is. Explaining this further, Arjun said that he loves how Malaika has gone through her life with dignity since she began working at the age of 20. Further, he shared that he has never seen her complain about things or change the 'narrative' around her. The 2 States actor said that she lets her work do the talking instead of her and that he gets to learn from his ladylove every day.



Oscars 2021: Anthony Hopkins wins best actor, Nomadland best picture

In a stunning close to a largely predictable Oscar ceremony, Anthony Hopkins won Best Actor for his work in *The Father* over the late Chadwick Boseman, who died last year of cancer and has swept awards season so far for his performance in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Chloe Zhao made history at the 93rd Academy Awards as the first woman of colour to win the Oscar for Best Director for *Nomadland*, which also won Best Picture. She's also only the second woman in Oscar history to win the award after *The Hurt Locker* director Kathryn Bigelow. Frances McDormand, star of *Nomadland*, won her third Best Actress Oscar, matching Daniel Day-Lewis' three Best Actor Oscars. Joining Chloe Zhao in the history-making category was Yoon Yuh-jung, Best Supporting Actress for *Minari*. Daniel Kaluuya completed his awards grand slam this year with the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *Judas And The Black Messiah*.

The first Oscar of the show went to Emerald Fennell who won Best Original Screenplay for *Promising Young Woman*; Best Adapted Screenplay was won by *The Father*. *The White Tiger*, starring Priyanka Chopra, was nominated in this category.

Another *Round*, from Denmark, was awarded Best International Feature Film. "We wanted to make a film that celebrates life," said director Thomas Vinterberg who made the film while facing a tragic personal loss - his daughter, who was cast in *Another Round*, died in a car accident. The official entry from India this year - *Jallikattu* - failed to make the shortlist.

Mank, which led the nominees slate with 10 nods, won two Oscars - Best Cinematography and Best Production Design. *Sound Of Metal*, starring Pakistani-origin actor Riz Ahmed, also won two of its six nominations - Best Sound and Best Film Editing. The nominations were announced last month by Priyanka Chopra and husband Nick Jonas.

The Oscars this year were historic at several levels - for one, it boasts the most diverse list of nominees in the history of the Academy Awards; for another, in addition to the traditional venue of Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre, much of the ceremony is taking place at Union Station. This year, the categories of Best Sound Mixing and Best Sound Editing have been consolidated into a single Best Sound award. Also, there is no host for the award ceremony for the third year running.



Director/Producer Chloe Zhao, winner of the award for best picture for "Nomadland," poses in the press room at the Oscars on Sunday, April 25, 2021, at Union Station in Los Angeles.



This image released by Sony Pictures Classics shows Anthony Hopkins in a scene from "The Father."



Daniel Kaluuya, winner of the award for best actor in a supporting role for "Judas and the Black Messiah".



Emerald Fennell, winner of the award for best original screenplay for "Promising Young Woman".



Martin Desmond Roe, left, and Travon Free pose with award for best live action short film for "Two Distant Strangers".



Here are the winners of the 93rd Academy Awards:

- Best Picture: *Nomadland*
- Best Director: Chloe Zhao, *Nomadland*
- Best Actress: Frances McDormand, *Nomadland*
- Best Actor: Anthony Hopkins, *The Father*
- Best Supporting Actress: Yoon Yuh-jung, *Minari*
- Best Supporting Actor: Daniel Kaluuya, *Judas And The Black Messiah*
- Best Original Screenplay: *Promising Young Woman*
- Best Adapted Screenplay: *The Father*
- Best Animated Feature Film: *Soul*
- Best International Feature Film: *Another Round*
- Best Original Score: *Soul*
- Best Original Song: *Fight For You*, *Judas And The Black Messiah*
- Best Documentary Feature: *My Octopus Teacher*
- Best Documentary Short: *Colette*
- Best Live Action Short: *Two Distant Strangers*
- Best Animated Short: *If Anything Happens I Love You*
- Best Sound: *Sound Of Metal*
- Best Production Design: *Mank*
- Best Cinematography: *Mank*
- Best Makeup And Hair: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*
- Best Costume Design: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*
- Best Film Editing: *Sound Of Metal*
- Best Visual Effects: *Tenet*
- Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award: Tyler Perry



HARLEM i FILM FEST

BY MABEL PAIS

Opening Night in-person celebration features World Premieres of Tarabu Betserai Kirkland's "100 Years from Mississippi,"

Glenn Osten Anderson's "Coogan's Way,"

North American premiere of Anne Via McCollough's "Full Circle."

16th Edition, May 6-9

The 2021 Harlem International Film Festival ("Hi") has its 16th edition - a hybrid event - May 6-9.

The film festival will open with an audacious presentation of two triple-header screenings at the AMC Magic Johnson Harlem 9 Theaters (2309 Frederick Douglass Blvd) with the first Opening Night featuring the world premieres of Tarabu Betserai Kirkland's "100 Years from Mississippi," and Glenn Osten Anderson's "Coogan's Way," as well as the North American premiere of Anne Via McCollough's "Full Circle."

The second Opening Night trio features films making their New York premieres including; "Voodoo Macbeth," a film project from the University of Southern California Graduate students collective, about the first all black cast (in 1936 Harlem) to perform Shakespeare's MACBETH, directed by a young and arrogant Orson Welles; Rebecca Heidenberg's "Queens of The Revolution," a Cuban documentary which is a moving portrait of Mejunje, a cultural center in Santa Clara that paved the road for LGBTQ+ rights in that county, highlighting the bravery of people who have fought for their lives and identities for decades; and Celine Parrenas Shimizu's "The Celine Archive," which looks at the remarkable story of Celine Navarro, who was buried alive by her community in 1932. The story exposes issues that still haunt Filipinax American communities today.

The red carpet in-person event will kick off the film festival's celebrated showcase of relatively undiscovered international cinematic gems and local New York filmmaking talent and lead into virtual screenings of 71 films and more (31 features, 32 shorts, 2 VR/360 projects, and 6 webisodes) representing over 17 countries.

The Harlem International (Hi) Film Festival will also offer its signature curated presentations of curated Harlem Uptown and local New York produced and themed short films preceding each of the features screening during the Opening Night event.

Harlem International (Hi) Film Festival's Program Director, Nasri Zacharia, said, "We are thrilled to return to the theater, have a red carpet welcome for our filmmakers, live audiences and Q&As, and experience the magic of film festival discovery in the company of one another the way we did prior to the pandemic. At the same time, we will also utilize the virtual presentations to not just introduce our audiences throughout the state of New York to films from around the world, but also to interact and connect with filmmakers from all over the globe. And, of course, we'll continue our efforts to truly showcase the filmmakers and the setting of our beloved home neighborhoods of Harlem, Upper Manhattan and the Bronx, which we call the HUB."

TICKETS, PASSES

For Film festival passes, tickets, and more

information on the Harlem International Film Festival go to HarlemFilmFestival.org

OPENING NIGHT TRIPLE FEATURES SELECTIONS

"100 Years From Mississippi"

DIR: Tarabu Betserai Kirkland | USA | 59m | World Premiere



*A scene from "100 Years From Mississippi."
Photo / courtesy Hi Film Festival 2021*

Mamie Lang Kirkland was seven years old when she fled Ellisville, Mississippi in 1915 with her mother and siblings as her father and his friend, John Hartfield, escaped an approaching lynch mob. John Hartfield returned to Mississippi in 1919 and was killed in one of the most horrific lynchings of the era. For over 100 years.... Mamie vowed never to return to Mississippi. Yet with Mamie's son, Tarabu's remarkable find, he urges his mother to finally confront her childhood trauma by returning to Ellisville.

"Coogan's Way"

DIR: Glenn Osten Anderson | USA | 1h



7 m | World Premiere

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, NYC's Washington Heights neighborhood was considered the epicenter of America's crack cocaine epidemic. "Coogan's Way" is the story of how a small bar and restaurant that welcomed all races, religions, and interests became a force for good in the community. And how decades later, when the owners were faced with the challenges of a rapidly changing NYC real estate market, their diverse and dynamic clientele fought for this beloved institution.

"Full Circle"

DIR: Anne Via McCollough | USA | 86 min | North American Premiere

This stunning documentary celebrates one woman's triumph in conservation, the Great Gull Island Project, Helen Hays' 50-year quest to save two species of threatened seabirds - Roseate and Common Terns - on a small, uninhabited island in Long Island Sound. The film highlights the myriad of volunteers inspired by Hays over the decades; her extensive collaboration with scientists in Argentina, Brazil and the Azores; and also her remarkable & heartwarming connection with a small fishing village on the north coast of Brazil.

"Voodoo Macbeth"

DIR: University of Southern California Graduate students collective | USA | 1h 48m | New York Premiere

In 1936 Harlem, the first all black cast to perform Shakespeare's MACBETH, directed by a young and arrogant Orson Welles, battles to make it to opening night.

"Queens of The Revolution"

DIR: Rebecca Heidenberg | Cuba | 1h 18 m | New York Premiere

This moving portrait of Mejunje, a cultural center in Santa Clara that paved the road for LGBTQ+ rights in Cuba, highlights the bravery of people who have fought for their lives and identities for decades.

"The Celine Archive"

DIR: Celine Parrenas Shimizu | USA | 1h 9m | New York Premiere

Adulteress, traitor, heroine, or prey? In 1932, Celine Navarro was buried alive by her community in Northern California. The filmmaker digs up Celine Navarro's story, exposing silences that haunt Filipinax American communities today, along with Celine Navarro's family, community members and scholars who know different details about this largely untold event in American history.

ADDITIONAL FILMS

In addition to the Opening Night films, there are 11 Narrative Features, 13 Documentary Features, 7 HARLEM/UPPER MANHATTAN/BRONX SHORTS, 18 Other Shorts, 5 Animation Shorts, 2 Virtual Reality Screenings, and 6 Webisodes.

ABOUT THE HARLEM INTERNATIONAL (Hi) FILM FESTIVAL

Celebrating the art of cinema in the home of the Harlem Renaissance, The Harlem International Film Festival (Hi) inspires and entertains by honoring dynamic films by anyone about anything under the sun. Conceived from the belief that we all have unique experiences and perspectives to share, the Festival actively seeks and exhibits fresh work. Hi is committed to exemplifying the eminence that Harlem represents and is dedicated to bringing attention to the finest filmmakers from "Harlem and across the globe."

(Mabel Pais writes on The Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness)

EMERGE: NJSO Concert Film Trilogy

BY MABEL PAIS

The New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO) with DreamPlay Films presents "EMERGE," an NJSO Concert Film trilogy pairing orchestral performances with stunning visuals, mesmerizing dance sequences and format-bending on-and off-stage elements.

Music Director Xian Zhang conducts programs featuring a trio of star pianists-Daniil Trifonov, Simone Dinnerstein and Inon Barnatan. The films are directed by award-winning, Newark-raised filmmaker Yuri Alves and produced by DreamPlay Films, part of Newark-based DreamPlay Media.

The films premiere through June at njsymphony.org/emerge and on the NJSO's YouTube channel. The films are free for viewing.



NJSO perform "Emerge" - Photo / Courtesy NJSO

"EMERGE Part 1" premieres April 28.

Zhang leads the East Coast premiere of "Primal Message" by American composer Nokuthula Ngwenyama, whom 'Gramophone' has hailed for the "bold mesmerizing character" of her music. Simone Dinnerstein, whose "individual, compelling" ('New York Times') interpretation of Bach's "Goldberg Variations" propelled her to international fame, performs Bach's Keyboard Concerto No. 5 in F Minor, BWV 1056. The program closes with Schumann's Fourth Symphony.

The film features captivating images of and inspired by the people of Newark, and is presented in 4K anamorphic widescreen.

"EMERGE Part 2" premieres May 26.

Inon Barnatan brings his "penetrating musicianship, compelling interpretive insight and elegant pianism" (BBC Music) to Florence Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement. Zhang pairs the celebrated American concerto with Mozart's Symphony No. 39.

The film features dance performances by local dancers Cori Barnes and M.A. Taylor, behind the scenes images of the NJSO musicians, and is presented in black-and-white 4K Ultra HD.

"EMERGE Part 3" premieres June 23

Grammy Award winner and "Musical America" 2019

Artist of the Year Daniil Trifonov - "without question the most astounding young pianist of our age" ('The Times') - returns to the NJSO. He performs Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto, which also features NJSO Assistant Principal Trumpet Anderson Romero. Zhang brings the series to a close with Beethoven's Fourth Symphony.

The film features riveting images of and inspired by the people of New Jersey, presented in 4K Ultra HD.

The film series, which will be available on demand after the premiere, is part of NJSO Virtual 20-21, the Orchestra's digital season. For more information, visit njsymphony.org/virtual.

PROGRAM

EMERGE: An NJSO Concert Film Trilogy

A musical journey without boundaries.

EMERGE Part 1: An NJSO Concert Film

Wed, Apr 28, at 7:30 pm

This moment invites us to discover hidden dimensions within, and to see the world with fresh eyes. A new beginning awaits.

Xian Zhang, conductor

Simone Dinnerstein, piano

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

Yuri Alves, director

Igor Alves, producer

DreamPlay Films

Tim Martyn, audio producer

BACH Keyboard Concerto No. 5 in F Minor, BWV 1056

NOKUTHULA NGWENYAMA Primal Message (East Coast Premiere)

SCHUMANN Symphony No. 4

The film features NJSO and Simone Dinnerstein on stage and captivating images of and inspired by the people of Newark. Presented in 4K anamorphic widescreen.

EMERGE Part 2: An NJSO Concert Film

Wed, May 26, at 7:30 pm

In tune with hope and beauty, the world beckons us to move ahead in solidarity and in purpose. Let us create-from love-a better world.

Xian Zhang, conductor

Inon Barnatan, piano

Cori Barnes, dancer

M.A. Taylor, dancer

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

Yuri Alves, director

Igor Alves, producer

DreamPlay Films

Tim Martyn, audio producer

PRICE Piano Concerto in One Movement

MOZART Symphony No. 39

The film features the NJSO and Inon Barnatan on stage, dance performances by Cori Barnes and M.A. Taylor and behind-the-scenes images of NJSO musicians. Presented in black-and-white 4K Ultra HD.

EMERGE Part 3: An NJSO Concert Film

Wed, June 23, at 7:30 pm

Light and sound guide our path to grace in the collective soul. It is time to embrace humanity anew and to thrive in the abundance of our destiny.

Xian Zhang, conductor

Daniil Trifonov, piano

Anderson Romero, trumpet

New Jersey Symphony Orchestra

Yuri Alves, director

Igor Alves, producer

DreamPlay Films

Tim Martyn, audio producer

SHOSTAKOVICH Piano Concerto No. 1

BEETHOVEN Symphony No. 4

This film features NJSO and Daniil Trifonov on stage and riveting images of and inspired by the people of New Jersey. Presented in 4K Ultra HD.

NJSO VIRTUAL

To learn more about NJSO and access, for free, the "Emerge" and former concerts, visit

njsymphony.org/virtual

Connect with NJSO:

Website: njsymphony.org

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: @NJSymphony

YouTube: @NewJerseySymphony

Email: information@njsymphony.org

YURI ALVES

Filmmaker Yuri Alves has written and directed films, primetime television programs and commercial projects in the US and Europe. Alves' films have screened at over 100 film festivals worldwide, earning 20 awards. Alves' projects include "Grind, On the Cusp and Exit Road" and the European primetime television series "Tempo Final" and "Filha da Lei." Alves is the co-founder and creative director of DreamPlay Media and served as head of production at Fox Digital Studios. Alves was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to Portuguese parents, and grew up in Newark, New Jersey.

For more, visit yurialves.com | Instagram: @yurialvescinema.

DREAMPLAY FILMS

DreamPlay Films develops and produces narrative and documentary films, television programming and more. DreamPlay Films is a division of DreamPlay Media, an original and creative media company, based in Newark, NJ. For more, visit dreamplayfilms.com | dreamplaymedia.com.

MOTHER'S DAY GIFT

From NJPAC & ALVIN AILEY

BY MABEL PAIS

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater "Revelations Reimagined"

Saturday, May 8th at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 9th at 3:00 p.m.

Celebrate Mother's Day weekend with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater!

For 21 seasons, Alvin Ailey has been a beloved tradition at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC). Although we can't gather in person this year, NJPAC has something special honoring MOTHERS: a virtual screening of Alvin Ailey's new



Alvin Ailey dancers - Photo / Courtesy NJPAC

dance film, "Revelations Reimagined."

Whether your family is near or far, tune in and remember the feeling of live performance. This presentation is a thank you to everyone who has enjoyed Alvin Ailey at NJPAC in the past-and a hopeful reminder of all the soul-stirring performances yet to come.

"Revelations Reimagined" explores "Revelations" in a new context: past and present, on stage and off, a

cultural treasure that transformed modern dance forever and continues to reinvent itself. The beloved Ailey masterpiece pays tribute to African-American heritage - "sometimes sorrowful, sometimes jubilant, but always hopeful" - and to the power of the human spirit.

Program

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater "Revelations Reimagined"

Saturday, May 8th at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 9th at 3:00 p.m.

To RSVP, visit njpac.org/alvin-ailey-american-dance-theater-revelations-reimagined

NJPAC

To learn more about NJPAC, visit njpac.org

ALVIN AILEY

To learn more about Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, visit alvinailey.org

(Mabel Pais writes on The Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness)

Bad habits that can ruin your relationship

When you're in a relationship, you're more often than not always trying to do what you can to keep it relatively healthy and happy. And of course, unless you're a complete masochist, you'd never do anything to deliberately sabotage it. But it's surprisingly easy to fall into bad habits that can slowly suck the life out of your relationship — and those can add up over time.

Being on your phone all the time

Sure, sometimes work stuff can't wait, but regularly being glued to your phone or checking it when you're having a conversation with your S.O. sends a subconscious message that they're not your priority. "It can help to either be all present with your partner or let them know that you can talk once you are off your phone," says licensed marriage and family therapist David Klow, owner of Skylight Counseling Center in Chicago. "Splitting your attention often leaves the other person feeling neglected and less valued."

Making public jokes at your partner's expense

You know your S.O.'s insecurities, and the two of you may even laugh about them in private. But doing it in public is an entirely different story, Durvasula says, even if it's phrased as a joke. So while your partner may think it's funny when you say their new haircut makes them look like a less cool version of Conan O'Brien, they're probably going to be hurt when you say it in front of your friends.

Being passive-aggressive

You know this is bad. Pretty much everyone on the planet knows this is bad — but it still happens a lot. "This is a relationship killer," Durvasula says. "This reflects indirect communication and usually a fair amount of unhappiness and challenges with self-esteem and insecurity on the part of the passive-aggressive person." Basically, it doesn't make you look good and it only serves to piss off your partner. When you find yourself slipping into passive aggression (it happens), try to take a minute and think about what you really want say, even if it's opening up about something you've been dreading talking about or frustrations you've been letting fester. Doing that instead of



resorting to snark or sarcasm will get you so much farther than you think.

Starting fights over text

Text messages leave so much open to interpretation, and when you start an argument over text, you're just asking for more issues. "Fighting via text is a setup for a mess — all the emojis in the world cannot substitute for the warmth in your eyes, a smile or seriousness when talking to your partner about something frustrating or upsetting," Durvasula says. If you have a problem and you need to discuss it, ask them to save some time for a one-on-one later. And if it really can't wait, call them — it's not ideal, but hearing each other's voices is still way better than a text.

Criticizing their family

While you probably wouldn't start railing on your partner's mom out of the blue, family issues can come up. "If they bring it up, then you can reinforce their opinions if you agree, but don't fall into a trap that could come back to bite you," Durvasula says. Instead, try be diplomatic and keep in mind how you'd feel if they said the same thing about your family.

Dyeing your eyebrows might be the beauty trick you're missing

Eyebrow tinting is the process of applying semi-permanent dye to enhance, shape, and define your brows. Tinting allows a professional to manipulate the brow area by darkening the fine hairs that surround the perimeter of the brow to increase the width. It also allows the specialist to darken the fine hairs in the inner core of the brow that are in less dense areas. This creates a longer brow line (brow tail) or fuller front and a more ideal shape.

Eyebrow tinting works on skin types, skin tones, and hair colors. If you're trying to tint grey or white hair though, the process is a little trickier. Make sure you go to someone that knows how to tint eyebrows well and does it often. Grey hair is more resistant and tends to be stubborn, so you might need to adjust the process a bit.

You'll want to avoid getting your brows wet for 12 hours after getting the treatment done and to clean around the area with gel or cream-based cleansers. Your brows will stand out and look fuller right away. You can cut back on the multiple brow products in your beauty routine. The tint lasts anywhere from three to six weeks. To avoid exfoliating or use of any oil-based products in that area as it will cause the tint to fade faster.



Apply a thin layer of Vaseline or Aquaphor to the surrounding skin as a form of protective barrier between the dye and your skin.

Be aware that eyebrow tinting dyes aren't FDA-approved. There is no standard dye formulation and a variety of dyes out there are being used, some of which contain preservatives that aren't regulated.



By Tript Arora

CONNOISSEUR'S CHOICE



Punjabi Chole

On the occasion of Mother's Day, I am sharing the recipe which was taught to me by my mother. My Mom was a fantastic cook. Though she cooked so many dishes but this one like all punjabis is close to my heart. So today I am sharing my Mom's recipe of Punjabi choley.



We Need

1 cup Chick peas or Chole(small variety), 2 Big Onions (200 gm), 2 Big Tomatoes (150 gm), 8 Cloves of Garlic, 2" Piece of Ginger, 1 Black Cardamom, 2" Piece of Dalchini (Cinnamon), 5 to 6 Laung (Cloves), 1Tsp Turmeric Powder(Haldi), 1 Tsp Chilli Powder, 1 Tsp Coriander Powder (Dhania), 2 Tsp Chana Masala (Any Brand), 1 Tsp Anardana Powder (Pomegranate Seed), 1 Big ladle of Cooking Oil, 1 Tsp Salt or to taste, ½ tsp Baking Soda (soda-bi-carb), 2 Tsp Tea leaves,

For Tempering

2" Piece of Ginger cut into Jullians, 3 Green Chillies Slit lengthwise, 1 Tbsp Kashmiri red Chilli powder.

Preparation

- Soak Chole(White Gram) in water and soak it overnight. In the morning drain the water and keep aside the chick peas. Grind Onions to form a paste. Grind Tomatoes to form a puree. Make a Ginger garlic paste.
- Boil 2 Tsp of Tea leaves in 1 cup water . Strain it and keep aside.
- Mix all the Spice powder in a small bowl and keep aside. This way You will not forget any spice powder at the last moment.
- Heat Cooking Oil in the pressure cooker and add dry spices ie Cardamom, Cinnamon and cloves. Let it splutter. When the Dry spices are heated ingoes the Onion paste. Saute the paste on medium flame till it is of brown colour. Add a little water and it will prevent onion paste from burning.
- When the onions are done, add Ginger garlic paste to them. Saute till fragrant.
- Now is the time to add Tomato puree. Add salt alongside as it will quickly make tomato soft and mushy .
- Stir in all the spice powders you mixed in a small bowl. Mix them well with the onion, tomatoes mixture. Saute till the mixture leaves oil.
- Add drained Chole . Saute for 2 min. Now add water to Chole. Approximately 4 times the quantity of Chole. The water should only cover the Chole and not more.
- Now let us have the Halwai effect. Add 1 cup of tea water to the Chole which is going to give the traditional black colour to them. After pouring tea water in pressure cooker, stir in Baking soda. You will see bubbles forming on the surface . This chemical reaction is going to bring out the real taste of Punjabi Chole.
- Now close the lid of the cooker and on high flame cook it till 8 whistles. Let the steam sit. Open the pressure cooker only after it has cool down completely. If Chole appear thick , add boiled water to adjust the consistency. Switch off the flame.
- Time to temper the Punjabi Chole. Take a small pan. Switch on the flame. When the pan is warm, add Desi ghee. Let it heat a bit and then add Ginger Julians and Slit green chillies. Saute for a 30 seconds switch off the flame .
- Immediately add Kashmiri red Chilli powder to the pan and quickly pour the ' tadka' over the cooked Chole.
- Serve hot with poori, Bhaturs , rice or whatever bread of your liking. For side onion rings dipped in lemon juice and any pickle make a sumptuous brunch on a Holiday.

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Why sunlight is so good for your health

Amid pandemic concerns, more and more healthcare practitioners have suggested how sun exposure for even half-hour daily can help up one's vitamin D levels in the body which is considered essential for bone and muscle health. But did you know that sun is not just a source of vitamin D? It actually has several other benefits for one's health.

Taking to Instagram, ayurvedic practitioner Dr Dixa Bhavsar suggested how sunlight in the morning, right after sunrise till about 8 am and at the time of sunset, can help.

Here's what to know about the sun's rays and our health

According to Dr Bhavsar, different light wavelengths (colours) are present at different times of the day and impact us differently. Every wavelength has a different therapeutic benefit.

- UVA exposure, for example, increases nitric oxide which is a vasodilator, which improves blood flow, improves oxygenation, lowering respiratory rate, lowering blood glucose levels.
- The red visible spectrum which is always present during the day touches on mitochondria function which increases energy and overall



- health.
- From natural light, we also make the neurotransmitters serotonin, melatonin and dopamine which are critical for mental health including reducing anxiety, depression etc.
- Blue light stimulates us and keeps us awake. It also helps with seasonal affective disorder and depression due to its hormone-producing capabilities.
- Being outdoors has shown to improve our sleep quality and

fine-tune our daily circadian rhythm too, as we make melatonin (our sleep hormone) from daylight, then excrete melatonin after an absence of blue light for 2+ hours (which is why blue blocking glasses are so important after sunset).

"I'm not advising to recklessly go overboard with direct sunlight and start burning. Tweak your day, be mindful to get more natural light (not just direct sunlight), like training outside instead of in the gym," she said.

Source: Indian Express



Delaying vax will give virus opportunity to develop new variants

People should not delay taking Covid-19 vaccine as this will give virus an opportunity to develop new variants and some of them may reduce the efficacy of current vaccines, say healthcare experts.

They believe that those not taking the vaccine are doing a great injustice to their near and dear ones.

Government of India has announced that all individuals aged above 18 years would be eligible to get Covid-19 vaccination starting May 1. This must be considered as the end game for the deadly pandemic to be driven out of India but this would not be achieved if the young and the old hesitate to take vaccine, say the experts.

Dr. Mervin Leo, Cluster COO, Gleneagles Global Hospitals believes that Covid-19 virus still has many hosts left to replicate in, and it has more opportunity to randomly develop new variants. "Some of these variants may reduce the efficacy of the current vaccine, which is surely not a desirable scenario to be in. Hence, it is important people encourage each other to get vaccinated at the earliest and ensure the virus is driven out of our lives before it gets to us," he said.

Healthcare facilities across Hyderabad are ramping up their capacity to vaccinate more population in the weeks ahead. They believe vaccination for all is the most definitive step in the fight against coronavirus.

"Vaccination for all is about controlling the pandemic at a population level through reaching herd immunity, and the objective cannot be achieved unless each and every one joins the movement and get themselves vaccinated. Fight against coronavirus requires a community effort, and everybody must step forward in and get their vaccines, so that we can break the chain of transmission from one person to another," said Dr. Riyaz Khan, CEO, Continental Hospitals.

"There needs to be emphasis to get a vaccine (Covishield/Covaxin) whichever is available at the earliest and easily. Both are effective. Now it is proven beyond doubt that even a single dose provides decent protection. Vaccines are highly effective in preventing hospitalisations and deaths. It is unnecessary for people to wait for a year to get vaccinated, and the longer we wait to observe any side-effects might only lead to developing of future virus mutants," said Dr. Aarathi Bellary, Consultant Internal Medicine, SLG Hospitals.

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Home remedies for fatty liver

Having fat in the liver is normal but only to some extent. When more than 5 to 10% of your liver's weight is fat, it is known as a fatty liver disease. This exposes your liver to a risk of injuries, inflammation, and scarring. Fatty liver is of two types, alcoholic fatty liver, and non-alcoholic fatty liver. The former happens as a result of excessive alcohol intake and the latter is because of other alcohol unrelated reasons.

There are some natural home remedies which can help you treat fatty liver disease easily. Take a look:

Apple cider vinegar

One of the most effective home remedies for a fatty liver disease is apple cider vinegar. It helps you by reducing fat accumulating in the liver and by inducing weight loss. It also promotes healthy liver functioning by reducing inflammation. All you need to do is add a tablespoon of ACV to warm water and drink it twice daily before your meals. You can also add honey to



enhance the taste. Repeat this for two months to see the difference.

Lemon

Lemons are rich in vitamin C and antioxidants which help the liver produce glutathione. This enzyme neutralizes the toxins in the liver, thereby promoting detoxification. All you need to do is squeeze a lemon in a glass of water and drink it twice or thrice

a day for some weeks. This will help in reducing the fat accumulated in the liver, thereby treating fatty liver disease naturally.

Green tea

Green tea is enriched with high-density catechins which improve liver functioning and prevent fat accumulation in people suffering from the nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. It blocks the amount of fat stored in the liver and improves its functioning as well. Drink 3 to 4 cups of green tea regularly to keep the fatty liver disease at bay.

Papaya

One of the main causes of fatty liver disease is dietary fats. Ayurveda has it, both the pulp and the seeds of the papaya fruit are effective in burning these dietary fats, thereby preventing fatty liver disease naturally. For this, you could eat a slice of papaya with honey every day. You could also grind its seeds, mix it with water and drink it daily for the same effect.

Apple to ban apps that offer incentives to users for enabling app tracking

Apple has finally released the much-awaited iOS 14.5 update for its gadgets. Apple users may already be aware of the many features that come with the update, one of them being App Tracking Transparency. This feature basically notifies users whenever a third-party app is tracking them online and asks for their permission on whether or not to move ahead with it. While users were pretty content with this new feature, companies like Facebook that are known for being fuelled by web user data have criticized this decision. The situation only headed towards the south as many apps started announcing rewards for users in exchange for their data to circumvent Apple's decision. Here is Apple's response.

Following the iOS 14.5 update, users will get to see a new feature in the form of a pop up that greets them before they open an app. The pop-up asks for their permission on whether or not they want to be tracked and presents them with two options as answers, "Ask App Not to Track" and "Allow". Apple also simultaneously updated its Human Interface Guidelines with a new section called "Accessing User Data" that dictates new policies for companies. In the policy, it is mentioned that all apps must follow the procedure of asking user permission not just for personal data but also to access device compatibilities like microphone and camera as well as consent to track them.

NASA astronaut successfully harvests 2 plants in space



WASHINGTON (TIP): NASA's Expedition 64 crew member Michael Hopkins has harvested two crops in space—'Amara mustard, and a previously grown crop, 'Extra Dwarf pak choi. They were grown for 64 days, the longest leafy greens have grown on station, the US space agency said.

The pak choi grew for so long that it began to flower as part of its reproduction cycle. Hopkins' efforts in eclipsing the mark included using a small paintbrush to pollinate plant flowers.

"I wasn't all at surprised that he chose this route to make sure the plants were fully pollinated because he has always wanted to be very involved," Matt Romeyn, a space crop production project scientist and science lead on the four-plant experiments, said in a statement on Tuesday.

"After he used the paintbrush, we saw a high seed production rate," he added.

Hopkins ate the pak choi as a side dish, with leaves marinated in an empty tortilla package. He added soy sauce and garlic, and put it in a small food warmer for 20 to 30 minutes, NASA shared in a post.

Astronauts have been enjoying the Amara mustard "like a lettuce wrap," Hopkins explained, adding ingredients such as chicken, soy sauce, and balsamic vinegar.

"Delicious, plus the texture or crunch," he wrote in the experiment notes after sampling Amara mustard grown in space.

While the astronauts' pre-packaged food offers variety and nutrition, fresh crops deliver an appealing addition. Hopkins said the plants were a much appreciated "connection to Earth" and that connection is one reason he uses his personal time to be a space gardener.

The experiment is important because fruit crops require pollination, and crews need to understand how the process works in microgravity and, eventually, in reduced gravity.

As part of the Plant Habitat-04 experiment, the Kennedy Space Centre will send pepper seeds to the space station later this year. The pepper seeds will fly on SpaceX's 22nd Commercial Resupply Services mission and will grow in the Advanced Plant Habitat. A VEG-05 experiment with dwarf tomatoes also is planned for Veggie next year, NASA said.

Instagram working on new tools for influencers

Facebook-owned Instagram is working on a suite of new tools to help influencers make money off its platform, including creator shops, affiliate commerce and a "branded content marketplace." Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the upcoming features during a live stream with Instagram chief Adam Mosseri.

Creator Shops would be an extension of the company's existing shopping features, which allows businesses to sell products, reports Engadget.

"We see a lot of creators setting up shops too, and one part of being a content creator business model is you create great content, and then you can sell stuff, and so having creator shops is awesome," Zuckerberg said.

Zuckerberg also said the company is working on tools that would enable Instagram stars to get paid for promoting products.

"Creators should be able to get a cut of the sales of things that they're recommending and we should build up an affiliate recommendation marketplace to enable that to all happen," he said.

Europe starts tests for automated asteroid spotters

Scientists said on Tuesday they have switched on a new telescope at the European Southern Observatory as part of an effort to create an automated network for spotting asteroids that might pose a risk to Earth.

The 56-centimeter telescope that's now seen "first light" at the La Silla Observatory in Chile, known as TBT2, will work together with a twin in Cebros, Spain, to test whether the same object in space can be detected with one device and then tracked by another.

The tests are a precursor to a planned network of automated telescopes being developed by ESO and the European Space Agency. The project, called Flyeye, will survey the night sky for fast-moving objects and flag those that could become a threat to human researchers for further investigation.

More than 900,000 asteroids have been catalogued in the Solar System and about 25,000 have an orbit that brings them close to Earth. The European Space Agency keeps a risk list of more than 1,000 such objects that are closely tracked.



WhatsApp testing 24-hour option for disappearing messages

After the seven-day limit, WhatsApp is now testing and developing a Disappearing Message feature with the 24-hour option for personal and group chats.

According to WABetaInfo, a website that tracks WhatsApp in Beta, revealed that the disappearing message feature will be available in a future update.

"WhatsApp won't replace the 7 days option, but 24 hours will be an addition," the report said.

WhatsApp will soon include the 24-hour option in the section where people are used to enable/disable disappearing messages for personal and group chats.

When the user chooses "24 hours", all messages sent/received after this change expire after 24 hours, so they will disappear from the chat.

"The feature is under development and it will be available in a future update for iOS, Android and Web/Desktop," the report mentioned.

In November last year, WhatsApp launched the much-awaited



'Disappearing Messages' on its platform for both Android and iOS users that automatically deletes new messages sent to a chat after seven days when turned on.

In a one-to-one chat, either person can turn disappearing messages on or off. In groups, admins will have the control on the new feature.

The Facebook-owned platform started with the seven-day limit "because we think it offers peace of mind that conversations aren't permanent, while remaining practical so you don't forget what you were chatting about".



India's unemployment rate may rise to 8%: CMIE

As states go into lockdowns and impose restrictions amid the second wave of Covid-19, the unemployment rate in April is likely to increase to nearly 8 per cent from 6.5 per cent in March, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

CMIE's CEO Mahesh Vyas said that fast frequency labour statistics indicate that labour market conditions have been deteriorating in April 2021.

"The labour participation rate (LPR) looks unlikely to fall in April. The 30-day moving average LPR indicates that the ratio was rising till April 15 when it peaked at 40.8 per cent. Then it started falling, but it is unlikely to fall to a level lower than that of March 2021," he said.

Unless there is an unusual bounce in the last week, the April LPR is likely to stabilise at its March level of 40.2 per cent, as per CMIE.

US economy grows at 6.4% in March quarter

The US economy grew at a brisk 6.4% annual rate last quarter — a show of strength fuelled by government aid and declining viral cases that could drive further gains as the nation rebounds with unusual speed from the pandemic recession.

Thursday's report from the Commerce Department estimated the nation's GDP accelerated in the January-March quarter from a 4.3% annual gain in the final quarter of 2020.

Growth in the current April-June period is expected to be faster still, potentially reaching a 10% annual pace or more, led by an increase in people willing and able to travel, shop, dine out and otherwise resume their spending habits.



India's oxygen crisis to ease by mid-May, output to jump 25%: Report

NEW DELHI (TIP): India's severe medical oxygen supply crisis is expected to ease by mid-May, a top industry executive told Reuters, with output rising by 25 per cent and transport infrastructure ready to cope with a surge in demand caused by a dramatic rise in coronavirus cases.

Dozens of hospitals in cities such as New Delhi and Mumbai have run short of the gas this month, sending relatives of patients scrambling for oxygen cylinders, sometimes in vain.

Medical oxygen consumption in India has shot up more than eight-fold from usual levels to about 7,200 tonnes per day this month, said Moloy Banerjee of Linde Plc, the country's biggest producer.

"This is what is causing the crisis because no one was prepared for it, particularly the steep curve up," Banerjee, who heads the company's South Asia gas business, told Reuters on Thursday, April 29.

Linde - whose two affiliates in the country are Linde India and Praxair India - and other suppliers are ramping up production to a total of more than 9,000 tonnes per day by the middle of next month, he said.

A logistics crisis impeding the speedy movement of oxygen from surplus regions in eastern India to hard-hit northern and western areas would also be resolved in the coming weeks as more distribution assets are deployed, Banerjee said.

"My expectation is that by the middle of May we will definitely have the



transport infrastructure in place that allows us to service this demand across the country," he said. Banerjee said India was importing around 100 cryogenic containers to transport large quantities of liquid medical oxygen, with Linde providing 60 of those. Some are being flown in by Indian Air Force aircraft.

Many of these containers will be placed on dedicated trains that would cut across the country, each carrying between 80-160 tonnes of liquid oxygen

and delivering to multiple cities.

The company is also looking to double the number of oxygen cylinders in its distribution network to at least 10,000, which would improve supply to rural areas with weak infrastructure.

"We are trying to create a hub-and-spoke type of system so that we make a lot of liquid oxygen available at the local area, from where the local dealers can pick it up," Banerjee said.

Source: Reuters

Oil drops after rallying on signs of rising global fuel demand

Oil declined on Friday, April 30, but prices are still heading for a weekly gain as signs of strengthening demand from the US to China stoked optimism the recovery from the pandemic is accelerating.

Futures in New York dropped 0.6% after closing above \$65 a barrel on Thursday for the first time since mid-March. Major American cities are moving to fully reopen, travel across China over an extended holiday that starts Saturday is expected to hit a record, and sales of transport fuels in the U.K. are rising. Big oil companies are also starting to reap the rewards of the recovery.

The coronavirus is still looming over the market, however, with a resurgence in regions such as India and Brazil clouding the near-term outlook. OPEC+ warned earlier in the week that the flare-up could even derail the recovery.

"This week saw an avalanche of strong data and reassuring developments in the U.S, but that may have buried the rising global risk of more transmissible Covid variants, particularly the one that has wreaked havoc in India," said Vandana Hari, the founder of energy consultant Vanda Insights in Singapore. "At six-week highs, crude was ripe for a breather."

There's been a raft of bullish calls on the outlook this week, with the OPEC+ coalition raising its consumption estimates for this year and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. predicting oil demand will post a record jump as vaccination rates increase. While some regions tackle a virus resurgence, the market is also facing additional supply next month as OPEC and its allies boost output.

The short-term risks to the demand outlook are starting to show up in gauges of market health.



Powell stomps on inflation fears, pledges more stimulus

Temporary price jumps will not spook the Federal Reserve into pulling back on the stimulus it has pumped into the US economy during the Covid-19 pandemic, the central bank's chair Jerome Powell said on Wednesday, April 28.

While the world's largest economy is coming back from the depths of last year's crisis, the recovery has a ways to go and it is too soon to even talk about easing off the gas, Powell said as the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) concluded its two-day meeting.

He highlighted the Fed's commitment to keep the benchmark lending rate near zero, where it has been since the start of the crisis, and to continue its massive bond buying programme until employment recovers and inflation exceeds the 2% threshold "for some time." Responding that policymakers could let inflation get out of control, Powell snapped back: "We understand our job. We will do our job."

Speaking at a press briefing, he again acknowledged that inflation will increase in the coming months as business ramps up, but he stressed that the main factors pushing it higher will dissipate.

"An episode of one-time price increases as the economy reopens is not the same thing as, and is not likely to lead to, persistently higher year-over-year inflation," Powell said in response to a question from AFP. After falling sharply in the early months of the pandemic as demand tanked when the economy shut down to contain the virus, prices of many goods and services have spiked in recent weeks, including gasoline as travellers and commuters return to roads and airports.

Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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**WEEKLY HOROSCOPE
May 3 to 9, 2021**

Aries

Ganesha says this week is a crucial week for you to take ownership of your actions and choices. You have been trying to find the reason why you're lagging behind at work and you are not being as productive as you used to be. What you have failed to realize is that you're the one that's holding yourself back from working to your full capacity and being happy from within. You often tend to function on autopilot and go through the day just to get over with, which is what you should change this week. Try to be as proactive as possible.

Taurus

Ganesha says You can try to go on a spiritual journey this week. You will have a lot of free time to do what you want and this is the perfect opportunity for you to enhance your overall well-being by indulging in activities that give you deep meaning and purpose in life. It could simply be as little as meditating and saying prayers that bring you peace. Some difficult events might occur in the middle of this week which will require you to have a stronghold on your emotions and feelings which is where the spiritual activities and meditation will help you.

Gemini

You will be provided with good luck in abundance this week. The planetary motions have moved which will benefit you immensely this week. You will notice how things that have been stuck for the longest time for you are now working out immensely in your favor and causing you to be the happiest you have been in a while. Hence make sure you take the most advantage of all the opportunities that come your way this week and be open-minded about them.

Cancer

You will face some challenges at the end of the week because the rest of the week which is the beginning will go so smoothly and easily for you but as time progresses challenges are planted in your way by fate. The fact that your time at the beginning of the week was easy will make it even difficult for you to overcome the obstacles you face towards the end of this week because you will be constantly comparing how things have been working out for you and you will struggle during the end of the day but you will eventually realize that struggles are just as important as easy days for you to learn to grow and be productive.

Leo

A week full of surprises is on your way today. You will go through a growth phase from within which means you will be more intellectual by being more introspective, you will have deep and eye-opening conversations with your partner throughout this week which will make your partner fall in love with the beauty of your thinking. You will feel like your health has never been better as you tread through the week full of energy and enthusiasm, you will have a great time this week but you might tend to get egoistic and boastful by the end of it hence you need to stay grounded.

Virgo

You will have to go through a painful phase when it comes to your health. Your stomach and digestion area seem to be troublesome this week hence you will need to take care and focus on the good things as well as becoming as better as you can. Consulting a specialist in the area that you're facing trouble in will give you a great start when it comes to improving your health. You will get bored with the food that you have to eat and the regimen that you have to follow, make sure you seek help but stay disciplined and save yourself from health issues.

Libra

You will recognize behavior patterns in your partner that will give you second thoughts and red flags; you will go through a difficult phase internally as you contemplate back and forth regarding the relationship that you're in. You will need to focus on your work because when you tend to over think it drains a lot of your energy and you have very little control over your thought which is why going through the challenges that you go through this week is a good thing for you. You will realize that you have grown because of what you went through today.

Scorpio

Positive energies are mild for you this week. This week you will realize the importance of your family as they will support you despite the mistakes that you have made and your bad behavior during the past few days towards them. Make sure to express your gratitude to them and apologize for your past mistakes genuinely. You won't be able to be much productive as you will be taking time to relax and unwind which will prove beneficial for you in the long run.

Sagittarius

New opportunities will arise this week. Choose it wisely. You will want to rush and get into new things, calm your energies down by chanting the Om Namah Shivaya mantra 11 times. This week might be the time to talk about issues that you have remained silent about. Your love life is going pretty well, it is the right time to say the things you need to say, for you to be able to start thinking about your future. This week is good for you to surprise your partner.

Capricorn

The movement of mars will provide the intense positive energy that you need. This is the week it all starts getting better and then goes on to be better than you could have ever imagined. Work on being resilient and self-reliant, it will save you from a lot of heartbreaks in the future. You seem to have a lot of beginner's luck this week. No significant changes will occur, which is a good thing. You will feel settled and secured about your future with your significant other this week. Their sweet little everyday gestures will prove to you that your partner can make promises and keep them too.

Aquarius

Your self-confidence is on the rise this week. You have the ability to be very productive this week tries to finish as much work as you can as you have ample amount of positive energy this week. Don't let that energy go to waste, use it while it lasts which are your very own business and yourself. High-intensity exercises will benefit you a lot this week. The best thing you can do is minimize your reaction and reflect on the situation when you feel you can have a neutral take on it. Chant Shiv Panchakshari mantra while offering water to the sun as early in the morning as possible. It will help you reap all the benefits of your luck during this week.

Pisces

Your love life is the most positive thing about this week. A lot of love and appreciation from your partner will set a very positive tone for today for you. Your partner will be very supportive today. You won't have much time for your loved ones, but you will receive their love and support regardless. They will put in their work even though they lack expertise in this field they will try their level best and will indeed be very helpful to you this week. Your health is doing great in general. Except for the overworking taking a toll on you.

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE
May 3 to 9, 2021*May 3*

This day will bring a lot of prosperity and positivity in your life. Today's positivity will have a long-lasting impact on your life hence make sure you are at your productive best today. You have to make the most of the day today and make sure that you bring your family along with you on the success ladder that you will climb from today onwards.

May 4

Life might be a little bit tough today but you will realize that you are tougher than any circumstances or challenges that you come across today. You will be a force to reckon with in the face of adversities that you face today and everything that you do in life will be an inspiration to all those around you from this point onwards.

May 5

You will be amazed by the amount of gifts you receive today. Considering how challenging the surrounding days and events have been you

were not expecting anything exciting to come your way today. You will need to be very grateful and appreciative about the people who brought you warmth and joy today. Make sure you appreciate everyone individually.

May 6

You will have a fun time doing what you love today. Even though you will not have much company and you won't be able to socialize which might make you sad because you're a people person and you like being around lots of friends but as you spend the day being by yourself you will realize that being alone is not so bad and you will actually have a fun day today.

May 7

You might experience some anxiety today from the fact that you're supposed to show up and meet all these people which you hate doing. You will have to put up with meeting and talking to new people as well as people you have known which will drain your social battery quite quickly even though you might be a little upset about it, you will do just fine today.

May 8

You might be feeling fit and fine mentally and even elated by the love that is being shown to you but physically your health with be like a leash to you which prevents you from having fun and living life to the fullest today. Eventhough the trouble that you have in your health today is quite temporary and won't go on to bother you as much as it does today in the next few days but today might be a slightly tough day for you.

May 9

A very heartfelt day for you today as a lot of your friends will take out the time to come and meet you. You have been feeling quite down lately and today will most definitely change that. As you go through today, you will realize that you were over thinking about being unwanted and annoying, while in reality, everyone enjoys your company, this realization will bring you great joy and curb your anxiety.

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Saptarishis: The 7 holy sages

Saptarishis are the seven greatest sages of the Vedic realm. They have attained a semi-immortal status, that of an exceedingly long lifespan due to their yogic power and by the power of their penance. The seven holy sages were assigned to be present through the four great ages, to guide the human race. These seven sages or Sapta Rishis worked closely with Lord Shiva to maintain the balance on Earth.

They are the seven mind-born sons of Lord Brahma who live for a period of time known as a manvantara (306,720,000 Earth Years). During this period of time, they serve as representatives of Brahma and at the end of a manvantara, the universe gets destroyed and Saptarishi merge in God and the task of filling the Earth is given to newly appointed Saptarishi.

All the Saptarishis are Brahmarishis which means they have completely understood the meaning of Brahman. Usually, one cannot rise to the level of a Brahmarishi through merit alone, since the order was created divinely and is appointed by Lord Brahma. However, Vishwamitra rose to the position of a Brahmarishi through his own merit alone. He performed meditation and austerities (Tapasya) for tens of thousands of years and as a result, he was awarded the rank of Brahmarishi from Brahma himself.

Brahmarishis are so powerful that they are capable of defeating every weapon on earth, can forecast the future, and are not influenced by the circle of life and death. Saptarishis are greater even than the devtas in power and piety are the highest in rank over Devatas and other classifications of Rishis such as Rajarishi and Maharishi.

Maharishi means 'great sage' in Sanskrit and refers to one who has greatly expanded and refined senses. Their third eye is completely open and their intuition is used to its fullest capacity. Their attention and focus encompass the entire universe and yet they can still maintain incredibly precise detail in actions and thoughts.

Rajarishi means 'royal sage' in Sanskrit. It refers to one who is a king or a prince as well as a sage. A Rajarishi can leave the kingship and become a Rishi such as Vishwamitra.

Bharadvaja

He is one of the greatest sage in Vedic times and also a descendant of sage Angirasa. His father is Devarsi Brihaspati. Sage Bharadvaja is the Author of Ayurveda. He is the father of Guru Dronacharya and his ashrama still exists in Allahabad. He was also a master of advanced military arts, including the Devastras. His wife is Suseela with whom he had a daughter named Devavarnini and son Garga.

According to some of the Puranas, Bharadvaja was found on banks of river Ganga and adopted by king Bharata. He had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge of Vedas and in addition meditated for Indra, Lord Shiva and Parvathi for more Vedic Knowledge

Vishwamitra

Rishi Vishwamitra is one of the most well-known Saptarishi and the great sages who discovered the Gayatri Mantra, found in the Vedas. Usually, one cannot rise to the level of a Brahmarishi through merit alone, since the order was created divinely and is appointed by Lord Brahma. However, Vishwamitra rose to the position of a Brahmarishi through his own merit alone.

His epic tussle with Vasistha for the position of the greatest sage of all time makes a very interesting story. He was not a Brahmana by birth, but a Kshatriya (warrior). Having fought, lost, and then pardoned by the Sage Vasistha, it made a deep impression on the King. He realized that the power obtained by penances was greater than mere physical might. He renounced his kingdom and began his quest to become a greater sage than Vasistha. He took on the name Vishwamitra.

After many trials and undergoing many austerities for thousands of years, Vishwamitra at last obtained the title of Brahmarishi from Brahma and Vasistha himself.

Vasistha

Rishi Vasistha is one of the Saptarishi of this Manvantara and husband of Arundathi. He is the mind-born son of Lord Brahma and the Raja-guru of the Surya



Vamsha or the Solar dynasty. He is the author of Vasistha Samhita a treatise on electional astrology. He and his family are glorified in a hymn in the Rig Veda.

Lord Rama once explains his disenchantment with worldly things and expresses sadness at the miserable life as a worldly man to King Dasaratha after returning from a pilgrimage of holy places. Then the Sage Vasistha starts answering the questions posed by Lord Rama. This is the context and content of the scripture called "Yoga Vasistha".

Gautama

Gautama Rishi belongs to the lineage of Angiras. His sons were Vamadeva, Nodhas, Shatananda and were one of the earliest writers on Law. He also authored the Gautama Dharma Sutra and The Rig & Sama Vedic mantras.

His wife was Ahalya, who was the daughter of Lord Brahma. At the appropriate time, the Lord announced that whosoever goes around the Earth first shall win Ahalya's hand. Gautama Rishi went around the divine cow thus fulfilling the condition. Ahalya and Gautama Rishi were married.

Gautama Rishi was a person without ego. When the people of the land suffered a draught, the Maharishi set out to meditate upon Lord Varuna. Pleased with his single-mindedness, Lord Varuna appeared. The Rishi asked Varuna for rain. Lord Varuna explained "The Law demands that there should not be rain in the place for this period of time. I cannot go against the Law since all five forces are governed by Lord Shiva. Ask me anything else." Maharishi immediately requested for an incessant supply of water in the reservoir. Thus Gautama Rishi saved many people.

Atri

Sage Atri is one of the Saptarishi in the current Manvantara and a son of Brahma. He is one among the Sages who propounded the sacred thread (Poonal). Sage Atri's wife is Anusuya, an embodiment of chastity. He is considered to be one of the great discoverers of sacred mantras. Atri Samhita and Atri Smriti are two works of the great sage.

Anasuya is known for chastity. One day Trimurty decided to test and arrives at her home as Brahmins. They ask her to serve food in naked. She agrees and converts them into kids. Surprised with the power of her chastity trinity of gods requests to give their original form and hence she becomes their mother. Anasuya gave birth to Lord Dattatreya as an avatar of Trinity – Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva.

Kashyapa

Kashyapa Rishi is one of the most popular ancient Rishi and Saptarishi. He is the son of Rishi Marichi and

grandson of Brahma. He was the father of Devas, Asuras, Nagas, garudas, Vamana, Agni, Adityas, Daityas, Aryaman, Mitra, Pusan, Varuna, and all Humanity. He is the progenitor, Prajapati. He was an author of Kashyapa Samhitha which is a classical reference book in the field of Ayurvedic Paediatrics, Gynecology, and Obstetrics.

In the story of King Parikshith killed by Serpent Takshaka, Kashyapa arrives to stop it when Takshaka challenges him by biting a tree and turning it into ashes. Kashyapa restores the tree with his yogic powers and defeats the serpent. However, it explains the curse of Brahmin Boy and tells that consequences have to be faced. Sage understanding the future of King leaves the place taking offerings from Takshaka. Soon he realizes that what done is not correct and visits Tirupathi for getting rid of sin.

Jamadagni

Jamadagni is the father of Parashurama, the sixth avatar of Vishnu. Also the descendant of sage Bhrigu one of the Prajapatis created by Brahma. His wife was Renuka, who used to fetch water from the river in an unbaked clay pot with the power of her chastity. One day her heart was filled with desire when a group of Gandharvas is passing in the sky. The pot dissolved. She being afraid of her husband doesn't come home. Jamadagni knowing this from his yogic powers asks Parashurama to kill her mother which he did.

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

CONTD FROM PAGE 1

India sees record 3.79 lakh new...

recovery rate has further dropped to 82.1 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1, 50, 86,878. The case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.11 per cent, the data stated.

According to the ICMR, 28,44,71,979 samples have been tested up to April 28 with 17,68,190 samples being tested on Wednesday, April 28.

The new fatalities include 1,035 from Maharashtra, 368 from Delhi, 279 from Chhattisgarh, 265 from Uttar Pradesh, 229 from Karnataka, 174 from Gujarat, 149 from Jharkhand, 142 from Punjab, 120 from Rajasthan, 108 from Uttarakhand and 105 from Madhya Pradesh.

A total of 2,04,832 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 67,214 from Maharashtra, 15,377 from Delhi, 15,036 from Karnataka, 13,826 from Tamil Nadu, 11,943 from Uttar Pradesh, 11,159 from West Bengal, 8,772 from Punjab and 8,061 from Chhattisgarh.

As the pandemic is growing in proportions, the world is worried, and sending in all help to India to overcome the dire situation. It is for the first time in 17 years that India has accepted aid from the world.

Indian envoy interacts with U.S....

including oxygen concentrators, cylinders, ventilators and oxygen generation plants and COVID-19-related drugs like Remdesivir and Tocilizumab.

"Appreciated the Chamber for coordinating the swift response and resource mobilization by the U.S. business community in support of India to meet the Covid challenge," Mr. Sandhu said in a tweet.

In the past few days, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce has mobilized support, brought together partners from other industry bodies and coordinated with the U.S. government to deliver critical medical supplies to India.

Significant additional supplies of medical equipment are being dispatched by the private sector.

Earlier the U.S. Chamber had urged the Biden administration to release unused AstraZeneca vaccine doses for use in India.

Mr. Sandhu said he had an "important conversation" with Albert Bourla, CEO of Pfizer.

The Ambassador said he highlighted the Indian government's decisions to facilitate import of vaccines and to fast-track emergency-use authorizations for those which have already been given approval in other countries.

"Discussed ways in which Pfizer could support healthcare efforts including vaccines in India, and strengthen our pandemic response," he added.

Two U.S. aircraft on their way

The Ambassador said two U.S. aircraft with oxygen equipment and other COVID-related supplies are on their way to India.

"Thank you @POTUS (President Joe Biden) for standing shoulder-to-shoulder with India during this challenging time," Mr. Sandhu tweeted.

WalMart CEO Doug McMillion had interacted with Sandhu a day earlier.

"My heart is breaking for our friends and associates across India as they battle a devastating surge in pandemic cases," Mr. McMillion said in a statement.

Walmart is diligently working to deliver oxygen and vital equipment to communities across the country, he said.

FedEx also issued a statement saying it was continuing its support to the fight against COVID-19 and had plans to send a dedicated aircraft with thousands of oxygen concentrators and critical aid for healthcare facilities in India. (Source: PTI)

Covid-19 surge: Indiaspora raises...

The campaign with a virtual event on Saturday will aim to double the impact of the donations by offering

to match funds, Indiaspora said.

The virtual event will bring together several powerful voices from the Indian and AAPI community, including Lilly Singh, Deepak Chopra, Dhar Mann, Payal Kadakia, Kunal Nayyar, Humble the Poet, Jay Sean, Radhanath Swami, Janina Gavankar, Vishen Lakhiani, Deepica Mutyala, a statement said.

"I am heartbroken by the deepening COVID crisis in India. Urgent action is needed to help those suffering," said Indiaspora Founders Circle member Reshma Kewalramani, chief executive officer and president at Vertex, a global biotechnology company, who contributed towards the campaign.

"Please join me in giving as generously as you can to support India in her time of need," she said.

The USD1 million raised by the organization so far will address three major areas of COVID-19 relief on the ground: the creation of urgently needed COVID care centers and makeshift hospitals through nonprofit WISH Foundation, direct cash transfer to families who have lost a primary earning member through nonprofit giving platform GiveIndia, and food relief and livelihood assistance for migrant workers and other underserved populations through nonprofits Goonj and Jan Sahas, the statement said.

"We are proud of our community's response. The outpouring of support from the Indian diaspora has been immediate and overwhelming," said Sanjeev Joshipura, executive director of Indiaspora.

"We are devastated by the news of the rising tragedies in India. They urgently need our help, and we are so grateful to our friends, communities and audiences that will participate in making a difference this weekend. We know you'll show up," said best-selling author, award winning storyteller & podcast host and former monk Jay Shetty, who has put together the two-hour event, which will be livestreamed on his and Indiaspora's Facebook and YouTube pages. (Source: PTI)

New York mayor envisions full...

The state has the power to impose or lift restrictions on restaurants and other venues.

"I think the best way to proceed here is to set out the city's vision," de Blasio said.

Even though the July 1 date is still aspirational, the mayor's announcement is significant in that New York is the country's most populous city and was the early epicenter of the pandemic as the virus began sweeping across the United States last spring.

The mayor said his optimism on the city's imminent return to normal reflected the success of a massive drive to get New Yorkers vaccinated. He said 6.4 million doses of vaccine have been administered in the city of more than 8 million residents.

While the mayor acknowledged the city needed to make more progress on vaccinations, he said more than 70% of New Yorkers have had at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine.

"People are showing up," he said. "We need to keep the momentum going," he added. "This is exactly how we get to the full reopening we're all looking forward to." Coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths have trended lower in New York City since the beginning of the year. On a seven-day rolling average, the city reported over 7,000 new cases a day at the outbreak's peak in January. By March new infections ebbed to 4,000 a day and now average about 2,000 a day.

De Blasio did not provide clear guidelines on whether those attending shows, dining indoors or frequenting gyms and salons would have to adhere to any specific requirements, such as presenting proof of vaccination.

"There certainly will be particular institutions that may choose to have rules around a vaccination or testing," de Blasio told reporters, adding that the city will keep monitoring COVID-19 data and adjust its approach accordingly.

Currently, the New York Yankees and Mets require those attending baseball games to take a rapid

COVID-19 test or show proof of vaccination before gaining admission to their ballparks in keeping with New York state guidelines. Attendance is limited to 20% of capacity.

New York City theaters have started to reopen this month for special events in front of limited indoor audiences. Some producers have targeted June 1 for their reopening dates, though many Broadway shows are not expected to pull back the curtains until September.

On Wednesday, Cuomo set a date for the end of a curfew that had forced city restaurants to end their bar and food service by midnight.

The curfew would end on May 17 for outdoor dining areas and on May 31 for indoors, he said. The governor also allowed seating at bars across the state to reopen for the first time on May 3.

In addition, Cuomo said capacity limits would increase starting May 15 for several businesses outside of New York City, including gyms and casinos. Offices across the state, including in the city, will be able to increase capacity from 50% to 75%, the governor said. (Agencies)

U.S. to restrict travel from India...

days prior to their entry or attempted entry into the U.S.

There is a long list of exemptions to the entry restrictions and the order will be reviewed every thirty days. H-1B, L and J visa holders and their dependents are not exempt from the restrictions.

The entry restrictions do not apply to lawful permanent residents' (LPRs or green card holders); non-citizens married to Americans or green card holders; non-citizen parents or legal guardians of minors (under 21) who are U.S. citizens or green card holders; siblings of unmarried citizens or LPRs, provided they are both under 21 and unmarried and other categories of travelers. The exemption list is longer than similar lists under the Trump administration's pandemic-related restrictions.

Other exemptions include foreigners traveling at the invitation of the administration for the purposes of containment of the virus, those whose entry into the U.S. is in its national interest, diplomats of various categories, crew members, and other categories.

Significantly, the order also states that the rights of individuals to claim asylum shall not be diminished by the order.

"After reviewing the public health situation within the Republic of India, CDC has concluded that proactive measures are required to protect the Nation's public health from travelers entering the United States from that jurisdiction," Mr. Biden said.

News of the order came earlier on Friday with White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki releasing a statement announcing it.

"It is the policy of my Administration to implement science-based public health measures, across all areas of the Federal Government, to act swiftly and aggressively to prevent further spread of the disease," Mr. Biden said in the order.

The order says India accounts for over a third of the new cases of the virus, and that they are increasing at a 'rapid rate'. The order says that India has seen circulating a variant called B.1.617, among others, such as the U.K. variant (B.1.1.7) and South African variant (B.1.351). These variants may be less susceptible to vaccines and more easily transmitted as per the CDC.

Mr. Biden's order invokes section 212(f) of the U.S.'s Immigration and Nationality Act, which was among the laws invoked on January this year by U.S. President Biden to extend a Trump-era restriction on travel from the UK, Ireland, EU, Brazil and South Africa due to COVID-19 concerns.

Airlines have been informed of the administration's decision, as per a CNN report.

Konark: The city of the Sun Temple

Being a UNESCO World Heritage site, Konark is a rich repository of ancient temples, traditional music & dance, monuments and beaches. The town is an admired tourist destination in Odisha which is loved by many travellers due to its serene and tranquil ambiance, beautiful monuments, enthralling heritage sites and pristine beaches that gives an opportunity to spend some time away from the hastened city life. You can feel the presence of sanctity at the Sun Temple which is Konark's prominent attraction and collect memories at India's archaeological gem to cherish for the lifetime.

Sun Temple

Situated on the northeastern corner of Puri, Konark Sun Temple is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the prime tourist attractions of Odisha. Built in the form of a giant rath or chariot of the Sun God, it depicts the chariot being pulled by a set of seven horses, four on the left side and three on the right. It has three deities dedicated to the Sun God on three different sides of the temple which catch the direct rays of sun in the morning, afternoon and evening. There is also a dedicated archaeological museum inside the temple complex. The temple transforms into a stage during The Konark Dance Festival, which is held every year usually in February and attracts a lot of foreign and Indian tourists — dedicated to devotees of the Sun God.

Konark Sun Temple is one of the last standing structures before the fifteenth century in the country. The sun rays reach the Nata Mandir from the coast and reflect through the diamond at the centre of the idol. The idol is believed to float mid-air due to arrangements of the magnets at the top of the temple but they were later removed due to the disturbance caused to coastal voyages. An engineering and artistic masterpiece, The Sun Temple has been standing stoically for the last two thousand years. Despite much of the temple in ruin, it still reflects the artistic genius of architects and sculptures of the time.

Chandrabhaga Beach

Situated 3 kms east of Sun Temple in Konark in Orissa where the Chandrabhaga River joins the sea, Chandrabhaga Beach is one of the most beautiful and pollution free beaches of the country. Owing to its immaculately clean shores and crystal clear waters, the beach has been awarded with the Blue Flag Certification by the Foundation of Environmental Education (FEE)- which is a tag given to environmental friendly beaches which meet their stringent standards. Lined with tall trees and vast expanse of golden sands,



the beach holds cultural and historical importance as well. Several cultural festivals and religious fairs are held here frequently which attract a lot of pilgrims and devotees to the beach.

ASI Museum

ASI Museum is situated outside the Sun Temple and houses some unique artifacts which reflect the essence of Oriyan art form. The museum has 250 different kinds of antiques recovered from the Sun Temple.

There are separate galleries which have unique collections of antique pieces like carved stones, images of Surya Narayana, erotic sculptures among other pieces are also the part of the collection.

Astaranga Beach

Astaranga meaning "colourful sunset" is a magnificent beach located in the state of Orissa. As the name suggests this beach is famous for the picturesque views that it provides during the sunset. The sky takes

on vivid hues and the blue water in juxtaposition of it makes the whole place look magical.

The Astaranga beach is a famous fishing village and every morning a market is set up on the beach from where you can purchase the different varieties of fresh fishes. This beach is a perfect place to getaway from the helter skelter of the city and spend some quiet and peaceful time rejuvenating yourself.

Konark Dance Festival

Konark Dance Festival is an event held annually in the backdrop of the exquisite Konark Sun Temple in Odisha. Classical performers of every age group descend on Konark to showcase their musical and dancing skills, to promote this age-old monument. Handicrafts and sculptures are also put on display to showcase the hidden talent of the region. Held every year this festival brings together dancers, musicians and cultures from all around the country in a scintillating display of different art forms.





Shikhar Dhawan takes back Orange Cap, Prithvi Shaw rises to third position

Shikhar Dhawan returned to the top of the Orange Cap table after scoring 46 in Delhi Capitals' (DC) seven-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Dhawan took 47 balls to score his 46 but played the perfect foil to his opening partner Prithvi Shaw, who scored 82 off 41 balls.

The pair shared an opening partnership of 132 runs in 14 overs, putting DC in control in their chase of a target of 155. Dhawan's tally for the season stands at 311 while second-placed Faf du Plessis of Chennai Super Kings is on 270.

Shaw, meanwhile, entered the top three of the Orange Cap standings, with his total run tally of 270 putting him one run ahead of Punjab Kings captain KL Rahul.

Naomi Osaka, Simona Halep advance to second round in Madrid Open

Second-seeded Naomi Osaka made her return to clay to beat Misaki Doi 7-5, 6-2 in the first round of the Madrid Open on Friday, April 30.

Osaka overcame Doi's strong start by hitting six aces and breaking her serve five times.

A leg injury meant Osaka missed last season's clay-court swing, and her last individual tournament on the surface was at Roland Garros in 2019. She played and lost for Japan against Spain's Sara Sorribes Tormo in the Fed Cup in February 2020.

Osaka, the U.S. Open and Australian Open champion, next plays Karolina Muchova after the Czech beat Qiang Wang 6-1, 6-3.

Third-seeded Simona Halep, who won the tournament in 2016 and '17, beat Sorribes Tormo 6-0, 7-5.

Maria Sakkari roared back after losing the first seven games of her match against Amanda Anisimova to win 0-6, 6-1, 6-4.

IPL 2021

Harpreet shines as PBKS use surprise weapon to tame RCB

AHMEDABAD (TIP): Punjab Kings registered their third win of the season, and the third in a row against Royal Challengers Bangalore, after managing to pull themselves out of a few tricky situations and eventually defend a target of 179 quite comfortably.

All because of a magical spell from the 25-year old left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar who was brought in for this game. Harpreet accounted for the wickets of Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell and AB de Villiers in a spell for the ages. After a rather sedate start, Kohli was itching to get after the spinner and was bowled after missing a slider while coming down the track. Maxwell was left dumbfounded by a classic left-arm spinner's delivery that turned and beat him comprehensively before clipping the off stump. And while de Villiers averted the hat-trick, he was out in the next over caught at cover while trying to go inside out. And just like that RCB had slipped from 62/1 to 69/4 in the space of 12 balls.

What else did Punjab do right?

They did well to keep a check RCB's top order in the chase. While Devdutt Padikkal fell early trying force the pace against Riley Meredith, RCB went into a period of lull after that. Both Kohli and Rajat Patidar struggled to up the ante, with the latter trudging along to a 30-ball 31 and robbing the innings of all momentum. Punjab's spinners Ravi Bishnoi (2/17) and Harpreet ensured



Harpreet Brar took out Kohli and Maxwell in a double-wicket maiden over. © BCCI/IPL

later that there was no opportunity for a comeback.

Did Punjab have a similarly smooth sailing with the bat?

Not at all. In fact, Punjab Kings had suffered an even bigger collapse in the middle overs. From 99/1, they slid down to 118/5 in the space of 24 balls with Gayle falling to a short one from Daniel Sams, Pooran (falling for a fourth duck in the season), Deepak Hooda (caught on the longer boundary) and Shahruxh Khan (bowled by a Chahal googly) departing in quick succession that

threatened to undo all the good work done at the top.

What good work?

The partnership of 80 that came off just 44 balls between KL Rahul and a rampaging Chris Gayle (46 off 24). The left-hander targeted the shorter straight boundaries and pulled it off with aplomb regularly. Rahul, played a good second fiddle to him before managing to step on the pedal for a brief period as well during the stand. And together they threatened to hit RCB out of the contest before that collapse.

'Shooter Dadi' Chandro Tomar dies due to Covid-19

NEW DELHI (TIP): Chandro Tomar, better known as 'Shooter Dadi', who became one of the oldest woman shooters in the world after taking up the sport in her 60s, died on April 30 after battling Covid-19 over the last few days.

The 89-year-old was being treated at a hospital in Meerut since April 26.

"Mera saath chhoot gaya, Chandro kaha chali gayi? (She has left me, Chandro where have you gone?)," her sister-in-law Prakashini Tomar, who is also one of the oldest female shooters in the world, wrote on her Twitter page.

Chandro was hospitalised after complaining of difficulty in breathing. Tests revealed she had contracted Covid-19. She battled for her life for four days in hospital before succumbing to the virus.

Hailing from the Baghpat village in Uttar Pradesh, Tomar was in her 60s when she picked up the gun for the first time. She went on to win many national competitions for veterans, her feats inspiring the award-winning Hindi movie Saand ki Aankh, released in 2019.

"Devastated by the news of Chandro Dadi's demise. Feels like a part of me is gone. She made her own rules &



paved the path for many girl to find their dream. Her legacy will live on in them. Condolences to the family. Am lucky I got to know and be her," actor Bhumi Pednekar, who played Chandro in Saand ki Aankh, tweeted.

"I'm deeply saddened by tragic demise of our most lovable Dadi Chandro Tomar ji. She was inspiration for millions and will continue to inspire forever. May her soul rest in peace. Om Shanti," Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju wrote on Twitter.

Granada blow to Barcelona hopes

MADRID (TIP): Barcelona missed a chance to take over the Spanish La Liga lead, losing 1-2 to Granada at home to squander an opportunity to take control of the title race. Lionel Messi put the Catalan club ahead in the first half but Granada rallied for a surprise victory with two second-half goals at the Camp Nou Stadium.

"It's a tough blow," Barcelona coach Ronald Koeman said. "It was a great opportunity for us." The match was postponed from two weeks ago because of Barcelona's participation in the Copa del Rey final, which they won over Athletic Bilbao. A home win would have given Barcelona a one-point lead over Atletico Madrid with five rounds to go. Atletico, seeking their first league title since 2014, have led the league for most of the season but have struggled recently. They lost 1-2 at Athletic.

Messi's lead

Messi scored his fifth goal in his last four matches with a low cross shot from inside the area after a pass by Antoine Griezmann in the 23rd minute. It was Messi's 26th league goal to increase his lead at the top of the scoring chart. He has five more than Real Madrid's Karim Benzema.

Granada, sitting in eighth place, scored with their only two shots on target. They equalised through Venezuelan forward Darwin Machis on a breakaway in the 63rd, then got the winner with a 79th-minute header by Jorge Molina.

China names first Mars rover 'Zhurong'

BEIJING (TIP): China has named its first Mars rover 'Zhurong' after the traditional fire god, the media reported China National Space Administration (CNSA) as saying on Saturday—China's Space day.

Zhurong is the god of fire in ancient Chinese mythology, which echoes the Chinese name of the red planet, Huoxing (meaning the planet of fire), the Xinhua reported.

Fire brought warmth and brightness to the ancestors of humankind, and fire lit up human civilisation. Naming China's first Mars rover after the god of fire signifies igniting the flame of China's planetary exploration, Wu Yanhua, Deputy Director of the CNSA, was quoted as saying.

Literally, Zhu (meaning wish) expresses the good wishes for humankind's exploration of the universe. Rong (meaning integration and cooperation) reflects China's vision of the peaceful use of space and the



building of a community with a shared future for humanity, Wu said.

The name is another example of Chinese aerospace workers' scientific romance as they have named spacecraft, including Tianwen, Chang'e and Beidou, after Chinese traditional culture, which also shows the Chinese people's spirit of exploration and cultural confidence, he said.

China launched its Mars probe—Tianwen-1 -- on July 23, last year. The spacecraft, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, entered the parking orbit of Mars on February 24 this year.

The orbiter is equipped with seven

kinds of scientific instruments: two remote-sensing cameras, Mars-Orbiting Subsurface Exploration Radar, Mars Mineralogy Spectrometer, Mars Magnetometer, Mars Ion and Neutral Particle Analyzer and Mars Energetic Particle Analyzer.

The six-wheel solar-powered rover, looking like a blue butterfly with a mass of 240 kg, carries the Terrain Camera, Multispectral Camera, Mars-Rover Subsurface Exploration Radar, Mars Surface Composition Detector, Mars Magnetic Field Detector and Mars Meteorology Monitor.

The Tianwen-1 aims to map the morphology and geological structure, investigate surface soil characteristics and water-ice distribution, analyze the surface material composition, measure the ionosphere and the characteristics of the Martian climate and environment at the surface and perceive the physical fields and internal structure of Mars, the report said. IANS

BULGARIA SET TO EXPEL RUSSIAN DIPLOMAT

SOFIA (TIP): A Russian diplomat will be expelled from Bulgaria after prosecutors alleged Russian involvement in explosions at several ammunition depots in the Balkan country, the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

In addition to the Foreign Ministry declaring "one more Russian diplomat persona non grata," Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva called on Russia's law enforcement agencies to cooperate with Bulgaria's investigations into the explosions so "the perpetrators will be discovered and brought to justice," the ministry said in a statement.

The prosecutor general's office in Bulgaria announced on Wednesday that it was investigating a possible connection between four explosions at arms depots and frequent visits by alleged Russian military intelligence operatives. — Agencies

INDO-PACIFIC ON MIND, AUSTRALIA TO UPGRADE MILITARY BASES

MELBOURNE (TIP): Australia will invest \$747 million in upgrading four key military training areas and ranges in the Northern Territory to defend the country's interests and support greater engagement with the Indo-Pacific neighbours and allies, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced on Wednesday amid China's increasing assertiveness in the region.

SCOTT MORRISON, PRIME MINISTER
These defence training areas will support greater engagement with our Indo-Pacific neighbours and allies, and prove beneficial for small and large-scale military exercises

Morrison announced the multi-million dollar investment, stating that the objective was to pursue peace rather than sending any message to China. The multi-million investment will upgrade four key training areas and ranges in the Northern Territory to enable the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to conduct simulated training exercises and remain battle-ready. Essential upgrades will be made to four key military training areas and weapon ranges in the Northern Territory, including Robertson Barracks, Kangaroo Flats, Mount Bundy and Bradshaw.

"These defence training areas and facilities will support greater engagement with our Indo-Pacific neighbours and allies, and to conduct small and large-scale military exercises across a number of different scenarios," the PM said. "This investment will boom jobs in the Northern Territory," he said. "Our focus is on pursuing peace, stability and a free and open Indo-Pacific, with a world order that favours freedom," he said. — PTI

EU hits Apple with music streaming charge in boost for Spotify

BRUSSELS (TIP): EU regulators accused Apple on Friday of distorting competition in the music streaming market, siding with Spotify in a case that could lead to a hefty fine and changes in the iPhone maker's lucrative business practices.

The preliminary findings are the first time Brussels has levelled anti-competitive charges against Apple, although the two sides have had bruising clashes in the past, most notably a multibillion-dollar tax dispute involving Ireland.

Apple, Spotify and other parties can now respond. If the case is pursued, the EU could demand concessions and potentially impose a fine of up to 10% of Apple's global turnover - as much as \$27 billion, although it rarely levies the maximum penalty.

Apple found itself in the European Commission's crosshairs after Sweden-based Spotify complained two years ago that the U.S. tech giant unfairly restricted rivals to its own music streaming service Apple Music on iPhones.

The EU competition enforcer, in its so-called statement of objections setting out the charge, said the issue related to Apple's restrictive rules for its App Store that force developers to use its own in-app payment system and prevent them from informing users of other purchasing options.

"By setting strict rules on the App store that disadvantage competing music streaming services, Apple deprives users of cheaper music streaming choices and



distorts competition," European Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in a statement.

"This is done by charging high commission fees on each transaction in the App store for rivals and by forbidding them from informing their customers of alternative subscription options," she said.

Apple rebuffed the EU charge.

"Spotify has become the largest music subscription service in the world, and we're proud of the role we played in that," it said in a statement.

"They want all the benefits of the App Store but don't think they should have to pay anything for that. The Commission's argument on Spotify's behalf is the opposite of fair competition," it added.

INTERNET GATEKEEPERS

Spotify welcomed the EU move, describing it as "a critical step toward holding Apple accountable for its anticompetitive behavior, ensuring meaningful choice for all consumers and a level playing field for app developers."

Reuters was first to report about the imminent EU antitrust charge in March.

Spotify, one of Europe's few global success stories in consumer technology, is the market leader in music streaming with 356 million active users and 158 million paid subscribers.

Apple Music, launched more recently in 2015, is estimated to have more than 70 million subscribers although the company does not give a separate figure for that part of its business.

Competition between the two companies has intensified in recent weeks, with both seeking to build their customer base via supremacy in the market for podcasts.

"Europe's consumers expect and deserve access to a full range of music streaming services without their choices being restricted or prices being inflated unfairly by internet gatekeepers," said European consumer organisation BEUC.

The EU charge comes a week before Apple's face off with Epic Games in a U.S. antitrust trial following a lawsuit by the "Fortnite" creator alleging that Apple has abused its dominance in the market for mobile apps.

Epic has complained to the Commission on the same issues.

Last month, the UK Competition and Markets Authority opened an investigation into Apple after complaints the iPhone maker's terms and conditions for app developers were unfair. Reuters

44 KILLED IN STAMPEDE AT JEWISH RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL IN ISRAEL

JERUSALEM (TIP): In one of the worst peacetime tragedies in Israel, at least 44 people were crushed to death and about 150 others injured in a stampede overnight at an overcrowded Jewish religious gathering in the country's north attended by tens of thousands of people flouting the coronavirus-related restrictions.

The mass gathering was organised to celebrate the Lag B'Omer, an annual religious holiday marked with all-night bonfires, prayer and dancing, at Mount Meron.

The town is the site of the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a second-century sage, and is considered to be one of the holiest sites in the Jewish world.

Israel recently eased mask-wearing requirements in open areas and other restrictions after the success of a massive vaccination drive that significantly brought down coronavirus-related cases.

The resulting "normalcy", with limitations, saw rejoicing crowds across Israel on Thursday evening with youngsters, especially schoolchildren, coming out in large numbers in open spaces putting bonfires that accompanied the Lag BaOmer festivities.

Tens of thousands of ultra-orthodox Jews participated in the event on Thursday night at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, making it the largest event held in Israel since the coronavirus pandemic broke out last year.

A preliminary police investigation revealed that some of the attendees slipped on the stairs, creating a "human avalanche" that crushed members of the crowd.

A Magen David Adom (MDA) rescue service official confirmed that at least 38 people had been killed with the numbers



likely to go even higher.

"Our paramedics have treated hundreds of people, including several in serious condition. All the wounded were evacuated to hospital", he said.

Some 150 people were injured in the accident. Zaka, an ambulance service, said the death toll had risen to 44.

MDA Director-General Eli Bin told the Ynet news site that the wounded were being evacuated to the Ziv hospital in Safed, the Galilee Medical Centre in Nahariya, Rambam hospital in Haifa, Poriya hospital in Tiberias, and Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital in Jerusalem.

Firefighters worked to free the trapped, supported by Israeli Air Force helicopters and rescue services.

Police were trying to clear the tens of thousands who attended the event from the area.

At around midnight on Thursday,

organisers had estimated that some 100,000 people were at the site, with an additional 100,000 expected to arrive by Friday morning, local media reported.

A police official told the local media that dozens of participants in a concert had "slipped," falling on those below them while walking along a slippery walkway and causing a crushing domino effect.

Videos posted on social media showed chaotic scenes as Ultra-Orthodox men clambered through gaps in sheets of torn corrugated iron to escape the crush, as police and paramedics tried to reach the wounded.

Bodies lay on stretchers in a corridor, covered in foil blankets.

Health Ministry officials had urged Israelis not to travel to Mount Meron, saying the festivities could lead to mass coronavirus contagion, Times of Israel reported.

Yet there was significant pressure on authorities to allow it to go ahead - especially as it was cancelled last year.

Since the site was so densely populated, search and rescue authorities say they struggled to evacuate trapped people.

"It happened in a split second; people just fell, trampling each other. It was a disaster," a witness told the newspaper.

"This is one of the worst tragedies that I have ever experienced. I have not seen anything like this since I entered into the field of emergency medicine back in 2000," said Lazar Hyman, vice president of the volunteer-based emergency organisation United Hatzalah, who was at the scene.

Panic and fear engulfed the survivors as many were trapped next to the dead, struggling to breathe and waiting for rescue.

Footage from the walkway showed shoes, hats, baby strollers, smashed eyeglasses and water bottles strewn on the ground. Metal railings were torn from the ground.

"We were going in to see the bonfire lighting, suddenly there was a wave coming out. Our bodies were swept along by themselves. People were thrown up in the air, others were crushed on the ground," The Times of Israel quoted David, a survivor, as saying.

Meir, who was injured, said, "A policeman pulled me out. He protected me and made sure I would not be trampled on until I was evacuated."

"It felt like an eternity, the dead were all around us," he said.

"People fell from above and crushed each other, they squashed each other. People just fell, I will never forget the banging sounds, people flying all over," a survivor identified as Zohar said. PTI

France's cafes, restaurants terraces to reopen next month

PARIS (TIP): President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday that the outdoor terraces of France's cafes and restaurants will be allowed to reopen on May 19 along with museums, cinemas, theatres and concert halls under certain conditions.

In an interview with regional newspapers, Macron outlined a four-step plan to reopen the country and revive its economy. The French government is slowly starting to lift partial lockdowns, despite still high numbers of coronavirus cases and hospitalised COVID-19 patients.

Reopening nurseries and primary schools this week was a priority, the president said.

"We have taken on the responsibility of the priority on education and the strategy of living with the virus, including with high numbers of infections, higher than those of our neighbours," Macron said.

Students will go back to secondary and high schools next week, and a domestic travel ban will end, he confirmed. A 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew will remain in



place.

Restaurants and cafes will be able to serve customers outdoors at tables seating a maximum of six people starting May 19, when the nightly curfew will be pushed back to 9 p.m. Non-essential shops also reopen, as well as cultural sites and sport facilities, which will have occupancy limits of 800 people indoors and 1,000

outdoors.

French authorities are anticipating the COVID-19 outlook in the country to be better next month, when a greater proportion of the population will be vaccinated.

The government's plan provides for permitting foreign tourists back into France on June 9 as long as they hold a "sanitary pass" with proof of a COVID-19 vaccine or a negative PCR test.

On that same day, cafes and restaurants will be allowed to resume regular service until an 11 p.m. curfew. Events of up to 5,000 people will be allowed.

The final stage of the plan will see the end of the night-time curfew and the lifting of most restrictions on June 30, although nightclubs will remain closed.

France is reporting about 29,000 new confirmed cases each day, down from about 40,000 earlier this month. Over 5,800 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized in French intensive care units, a slight decrease from previous days. France has reported almost 104,000 virus-related deaths in the pandemic. COVID-19 deaths. AP

US CDC warns vax providers of anxiety-related adverse events

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday, April 30, urged Covid-19 vaccine providers to be aware of anxiety-related events after vaccination.

Syncope and other anxiety-related events can occur after Covid-19 vaccination, said the CDC, Xinhua reported.

The CDC received reports of clusters of anxiety-related events after administration of the Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine on April 7 from five mass vaccination sites, all in different states, 5 weeks after the vaccine got authorization for emergency use in the country.

Overall, 64 anxiety-related events, including 17 reports of syncope, an anxiety-related event, among 8,624 Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine recipients, were reported from these sites for vaccines administered during April 7 to 9, according to the CDC.

It is important that vaccination providers are aware that anxiety-related adverse events might be reported more frequently after receipt of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine than after influenza vaccination, said the CDC.

Israel Bans Travel To 7 Countries, Including India

The Israeli government on Friday, April 30, decided to ban travel of Israeli citizens to seven countries over high Covid-19 morbidity and fear of the spread of variants of the virus, according to a joint statement issued by Prime Minister's Office and Health Ministry.

The seven are Ukraine, Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, India, Mexico and Turkey, the Xinhua news agency reported.

The ban will take effect on Monday, and will last at least 13 days, the statement said.

The decision follows a ministry's warning against travel to the seven destinations, reflecting both the current situation and the morbidity levels according to several criteria such as the countries' declarations, the percentage of vaccination and recovery, and evidence of variants.

The ban does not include non-Israelis who live in these countries permanently, nor does it apply to stays at airports of these countries for connecting flights.

On Friday, Israel reported 87 new Covid-19 cases, raising the total number in the country to 838,481.

Global Covid-19 caseload tops 150.9mn

WASHINGTON (TIP): In its latest update on Saturday, May 1, morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 150,972,476 and 3,176,054, respectively.

The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 32,345,038 and 575,921, respectively, according to the CSSE.

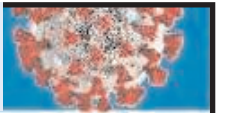
In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 18,762,976 cases.

The other countries with more than two million confirmed coronavirus cases are Brazil (14,659,011), France (5,677,835), Turkey (4,820,591), Russia (4,750,755), the UK (4,432,246), Italy (4,022,653), Spain (3,524,077), Germany (3,393,721), Argentina (2,977,363), Colombia (2,859,724), Poland (2,792,142), Iran (2,499,077) and Mexico (2,344,755), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 403,781 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 50,000 are Mexico (216,907), India (208,330), the UK (127,775), Italy (120,807), Russia (108,290), France (104,675), Germany (82,948), Spain (78,216), Colombia (73,720), Iran (71,758), Poland (67,502), Argentina (63,865), Peru (61,477) and South Africa (54,350).

TRACKING THE VIRUS



GLOBAL

Cases	Deaths
150,972,476	3,176,054

INDIA

Cases	Deaths
19,164,969	211,853



1 bn Covid vax unprecedented feat, but disparities exists, say researchers

GENEVA (TIP): The speed at which the world has administered one billion doses of Covid-19 jabs, just four months after the World Health Organization (WHO) approved the first vaccine for emergency use, is remarkable, but unequal distribution of the vaccinations highlights global disparities, say researchers.

Just 10 countries have acquired nearly three-quarters of all doses — China and the US alone account for about 50 per cent of all the doses given out, while the entire continent of Africa has received only 2 per cent of jabs.

Around 7.3 per cent of the world's population of 7.79 billion have received at least one dose, as of April 27, but more than 75 per cent needs to be vaccinated to bring the pandemic under control. This highlights the uneven distribution of vaccinations, both within and between nations.

"It is an unprecedented scientific achievement. Nobody could have imagined that, within 16 months of the identification of a new virus, we would have vaccinated one billion people worldwide with a variety of different vaccines, using different platforms and made in different countries," Soumya Swaminathan, the WHO's chief scientist, based in Geneva, was quoted as saying by the Nature.

The world is also likely to hit the two-billion mark much faster than it hit the first billion, but it is important to ensure global vaccine equity to help curb the pandemic, she added.

"It's absolutely amazing that in a short time we developed multiple vaccines and gotten a billion doses administered, but the way it's happened has worsened inequities around the world," said Krishna Udayakumar, Associate Director for innovation at the Duke Global Health Institute in Durham, North Carolina.



Disparities also exist within nations see. According to a UK study, of 1.1 million people aged over 80 who were treated for health conditions in clinics and hospitals between December and January, 42.5 per cent of white participants had been vaccinated, compared with just 20.5 per cent of Black participants. The same study also found evidence of divides along socio-economic lines, the report said.

"Vaccinating only portions of the population is not an effective strategy, and leaves us vulnerable to new variants," warned Udayakumar, adding a global response is needed to fight a global pandemic.

Source: IANS

Indian-origin Tycoon Sanjeev Gupta's Father Leaves UK as Group Battles for Survival



The senior Gupta has changed his country of usual residence from Britain to India, according to several filings made over the past few weeks at Companies House, the business registry

LONDON (TIP): Indian-origin Parduman Gupta, father of embattled metals tycoon Sanjeev Gupta, has moved out of the U.K., just as the pair's GFG Alliance teeters on the brink following the collapse of its largest lender Greensill Capital.

The senior Gupta has changed his country of usual residence from Britain to India, according to several filings made over the past few weeks at Companies House, the business registry. He owns Simec Group, the branch of the business empire which deals in renewable energy, shipping and mining, and was founded by the magnate as an export-and-import house in India.

It's not clear where Parduman Gupta is currently, but a spokesman for Companies House said that a company director must list their country of residence, and that this "should correspond with their usual residential address." A spokesman for GFG Alliance, a loose grouping of companies owned by the father and son, declined to comment.

Sanjeev Gupta has also been absent for several months from the U.K., where GFG owns numerous steel and aluminum plants and employs around 5,000 people.

He said on recent podcasts for GFG employees that he left the U.K. for Dubai before Christmas and hasn't returned since.

"Dubai is the perfect location for me and my family to operate out of for now," Gupta said on April 16 podcast, citing the city's time zone.

But he said that he was keen to be on the move again. "As soon as Covid travel restrictions in the U.K. and Australia and Europe are lifted I will definitely be trying to get in front of the customers and employees around the world."

"Very Opaque"

GFG last month asked the U.K. government for a 170 million-pound (\$235 million) bailout, but the request was rebuffed. Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng told a parliamentary committee last week that it would be "very irresponsible" to give taxpayers' money to the group, describing it as "very, very

opaque" and having "liabilities that nobody seems to have got to the bottom of."

GFG has borrowed about \$5 billion from Greensill, and is desperately seeking fresh financing, which Sanjeev Gupta is coordinating from Dubai.

Some progress has been made. Three lenders are in talks to refinance one of his Australian steel mills, while a private equity firm has positioned itself to buy two of the group's aluminum plants.

Still, other parts of the business are facing difficulties. Three French units were put into voluntary administration last week, while other parts of GFG in France and Belgium have sought protection from their creditors.

Gupta said on the April 16 podcast that some of his U.K. assets were "struggling at the moment with the lack of funding." He called on GFG employees to be "brave," but warned of "some difficult decisions" to come.

Indian American activists launch 'National Call In Day' for India Covid-19 relief

WASHINGTON (TIP): Following the Biden administration's offer to help India, currently in the middle of a cataclysmic Covid surge, some civil rights activists and lawyers based in the United States and abroad have demanded more swift and transparent action on the part of the US government and accountability from the Indian government in distribution of these medical resources.

The activists, who describe themselves as a concerned group of civil and human rights defenders, activists and organizers based in India, the United States, and across the world, organized a "Rise for India - National Call in Day" on Wednesday, April 28.

President Joe Biden assured on Tuesday that the United States will be rushing immediate help to India in the form of Covid vaccines, Remdesivir injections and other medical aid. However, some U.S. activists say that his administration's announcement of its revised policy on the export of vaccines and the supply of raw materials to produce vaccines does not detail how the policy will be administered.

The White House faced flak for not rushing to announce the aid package.

The Indian government has been criticized for mismanaging the crisis and under-reporting the infection and death rates.

The activists include civil, political and human rights lawyer Arjun Sethi, international human rights lawyer Ramya Reddy, and Georgetown Women's Law and Public Policy Fellow Asees Bhasin.

Sethi tweeted, "Covid-19 is a global pandemic & the people of India need our support. We're asking everyone to join a National Call In Day on Wed, April 28. Please use the app & urge Congress to take swift, comprehensive & transparent action to provide relief to India."

Covid-19 is a global pandemic & the people of India need our support.

We're asking everyone to join a National Call In Day on



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Wed, April 28.

Please use the app & urge Congress to take swift, comprehensive & transparent action to provide relief to India. <https://t.co/RWwc0dm4Vn>

- Arjun Sethi (@arjunsethi81) April 28, 2021

The group urged people to call their senators and representatives and ask them to demand President Biden to release information on how many doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine will be dispatched to India, share additional portions of the US vaccine stockpile, and provide a fully transparent timeline of when, how, and to what extent these measures, including the export of raw materials to ramp up the vaccine production, will be implemented.

They also asked Indian Americans to ask their representatives to continue to provide humanitarian assistance in the form of oxygen, testing kits, protective equipment and medical supplies. The group also demand

ethical leadership and accountability from the Indian government on how it will distribute these resources and called on New Delhi to allow open and free reporting on the Covid crisis.

Here's the full text with the details of the National Call in Day

The Biden Administration's announcement of their revised policy on the export of vaccines and the supplying of raw materials to produce vaccines does not detail how the policy will be administered. Join us for a National Call-In Day on April 28th, 2021. Call your Senators and Representatives and ask them to demand President Biden:

- Release information on how many doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine will be dispatched to India, share additional portions of the US vaccine stockpile, and provide a fully transparent timeline of when, how, and to what extent these measures, including the export of raw materials to ramp up the vaccine production, will be implemented.
- Continue to provide humanitarian assistance in the form of oxygen, testing kits, protective equipment, and medical supplies.
- Support the global campaign calling for an Intellectual Property Rights waiver from the WTO for COVID-19 vaccines.
- Demand ethical leadership and accountability from the Indian government on how they will distribute these resources & order them to allow open & free reporting on the COVID crisis.
- You can find more details on the National Call in Day here

<https://www.notion.so/Rise-for-India-National-Call-in-Day-79e1608061a540bdaf59591550a2386d>

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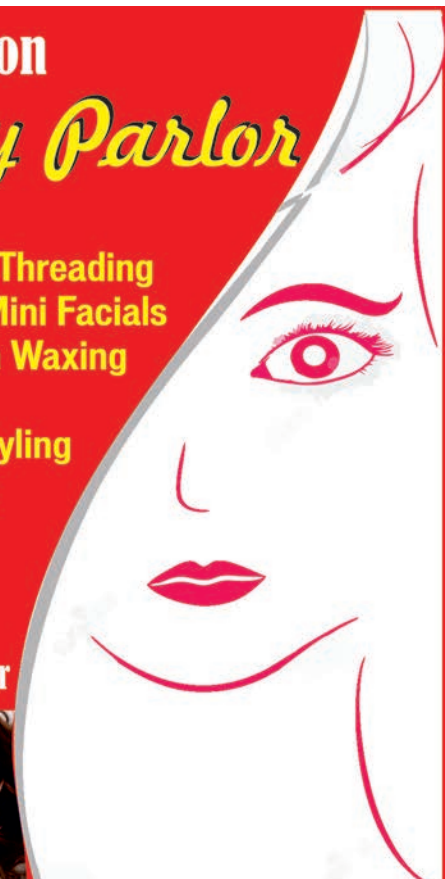
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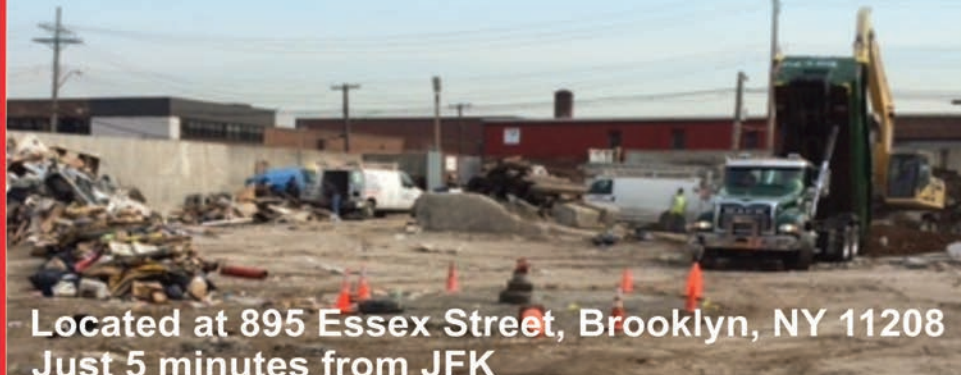
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**Message from
Peter J. McDonnell,
M.D. Director Wilmer Eye
Institute, Johns Hopkins
University, USA on the
occasion of laying the
foundation stone on
December 10, 2020**



"On behalf of all my colleagues of the Wilmer Eye Institute in Baltimore, MO, I send my best wishes and congratulations to our friends in Goutami on this extremely important occasion. This beautiful facility will match the wonderful world class work of your doctors, nurses and staff in preserving and restoring the vision of so many patients. We in the United States are inspired by your dedication and admire your tireless efforts to serve so many who need your skills and compassion. Best wishes, Peter"

"There can be no keener
revelation of a society's soul
than the way in which it treats
its children". - Nelson Mandela



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