



The South Asian



INSIDER

Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House



**Nlight
Real
Estate**

Sharanjit Singh Thind
Real Estate Broker/Notary Public

Tel: 516 NLIGHT8

Vol. 20

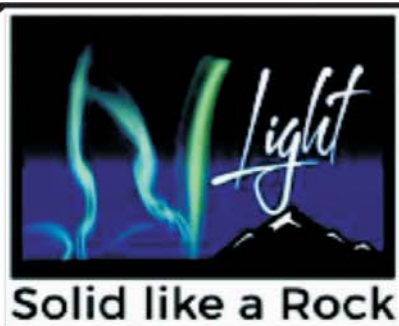
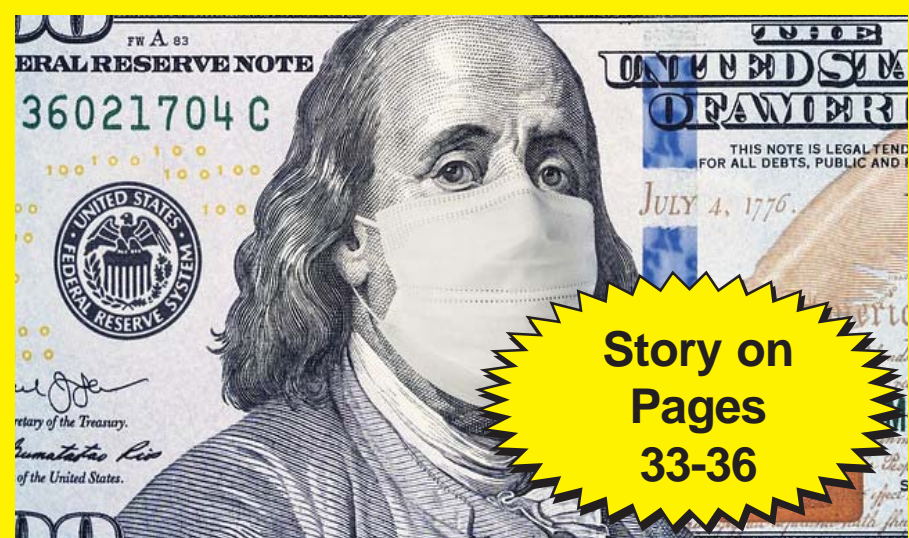
Issue 10

Friday 8 May to 15 May 2021

\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Will Corporate Greed Prolong the COVID-19 Pandemic?



Insurance

Tel : 516 NLIGHT 8 (516 654 4488)

A long wait: Indian diaspora sends Covid aid, but it gets stuck in the process

The cumbersome clearance process at airports and the conditions on exemption of IGST rates are reportedly causing delays and impacting aid distribution coming from abroad.

(Insider Bureau)-As India battles the second wave of coronavirus infections with an acute shortage of medical equipment, representatives of the Indian diaspora say they are finding it hard to send medical aid to NGOs, hospitals and civil society groups in the country. The reason, they say, is a cumbersome clearance process and the Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST) rates. Even after reaching India, several consignments of oxygen concentrators are lying at airports due to IGST rules. A group representing the Indian diaspora in Amsterdam, Netherlands has initiated a campaign to send medical help to India. 'Support Humanity in India', started by Captain Sanjay Sharma collected 50 oxygen concentrators and sent them to

India to help Covid-19 patients. While the group aims to send 1,000 oxygen concentrators, it says managing logistics has become a "nightmare". Initially, the Indian government was not willing to exempt IGST on imports by private entities to NGOs and other organisations that are helping in Covid relief. The exemption was only applicable for contributions made to the Indian government through the Indian Red Cross Society. This decision was revised and all imports for Covid relief were exempted from IGST. However, the exemption came with riders. "We have received several requests from different parts of India, and we want to help them. It should not be such a difficult process when all that we want to do is save Indian lives," said Captain Sanjay

Sharma.

He added that since the group was receiving calls from hospitals and NGOs across the country, they decided to send the medical aid directly to them instead of sending it through the Indian Red Cross Society.

"The Indian Embassy told us if we donate through the Red Cross, we won't have to pay 12 per cent IGST and air freight from the Netherlands to India. I had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to airlift the oxygen concentrators free of charge from the Netherlands and to exempt 12 per cent IGST on them. But we have not received any reply," Captain Sharma said.

Later, the organisation found an agency that would deliver the oxygen concentrators free of



cost. "The freight forwarding team of Global Logistics provider GEODIS, that works with Qatar Airways CARE, gave us efficient and timely support to move this shipment from Amsterdam to India. We appreciate their selfless and dedicated efforts," said Captain Sharma.

Meanwhile, on May 3, the Union finance ministry issued a notification exempting basic customs duty and/or health cess on imports of a number of Covid-19 related relief materials, for a limited period, till June 30.

The notification said the central government had received a number of representations from charitable organisations, corporate entities, and other associations outside India seeking exemption from IGST on import of Covid-19 relief material, donated/received free of cost from outside India for free distribution.

However, these exemptions are subject to following conditions: "The state/UT government concerned shall appoint a nodal authority in the state for the purpose of this exemption."

"Not Same Skin": Black Man Attacks Sikh With Hammer In US



(Insider Bureau)-A Sikh man was attacked with a hammer by a Black attacker who shouted at him "I don't like you" and "You're not the same skin" at a hotel in Brooklyn, prompting a prominent New-York based advocacy group to call on investigators to examine if the assault was a hate crime incident. Sumit Ahluwalia, 32, of Astoria has said his attacker was fuelled by racial hatred, according to a report on New York Daily News website. Sumit Ahluwalia said the man, a Black, assaulted him on April 26 at his workplace, the Quality Inn in Brownsville. He said the man came into the lobby of the hotel at around 8 am and started shouting while the front

desk lady asked him if he needed help. Sumit Ahluwalia stepped into the lobby to speak with the man and to seek the hotel security guard. At that point, the attacker "started running towards me, very fast, and he put his hand in the pocket - I thought, 'He's pulling out a gun'", the report said. Pleading with the man, the victim said, "What happened? You're my brother." The attacker responded "You're not the same skin," Sumit Ahluwalia said, adding that the man then "banged on my head with the hammer so hard." The attacker then screamed, "I don't like you," and ran away, according to the report.

Steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick

FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW: If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have it, follow the steps below to help protect other people in your home and community.

Stay home except to get medical care

- Stay home:** People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. Do not leave, except to get medical care. Do not visit public areas.
- Stay in touch with your doctor.** Call before you get medical care. Be sure to get care if you feel worse or you think it is an emergency.
- Avoid public transportation:** Avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.



Wear a facemask if you are sick

- If you are sick:** You should wear a facemask when you are around other people and before you enter a healthcare provider's office.
- If you are caring for others:** If the person who is sick is not able to wear a facemask (for example, because it causes trouble breathing), then people who live in the home should stay in a different room. When caregivers enter the room of the sick person, they should wear a facemask. Visitors, other than caregivers, are not recommended.



Separate yourself from other people in your home, this is known as home isolation

- Stay away from others:** As much as possible, you should stay in a specific "sick room" and away from other people in your home. Use a separate bathroom, if available.
- Limit contact with pets & animals:** You should restrict contact with pets and other animals, just like you would around other people.
 - Although there have not been reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19, it is still recommended that people with the virus limit contact with animals until more information is known.
 - When possible, have another member of your household care for your animals while you are sick with COVID-19. If you must care for your pet or be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them. See COVID-19 and Animals for more information.



Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cover:** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Dispose:** Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- Wash hands:** Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



Clean your hands often

- Wash hands:** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This is especially important after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Hand sanitizer:** If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Soap and water:** Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching:** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.



Avoid sharing personal household items

- Do not share:** Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your home.



CS 336120-A 01/20/2020

[cdc.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)

Brought to you by the
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services.



**Let's get together
around the table again.**



**Get your COVID vaccine
as soon as you can.**

They're our best chance at getting back to doing the things we love most. And they're authorized by the FDA. COVID vaccines are the best way to help slow the spread and keep family, friends, and our community safe. We can do this.

Learn more about COVID vaccines at cdc.gov/coronavirus

Indian-Origin Teacher In Singapore Faces Abuse Charges Against Maid

Nachammai Selva Nachiappan, 39, and her 41-year-old husband, Arunachalam Muthiah, are facing multiple abuse charges involving their maid Hla Hla Miang, 37.

(Insider Bureau)-An Indian-origin primary school teacher in Singapore has allegedly hurt her domestic help with a hot ladle just 11 days after the Myanmar national started working for her family in 2018, a district court heard on Monday. Nachammai Selva Nachiappan, 39, and her 41-year-old husband, Arunachalam Muthiah, are facing multiple abuse charges involving their maid Hla Hla Miang, 37.

The Indian-origin couple is

accused of committing the offences between June 25 and Aug 2, 2018.

Nachiappan stands in trial facing five charges. She is accused of acts including hitting Miang's face with a clothes hanger and throwing a hot ladle at her.

Muthiah, who faces three charges, is accused of kicking the maid and punching her, The Straits Times reported.

On the first day of their joint trial, the maid testified that she had to work from 4.30 am to 11.30

pm everyday for the family.

She said her employers took her back to the maid agency, as they were "not satisfied".

The Ministry of Education (MOE) had earlier told The Straits Times that it would review the case against Nachiappan and take the appropriate actions according to its internal disciplinary processes.

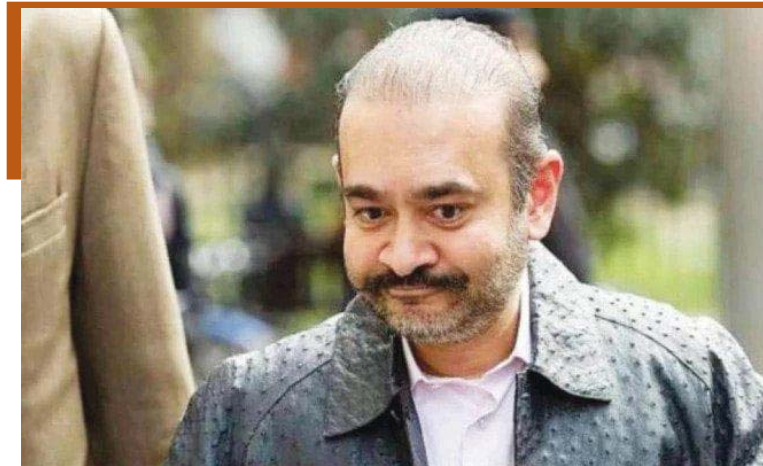
"MOE takes a serious view of staff misconduct and will not hesitate to take disciplinary action against those who fail to



adhere to our standards of conduct and discipline, including dismissal from service," the Singapore daily quoted a ministry spokesman as saying. The trial is underway.

For using an instrument to assault a domestic help, an offender can be jailed for upto 10-and-a-half-years and fined or caned. Nachammai will not be caned, as she is a woman.

Nirav Modi appeals against extradition to India before UK High Court



Nirav Modi has filed an appeal in the UK High Court against his extradition to India. This development comes after the UK Home Office on April 16 approved his extradition.

UK COURT APPROVES NIRAV MODI'S EXTRADITION

Nirav Modi is being probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the PNB fraud case and by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for money laundering related to the PNB scam.

Ruling that Nirav Modi can be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an estimated \$2 billion, a UK court on February 25 said that prima facie there is evidence against the diamond merchant. However, the court also added that there was no evidence to suggest that Nirav Modi would not get a fair

trial if he was extradited to India. Westminster Magistrates' Court judge Samuel Goozee had said that there were links between Nirav Modi and other conspirators, including the PNB officials in the scam. "I do not accept that Nirav Modi was involved in a legitimate business.

I find no genuine transactions and believe there is a process of dishonesty," the judge ruled. The judge also dismissed Nirav Modi's contention that he would not get justice in India due to intense media scrutiny and immense political pressure.

(Insider Bureau)-Fugitive diamondaire Nirav Modi has filed an appeal before the UK High Court in London against his extradition to India, according to sources. If Nirav Modi's application is accepted by the high court, his extradition will be delayed by at least a few months.

According to sources, Nirav

Modi in his appeal has claimed that he won't get a fair trial if he is extradited to India.

On February 25, a UK court had cleared the first legal hurdle for Nirav Modi's extradition. Following this, the extradition was approved by the UK Home Office on April 16. Nirav Modi had 14 days' time to file an appeal before the high court.

Indian-Origin Billionaire Pledges \$10 Million For Oxygen Supplies To India

(Insider Bureau)-Indian-American billionaire businessman Vinod Khosla pledged USD 10 million for the supply of medical oxygen to hospitals in India. This is in continuation with the Sun Microsystems co-founder's efforts to fund hospitals for oxygen supplies amid a surge in COVID cases in the country. Taking to Twitter on Sunday, he said there was a need to save lives as further delay may end up in more deaths. "For @GiveIndia this isn't enough. They've received requests for 20,000 oxygen concentrators, 15,000 cylinders, 500 ICU beds,



100 ventilators, 10,000-beds COVID centres with requests coming from non-profits & hospitals all across India every day. We need to do a lot more urgently," Mr Khosla said.

"The Khosla Family is adding USD 10 million to @GiveIndia to it's previous commitment as a match and hoping others will join in this urgent need," Mr Khosla said. India is struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 3,00,000 new coronavirus cases being reported daily and hospitals in several states reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

Josh

India WebTV

Geeta Saxena

Show Host (Prime Time News)

joshindiatv@gmail.com

2021 Kolam Art Installation

As a visual representation of President Joe Biden's historic 100-day speech and the universal power of healing, the 2021 Kolam art installation weaved together a giant colorful kolam (embedded with thousands of individual stories) as a peace offering to the US and the world. Award-winning artist Shanthi Chandrasekar led the 2021 Kolam art installation on Saturday April 24, 2021 in front of the US Capitol.

Initially created for Biden-Harris inauguration ceremonies and delayed because of the January 6th insurrection, the 1950+-tile Inauguration Kolam 2021 project is an inter-generational collaborative public art offering in the spirit of US Vice-President Kamala Harris' Tamil heritage. A kolam (pronounced kohl-uhm) is



how many women in Tamil Nadu greet each new day. This fem-powered art form has both meditative qualities and deep significance. Drawn outside homes, the beautiful designs made of dots and lines provide

a sense of joy and calm to all who enter. Traditionally hand-drawn with rice flour, kolams are inclusive and eco-friendly (inviting ants & birds to partake in the ephemeral beauty).

For the 2021 Kolam, each

participant was asked to pour love, goodness and positive energy around paper dots to create a 12"x12" cardboard tile. Each tile represents an unique story woven together in a beautiful mosaic; the weave of

stories is extraordinary and more beautiful than any single story alone. Hundreds of DC public school children, senior citizen communities, a women's correctional facility arts program, as well as artist and advocacy groups contributed tiles. Kishan Putta, Washington DC Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner stated: "After a difficult winter including unprecedented violence and hate, our community in DC and nationwide is proud to kick off Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month with this wonderful display of art, peace, love, and diversity." Also, Congressmembers Jaime Raskin (MD) and David Trone (MD) and Michigan State Representative Padma Kuppa have submitted video messages in support.

India Will Take Back Illegal UK Migrants For 3,000 Worker Visas A Year



The pact will provide enhanced employment opportunities for 3,000 young Indian professionals annually, in return for India agreeing to take back any of its citizens who are living illegally in the UK.

the two countries announced 1 billion pounds (\$1.39 billion) of private-sector investment. Talks on a full trade deal are due to begin in the autumn.

"It is our solemn duty that Indian nationals who are undocumented, or are in distress abroad and not being given nationality or residence permits, have to be taken back," Mr Chakravorty said.

Britain's interior ministry said in a statement that the deal aimed to attract "the best and brightest, and supporting people coming to the UK through legal routes,

while stopping the abuse of the system and speeding up the removal of those who have no right to be in the UK".

Migration has long been a source of friction between the two countries, with a similar proposal collapsing in 2018 due to disagreements.

At the time, London claimed there were as many as 100,000 Indians living illegally in the UK, though New Delhi disputes this figure.

Tens of thousands of Indians study in the UK each year, and New Delhi has complained about

a lack of employment opportunities available to them when they finish their studies.

Earlier on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pressed his British counterpart Boris Johnson during talks by telephone over the status of two Indian fugitive tycoons, Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi, who are wanted by New Delhi on fraud charges and are believed to be in the UK. Johnson said he faced some "legal hurdles" but was committed to extraditing the pair back to India as soon as possible, Mr Chakravorty added.

(Insider Bureau)-Britain and India on Tuesday signed an accord on migration and mobility, a foreign ministry official said, as they look to deepen economic, cultural and other ties following the UK's departure from the European Union.

The pact will provide enhanced

employment opportunities for 3,000 young Indian professionals annually, in return for India agreeing to take back any of its citizens who are living illegally in the UK, foreign ministry official Sandeep Chakravorty told a news conference.

The migration pact comes after

Man Jailed For Life For Indian-Origin Man's Alleyway Murder In UK

Manpreet Singh admitted murdering 37-year-old Baljit Singh at Isleworth Crown Court on Tuesday and was sentenced at the same court on Wednesday, the Metropolitan Police said.

(Insider Bureau)-A 21-year-old man who had pleaded guilty during a murder trial of an Indian-origin man found dead in an alleyway in west London last year was on Wednesday sentenced to life imprisonment. Manpreet Singh admitted murdering 37-year-old Baljit Singh at Isleworth Crown Court on Tuesday and was sentenced at the same court on Wednesday,

the Metropolitan Police said.

Baljit Singh, who lived in the Hayes area of west London, was pronounced dead at the scene after the Met Police and London Ambulance Service were called to Station Road on April 25, 2020. Officers from the Met Police's Specialist Crime Command (Homicide) opened the murder investigation soon after.

"Baljit Singh suffered a brutal and

sustained assault at the hands of Manpreet Singh - an assault which cost him his life," said Detective Inspector Adam Guttridge from the department.

"From what we know, Baljit would not have been in a position to defend himself given his slight frame and the amount of alcohol that he had consumed that evening. Manpreet Singh snapped in anger and took

advantage of the circumstances to carry out this horribly violent attack.

His problems with drink and his lifestyle may have played a part in the events that night, but they offer no excuse for taking another man's life in such a vicious way," he said. The court heard how Singh had only met Baljit in the weeks prior to the attack, after travelling down from Birmingham to London with a mutual acquaintance in seek of work. The pair had briefly lived together but had fallen out just prior to the attack. Since then, Manpreet Singh - who was struggling with

excessive drinking - had been living on the streets with his friend. In spite of this, on the day of the murder all three met up in the early evening and drank together at a venue on Uxbridge Road in Hayes. Baljit was extremely drunk by the end of the evening and left with Manpreet Singh and their friend. CCTV footage captured the three of them walking together, with Baljit struggling to stay upright. Just after 2200 hours local time, Manpreet Singh and Baljit entered an alleyway off Station Road where Manpreet launched his deadly assault.

Few weeks' lockdown in India can stop Covid transmission, suggests top US expert Dr Fauci

Top US epidemiologist Anthony Fauci has suggested a lockdown for a few weeks in India as an immediate step to contain the spread of the coronavirus as its deadly second wave shows no signs of ebbing.

(News Agencies)- Top US epidemiologist Anthony Fauci has suggested a lockdown for a few weeks in India as an immediate step to contain the spread of the coronavirus as its deadly second wave shows no signs of ebbing. Fauci, in an interview with The Indian Express, said another most important thing in the immediate is to get supplies of oxygen, medication, PPEs. He said looking at the magnitude of the crisis, India should look at putting together a crisis group that would meet and start getting things organised.

Without naming any government, he said one of the things that should have been recognised that "victory was declared maybe too

prematurely". "Well, one of the things you really need to do, to the extent that you can, is shut down temporarily the country, I think is important. If we want to time out and go back to what I said: there is the immediate, the intermediate, and the long range (measures to contain the virus).

Also Read | Rahul Gandhi launches 'Hello Doctor' medical helpline for Covid patients

"I think the most important thing in the immediate is to get oxygen, get supplies, get medication, get PPE, those kinds of things but also, one of the immediate things to do is to essentially call a shutdown of the country," said Fauci, who is the chief medical

adviser to the Biden administration.

He said when China had a big explosion of coronavirus cases a year ago, they completely shut down. Fauci said it is not necessary to shut down for six months, but it can be a temporary one to put an end to the cycle of transmission.

So one of the things to be considered is to temporarily shut down, he said.

"Literally, lock down so that you wind up having less spread. No one likes to lock down the country. Well, that's a problem when you do it for six months," he said. But just for a few weeks of lockdown could have a significant impact on the dynamics of the outbreak.



Some states have imposed a lockdown. Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said lockdown should be the "last resort" to deal with the raging pandemic and asked states to convince migrant workers to stay put at their places of work with a guarantee for their lives and livelihood. Breaching its all previous records, India on Saturday hit a record daily high with over 4 lakh new infections, while the active

cases crossed the 32-lakh mark. The second wave of the coronavirus has been wreaking havoc, infecting lakhs and killing thousands every day for the past few days. There have been cases where people have died due to lack of medical facilities, including oxygen. In many cases, families have to arrange oxygen for their patients as they are not able to get admission in hospitals.

India's Covid-19 tally breaches 2-crore mark with 3.57 lakh fresh cases, over 3,400 deaths

India on Tuesday recorded over 3.57 lakh fresh Covid-19 cases and 3,449 deaths over the past 24 hours. The country's Covid-19 case tally has now breached the 2-crore mark.

(News Agencies)- India on Tuesday recorded over 3.57 lakh fresh Covid-19 cases and 3,449 deaths over the past 24 hours. The tally of new Covid cases saw a slight dip from Monday's 3.68 lakh.

With the 3,57,229 fresh cases in 24 hours, India's total case tally has crossed the 2-crore mark and reached 2,02,82,833. The total number of active Covid-19 cases in the country now stands at 34,47,133.

With 3,449 deaths, India's death toll has reached 2,22,408 while the number of recoveries has

reached 1,66,13,292.

On May 1, India reported the highest-ever daily tally in the world with over 4 lakh cases being recorded in 24 hours.

Top five states which have registered the maximum cases over the past 24 hours are Maharashtra with 48,621 cases, followed by Karnataka with 44,438 cases, Uttar Pradesh with 29,052 cases, Kerala with 26,011 cases and Tamil Nadu with 20,952 cases.

47.33% of the fresh Covid-19 cases have been reported from these five states with

Maharashtra alone responsible for 13.61% of the new cases.

Of the 3,449 deaths reported in the country the most has been recorded in Maharashtra (567), followed by Delhi with 448 deaths.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan remain the most affected in the country.

The Health Ministry has said more than 2.15 lakh beneficiaries of age group 18-44 have received their first doses of the Covid-19 vaccine in the last 24 hours. More than 4 lakh total vaccine



doses have administered to 18-44 age group till now.

The month of April has battered India with a massive case load and surging death toll, straining the healthcare system.

India's average of newly confirmed cases per day has soared from over 65,000 on April 1 to about 3,70,000, and deaths per day have officially gone from over 300 to more than 3,000 in April.

West Bengal: Mamata Banerjee's swearing-in to be low-key due to coronavirus pandemic



(News Agencies)- Trinamool Congress president Mamata Banerjee will be sworn in as the Chief Minister of West Bengal at Raj Bhavan in Kolkata on Wednesday morning. This will

be a low-key affair in view of restrictions in place to curb the spread of Covid-19 in the state. A 'Guard of Honour' has been arranged for TMC chief Mamata Banerjee at the VIP entry of Nabanna, the state secretariat in Kolkata.

Invitations for the programme have been sent to her predecessor Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, leader of the Opposition in the outgoing assembly, Abdul Mannan, and CPI(M) veteran leader Biman Bose, an official said on

Tuesday.

Chief ministers of other states and leaders of other political parties have not been invited for the programme, keeping in mind the current Covid-19 situation in the country.

"It has been decided to keep the oath-taking ceremony Mamata Banerjee a very simple one because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Banerjee will be the only leader who will be taking the oath tomorrow. The programme will be a very brief one," added the official.

Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee, poll strategist Prashant Kishor and party leader Firhad Hakim are likely to be present at the ceremony scheduled to be held at the Raj Bhavan at around 10.45 am on May 5, said TMC sources. BCCI president Sourav Ganguly has also been invited to the ceremony.

Soon after taking oath, Banerjee will go to the state secretariat "Nabanna" where she will be given "guard of honour" by Kolkata Police, sources said.

Where are Covid-19 foreign aid supplies going? Opposition asks Centre to make details public

Opposition parties have questioned the Centre on the whereabouts of medical supplies received over the last week from different countries.

(News Agencies)- With foreign aid pouring in for India as it grapples with a raging Covid-19 second wave, Opposition parties have questioned the Centre on the whereabouts of those medical supplies received over the last one week. Congress has demanded transparency in the distribution of foreign aid and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make public details of all relief material received by India. The Delhi High Court has also sought data from the Centre on oxygen concentrators awaiting customs clearance at Delhi airport.

"India has received aid from 40 countries over the past one week. The people of this country have a right to know where the relief material is coming from and where it is going. The government is busy with media management and headline management while people are dying due to shortage of oxygen," said Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera. AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owasi took to Twitter to criticise the Centre over the distribution of Covid-19 relief materials from different countries. "Many countries are sending India a lot of aid, it is meant for all Indians,

not for @PMOIndia alone, why don't we know how much material has come and gone where?" he tweeted. Tonnes of medical equipment, including oxygen production plants, oxygen concentrators and ventilators, crucial in India's fight against Covid-19 sent by friendly countries have arrived at the Delhi airport over the past one week. On Monday, medical aid from Qatar, Italy and the UK was received by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) officials. Qatar sent 300 tonnes of medical supplies, including ventilators, concentrators and PPE kits, in three cargo planes.



These were distributed in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, the MEA official spokesperson informed. An oxygen production plant and 20 ventilators arrived from Italy. Sixty more ventilators were sent by the UK. In another dispatch from the UK, 723 oxygen concentrators that arrived over the past 24 hours were handed over to the Indian Red Cross society. Government data shows that India has received eight oxygen generators from France, one from Italy, 1.25 lakh from the USA and 9,000 from Belgium. India has also received 2,000 vials of Remdesivir from Germany so far.

PM Modi visits Delhi's Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib

(News Agencies)- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday visited Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib in Delhi on the 400th birth anniversary of Guru Teg Bahadur. He offered prayers at the gurdwara on the 400th Parkash Purab and extended greetings to the nation.

PM Narendra Modi said on Saturday that Guru Teg Bahadur refused to bow to tyranny and injustice and his supreme sacrifice



gives strength and motivation to many.

Paying his tribute to Guru Teg Bahadur, PM Modi said, "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."

Petitioner seeking stay on Central Vista project likely to move SC today

The plea is likely to seek a stay on the Central Vista project because several construction workers have reportedly contracted Covid-19.

After the Delhi High Court refused to put a stay on the Central Vista project and adjourned the matter to May 17, the petitioner who had moved the plea is likely to approach the Supreme Court today, India Today TV has learnt.

Sources say the petition before the Supreme Court would be to challenge the high court's adjournment order.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra had on Tuesday argued that the plea was to seek a stay on the order that allowed transporting construction workers from Sarai Kale Khan to the Cen-

tral Vista site in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic that has hit Delhi hard.

The special leave petition before the Supreme Court is likely to plead for a stay on the construction in the current situation as many workers have reportedly contracted Covid-19. Besides, other construction activities and gatherings have been banned.

During today's hearing in the Delhi High Court, the Additional Solicitor General said his "conscience is shaken" after hearing about the plight of construction workers. He sought time from the court to file a reply. However, the

court adjourned the matter to 17 May.

The bench headed by Chief Justice DN Patel said the court is not issuing a notice at this point. "We want to study the Supreme Court judgement on the matter," the bench said.

Meanwhile, on Monday, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) said the construction of the prime minister's residence under the ambitious Central Vista project will be completed by December 2022. The CPWD, which is the project developer, informed a government-appointed Expert Appraisal Com-



mittee (EAC) that the expansion of the Parliament building and the construction of a new Parliament building will be done by November 2022, and the prime minister's residence will be constructed by December 2022.

The Ministry of Environment has already granted the clearance for the expansion and renovation of the existing Parliament building, which is part of the Rs 13,450 crore Central Vista Redevelopment Project.

BJP workers flee Bengal amid post-poll violence, seek shelter in Assam

Post-poll violence that has erupted in West Bengal following the declaration of assembly election results, has raised a lot of concerns. Fearing for their lives, hundreds of BJP workers have fled Bengal and are now taking shelter in the neighbouring state of Assam.

(News Agencies)- As post-poll violence grips West Bengal following the announcement of the assembly poll results, hundreds of BJP karyakartas and family members reportedly fled the state and have now taken shelter in Assam by crossing the inter-state border. Senior minister in the Assam government, Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday claimed that around 300-400 BJP karyakartas and family members have crossed over to Dhubri in Assam after post-poll violence in West

Bengal. The Assam minister further added that the state government is providing food and shelter to the party workers who have fled West Bengal.

Himanta Biswa Sarma also hit out at Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and asked her to put a stop to the "ugly dance of demonocracy." BJP's Bengal chief Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday alleged that since the announcement of the West Bengal Assembly election result, BJP cadres in the state are facing atrocities at the hands of "TMC

goons". Dhubri district Superintendent of Police (SP) Anand Mishra told India Today TV that the people who fled Bengal are currently taking shelter at various clubs and schools at Kherabari, Japsabari, Pokrabari area under Agomoni, Golakganj police station in Dhubri district.

"We have provided food, cloths to the people who fled from West Bengal. We have also made Covid-19 test arrangements. We are closely monitoring the situation," Anand Mishra said.



He further added that Assam DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta is monitoring the situation closely and has sent clothes and food items for those who have reportedly fled post-poll violence in Bengal. **MHA SEEKS REPORT**

FROM BENGAL GOVT

In the wake of continued incidents of violence, the Union Home Ministry on Monday sought a report from the West Bengal government on the issue of post-poll violence in the state.

Maha govt opposes ex-Mumbai top cop Param Bir Singh's plea in Bombay HC



Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh in the Bombay HC, the Maharashtra government said the petition is 'pointless' since DGP Sanjay Pandey has already recused himself from the probe against the former top cop.

(News Agencies)- Opposing the plea by former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh in the Bombay HC, the Maharashtra government said the petition is 'pointless' since DGP Sanjay Pandey has already recused himself from the probe against the former top cop.

The Maharashtra government has opposed the plea filed by former Mumbai Police commissioner Param Bir Singh in the Bombay High Court. Questioning the 'maintainability' of the plea, the counsel for the state said Param Bir Singh's petition is "pointless". Param Bir Singh's lawyer sought

adjournment as he has filed a fresh petition which is to be heard on May 6. Senior advocate Dairus Khambata, appearing for Maharashtra government, opposed any adjournment saying that Singh's petition holds no water. Maharashtra Director General of Police (DGP) Sanjay Pandey, who was asked to conduct a probe against Singh, has recused himself given the allegations levelled against him in the plea, said Khambata.

During the hearing on Tuesday, Khambata said that the DGP has already recused himself from the

probe and a new inquiry has been initiated "as of last evening or this morning" which makes Singh's petition infructuous. The Maharashtra DGP also appeared for the hearing through his lawyer Navroz Seervai, stating that false allegations are being made against him and that he has already recused himself from both inquiries initiated by Maharashtra government. "We would like to file a short affidavit," said Seervai. Khambata pointed out that the petition filed by Param Bir Singh is not maintainable and he should approach the Central Administrative

Tribunal (CAT) as these are issues of service matters.

Suspended police inspector Anup Dange, who had accused Param Bir Singh of having underworld links, also filed an intervention application. Dange is opposing Singh's plea to stop inquiries against him. The division Bench of Justice SS Shinde and Justice Manish Pitale, after hearing arguments from both the sides, said, "We are of the prima facie view that the reliefs claimed can be adjudicated by the Central Administrative Tribunal."

Dinosaur bones dating back to 100 million years found in Meghalaya

(News Agencies)- Researchers have identified fossil bone fragments of sauropod dinosaurs dating back to about 100 million years from an area around West Khasi Hills District in Meghalaya.

The yet-to-be-published findings were made during a recent field trip by researchers from the Geological Survey of India's Palaeontology division in North-East.

The GSI researchers noted that this is the first record of sauropods of probable Titanosaurian origin discovered in the region.

Sauropods had very long necks, long tails, small heads relative to the rest of their body, and four thick, pillar-like legs. They are

notable for the enormous sizes attained by some species, and the group includes the largest animals to have ever lived on land. The finding makes Meghalaya the fifth state in India after Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu and the only state in the North-East to report Sauropod bones having titanosaurian affinity, they said. Titanosaurs were a diverse group of sauropod dinosaurs, including genera from Africa, Asia, South America, North America, Europe, Australia and Antarctica.

"Dinosaur bones from Meghalaya were reported by GSI in 2001 but they were too fragmentary and ill-preserved to understand its taxonomic identification," said Arindam Roy, Senior Geologist,

Palaeontology Division, GSI.

"The present find of bones is during fieldwork in 2019-2020 and 2020-21. The last visit of the team was in February 2021. The fossils are presumably of Late Cretaceous, about 100 million years ago," Roy told PTI.

He noted that the best-preserved fossils are limb bones, adding the type of curvature, development of lateral and proximal margins of the partially preserved bone are indicative of it being a humerus bone.

He, however, noted that the conclusions are drawn from preliminary studies and detailed work is going on.

The bone fragments were collected from poorly sorted, purplish to greenish very coarse-



grained arkosic sandstone interlaid with pebbly beds.

More than twenty-five disarticulated, mostly fragmentary bone specimens were recovered, which are of different sizes and occur as isolated specimens but some of them were found in close proximity to each other, the

researchers said.

Taxonomic identification up to genus level is difficult due to poorly preserved, incomplete, fragmentary nature of the bones and most of the recovered bones are partially petrified and partially replaced, they said. Therefore, only three of the best-preserved ones could be studied.

Only way to stop Covid-19 spread now is full lockdown: Rahul Gandhi

Rahul Gandhi said a lockdown is now the only option because of alleged 'complete lack of strategy' by the government.

(News Agencies)-Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the only way to stop the spread of coronavirus now was a full lockdown with the protection of minimum income guarantee scheme, NYAY, for the vulnerable sections.

Gandhi also said that a lockdown is now the only option because of alleged "complete lack of strategy" by the government of India.

"GOI doesn't get it. The only way

to stop the spread of Corona now is a full lockdown- with the protection of NYAY for the vulnerable sections," Gandhi said in a tweet. "GOI's inaction is killing many innocent people," he said.

Later, in another tweet, Gandhi said, "They allowed, rather, they actively helped the virus reach this stage where there's no other way to stop it. A crime has been committed against India."

The Congress has been

asserting that the central and state governments move to control the situation by resorting to partial curfews, travel restrictions, closure and lockdowns will again be restricting economic activity that will hit the poor and, therefore, it was imperative to provide monthly income support.

Gandhi has been pushing for the implementation of the party's proposed Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) providing minimum



income guarantee to vulnerable sections.

The Congress has been critical of the government's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

India's total tally of COVID-19 cases crossed the 2-crore

mark with 3,57,229 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 2,22,408 with 3,449 new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

Media cannot be stopped from reporting discussions in higher courts, Supreme Court tells EC

The Supreme Court on Monday told the Election Commission that media cannot be stopped from reporting oral observations made by the court.



(News Agencies)-The Supreme Court on Monday told the Election Commission that their prayer to stop media from reporting oral observations is too far-fetched and cannot be allowed.

A bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud was hearing the poll panel's plea challenging the Madras HC's 'murder charges' remark. The Madras High Court had slammed the Election

Commission of India for allowing political rallies amid a deadly second wave of Covid-19.

"Your institution is singularly responsible for the second wave of Covid-19. Election Commission officers should be booked on murder charges probably," the HC observed.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi is appearing for the Election Commission. The EC had sought that media should

not be allowed to report on oral observations of the court, and that no criminal complaint can be filed on the basis of oral observations of the court.

Justice Chandrachud said, "We cannot say that media will not report the discussion that takes place in Court. The discussion that takes place is in as much public interest as the final order of the Court. The discussion in Court is a dialogue between the bar and the bench. Media is a very powerful watchdog in protecting the sanctity of this process."

"It fosters a sense of faith in the community," he said.

Justice Chandrachud said, "We don't want to demoralise the HCs.

They are important pillars in our democracy."

WHAT IS SAID IS SAID. TAKE IT IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT

Supreme Court asked the Election Commission to take Madras HC's observations in the right spirit.

Supreme Court observed, "Judges are overburdened right now and are saying what they're seeing around them. High Courts are burning the midnight oil."

Justice Chandrachud said, "To say that ECI is not subject to judicial review is not correct. To ask a judge to contain what he says in Court will not do justice to any judicial process."

"Elections in our country have been a cornerstone of the

existence of our democracy and we want all institutions to be free. When we write an order don't think we are castigating ECI. We will bring balance. We have to because the issue is complex," he said.

COVID MANAGEMENT NOT OUR PREROGATIVE: EC

The poll body told Supreme Court that it has become a presumption that the election commission is responsible to curb the spread of Covid when that's not the case. The Election Commission does not have officers to send to the rallies of the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister. "Covid management is not just our prerogative," it told court.

Tripura West DM suspended over viral video of him stopping wedding midway citing Covid norms

Sailesh Kumar Yadav, the District Magistrate of Tripura West who stopped a wedding midway in Agartala citing Covid norms, has been suspended. A video of his actions is viral on social media.

Tripura (west) District Magistrate Sailesh Kumar Yadav has been suspended by the state government. The order for his suspension comes days after a video of Yadav stopping a wedding midway in a bid to enforce Covid-19 norms went into wide circulation on social media.

Earlier this week, DM Sailesh Kumar Yadav appeared before a committee to explain his

actions. The panel, comprising two senior IAS officers, was formed at the direction of Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb.

"It is my duty to enforce law and order and to prevent the spread of Covid-19. I stand by whatever I did that night," Yadav had told the committee.

A number of BJP leaders, including MLA Asish Saha and Sushanta Chowdhury had

written to Tripura Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar demanding Yadav's removal. Pratima Bhowmik, the BJP MP from West Tripura District, had even told the media that she would personally speak to the family of the bride. What led to Tripura West DM's suspension? A video of Tripura West District Magistrate Sailesh Kumar Yadav stopping a wedding ceremony midway has been going viral on social media.



The incident took place in Agartala at a wedding venue owned by Pradyot Kishore Debbarma, chairman of the Tripura Indigenous Progressive

Regional Alliance.

In the video, Yadav can be seen asking the bride, groom, their families and guests to leave immediately.

BKU leader Rakesh Tikait, 12 others booked for violating Section 144 in Haryana

The Haryana Police has registered a case against Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait and 12 others, who held a 'kisan mazdoor maha panchayat' in a village in the state.

(News Agencies)-The Haryana Police has registered a case against Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait and 12 others, who held a 'maha panchayat' in a village in the state, for allegedly violating prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc, officials said on Sun. Tikait and some other BKU leaders addressed the 'kisan mazdoor maha panchayat' in Dhurali village near Ambala Cantt on Saturday.

Ratan Maan Singh, Baldev Singh and Jasmer Saini are among the other 12 farmer leaders who have been booked by the police. In view of a massive surge in coronavirus cases, the district magistrate had imposed Section 144, which bars assembly of four or more persons. The police said Assistant Sub-Inspector Chandi Singh had warned the BKU leaders not to hold the 'maha panchayat' as Section 144 was enforced in the district.

"However, BKU leaders went ahead and organised the event," a senior police official said. Based on a complaint of the assistant sub-inspector, a case was registered against Tikait and 12 other farmer leaders. Also read | Week-long lockdown in Haryana from tomorrow amid rise in Covid-19 cases. "They violated the orders under Section 144 as well as the orders duly promulgated by the public servant (district magistrate) under



Section 188 of the IPC. The other provisions of IPC added in the FIR include Section 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life)," the police official said.

Addressing the 'maha panchayat', Tikait, who is the national spokesperson of BKU, reiterated that the agitation against the Centre's new farm

laws will continue till the time these legislations are repealed. He asked the farmers to prepare themselves for a long battle.

The BKU leader also hit out at the government over its handling of the Covid crisis, saying various hospitals across the country are grappling with a severe shortage of medical oxygen.

Talking to the media later, Tikait said during the event, farmers were told that they should take all the steps to protect themselves from the disease.

Assam Police arrest man for stripping, mercilessly thrashing 10-year-old daughter

(News Agencies)- A 10-year-old girl was brutally beaten up and stripped naked by her father in Cachar district of Silchar, Assam on Tuesday. A video of the horrifying incident is going viral on social media.

In the video, the man is seen stepping on his daughter's chest and beating her with a wooden log. And when a neighbor tries to stop him, he threatens her with a gun.

The police rushed to the victim's house and rescued her after they were alerted by locals.

Read | Assam issues new Covid-19 guidelines, night curfew from

May 5

Cachar district Superintendent of Police (SP) Bhanwar Lal Meena told India Today TV that a case has been registered in this regard. "Our team rescued the victim on Tuesday morning and a case has been registered. The accused person is still absconding and we have launched a search operation to nab the culprit," he said. Meanwhile, Special DG of Assam police GP Singh confirmed that the police have arrested the accused. Some locals said that the accused has a criminal record and was even

arrested on a number of occasions for his alleged involvement in unlawful activities. "The man stripped his daughter naked and assaulted her. He has many criminal records.

Facebook Launches In-App Vaccine Tracker In India

(News Agencies)-Facebook has partnered with the Indian government to roll out a vaccine finder tool on its mobile app in India that will help people identify nearby places to get vaccinated. According to Mashable, earlier this week, Facebook announced a \$10 million grant for emergency response efforts for the COVID-19 situation in the country. The vaccine tracker tool will allow users to find the nearest vaccine centres and their hours of operation as shared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

The tracker tool will also aggregate and display walk-in options (for 45 year olds and above) along with a link to register on the CoWin portal and schedule vaccination

appointments.

"Partnering with the Government of India, Facebook will begin rolling out its Vaccine Finder tool on the Facebook mobile app in India available in 17 languages to help people identify places nearby to get the vaccine," Facebook said in a post on its platform.

The company said that it also will join hands with NGOs and agencies - namely, United Way, Swasth, Hemkunt Foundation, I Am Gurgaon, Project Mumbai and US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) - to deploy the funds announced to help build up a stock of critical medical supplies with over 5,000 oxygen concentrators and other life-saving equipment like ventilators, BiPAP machines.

Thinking of Buying/Selling ?



WINZONE REALTY INC.



Baldev Singh

Associate Broker/Notary Public

146-20 34 av. Flushing NY 11354

Cell : 917-224-7395

Email : josanbaldev@yahoo.com

We need temporary reconciliation, a national action plan. PM must take lead

COVID wildfire sweeps up South Asia

'India alone reports over 412,000 new cases'

As death and suffering knock on each of our doors, our politics requires a temporary injection of idealism. In a political landscape marked by communalism, polarisation, petulance, authoritarianism, aggression, any call for idealism will invite the response "What are you smoking?" But the blunt truth is this: If our politics continues as usual over the next few months, the devastation to our lives will be immeasurable. Covid is exploiting every social faultline, worming away in glee, as we turn on each other more than we unite against the virus. There is palpable and justifiable anger against the sheer callousness and incompetence on what the central government under the leadership of the prime minister has inflicted upon us. But the political hard truth is that national elections are three years away. As much as I might want one, an immediate change in government is not our quick or easy road to redemption. Despite waning popularity, the hardcore supporters of the BJP are still dug in. They are not a majority but still a sizeable number. Their response to criticism has been to double down with even more aggression. On the flip side, the BJP must recognise that no fight against Covid can now work without the cooperation of every political party. This is partly because the Opposition controls key states. But it is also because if the fight about Covid becomes a fight over petulant one-upmanship as we are, for example, seeing between Delhi Government and the Centre, then we are doomed.

It is a cliché that it would be ideal to "depoliticise" the fight against Covid. One has to be careful about how the term "depoliticised" is used. It should not be used as an excuse to silence criticism, or demands for accountability, or public expressions of anger. These are necessary tools in crafting a better response to crisis. If nothing else, they provide information and create pressure. "Depoliticised" simply means creating structures of decision-making where the incentives to cooperate are strengthened and achieving results becomes more important than embarrassing opponents; a tangible verification of results becomes more important than perception management. In times of war and foreign policy crisis, such bipartisanship is not unusual. There is reason to deploy it in the context of one of India's most significant crises since Independence. So here might be some simple objectives that could allow some semblance of unity, public purpose and resolve in the fight against Covid. The first is the creation of something like a national action plan for the next two to three years, with tangible and realistic targets on everything from

vaccination procurement and pricing, to preparedness for future waves. The important thing is that the plan must be made and owned by all the state chief ministers and the central government together. So that the national strategy is, as far as possible, a consensus document. This document must also take hard decisions about financial allocations and building up the public health infrastructure. The second is a recognition that in the short to medium run there will be considerable scarcity and rationing, from vaccines to other supplies. It is important that the rationing be done fairly, according to principles that make sense from a public health point of view. The more such rationing decisions are collective decisions, the more confidence in their fairness. In times of scarcity, you also need coordination and trust to adapt as situations change. The third is the activation of parliamentary select committees as tools of accountability. This is not a time to suspend parliamentary activity, but deploy it in ways that produce accountability through formal channels. The very fact that the bureaucracy or the scientific establishment can be asked tough questions by members of different political parties may change the incentives on how information is put out. Allowing a parliamentary committee to ask why the ICMR was so slow in sharing data, for example, is not a bad thing; and the fact that they know they are now answering only to the executive will increase confidence in the system. We know parliamentary committees have, outside the glare of politics, done a better job of flagging so many issues. Fourth, for the time being, depoliticise the bureaucracy. Again, the fact that bureaucrats will be answerable to different CMs and parliament, rather than serve one master, will help in this. The insidious practice of bureaucrats now having to be like public spokespersons for the central government has destroyed the credibility of the bureaucracy but also made interstate coordination more difficult. Fifth, it would help if, for the time being at least, there was a commitment to prioritising the pandemic. I don't mean that in just an administrative sense. Frontline workers are battling this crisis. I also mean in a psychological and political sense, where we can convey that the death and suffering around us is not just an afterthought tacked on to the usual pathologies of politics. This will require an almost heroic forbearance. The usual ingredients of politics - communalism, ambition, venality - will still be around for parties to play with when this is over. The point is to demonstrate that the different sinews of power are pulling in one direction, at least on the pandemic.

'The ongoing pandemic is devastating,' is an understatement by now. With over 412,000 new cases (on May 5, 2021) in India, it has been the highest one-day rise for any country since the pandemic began last year. A morbid 3980 deaths were reported during the same time.

The Indian authorities have attributed this unprecedented spike due to the presence of a 'double mutant' variant, which apparently makes the virus more contagious. Mutation in the key areas of the virus areas allows escape detection by the immune system. A UN report states that around 500,000 deaths due to COVID-19 are possible in the coming months in South Asia, with over 490,000 projected to occur in India alone. A report titled "Direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and response in South Asia", discussed the impact of the severe disruptions in health services due to the pandemic. It also discusses the adverse effect on poor and vulnerable families.

One of the biggest reasons for this massive surge in COVID-19 cases in this area is the density of population. South Asia is the home to a population of over 1.8 billion people, all densely packed. Among the South Asian countries, all of which have seen a spike in cases of late, India is the most affected country.

The Indian healthcare system present in the countries simply cannot cope up with the immense surge in cases. The healthcare professionals are overworked and are in constant exposure to the

virus, leaving them more susceptible to the same. Thousands of lives are being lost daily and it has taken its toll on its already stressed-out medical system. The speed at which the infection is spreading is indeed alarming! Over 1.5 million people are sick in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh combined, which is 50 times more than what has occurred in April, 2021.

This continual increase in COVID-19 cases has left nearly two-third of the South Asian firms likely to fall into arrears, higher than other regions. The manufacturing firms are expecting upwards to 25 percent decline in their sales figures. They also have lagged behind in providing digital solutions in the wake of social distancing which in turn increased their risk of falling into debt.

On top of that, an immense shortage of oxygen supplies in hospitals, too, contributed to what could be described as panic-like situations in the nation. Oxygen cylinders were sold in black market and at this point of time, one can agree that the Indian healthcare system has failed to serve the patients. With plants amping up production and foreign aid pouring in from the US, Germany, Russia and others, it is still a long way to go for India to become self-sufficient in oxygen supplies. In the meantime, the healthcare officials are working round-the-clock and trying their best, help saving lives. The impact on these frontline workers is catastrophic and one can only wish and do their bit in assisting the community.

By Susmita Ghosh



ISSN No. 1554 06X

Editor in Chief & Publisher :

Sharanjit Singh Thind

Editor (Political Affairs-India) :

Aruna Singh

Chief Photographer : Vijay Shah

Editorial Intern: Roubin Singh Thind

Special Correspondent :

Gagandeep Singh (India)

Web Coordinator : Harpreet Singh

A Publication of Media Partners Capital, Inc.

REGD & MAILING OFFICE :

P.O Box 7005 Hicksville New York 11801

Phone: 917 612 3158

editor@thesouthasianinsider.com, thesouthasianinsider@gmail.com

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Disclaimer The South Asian Insider is a weekly newspaper published every week by The South Asian Insider. It's available in community & religious centers, ethnic grocery stores and also available by mail, email & online to subscribers. The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various writers, authors and forum participants in The South Asian Insider do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editor. All advertisers advertising in The South Asian Insider assume responsibility for accuracy of their advertisements. The South Asian Insider and/or people associated with it are not responsible for any claims made by the advertisers and don't endorse any product or services advertised in The South Asian Insider. We strongly urge consulting your lawyer before buying/contracting/hiring through the ads published in the newspaper. We are in the business of selling space and claims made by the advertisers are not authenticated or confirmed by an independent source

PM Modi's dilemma: Good politics vs good governance

For the first time in PM Modi's political career, which is full of triumphs and vanquished rivals, the answer to the question - which way will the Bengal battle go - is of lesser significance than what if the BJP wins West Bengal and what if it loses the state election?

Albert Einstein had said, "You can't resolve a dilemma with all the very same mind that made it."

One night before the results of five assembly polls Prime Minister Narendra Modi might have gone to bed failing to resolve a dilemma he had authored - as the BJP's star campaigner and as the head of the government.

In Waterloo Bengal, the exit polls predicted a tight fight between him and TMC chairperson Mamata Banerjee. But for the first time in PM Modi's political career, which is full of triumphs and vanquished rivals, the answer to the question - which way will the Bengal battle go - is of lesser significance than what if the BJP wins West Bengal and what if it loses the state election?

Consummate politicians like him are good at smelling the vapour like political realities rising from the ground. Given the ferocious second Covid-19 surge it seems a win in Bengal may not completely defeat and dishearten the Opposition. The BJP needs to worry that a win can fuel a perception that from February to April when the coronavirus pandemic killed people gasping for oxygen, and writhing for medicines and hospital beds, the government failed to deliver as the BJP campaigned and won.

Questions will be asked - who won good politics or good governance?

A loss has its own negatives. The forecast for the BJP in three southern states is: no showers for the BJP in Kerala, ally AIADMK likely to drown in Tamil Nadu, and even if it wins Puducherry, it wouldn't be a trophy in the BJP's drawing room.

If the BJP wins Assam as per predictions but loses Bengal, the rivals will pull out the knives and yell: the vote especially in Bengal is against Modi, his handling of the country and the pandemic.

WHY BJP NEEDS TO PUT ITS



EAR TO THE GROUND

Before March 2021, the BJP and PM Modi wouldn't have bothered about such charges by the Opposition. After all, Bihar election was fought and won by NDA right in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic's first wave, tail end of lockdowns, crumbling economy and a massive tragedy in form of crores of dislocated migrants like destitute trudging back to the homes they had once fled to escape hunger and abject poverty. The NDA won and nothing happened.

India post-March 2021 is a different place. Earlier PM Modi, it seemed, wore a hard to dent armour with none of the political rivals having the artillery to pierce or dent it.

The raging pandemic is doing what men in khadi ranged against PM Modi couldn't. The political foes failed in the past because the political soil had perception nutrient that favoured PM Modi and didn't allow the seeds sown by the Opposition to germinate and crowd the political landscape. However, the pandemic is threatening to change the perception topsoil.

The first indication that the pandemic and its fallout were forcing the BJP to tone down its usual swagger and bluster to save the perception came when ahead of the last phases of voting in Bengal, the party clubbed PM's four campaign rallies spread over two days to one day. Then the PM announced the cancellation of those rallies. It happened as the Opposition using the body toll and suffering due to the pandemic was threatening the perception by

shouting "BJP's election machinery was rolling over the misery of people and threats to their lives".

The BJP leaders over the last two days have been spending a lot of time informing journalists that the mood in the party is sombre and that the usual expression of triumph will be missing even if the BJP wins Bengal and Assam. "The party is sensitive to the suffering of the people. Winning an election at this juncture is of little significance," a senior BJP leader said.

The BJP's worry is, however, deeper. It knows that a win will get juxtaposed with the faltering battle against Covid-19. Winning an election when people are losing has potential to build an adverse political chain reaction. This is where what Albert Einstein said comes in. It's a dilemma that PM Modi created. It's there because PM Modi drove a fierce hard-working campaign in Bengal. It has cropped up because the BJP is not fighting Mamata with Dilip Ghosh or Suwendu Adhikari as the face in Bengal. It doesn't have Sarvananda Sonowal as its chief ministerial candidate in Assam.

The BJP is fighting in the crucial states in the name of Modi, the vote getter. And, the government that failed to pre-empt the second surge's ferocity and prepare in advance has Modi as PM. Over the years, the BJP erected the winning perception that "Modi hai to mumkin hai" (with Modi around everything is possible).

The queues of patients outside hospitals for beds, outside oxygen plants, top private hospital CEOs tweeting about few hours or remaining oxygen, the shortage of Remdesivir, ICU beds and ventilators are dislodging some of the bricks in the perception wall that has "Modi hai to mumkin hai" painted on it.

People who had faith that PM Modi could do it are and may not turn to blame an Arvind Kejriwal or Uddhav Thackeray for the despair they battle.

The BJP's current problem is how to remedy the Covid-19 situation and how to amend the changing perception as it's the creator of its current woes.

PM Modi runs a government that's engined, propelled and steered by him. The BJP insiders defensively say he has been battling the handicap of lack of talent and poor bench strength in the BJP. Rivals say he has designed his council to have more avowed followers in his council of ministers than capable leaders or administrators.

When the pandemic arrived in India last year, he stood up and never shied from getting his hands dirty. He announced the dramatic lockdown. He steered the battle against Covid-19 by holding meetings with CMs and officers.

Then came the lockdowns. They were destined to drive the economy in a downward spiral and cause hardships for millions. Unaccustomed to adverse publicity the central government discovered

federalism. The prime minister receded. The movement was subtle but visible. For example, to revive the economy, fiscal measures were announced in tranches. Not by him but Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The states which had been clamouring for more autonomy and complaining against what they called an overbearing central government, their official machinery and Delhi's bureaucracy slipped into a slumber. No one thought of using the brief dip in Covid-19 numbers to augment health infrastructure, stock medicines or even promote safety protocols.

He returned to the forefront with the vaccine hope. But a couple of months were enough to do the damage. The vaccine drive meant to be a signal for hope and revival coincided with the second surge which brought destruction and despair.

The vaccine drive is floundering. The so-called pride of India - world's largest vaccine manufacturing industry - is terribly short of jabs for the teeming millions.

The Modi government had aspired to use the pandemic and the economic downturn to infuse self-reliance. As the Chinese forces stood at our borders menacingly, the government attempted to make India its economic challenger aggressively.

But the well-intended "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" drive is taking a beating with India looking for almost everything it needs to battle the gargantuan crisis it faces. The success stories of manufacturing unprecedented number of medical face masks, PPEs, ventilators etc domestically after the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic have been become trivia compared to the crisis that rampages now.

SILVER LINE IN THE DARK CLOUDS

PM Modi, in the last seven odd years in power, has shifted gears each time he has faced a challenge. After Rahul Gandhi's suit-boot-ki-sarkar jibe, he crafted policies and schemes to walk away with the pro-poor government tag. The poor were hit badly by note ban of 2016 but they backed his spunk.

Mamata Is Souring Her Victory With Anti-BJP Violence



"Bengal exceptionalism" was on display on May 2 when Mamata Banerjee returned full-throttle to office for a record third term, beating back a fierce BJP challenge. But the succulence of her victory is being soured by the violence that has broken out since with gruesome killings, houses and shops being set alight and people in many villages fleeing to save their lives. Some would argue that this too is a gruesome display of "Bengal exceptionalism" (political violence has been endemic in West Bengal for decades during the Left rule, Trinamool terms in power and the recent BJP-versus-Mamata campaign). Angry party workers violently setting scores while the police watches on the sidelines is a

feature of and not a bug in West Bengal politics. I spoke to several leaders across parties and top stakeholders in West Bengal, including senior police officials, for this column; some commented on the record and some off the record. This is a sense of what the various leaders claim. First up, Derek O'Brien, Trinamool party leader in the Rajya Sabha. He dismissed all my questions on why violence has been triggered against BJP workers after one of the most toxic election battles in India's history. "People who are blaming us don't know Bengal at all. Let me tell you, there are three very aggressive factions of the BJP and they are attacking each other. One is the original BJP led by Dilip Ghosh, two is what is

called "Five-BJP" led by Mukul Roy, Trinamool defector and his supporters who joined the BJP five years ago, and the third what is called "Tatkal (instant) BJP" led by Suvendu Adhikari and his workers. They are all fighting with each other, with factions trying to take control of the BJP. That is why JP Nadda is coming to Kolkata to broker peace between the three BJP groups". O'Brien also repeated the claim he made on social media that this is an intra-BJP fight because top leaders who he calls "MoSha" had come and spread hatred in West Bengal during the campaign. The Trinamool also claims that the BJP has triggered a massive disinformation campaign to create communal unrest. On the other hand, the BJP has been trending a demand to enforce President's Rule in Bengal and rejects the Trinamool version of events. BJP President JP Nadda will camp in Kolkata for two days starting today. He says the Trinamool has unleashed a terror campaign against the BJP's cadre to punish them for their commitment to the saffron party. Swapan Dasgupta, who contested and lost the election,

claims that law and order in West Bengal has totally broken down and the violence is an assault on Indian democracy. Dasgupta demanded that the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court take suo moto action to stop the wave of political retribution. Senior police officials told me that the violence will end tomorrow - the day when Banerjee takes oath. This is a shocking admission of police connivance and looking the other way as law and order is crushed but this, they claim, is the Bengal political template. A senior serving police officer said, "The Left did it when they ruled. They broke open Mamata's skull. The Left government allowed cadres to run amok and when Banerjee came (to power), the Trinamool went on the rampage and attacked their old enemy, the Left workers. Banerjee's crackdown was so total that the Left cadre took shelter in the BJP. Now, after this bitter election, this is the ritual bloodletting." Left workers fleeing to the BJP as political refugees has an element of truth as Banerjee systematically decimated the Left. In extremely significant ways, the Trinamool and the Bengal BJP, hugely made

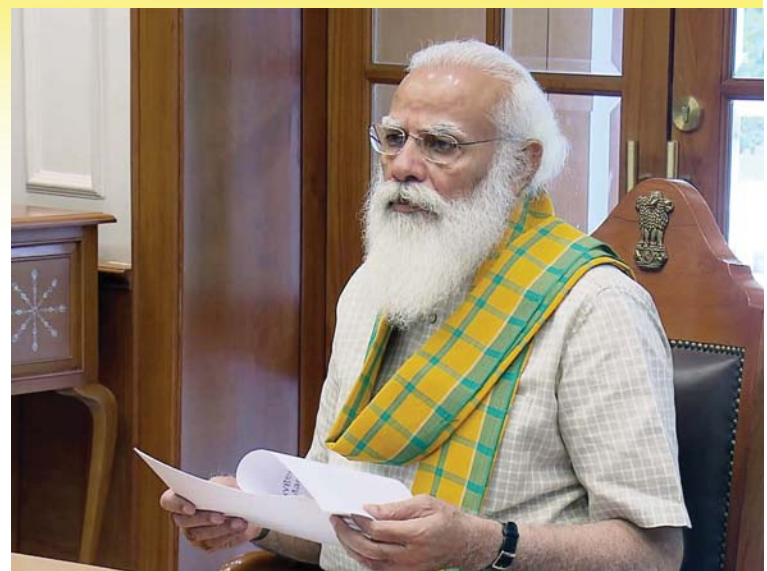
up of Trinamool defectors, mirror each other. The qualities that make Banerjee an excellent street fighter, who fought on the ground to halt the Tata Nano project in Singur, and who campaigned in every constituency in a wheelchair after sustaining a fracture in what she claimed was a BJP attack, also hurt her image as an administrator. The BJP, which is always an excellent aggressive party in opposition, is running a high-decibel campaign against the violence on its workers. The bitterness of the just-ended campaign continues and keeps breaking out in clashes between the Trinamool and the BJP. Banerjee has complained that Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke with custom and did not make the customary call to congratulate her on her victory. Modi confined his congrats to a tweet. What Banerjee may be overlooking is that she is the one losing the perception battle right now as the violence continues unchecked. Instead of honing her image as a three-time winning Chief Minister with national ambitions of leading the Opposition, she risks coming across as a partisan and bad administrator.

India Needs Modi To Work With Political Rivals Right Now

As anyone who has tried to invest in India can tell you, India's states are as distinct from each other as European countries. Every now and then, India's politicians are reminded of this as well. Prime Minister Narendra Modi certainly was earlier this week, when his all-conquering Bharatiya Janata Party fell short of expectations in state elections. Of the four large states that had gone to the polls, Modi's BJP was already in power in Assam and had made major inroads in West Bengal, where it was expecting a win. But the party lost heavily there as well as in the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala - stopped in its tracks by three powerful contenders from regional parties whose politics emphasized their states' local identities. In Bengal, for example, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ran a campaign designed around the slogan "Bengal wants its own daughter," a not-so-subtle dig at the BJP for its roster of

carpetbaggers from north and west India. Modi remains tremendously popular in most of the country and won re-election emphatically just two years ago. But he and his party know that regional satraps such as Banerjee pose the main threat to their power. The ugly and dispiriting campaign, which featured super-spreader rallies and the mobilization of various federal agencies against the BJP's rivals, showed just how serious they are about stamping out sub-nationalism. This tension between Modi and powerful local leaders is reflected in and sharpens conflicts between the central government and opposition-ruled states. In the recent past, for example, they have had major disagreements over tax-sharing. Nor is this simply a question of personalities and clashing egos: The political divisions between the BJP's heartland and these other

states map imprecisely onto cultural and demographic cleavages as well. Tamil Nadu is far richer than the north, Kerala better governed and West Bengal proud of its cultural uniqueness. Federalism is now the primary axis of Indian politics - and the location of the biggest crises of Indian governance. Nothing illustrates this better than India's crushing second wave of Covid-19. The federal government has, over the past few months, tried hard to pass all responsibility to the states for its own failures, which have led to oxygen shortages, a stumbling vaccine rollout and an exponential growth in cases and deaths. As in the U.S. under former President Donald Trump, India's state leaders have been left largely on their own, provided with no overall strategy and minimal federal support. The Modi government's failures and evasions have harmed his image as an efficient administrator and the poll results



strongly suggest they reduced his party's appeal as an alternative in Bengal. Nor have some BJP chief ministers, such as the priest-turned-politician Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh, distinguished themselves in this crisis. The BJP tried to present Adityanath as an exemplar of governance at its rallies; it isn't surprising that voters refused to allow their states to descend into the kind of anarchy that

characterizes UP today. Meanwhile, a few opposition-led states have differentiated themselves by managing the crisis better. Maharashtra, home of the financial center of Mumbai, had to face the initial force of India's second wave on its own. But, through relatively skillful administration, it seems to have escaped the tragic chaos that Delhi and UP are currently experiencing.



The **ONLY** temple in the world outside India
dedicated to Shri Shani Maharaj

Shri SHANI DEV Mandir, New York

Sarvamangala Shri SANEESWARA Temple, New York

*Regular Poojas' and
Homams' are conducted on
daily basis:*

Special Poojas:

- + Sri Saneeswara
homam
- + Sri Saneeswara -
parikara pooja
- + Sri Saneeswara
harati
- + Sri Navagraha Homa
- + Poornima: vrata
Pooja
- + Pradosham Pooja
- + Sri Sankatahara
chaturthi Pooja
- + Sri Satyanarayana
Vratha
- + Birthdays / Wed-
dings / Upanayanam &
More... ..



**1616 Hillside Avenue, Temple Suites
New Hyde Park NY 11040**

Ph: 718 740 9400 / 516 358 9400

Email: temple.navagraha@gmail.com

Temple Hours: 8.00 am to 9.00 pm

*The Temple entrance is in the western side parking lot behind Hot Breads &
Maharajas in New Hyde Park NY*

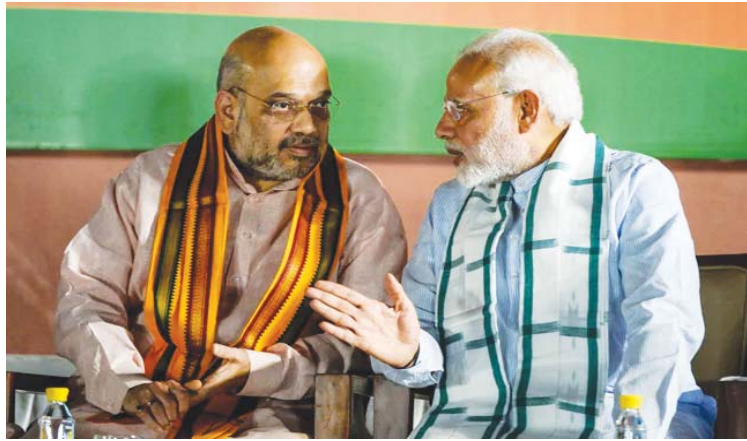
Functions of the space:

*Temple / Community Events / Senior Social Day Care Center /
Art & Music School / Library / Spiritual Lounge / Gift Shop*

www.NavagrahaUSA.com

BJP's Principal Assets - Modi And Shah - Are In Trouble

Alarm bells have started to ring for the BJP. But not because the results of the five assembly polls - Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal - have been apocalyptic for the party ruling at the Centre since 2014. Far from it. The BJP has won a renewed mandate in Assam. With a little spin - and the party is not bereft of spin masters - it can claim that its tally in West Bengal has risen from a mere 3 seats in 2016 to over 75 seats in 2021. Yes, it has done poorly again in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. But it can always put up a brave front and admit that it did not have high expectations from these two southern states. Puducherry, being a tiny union territory, doesn't make much of a difference in the national scheme of things whichever way it votes. In normal times, the BJP could have claimed that this is just another set of state elections and that there is nothing extraordinary about the "win-some-lose-some" outcome. But these are not normal times. It rarely happens - but it has happened now - that the timing



of an election result becomes as crucial as the result itself. Viewed from this perspective, the BJP and its two supreme leaders, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, have a lot to worry about. Modi, in particular, is currently facing the worst crisis of his prime ministerial tenure because of the widespread perception, both in India and abroad, that his government has monumentally mismanaged the Covid crisis. This perception has solid basis in reality. Even without the BJP's average performance in the five assemblies, Modi had begun feeling the heat of unprecedented criticism over his

palpable failure to anticipate and plan for the second wave of the pandemic. Now, the heat will surely intensify due to the timing of the election results - they have arrived right in the midst of the daily news of Covid-related calamities from almost all parts of the country.

Much of this criticism will be on account of the BJP's abysmal failure to dethrone Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal. Never in the 36-year history of the party had it fought so hard to win a single state election. Modi and Shah made it a prestige issue to install a BJP government in that state. After winning 18 of 42 seats in the state in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections (when the BJP

gained majority votes in 122 assembly segments), they thought West Bengal was ripe for the picking. They deployed all the "weapons" in their possession - ED, CBI, Income Tax department, Election Commission, and tons of money - to win the electoral battle. In a state where all political parties have so far fought low-budget elections, they poured huge amounts of money into its campaign. They made a pliant Election Commission hold an eight-phase election, spanning nearly two months, in the state (as against a single-day polling in Tamil Nadu) so that the two leaders would get maximum time to campaign. As someone who stayed in West Bengal for almost the entire stretch of electioneering, I heard many independent observers derisively say that "Modi and Shah have become daily passengers coming to our state". Even more annoying was the unbecoming content of the speeches by Modi and Shah. It was certainly not prime ministerial of Modi to make "Didi-o-Didi" taunts. They brought him instant applause from paid BJP

supporters who had been bussed to attend his election rallies, but most ordinary and elite Bengalis saw it as an insult to a woman. Modi had made a similar nasty remark while addressing the BJP's election rally at Brigade Parade ground in Kolkata on March 7. Taking a jibe at Mamata Banerjee's scooter ride to protest against the rising fuel prices, Modi had quipped, "We don't want anyone to get hurt, but if Didi's scooty has decided to fall in Nandigram, then what can we do?"

The BJP's defeat in West Bengal is particularly worrisome for Modi because his party had projected him as Mamata Banerjee's rival in the state. It was a foolhardy decision because the BJP thought that the Prime Minister's imagined "popularity" alone would be enough to secure victory. This theory about Modi's "popularity" - and hence his election-winning ability - will now be called into question, not only since it has failed in West Bengal, but also because his leadership has failed to prevent widespread deaths and agony due to the corona pandemic.

What's behind the trauma of taking off masks

Last week, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention relaxed its rules on face coverings, issuing new guidelines stating that vaccinated Americans can safely drop their masks when outdoors, except in certain crowded settings and venues. Shortly after, President Joe Biden, who has been vaccinated, wore a mask as he made his way to an open-air podium outside the White House to announce the CDC guidelines, a seemingly (but not actually, per the guidelines) contradictory move that did not go unnoticed by many media outlets. Meanwhile, officials across the country have been releasing their own new rules. A sampling: In Rhode Island, the Department of Health issued an outdoor mask reprieve for vaccinated residents. In Massachusetts, Gov. Charlie Baker did not distinguish between the vaccinated and unvaccinated when he told citizens they need only wear a mask outdoors if they can't socially distance. Texas, of course, removed its statewide mask order -- effective indoors or

out, for those vaccinated or not -- back in March; Alabama's mandate expired in early April. Is it any wonder Americans are confused -- and, in some cases, choosing to continue wearing their masks in most situations, even after being made safe with a vaccination? Indeed, now that more than 100 million Americans have been fully vaccinated and businesses in many states are set to fully reopen -- as things appear to be inching ever more quickly back toward the normal we used to know -- many vaccinated people are clinging anxiously to their masks anyway. There are a number of understandable reasons for this, and some necessary steps for moving forward.

It has been a very long 14 months, and Americans have made countless adjustments to their lives under the ever-changing conditions of Covid-19. Many fully vaccinated people may not feel safe -- physically, but also emotionally -- taking their masks off. Masks, for many, have

become an unquestionable part of safe daily life outside the house, if also an unavoidably political one. (As Politico put it -- tongue in cheek -- a year ago, "wearing a mask is for smug liberals. Refusing to is for reckless Republicans.")

In places where mask-wearing has separated friends and neighbors -- which is most places -- many are loathe to present as anti-vaxxers or, well, Republicans, and risk public rebuke from like-minded maskers. (At the same time, in some instances anti-maskers are harassing people for wearing masks, as in this striking incident of sign-waving protesters outside a Santa Monica, California, school this week. Be sure to click on the videos.)

And, to be sure, the national divide on mask wearing that began with former President Donald Trump's downplaying the need to cover up, only deepened as states set rules that were literally all over the map. Republican controlled states, in general, were slower to adopt



mask mandates and quicker to drop them; in Wisconsin, to wear or not to wear played out in court between a Democratic governor and his Republican-led legislature. (The state's Supreme Court struck down Gov. Tony Evers' statewide mask mandate early last month.)

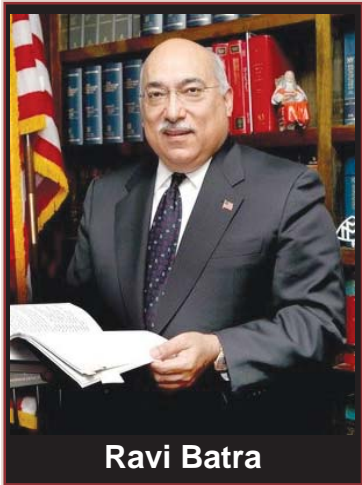
But mask-wearing among the vaccinated isn't purely politics and obstinacy. While it's impossible on outward appearances to indicate your vaccinated status (unless you go around wearing your "I GOT MY COVID-19 VACCINE" sticker on your sleeve), wearing a mask is a clear way to state where you stand on the

safety -- the very survival -- of your family and your community, and it has been a clear way to know where others stand, too.

That is key for many. Vaccination rates have slowed, and experts now saying it is unlikely the United States will reach widespread protection due to vaccine hesitancy and new variants. Some who are vaccinated complain that the people who are not will reap the benefits of the people who are, at least through the summer months -- and that the unvaccinated may end up as carriers of variants, which could rear up once the weather turns cold again.

As Covid19 Tsunami ravages India, the need for the "raw truth"

Open Letter to H.E. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India



Ravi Batra

As Covid19 Tsunami ravages India, the need for the "raw truth" of this lab-created biowarfare agent is now necessary to fabricate more-accurate vaccines that can disarm the ever-mutating strains of SARS-CoV2, which if not disarmed, this virulent ever-more deadly mutating-disease can eliminate humanity globally.

Honorable P.M. Modi:

As an un-conflicted American, having migrated from India at the age of seven (7), I spent four-plus years in Hong Kong and learned to love and admire the Chinese culture, although, Confucius has gotten wiser as I have aged as a happy New Yorker. Your early leadership with a strong "Lockdown" of India was a global example of a government honoring it's duty to protect the public health. Given the sudden Covid19-mutated strain's tsunami ravaging India, I write to you, because now, protecting and curing all the people across the world must be Job 1.

It is not a time for political advantage or even seeking compensatory damages, as it is now becoming clear that this lab-created virus can become an existential threat to humanity globally, and those who dream of building new empires will have nothing to dominate or rule over. Instead, India's experience - a year after we were overwhelmed - speaks to a need for an international all-nations' effort to disarm this biowarfare agent with President Xi's help - using a form of Truth & Reconciliation Commission which grants legal immunity for "whole truth disclosure" - so scientists can get immediate access to all the creative knowledge, documents and lab variant-samples about this out-of-control PLA-Lab

created weapon. This is much worse than a nuclear weapons threat, as its out of control, and its infection capability makes every person and animal on earth vulnerable, and rendering current vaccines potentially ineffective.

Disclaimer

As an open disclaimer, I see life thru an American Lens, given that human follies are well splashed across the pages of history, I am resoundingly certain of American Exceptionalism, structurally embedded in our founding Declaration and Constitution, with each American duty-bound to help "form a more perfect union" - not shaken, until our insurrection of January 6th.

That I successfully intervened, as requested by India, in the shameful auction of Mahatma Gandhi's items in New York and had the items respectfully returned to India; successfully defended Kritika Biswas' honor and won in every federal court and won the highest award for a false arrest and for a night in jail - an effort I was supported in by the now-late great Queens D.A. Judge Richard Brown, Rep. Gray Ackerman and, most effectively, by Senator Chuck Schumer; and, inter alia, successfully represented the Indian National Congress and the Hon. Sonia Gandhi in U.S. Federal courts regarding the painful "1984 Riots" and helped create a legal precedent, that India, like the United States with inter alia our unconstitutional Japanese-American Internment during WWII, has the right to fix her own mistakes without our meddling in her internal affairs. By so doing, I enhanced the bilateral relationship between our two great nations, which you later described in your pivotal Joint Address to Congress as "indivisible." That exact relationship, I have always seen as our "Joint Destiny," given the pull and push of history: Indian tea starred in the 1773 Boston Tea Party, and Lord Cornwallis, after losing to General George Washington, upon arriving as Viceroy of India ordered 5,000 Indian men, women and children be put to death for his American loss, and proceeded to rule with an "Iron Fist." A Fist that never unclasped, until Mahatma Gandhi. And, Dr. Ambedkar,

Columbia Law-educated, authored India's Constitution, deeply informed by ours from 1787.

During the last decade, my incredible wife, Ranju, then-chair of the Diwali Stamp Project, spent seven (7) years seeking a United States Postal Service Diwali Stamp, and got help from many persons, but none more than Rep. Carolyn Maloney, then-Amb. Hardeep Singh Puri, then-ASG Lakshmi Puri, Rep. Grace Meng, then-Rep. Eliot L. Engel, Rep. Greg Meeks, and inter alia, then India's New York-based CG Dnyaneshwar M. Mulay who wrote the Official poem for the Diwali Stamp Project. Indeed, Ranju asked and received from you - your support for the Diwali Stamp during your UNGA visit - as she did and received from then-President Obama. Ranju's achievement was immortal, as the Diwali Stamp successfully dedicated on October 5, 2016 was a USPS "Forever" stamp, and Ranju made personal history by selling over 170,000 stamps for Day One, beating Batman, and making the Diwali Stamp #1 in USPS history. Indeed, your 2016 Diwali Message contained a clip of that Stamp Dedication, which serves to enhance our bilateral relations forever. Indeed, the United Nations has celebrated that achievement with 24 nations coming together to honor Ranju, and now, Ranju, as chair of the Diwali Foundation USA, bestows Power of One awards, aka Oscars of Diplomacy, on exceptional world class diplomats who personify the highest ideals of the United Nations Charter and enhance global peace & security.

More recently, I was invited by then-Chairman Eliot L. Engel of House Foreign Affairs Committee to testify on October 22, 2019 regarding Kashmir, and inter alia, issued: an apology for advocating "restraint" after India's November 26th (akin to our 9/11); and India's right to enact Section 370, and to restore normalcy as soon as public safety was secured. Indeed, on January 9, 2020, during our historic reception in the actual HFAC Room for strong US-India ties and celebrating Congress, your distinguished

Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, with now-Joint Secretary Sandeep Chakrovorty in attendance, showed pictures of a 16-nations' strong ambassadorial visit to Kashmir earlier that day - a fact I celebrated then and there in Congress, which included, Rep. Brad Sherman and Chairman Eliot L. Engel participating.

SARS-CoV2 aka Covid-19 aka Wuhan Virus - Case Cracked on April 14, 2020: Lab-Created

With that truncated disclaimer out of the way, and with God's Grace, I and my family survived Covid19 on or about March 29, 2020. Treating this Virus as a cancer case that I needed to crack, and after learning biochemistry and epidemiology during an intense effort, I did so, and a year ago, on April 14, 2020, I wrote a 6-page "Open Letter" to then-President Trump, Speaker Pelosi and then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell ("OL"; copy enclosed, with uniform spelling of "Wuhan"), and for POTUS, emailed it to a former Marine: Deputy NSA Matt Pottinger at 8:31pm. In the OL, I had the science, the facts, and recommendations, including, bringing our "supply chains" home. The next day, April 15, 2020, about 1 p.m. the United States opened a preliminary investigation into inter alia the origin of SARS-CoV2 from PLA-run Wuhan Virology Lab, and the motives of CCP China in causing its global-spread without sounding a pandemic-alarm directly or thru the WHO. I remain grateful for the start of the April 15, 2020 "all hands on deck" Investigation. I have since, written an Open Letter to President Joesph R. Biden Jr. on April 13, 2021 (copy enclosed).

It remains an open secret that my analysis was and is correct, and that this is a lab-created Frankenstein that transplanted the "Spike Glycoprotein(S)" ("Spike") from Bats - a unique feature in bats, as they are either "cold" or "warm" blooded, and still, a warm Bat can procreate with a cold Bat due to the "Spike." OL at 3. I called "Covid19," aka "WuhanVirus," a Trojan Horse, as its Spike feature does not cause our immune system to sound an alarm upon infection (and the T-cells remain asleep).

Disturbingly, China has not turned over, to this day, the genome of Patient Zero who was admitted in Wuhan hospital on or about December 1, 2019, while a different protein string-virus was released on or about December 31, 2019 at the Wuhan Wet Market. The animal farms about a 1000 miles away from Wuhan, did not experience a Covid19 outbreak, thereby decimating the WHO's coddled-team's report, after a 3-hour chaperoned visit to the Wuhan Virology lab, falsely asserting a zoonotic virus jump from animal to human. Natural viruses mutate to become safe and un-hurtful. This Virus is mutating serially, as if it was a multi-stage ICBM, becoming more and more dangerous as it continues to exist.

WHO dishonored its high fiduciary obligations, and did not promptly alert the leaders of every nation that a pandemic was afoot and ask to lock-down China. President Trump said we were fighting an invisible enemy. I disagree. The Virus is surely invisible, but this string of protein, despite its lab-based default programing, has no animus towards us and does not benefit by causing death and destruction - and by my last count, our needlessly dead far exceed our losses at Pearl Harbor.

Despite Truth-in-Labeling laws, China, run by 100 years' celebrating CCP, has succeeded in blocking this Virus from being origin-labeled by deeming origin-labeling to be racist. But, its not a fight over labeling. Only Solution: Disarm Covid19

I now write to you - as my views have changed and evolved - as even war will not stop this mutated-variant's tsunami that is ravaging India from jumping to other nations, even as travel restrictions are imposed on India, as we have gotten earlier variants despite best efforts to block travel. Indeed, re-visiting my prior conversation with China's distinguished Foreign Minister Wang Yi suggests - that while I wanted a Little War in 2017 due to events in South China Sea, as in a stitch in time saves nine (a la nine dashes) - whereas he did not, as he clearly said.

There is more to the story of Facebook's Trump decision

Four months ago, Facebook announced former President Donald Trump had been suspended indefinitely from its platform. On Wednesday morning, Facebook's oversight board -- a first-of-its-kind group of legal experts and human rights leaders -- announced that Trump will remain banned from the site. Facebook's decision was a litmus test for social media platforms' capacity to draw the line between the protection of free speech and public safety. But American social media users were deeply polarized long before Trump took office, and will continue to antagonize each other in the wake of this decision as well. Is there anything that we -- the citizens of social media -- can do to prevent this decision from launching yet another round of partisan warfare on social media? That question may seem wrongheaded. By popular accounts, it was social media companies that trapped us inside ideological echo chambers, ignored misinformation campaigns that divided us even further and built algorithms that radicalize us for profit. But what if I told you that the evidence for

each of these claims is surprisingly thin?

Four years ago, I founded the Polarization Lab at Duke University. We use the tools of computational social science to research the key drivers of political polarization and build new technology to help social media users implement insights from our research.

Social media companies are by no means blameless for our current situation. But the latest research indicates that most people are not stuck inside political echo chambers, misinformation can have surprisingly little impact on our views and algorithms probably only radicalize a tiny fraction of people.

These findings may seem surprising, but they are actually quite consistent with decades of research about public opinion. Most people don't care very much about politics, and those that do usually have very strong views that are difficult to change. The small group of people who follow politics closely enough to erect strong echo chambers around themselves also see and share the vast majority of fake news.

Though we might like to think that

Facebook, Twitter or other platforms could simply tweak some code to save us from our current predicament, these studies hint at a much more unsettling truth: the root cause of political polarization on our platforms is us. And it's not going away until we find a way to solve it.

Americans are deeply divided, and many are not yet willing to cross the chasms that separate us -- especially on divisive issues such as race. But what about the majority of Americans who want political compromise? What would a bottom-up movement to counter polarization look like for them?

Though there is no single solution to defeat political polarization, my colleagues and I have identified three things everyone can do to form better habits -- and we have created new technologies to assist in this process.

First, we can learn to combat false polarization, or our tendency to exaggerate extremity on the other side and minimize radicalism on our own side -- making us think that political polarization is more pervasive than it really is. False polarization existed long before social media, but social media users have set this pro-



cess into hyperdrive. A recent report from the Pew Research Center revealed that about 6% of all Twitter users generate 73% of posts about national politics -- and a majority of these individuals have extreme views. Meanwhile, the majority of Twitter -- more moderate users -- rarely post about politics, making it seem like they do not exist in the political sphere at all.

That's why it's so important to learn to see Twitter trolls for what they really are. And we have developed a tool to do just that. Our troll-o-meter, built after tracking the language and characteristics of trolls on Twitter, helps to identify social media users who not

only have extreme views, but engage in the type of highly uncivil behavior that can make political compromise seem impossible. Second, we must all become more introspective about our own behavior on social media -- and whether it contributes to false polarization. Becoming a more reflective social media user does not simply mean tamping down our inner trolls. Instead, it requires asking ourselves more fundamental questions about how our behavior shapes the bigger picture. If we are part of the moderate majority of Americans who never posts about politics, for example, we must consider whether our lack of engagement helps fuel the fire.

Bill and Melinda Gates' other partnership is too big to fail



On Monday, billionaire philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates announced that they are divorcing after 27 years. "We have raised three incredible children and built a foundation that works all over the world to enable all people to lead healthy, productive lives," the Gateses said in a statement. "We continue to share a belief in that mission and will continue our work together as the foundation, but we no longer believe we can grow together as a couple in this next phase of our lives." Divorce is a sad and

stressful time for most people who go through it. The Gateses are hyper-wealthy, but that doesn't make them less human -- I hope they are able to walk the difficult path forward as amicably and gently as possible. And I hope that one of the greatest outcomes of their partnership -- their foundation -- not only endures, but continues to move forward with Melinda's influence.

The Gates Foundation, and the Gateses themselves, are arguably far from perfect. And in a better and fairer universe, we

wouldn't need billionaire dollars funding the basics to keep people alive (a better and fairer universe perhaps wouldn't have billionaires at all). But in the world we do live in, the Gates Foundation has done incredible good. And Melinda Gates's apparent influence has made the foundation's work more equitable and impactful.

The Gates Foundation has spent more than \$50 billion, mostly on essential global health and development initiatives. Vaccinations, education and campaigns against HIV/AIDS and malaria have long been on the foundation's agenda, but over the years, it's been Melinda's voice heard pushing for an increased focus on family planning efforts.

Without the most basic right to one's body -- to determine how many children to have, and when -- there is no way for women as a group to be on equal footing to

men, let alone thrive.

And family planning truly must be at the core of any successful development strategy: When women have access to family planning tools, maternal and infant mortality go down, poverty decreases and children are more likely to be in school. Family planning makes families healthier, wealthier and happier, which makes communities and whole countries better off.

And yet family planning has long been pushed to the margins of global health and development, tied up as it is in two of the more controversial topics out there: Sex and female independence. It's only been fairly recently that women's health advocates have been successful at mainstreaming family planning into national and global development strategies, and still, it remains controversial: the Catholic Church and some other religious organizations

continue to oppose the use of the most effective contraceptive methods, and when the US government is in conservative hands, America's support for comprehensive family planning plummets, along with the dollars we spend on it.

The Gates Foundation has prioritized helping women to plan their families and control their own destinies. And it's not hard to see Melinda Gates's influence there. As clearly thoughtful and passionate as Bill Gates is, he can have entire conversations about the future of the developing world while scarcely (or not at all) using the word "woman" or talking about reproductive health and choice.

Watching the foundation shift over the last two-plus decades has been an observation of Melinda finding her role and asserting her power, often on behalf of other women.



STEPHEN MATUREN/GETTY IMAGES

What makes Andrew Yang appealing to New Yorkers?

There is something about Andrew Yang that makes him the candidate to beat in New York City's mayoral race. With less than two months to go before the Democratic primary on June 22, Yang continues to outpace his many rivals in a notoriously tough city. What is it about Yang that has made him such a powerful candidate in 2021? His frontrunner status was not a foregone conclusion. Yang entered this race with no experience in politics, other than his 2020 presidential bid. While his presidential campaign lasted longer than expected, having attracted a loyal group of supporters dubbed the "Yang Gang," he exited the race after the New Hampshire primary without winning any delegates. Yang, who had a brief stint in corporate law, has more substantial experience in business. He worked for a number of start-ups, headed an education company and in 2011, founded the non-profit organization Venture for America in an attempt to create jobs and bring high-tech work to cities that were suffering from the Great Recession. While the Obama administration listed him as one of the 500 "Champions of Change" and a "Presidential Ambassador for Global Entrepreneurship," Venture for America so far has failed to meet its own goal of creating 100,000 jobs by 2025.

But this resume doesn't compare to the kind of experience in politics and public service most of the other Democratic candidates bring to the table.

Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams is a former captain in the New York Police Department. He served in the New York State Senate for almost seven years and has been in his current position since he was elected in 2013. Sean Donovan was the former commissioner of the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development under Mayor Michael Bloomberg and served under three presidents. Maya Wiley, a professor and former legal analyst for NBC and MSNBC, served as the chair of the city's Civilian Complaint Review Board. She was also counsel to Mayor Bill de Blasio and worked in the civil division of the US Attorney Office for the Southern District of New York. City Comptroller Scott Stringer, a former New York State assemblyman and Manhattan borough president, is now struggling to stay in the race after a woman who worked on his 2001 race for public advocate accused him of sexual assault (Stringer has denied the allegations, saying they had a consensual relationship). Kathryn Garcia, the former commissioner of the New York City Sanitation Department, has long been in the trenches of city politics.

Diane Morales opened the Office of Youth Development and School-Community Services in the city's Department of Education and was the director of the Teaching Commission. Morales also brings impressive non-profit bona fides, having started and headed various organizations that have focused

on children and young people through education, development services and initiatives to tackle poverty. Even the other outsider, Ray McGuire, can claim a much more successful record in the private sector as a top executive at Citigroup. But Yang has gained traction by pushing unconventional ideas like a universal basic income. His presidential bid centered around his proposal to offer \$1,000 a month to everyone over 18 - a policy he has reworked and narrowed significantly to try to tackle extreme poverty in New York. He has also proposed the Big Apple Corps, an initiative in New York that would hire 10,000 aspiring college graduates to tutor 100,000 public school students. But the key to his appeal has to do with his being a charismatic outsider in a moment of genuine crisis for the city. Capitalizing on the name recognition he enjoys from his presidential bid, Yang is selling his personal story through Instagram and other social media platforms to connect with voters. From his upbringing as an Asian American in the suburbs of New York, where he was bullied as a child, to his passion for what the city can be even after being ravaged by Covid-19, his biographical-centered approach is working, at least for now. His social media posts are filled with him enjoying the life of the city, drinking boba tea, strolling through Coney Island and elbow bumping supporters. Don't tell Yang that this city has no heart, to

because - he appears to be conveying - he can hear it beat out loud. Some critics compare him to Donald Trump in 2016, given his outsider status and lack of experience. They see a candidate who thrives on incessant media coverage rather than substance. One can imagine a future debate in which an opponent might turn to him, borrow a line from Walter Mondale in the 1984 Democratic debates, and ask: "Where's the beef?" A better comparison might be the 1976 Democratic primaries when former Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter defeated many formidable and experienced Democrats despite the common refrain, "Jimmy Who?" Carter then beat President Gerald Ford in the general election. Historians agree that the heart of Carter's appeal was his outsider status. His campaign hammered away at the fact that Carter was a peanut farmer who worked far outside a Washington that seemed to have become corrupted after Vietnam and Watergate. In a nation that had become deeply distrustful of elected officials and desperate for a leader who could bring the nation into a better place, Carter was the perfect candidate for the times. He turned the experience of his opponents against them. They were part of the broken system; he could do better. Voters, Carter said, could trust him. His campaign spots revolved around his life and family, as he offered himself up as a fresh voice in a broken nation. "1976. Across the land,

a new beginning is underway, led by a man whose roots are founded in the American tradition," the narrator says in one campaign ad over photos of Carter and his family.

To be sure, Yang is no Carter. The Georgian had a significant political record as governor and state senator plus his time as campaign chairman of the Democratic National Committee. But his outsider status and biographical campaign resonate in a similar way to Yang's. Yang is a fresh voice in the world of politics. While Trump offered rage, Yang offers optimism and enthusiasm. He is part of a new generation of people who are working to break through in the world of elected politics - at every level - and he comes from a sector of the economy that many young New Yorkers see as the heart of our future growth. For many of his supporters, his relative youth and fresh perspective is an asset, not a liability. His unyielding belief that this city can be even better than before is alluring to many residents. This shouldn't be a surprise. New York is a city still reeling from Covid-19. The streets are lined with boarded-up storefronts and empty office buildings. Public school children have barely been in the classroom in the last year and families are still trying to recover from severe illnesses and the deaths of their loved ones. Hospital workers have been through many traumatic months. The budget is in bad shape, the future is uncertain, and all the other chronic problems - including police brutality, unaffordable housing, budget shortfalls, economic inequality and more - loom large. It is also, however, a city filled with optimism, ready to live again. It remains unclear whether Yang has the legs or substance to make it to the finish line. It would be a big mistake to underestimate the ability of his opponents to thrive in the final months of the campaign. New Yorkers will also be using rank choice voting - which only makes the race all the more unpredictable. Meanwhile, Yang's opponents like Eric Adams and Maya Wiley have received endorsements from major unions - like the Transport Workers Union Local 100, or Local 1199 of the Service Employees International Union - that can deliver the vote in city elections.



Why RSS Has Reason To Enjoy Mamata's Bengal Win

The result of the West Bengal election will cause anguish to Modi but make Mohan Bhagwat happy. This may sound intriguing to many, but those who understand the ideology of the RSS will accept my submission. Modi and BJP are political entities. Their endgame is winning elections, forming governments. But for the RSS, capturing power is not the ultimate goal, it is to make India a Hindu society. Their target is to raise Hindu consciousness and make every Hindu realise that they are a proud Hindu. Mamata Banerjee reciting the Chandi Path and calling herself a Brahmin girl would have certainly gladdened Mohan Bhagwat's heart.

And let us not forget that she is not the only leader who had to prove her Hindu credentials during an election; before her, Arvind Kejriwal was heard reciting the Hanuman Chalisa and Rahul Gandhi was seen hopping temples and showing his sacred thread. The RSS had been upset all through that leaders after Independence had a problem projecting themselves as Hindu, whereas leaders of other religions were always upfront about their religious identities. If the wheel of history has taken a turn and today, leaders of other political parties are equally proud of their Hindu identity, don't feel shy about flaunting their Hindu-ness, in public and during elections, then why should the RSS not be happy? This is what the RSS has

desired since its inception in 1925. This way it has accomplished its goal. Now it is the BJP's turn to worry about this paradigm shift.

The West Bengal election is a warning signal for Modi and the BJP. The BJP has undoubtedly come a long way in Bengal: from being a party of no relevance to gaining more than 80 seats in the Bengal assembly is an accomplishment. In 2016, BJP had only three assembly seats and only 10% votes. It had a spectacular showing in the 2019 parliamentary elections and won 18 seats with 40% vote share. Then, the assembly configuration had seemed more encouraging. The BJP had leads in 121 seats. It was for this reason that the BJP was very upbeat about Bengal, and why it put in all resources and effort in the state, hoping to cause a major upset in Indian politics.

There are three things which have gone against the BJP in the state.

1) The BJP from the beginning was handicapped by its own politics. For ideological reasons, it does not believe in wooing Muslim voters, it does not go to them asking for their votes. In Bengal, Muslims command 27% votes; some estimates put this at 30%. That means the BJP can win if it succeeds in polarising more than 50% of the rest of the population. The BJP tried its best to polarize Hindu voters. It tried its best to project Mamata

Banerjee as a Muslim leader, accusing her of Muslim appeasement and suggesting that Hindus will not be safe if she becomes Chief Minister once again; she was called "Begum Mamata", to hint at her Muslim bias; voters were told that she wears a hijab. Mamata Banerjee knew she had to counter this narrative in a spectacular fashion. Knowing that Muslims were backing her firmly, she knew that she had to woo Hindus, and had to make them feel that she is not a Hindu hater as the BJP was suggesting. The Chandi Path recitation did the trick.

In this calculus, the BJP will always have a disadvantage. Other parties will always have a substantial chunk of minority votes in their pocket and the BJP has to start from zero. That means that if other parties can dispel the notion that they care only for Muslims and woo Hindu voters also, it can spell doom for the BJP and its politics of Hindutva. Because the politics of Hindutva by default gives an added advantage to anti-BJP parties. These parties will always have Hindu plus votes, that is, Muslims and a section of Hindu voters, whereas the BJP will have to be satisfied by only Hindu votes, and Hindus, being in the majority, will never be as consolidated as the minority community. In Bengal, this is what played out.

2) In this election, in somewhat strange logic, Mamata played the victim card despite being in the

government and a two-term Chief Minister. She projected the BJP as an invading army who wanted to conquer Bengal by hook or by crook. And it worked. Mamata Banerjee had all the reasons to feel aggrieved and victimised by the Modi Government. Deployment of central forces to a very tiring 8 phases, there were many visible symbols of the centre interfering in state affairs. Last minute transfers of her close officers by the Election Commission also sent the same signal. She did not mince words in criticising the CRPF and the CISF, and blamed Home Minister Amit Shah for misusing central forces to defeat her. The killing of four persons by CISF in Sitalkuchi bolstered her argument. Like in other states, the BJP freely used central investigating agencies to target Trinamool leaders. These agencies tried to implicate her own nephew and Number Two leader in the party, Abhishek Banerjee, on corruption charges. His relatives' houses were raided. Other leaders like Madan Mitra were also subjected to similar humiliation. The BJP had played the same trick on Sharad Pawar in Maharashtra and it had backfired. Mamata, being a very shrewd politician, used this to the hilt and garnered sympathy. 3) Mamata Banerjee also played the Bengali nationalism card very well. She constantly projected the BJP leaders as outsiders who know nothing about Bengal and its great tradition and culture. She and her

party brilliantly communicated with the Bengali mindset that Bengal, which has always been a torch-bearer for the rest of the country, was in danger of being subverted by leaders from Delhi and Gujarat. It was very much like Modi playing the Gujarati card in the 2002 assembly elections. To her advantage, the BJP leaders proved themselves equally ignorant of Bengali tradition. "Jai Sri Ram" is a political slogan for the BJP which worked well in north India, but it has very little resonance in Bengal. Durga, not Ram, is the religious icon in Bengal. Durga is part of the great Bengali tradition. BJP leaders like Dilip Ghosh said that Ram's ancestry is known but not Durga's; nothing could be more insulting to Bengal culture than this. When BJP leaders were harping on Ram, Mamata very cleverly said that even Ram worshiped Durga.

West Bengal has very clearly underlined the limits of Hindutva politics. Modi and Amit Shah can have an abundance of resources and state power but Hindutva, to succeed outside the Hindi heartland, needs to adapt to the local culture and assimilate with local traditions. Mamata Banerjee is undoubtedly a strong leader, but she is part of the Bengali culture and an attack on her became an attack on that culture, whose symbol she has become after the demise of the Jyoti Basu.

So, No, Mr Modi Does Not Know How To Sweep Elections



They counted the votes before they counted the bodies. After huge super-spreader assembly election campaigns in several states, the results finally came in as India was gripped by an even deadlier wave of Covid. Cremation grounds overflowed and patients struggled breathlessly for scarce oxygen while the Election Commission - for whose actions a High Court has used the term 'murder' - told us who had won and who had lost. But not who had died. Assembly election results mean different things to different people. For the BJP, the victory it had already declared in the West Bengal polls would have served

as a morale booster in the midst of a crisis. During its last term in office, when India reeled from the disaster of demonetisation, the BJP had gloated that its electoral victory in Uttar Pradesh proved that the electorate was behind the Prime Minister. A victory in Bengal might have achieved the same effect even if it involved clambering over the bodies of those who had died during the unprecedentedly long campaign that the Election Commission designed despite the objections of all parties except, of course, for the BJP. But there was no victory. There were only defeat and humiliation. Having become a force to reckon with in Bengal, the BJP had said it would take the final step and

throw out the incumbency-afflicted TMC government. The Prime Minister made it his personal mission to tour the state and address large rallies. The BJP bulk-purchased a large chunk of the TMC's top leadership. Vast financial resources were thrown into the election. On social media, a campaign of rare ferocity and power was waged against the TMC.

And everyone else did their bit: the central agencies obligingly raided the TMC's leaders. The EC functioned, as Prashant Kishor said on NDTV, "as an extension of the BJP", turning a deaf ear to the most offensively communal speeches.

At nearly every rally, the BJP chant was "Jai Shri Ram". In actual fact, "Ram Naam Satya Hai" would have been more appropriate.

As thousands of people died and the vaccine program spluttered unsteadily with only 2 per cent of our population fully vaccinated, the top people in government focussed only on the elections and took their eyes off the virus. As our leaders campaigned, Covid spread death and

destruction across India.

And the BJP went down to defeat. Amit Shah had predicted 200 seats. The party struggled to even go beyond 80. And the TMC swept Bengal in a landslide that embarrassed exit pollsters had either failed to see, or had been asked to suppress.

So the election victory they had hoped for to distract attention from governmental failures on Covid turned into the worst kind of defeat. And it served as a vivid demonstration that even when the BJP and its friends in the agencies, the Election Commission and a cheerfully co-operative media give it their best shot, a woman in a wheelchair can still whip their backsides.

If the results of the Bengal election force the government to focus more on the pandemic and less on politicking, campaigning and legislator-purchasing then India will have gained. And lives will be saved.

But even after that defeat, Mr Modi is in no immediate danger. The message of the elections in other states is that there is no national opposition to the BJP. There may be no growth in the party's areas of influence. In

Tamil Nadu, the BJP, despite its doomed efforts to tango with Rajinikanth, remains a tiresome irrelevance. In Kerala, where the RSS has worked so hard to raise communal temperatures, the BJP is still a junior artiste. But, overall, the BJP benefited because the Congress did much worse in these elections. In Kerala, where it had alternated in power with the Left for four decades, the Congress lost decisively, giving the Left an unprecedented second term. In Assam, where things had begun well and where the Congress was strengthened by alliances (including a controversial one with Badruddin Ajmal's AIUDF), it lost an election it should have won. In Puducherry, where it should have earned popular sympathy because of the way in which its government was toppled, it went down to defeat. There are specific local reasons for each defeat, mostly to do with poor choice of people and factionalism but the overall message is hard to ignore. The Congress, in its present form, is virtually unelectable anywhere in India. It is not a message that the Congress wants to hear.

The Defeat Of PM Modi's Cult Of Personality

A huge victory for an embattled single woman in a wheelchair who stood for an India and a Bengal for all. And an equally big defeat for a juggernaut so hungry to crush obstacles in Bengal that it refused even to acknowledge the Covid death machine that is bringing unbearable grief across India. The BJP has no doubt retained Assam, but even there, the results might have been different had its elections been held two weeks later than they were, for the Modi government's failure on the Covid front seems to have impacted minds across India. That daunting front will now require all the energies of the newly-elected state governments. The Prime Minister marvelled aloud at a huge cheering crowd in West Bengal. He, Amit Shah and the BJP threw all the money they had into their bid to capture the state. Modi and Shah spent time electioneering in Bengal

even when Covid's race across India needed their total attention. Stars and BJP Chief Ministers were put to work in Bengal. Much of the national media echoed the Modi-Shah predictions of a BJP sweep there, and their party seemed to possess all the advantages from a staggered voting schedule, even though that schedule assisted Covid's advance.

But the voter had the last word. In a democracy, she, the voter, is Queen.

And this time, under the surface, democracy was indeed a major election issue, especially the equality pillar on which democracy rests, and especially the equal rights of minorities in India. Mamata Banerjee was pilloried by the juggernaut as an appeaser of Muslims, and the state's Hindu majority was exhorted to unite against the 27 percent Muslim minority who were portrayed as anti-nationals more loyal to

neighbouring Bangladesh.

Moreover, the sarcastic "Didi, O Didi!" cry that Modi repeated, to great applause, in rally after rally did not sound respectful to women. But Bengal's women have had the last word. The equality for which Bengal has voted is not only between Hindus and Muslims. It is equality between women and men too. It requires no thought to recognize that equality is precisely what the virus has taught. Covid did not differentiate between people. Here the death-dealing virus was superior to us humans. Will we learn equality from it? At one level, Covid has already enforced equality. In India's greatest cities, the rich and the influential are at one with the humble in begging for oxygen and a hospital. Covid the Horror is also the Covid the Leveller.

Also noteworthy is the failure of the mighty BJP machine to obtain any substantial benefit



from the publicized defections secured by it of ministers and legislators from Chief Minister Banerjee's party. Modi and Shah saw nothing strange in extolling ministers from a government they were condemning in the strongest language once they had defected to their side. Voters were not impressed. They were impressed more by the fighting spirit of their own Didi.

I should add that the BJP's poor show in Kerala, where the CPM's Pinarayi Vijayan has impressively won a second term, and Tamil

Nadu, where M. K. Stalin of the DMK will lead the state as his famous father had done, confirms that the politics of communal polarization faces hard geographical limits. Apart from the attempt to intensify and exploit communal ill-will, the Modi campaign in Bengal and elsewhere also featured Modi himself as the individual who brings relief, who arranges vaccinations, and cares personally for every citizen. The personality cult is also a force that has received a welcome setback.



Looking to Buy/Sell ?

We know the difference between Home & House

Honesty, Integrity & Experience



Specializing in Investment & Income Producing Real Estate

Nlight Real Estate

Tel: 516 NLIGHT8



Sharanjit Singh Thind
Real Estate Broker/Notary Public



180 Broadway, PH 3A, Hicksville NY 11801
Email: homes@nlightrealestate.com
www.nlightrealestate.com



Polarisation, anti-incumbency, turncoats: Did the BJP overestimate its chances in Bengal?

Why did the BJP fall so short of victory in West Bengal despite an all-out effort? The answer perhaps lies in misguided approximations and conjectures that made its otherwise fabled strategising go awry.

(News Agencies)-The West Bengal election results on Sunday came as a rude shock to the BJP. The sweeping victory of Trinamool Congress was neither foretold by reporters on the ground nor anticipated in the exit polls. The results in some ways have humbled all those in the business of studying and predicting elections journalists, pollsters and academicians.

So why did the BJP fall so short of victory despite an all-out effort? The answer perhaps lies in misguided approximations and conjectures that made its otherwise fabled strategising go awry.

First, the notion of polarisation and counter-polarisation. Time and again, the presence of a large Muslim population has been used as evidence to suggest the

possibility of Hindus rallying behind the BJP. In Bengal too, the BJP and many analysts worked under similar assumptions. While one may argue that the complete collapse of the Left-Congress-ISF alliance led to a consolidation of Muslim voters behind the TMC, the BJP's failure to affect the counter-polarisation of the majority Hindu population behind the party reflects the limits of this strategy. It also harkens to another lesson that other promises, such as those of development and welfare are equally attractive to voters. It seems that the welfarist thrust of Trinamool in the tail-end of its rule did not go unnoticed by voters. Second, the narrative of deep anti-incumbency against the Trinamool was perhaps blown out of proportion. It seems that

analysts misread people's customary dissatisfaction with governance. The BJP too, it seems, overestimated this phenomenon. The extent of the victory refutes the presence of any noticeable wave of public anger. In fact, the Trinamool dominated across geography and demography. All groups of voters, and not just women and minorities, seemed to have voted for it.

To be sure, this does not absolve the Trinamool from charges of corruption or mismanagement after the Amphan cyclone. The humbling truth is that the incumbent's performance is a noisy and fickle predictor of electoral outcomes. It is difficult to estimate the effect of anti-incumbency sentiments, especially when the challenger



does not have a proven track record in state politics.

In the hindsight, it is clear that the personal jibes on Mamata Banerjee did not pay off. In fact, if BJP strategists could introspect, they would realise that this is the exact strategy that allowed Prime Minister Narendra Modi to establish his credentials as a national leader. Getting attacked and being pushed to the wall makes for great optics of political victimhood. Along with the almost misogynist and

naked gloating from the other side, this ensured that people's sympathies resided squarely with 'Bengal's own daughter'. Third, while the PM enjoys high levels popularity across the country, it cannot always generate votes for the party outside its core base. Offering Modi as the alternative, instead of a state-level leader, is not a solution that will work every time, especially in states where the opposition leader is equally popular, if not more.

Congress routed in 5 assembly polls. Will Rahul Gandhi still return as party president?

As the results of the latest round of assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry are released, the Congress party is experiencing an existential crisis.



(News Agencies)-Of the five assembly elections, four got mandate mostly on the anticipated lines. West Bengal saw a tough fight in which Mamata Banerjee pulled her Trinamool Congress (TMC) decisively ahead of the Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP). But in all the elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, the Congress presents a sorry picture.

The Congress had a government in Puducherry before the assembly election but lost it due

to defections. Now, it has lost power in the state.

The Congress had an anti-incumbency, anti-CAA agitation, anti-NRC sentiments and a history to ride on to wrest power from the BJP in Assam. But the BJP scripted history by becoming the first non-Congress party to win two consecutive elections to retain power in Assam.

In West Bengal, the Congress tied up with the Left and controversial cleric Abbas Siddiqui, who floated Indian

Secular Front (ISF) to contest the assembly polls. Some Congress leaders were not happy with the party tying up with the ISF. Now, it sees itself out of contest in West Bengal along with its ally Left Front, the Congress's rival in Kerala.

The Congress's Leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury comes from Bengal. Still, the Congress stood decimated in West Bengal. Its top leader Rahul Gandhi campaigned, though delayed, in Bengal but failed to make an impact.

But it is Kerala that will hurt the Congress and its top leader Rahul Gandhi the most. In 2019 Lok Sabha election, Rahul Gandhi moved from Amethi in Uttar Pradesh, family's traditional bastion, to Wayanad, a citadel of the Congress in Kerala.

The Congress had won 19 of 20 seats in the Lok Sabha election two years ago. This gave an impression that Kerala was ready to follow the four-decade pattern of voting against the state government. No party or coalition has returned to power in over four decades. Now, the Left Front has bucked the trend and convinced the Kerala voters enough to vote them back to power for consecutive terms. Kerala was the only state where the Congress believed it would be voted to power by the very logic of democracy despite its internal fights and relentless campaign by Rahul Gandhi.

There was a narrative that was built during the run-up to these five assembly elections that Rahul Gandhi was waiting for a favourable result particularly in Kerala to return as the Congress president.

Everyone Is Battling The Virus - Everyone Except The Government

If you are lucky enough to be healthy in Covid-haunted Delhi, life feels strangely disconnected. Offline, there's an undeclared lockdown. The normally noisy city is silent except for the sound of birds. Social media, on the other hand, is an unfolding tapestry of tragedy. People beg for help finding hospital beds and life-saving medicines. Friends and acquaintances call and text asking if you know where they

can get an oxygen concentrator for the home. In one way or another, everyone is battling the virus. Everyone, it seems, except the Indian state. Once again, ordinary citizens feel as if we've been abandoned by our government. Even in the face of an unprecedented emergency, state and federal officials seem more interested in point-scoring and blame-shifting than in cooperation. Denialism about the scale of the problem is official

policy. Ministers, bureaucrats and even government lawyers insist that there is no shortage of oxygen or hospital beds, although everyone can plainly see that there is. Things are even worse in places such as Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state. There we might not know the scale of the humanitarian disaster for months, if ever: Few deaths are being recorded and the state's administration has warned those spreading online

"rumors" -- including about family members gasping for oxygen -- that they might be prosecuted under draconian national-security laws. Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. Perhaps we shouldn't have expected more of the notoriously fragile Indian state. There's no escaping the fundamental contradiction of 21st century India: It is one of the world's largest economies, ambitious and aspirational, and its government has vast resources.

Bill Gates took getaways with his ex-girlfriend after marriage to Melinda

After marrying his wife, Bill Gates would spend a long weekend every year at a cozy beach cottage in North Carolina - with his old girlfriend.

The billionaire Microsoft founder made sure the bizarre arrangement was part of the deal when he married Melinda French in 1994, he told Time magazine in a 1997 profile.

"We can play putt-putt while discussing biotechnology," Gates said of his private getaways with fellow nerd techie and ex Ann Winblad.

Gates even sought Winblad's approval before proposing to his wife.

"When I was off on my own thinking about marrying Melinda, I called Ann and asked for her approval," he said, adding that Winblad gave the other woman the thumb's up.

Winblad recalled, "I said she'd be a good match for him because she had intellectual stamina."

Gates - who announced with Melinda on Twitter on Monday that they were divorcing after 27

years of marriage - revealed that he and Winblad started taking an annual trip to his ex's Outer Banks home when they began dating in 1984 after meeting at a computer conference.

The close pair continued making the yearly jaunt down South together even after breaking up in 1987, when Winblad, who at 70 is five years older than Gates, was reportedly more ready to settle down.

The secluded trips involved everything from riding dune buggies to hang-gliding and quiet strolls on the beach.

"We share our thoughts about the world and ourselves," Winblad told the mag.

"And we marvel about how, as two young overachievers, we began a great adventure on the fringes of a little-known industry and it landed us at the center of an amazing universe."

At the time of the interview, Gates still had a photo in his office of him and Winblad on a trip to Germany, the magazine said.

He also had a snap of him, Melinda and a bunch of pals from a trip to Indonesia in 1995 among the rare personal pictures in his work space.

Gates and Winblad, a software expert and venture capitalist from Seattle, Wash., started off their romance like any other good computer-geek couple - with virtual dates, the outlet said.

They would each be in different cities but go to see the same movie at the same time and then talk about it over the phone.

"Bill wasn't such a big deal when I started dating him," Winblad recalled to the San Francisco Chronicle in 2005.



"And there was a period of time when my net worth was higher than his, and I had to pay for everything. It was a very short period of time, but it was memorable," she quipped.

Meanwhile, Gates seemed eager to please Winblad - agreeing to stop eating meat at the time, although he has since fallen back on that stance, Time said.

And she was in awe of his drive and confidence.

After they started dating, "Bill

and I went for a walk on a beach, and Bill tells me, 'I can see my way, if I really squint, to \$500 million in revenue,' Winblad told the Silicon Valley Business Journal in 2013.

That amount was at least five times more than what any software company was doing at the time, the outlet noted.

"Bill was a great influence on me, and I was thinking, 'Wow, you can

actually build a company that big in the software industry? Are you kidding me?'" Winblad said.

NYC: STOP THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS!

New Yorkers working together can slow the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in New York City.



PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead wave or elbow bump.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.



STAY HOME IF SICK

- Stay home and call your doctor if you have symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, fever, sore throat.
- If you do not feel better in 24-48 hours, seek care from your doctor.
- If you need help getting medical care, call 311.
- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.



PROTECT THE MOST VULNERABLE

- If you have chronic conditions like lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system, avoid unnecessary gatherings and events.
- If you have family or friends who have one of these conditions, do not visit them if you feel sick.



REDUCE OVERCROWDING

- Consider telecommuting.
- Stagger work hours, starting earlier or later.
- Walk or bike to work, if possible.
- If the train is too packed, wait for the next one.

Text COVID to 692-692 for real-time updates or visit nyc.gov/coronavirus.

Call 311 to report harassment or discrimination.

*Messages and data rates may apply. Check your wireless provider plan for details.

NYC
Health

Bill de Blasio
Mayor
Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

Pakistani Taliban turn on China



foreign officials were the target of the attack. Chinese state mouthpiece Global Times warned that "the possibility that the local terrorists wanted to create bigger noise by targeting Chinese nationals cannot be ruled out" in a bid to advance a "malicious domestic agenda".

Whatever the motivation, the attack appeared to mark the beginning of a new threat to China's interests in Pakistan.

TTP rose to prominence in 2007, when Taliban factions fighting the state of Pakistan united under a single umbrella. In the 14 years since, TTP has carried out

hundreds of attacks which have killed thousands of people in Pakistan. Despite sustained operations by Pakistani security forces, TTP remains intact and is still a potent security threat. According to the latest counterterrorism report by the UN Security Council's sanctions monitoring team, the strength of TTP has considerably increased after five terrorist entities based in Afghanistan pledged allegiance. The same report estimates the strength of TTP forces to be approximately 6000 fighters, while analysts estimate the group was responsible for

more than 100 cross-border attacks in Pakistan between July and October 2020. At least three possible reasons could drive a shift in strategy towards targeting China's interests. Most obviously, the TTP recognises that China is arguably the closest ally of Pakistan at present. The terror group has repeatedly targeted symbols of the Pakistani state and important personalities. Given that China is also in the process of implementing the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the local component of the Belt and Road Initiative, the TTP sees Beijing as a natural opponent.

(News Agencies)-A deadly bomb blast rocked the Serena Hotel last month in Pakistan's south-western city of Quetta, leaving five dead and 12 critically injured. The bomb exploded just as a VIP guest and his entourage were barely five minutes away from the site. He was Nong Rong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan, returning to the hotel after a dinner with local officials. Local media was quick to conclude that Beijing's top diplomat in Pakistan had narrowly escaped an attack on his life. Soon afterward, the responsibility for the attack was claimed by

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, which translates as Movement of Taliban of Pakistan), with the group declaring that local and

Foreign Office investigates reports British woman killed in Pakistan

(News Agencies)-The Foreign Office is understood to be investigating reports that a British woman has been killed in Lahore, Pakistan. The woman reportedly travelled to the country for a friend's wedding. Authorities in Lahore have yet to confirm details, but a police officer told local reporters that a group of four men broke into the woman's rented home and killed her. An officer, named only as

Qasim, was quoted by the Jam Press news agency as saying: "We have launched an investigation into every aspect of the murder. More facts will come to light after the autopsy and forensic report." A source said Foreign Office officials were investigating the reports of her death. They said: "We are supporting the woman's family and our thoughts are with them at this difficult time."



Invest in First Mortgages

**EARN 8-15%
ANNUALLY ON WELL
SECURED, SHORT TERM,
1ST MORTGAGE LOANS.
MONTHLY DIVIDENDS**

Learn about Investment Opportunities

B-1 Business Visas

EB-5 Investor Visas

Hotel - Land - Business

Investment/Partner Opportunities

For details & disclosures

WREAM

Whitestone Real Estate Asset Management Corp.

Phone: 917 612 3158 Email: whitesone1979@gmail.com

Real Estate Broker/Investor/Private Lender Since 2009



The first signs of global warming are now clearly visible. We urgently need to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Nothing and no-one will be spared from climate change. This warning is therefore to all people, all countries and, in particular, to the Belgian Council of Ministers who, on the weekend of March 20 and 21, will have to decide what action to take regarding essential measures linked to the Kyoto Protocol.





WHEN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF, YOU PROTECT ME.

I know you depend on me, just as I depend on you to keep me safe—by wearing a mask, keeping 6 feet apart, and getting vaccinated when it's your turn. With new forms of the virus that may spread more easily, it is that much more important for all of us to continue doing our part to slow the spread of COVID. As I wait my turn for the vaccine, I can still make sure everyone gets what they need as safely as possible.

Learn more at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



Brought to you by the
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services.

**WE
CAN
DO
THIS**

The Global Gag Rule's Long Shadow in Pakistan



(News Agencies)-
PUNJAB and SINDH
PROVINCES, Pakistan-On a
Saturday in February, four
women came to a reproductive
health clinic in Rawalpindi,
Pakistan, seeking to end their
pregnancies. Three of the four
were married mothers who
already had multiple children
like many women receiving
abortion care in Pakistan. When
Naseem Tariq, a doctor at the
clinic, lifted one client's shirt to
take an ultrasound, the stretch
marks from her last baby were
still visible. Tariq sees patients

about their family planning options. Most patients don't have access to any long-term birth control method, often because husbands or mothers-in-law don't allow it or because they can't easily afford it. Just 34 percent of married Pakistani women use contraception and only 25 percent rely on modern methods, based on the latest state-supported survey. "They are poor. They have seven to eight kids. The access to family planning services is not there," Tariq said. "What comes out of this? Unwanted pregnancies." Despite abortion only being legal

in Pakistan under certain conditions, the country has one of the highest abortion rates in the world—an estimated 50 abortions per 1,000 women, according to 2012 research by the Population Council, one of the most comprehensive reports on the topic. This makes health organizations in Pakistan particularly vulnerable to funding restrictions that target abortion. Family planning initiatives in Pakistan suffered under the Trump administration, which reinstated and expanded the Mexico City policy to ban recipients of U.S. assistance for

global health from providing abortions, counseling women about abortions, or giving referrals for abortion services—even with their own private funds. U.S. President Joe Biden repealed the so-called global gag rule shortly after taking office in January, ending restrictions on an estimated \$12 billion of U.S. foreign assistance. Although the change reopens channels for funding, limitations around abortion remain a defining characteristic of the U.S. model for family planning, affecting the care that reproductive health organizations can provide.

Thousands march in Pakistan Shiite procession as virus cases soar

(News Agencies)- Thousands of Shiite Muslim devotees -- many not wearing masks -- gathered in Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore for a religious procession on Tuesday, fanning fears about the spread of the coronavirus after similar crowds were blamed in neighbouring India for its own surge. The federal government

had issued a notice banning mass gatherings commemorating the death of Prophet Mohammad's companion and son-in-law Imam Ali, but local negotiations with religious leaders failed. Religious events staged in India in recent weeks, including the Kumbh Mela attended by millions of pilgrims, have been held

responsible for spurring one of the worst crises of the pandemic to date, closely watched by Pakistan with growing anxiety. "I have attended this procession every year for as long as I can remember," said Ali Kazmi, 28, who took part in Lahore, where officials estimated between eight and ten thousand worshippers participated. "They try to stop

Shiite mourning ceremonies and processions using different excuses. It is (coronavirus) today, before that it was the issue of security. It's all excuses."

Members of Pakistan's Shiite sect make up around 20 percent of the Islamic republic's 220 million population.


www.humhindustanusa.com
 Like us on

<https://www.facebook.com/www.humhindustanusa.com>
 Price: 50¢

मोदी का एलान-ए-जंग

बूंद-बूंद को तरसेगा पाक



**नहीं बाज आ रहा
पाकिस्तान, तीसरे दिन
भी की गोलीबारी, भारत
ने दिया कटाव जवाब**

[illegible]

ਪੰਜਾਬ, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਅਤੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਅਤ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾਨ
ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ
 Since April 2005 Editor : Sharnjit Singh Thind PUNJABI DUNIYA Weekly
 Vol. 14, Issue 15 Wednesday 02 Jan. 08 Jan. 2019 www.PUNJABI.DUNIYA.com Distributed Weekly from New York

**ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਨੇ ਵਿਦੇਸ਼ ਉਡਾਰੀ
ਮਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਖਰਚੇ 27000 ਕਰੋੜ**

[illegible][illegible]

ਇਹ ਮੁੱਦਾ ਚੁੱਕਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਸੋਚ ਅਧੀਨੀ ਬਣਨਾ ਸੁਝ ਨਾ ਵਾਪਸ ਹੈ। ਸੋਸ਼ਲਿਸਟਿਕ ਮਾਨਸਿਕਤਾ ਦੀ ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਕਰਨ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਨਾਮੇ ਦੇ ਅਧੀਨ ਹੋ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਵਿੱਚ 'ਭਿੰਨ' ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਹ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਨਾ ਸਮਝਾ ਕਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਕਰਨਾਮੇ ਦੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਨਾ ਸਮਝਾ ਕੇ ਫਿਰ ਕਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਅਜਿਹਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਇਹ ਕਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ, 'ਸੂਰੀ ਸੋਧ ਫਿਰ ਨਾ ਮੰਨੀ ਜਾਵੇ, ਤਦ ਹੀ ਭਰੋ ਸੋਚਣ ਲਈ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ।' ਪਰ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਨਾ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਣਦਾ ਤੇ ਹਦਾਫ਼ ਹੀ ਬਾਕਸੀ ਦੀ ਯੋਜਨਾ 'ਤੇ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਕਿਹਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਨਾ ਅਥਵਾ ਅਥ ਸੋਧ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੋਧ ਕਾਨੂੰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਮਨੁੱਖ ਅਰਥ ਸੰਸਥਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਹ ਨਿਯਮ ਹੋ ਸੇਖ਼ ਲਾਗੂ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਸਮਝਾਉਣਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅੰਤ ਵਿੱਚ 'ਭਿੰਨ' ਸੋਧ 19 ਜੂਨ ਨੂੰ ਕਰੇ ਗਏ। ਸਥਾਪਨਾ ਅਥਵਾ ਅਥ ਸੋਧ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਲਕਦਮੀ



ਨੂੰ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਸਾਫ਼ੀ 700 ਮਿਲੀਅਨ ਡਾਲਰ
ਮਦਦ ਨੂੰ 150 ਮਿਲੀਅਨ ਡਾਲਰ ਕਰ ਸਕ
ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਕਾਰਨ ਨੂੰ ਰਾਸ਼ਟਰ ਬਰਨ ਲਈ
ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਕਈ ਸ਼ਰਤਾਂ ਦਾ ਪਾਸ
ਬਰਨਾ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਇਹ ਖਾਣਾ ਵੇਲੇਆਂ ਅਜ਼



ਸਮੇਂ ਸਮੇਂ 'ਤੇ ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ ਹੈ। 2019 ਸਾਲੀ
ਕੀਤਾ ਕਿਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ 'ਤੇ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕਰਕੇ
ਧਮਾਕਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਇਸ ਵਿਸ਼ੇ 'ਤੇ
ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ ਨੂੰ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇਣਾ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਵਿੱਚ
ਕਾਨਫਰੰਸ ਨੂੰ ਸਮੇਂ ਦੇਣਾ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਵਿੱਚ

ਸੱਜਣ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖ

ਬੇ ਰੱਬਗਾ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨ
ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲਦਾ ਹਾ ਹਿਲਮਾ ਬਥਰਬਾਨੀ
ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਬਥਰਬਾਨੀ ਦਾ ਹੋਰੀ ਸਿੱਖਣ
ਕੁਰਾਹ ਹੁਣ ਜੇਲ੍ਹ ਦੀ ਕੋਠੀ ਨੰਬਰ 14 ਵਿਚ
ਬੰਦ ਰਹੇਗਾ। ਸਿੱਖਣ ਕੁਰਾਹ 1-2 ਨਵੰਬਰ
1984 ਨੂੰ ਦਾਖ਼ਤ-ਘਟਨਾ ਵਿੱਚੀ ਬਿਲੀ ਬਾਨੀ
ਭਾਸ਼ਨ ਲਗਾਓ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਲ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਮਾਨਣ ਅਤੇ
ਹੁਦਰਦਾਖ਼ਾਹਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਾਥਨ ਦੇ ਜੁਗਮਾ ਬਸੀ
ਸਭਾ ਹੋਰੀ ਹੋ।

ਨਵੇਂ ਸਾਲ ਮੌਕੇ ਅ ਦਾ ਟਵੀਟ ਕਰਨ

ਮਮਰੀਕੀ ਫੌਜ ਨੇ ਬੰਬ ਲਈ ਮੰਗੀ ਮੁਆਫ਼ੀ

ਬੰਦੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੋਸ਼ੀਆ ਜਿਹਾ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ। ਸੰਸਦ ਨੂੰ ਜੇਜ਼ੂ ਵਿਚਲੇ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਾ ਕੋਲੋਂ ਹੁੰਦੀਆਂ ਸਾਰੇਗਾ ਨਵੇਰ 1984 ਨੂੰ ਸ਼ਾਅਰਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਨਾਲਗਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਦੇਖੀ ਸੰਸਦ ਕਮਾਜ਼ ਤਿੰਨ ਦਹਾਕਿਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਕੋ ਵਾਂਝ ਸੰਸਦ ਵਾਂਝੇ ਅਗੂ ਦੇ ਅਤੇ ਰਾਸ਼ੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਰਾਸ਼ੀ ਕੀਤੀ। 17 ਦਿਸੰਬਰ 2018 ਨੂੰ ਵਿਲੀ ਸੁਖਮੀ ਪੋਲਟ ਵਲੋਂ ਹੰਗਲੀ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਦੇ ਹੋਸ਼ੇ ਕੇਰਤਾ ਵਿੱਚਲੀ ਸੰਸਦ ਕਮਾਜ਼ ਨੂੰ ਉਸਤ ਕੇ ਹੀ ਸੰਸਦ ਸਟਾਪੀ ਕੀਤੀ।

ਭਾਰਤ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਖਾਲਿਸਤਾਨ

ਨ ਲਿਖੇਗਨ ਫੇਰਮ ਤੇ ਪਾਖੰਸੀ ਲਾਈ

विश्व की 2 बेहतरीन गिफ्टिंग स्टाइल फिटिंग
मॉडर्निज्म का जन्म है वास्तविक विश्व और उसके
के डिजाइनर यह विश्व अपने अग्रणी के डिजाइन
दिए गए हैं वास्तव में वास्तव में डिजाइन
के डिजाइन। विश्व के डिजाइन के डिजाइन
को #NewYear तक प्राप्त करें।
#TimesSquare के डिजाइन के डिजाइन
अपनी डिजाइन के डिजाइन के डिजाइन के डिजाइन
की बड़ी सीमा में डिजाइन के डिजाइन के डिजाइन
के डिजाइन के डिजाइन के डिजाइन के डिजाइन

१. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 २. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 ३. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 ४. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 ५. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 ६. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 ७. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 ८. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 ९. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन
 १०. "मैंने एक दिन सोचा कि मैं एक दिन

1 ਦਸੰਬਰ ਦਿਨ ਸੀਮਵਾਰ
ਕੜਕੜਭੂਮੀ ਅਦਾਲਤ ਸੈਸ਼ਨ ਕੁਮਾਰ
ਆਰਮ ਮਨਰਪਟ ਡੇ ਬਾਅਦ ਹਿਸ ਨੰ ਮੰਡੇ

ਕੀਰਕਾਨੰਤੀ ਭਾਗੀਬਪਾਲਿੰਗੇ ਰੇਲੁ ਕਾਨੰ
(ਪੁਰੇਮੀ ਦੇ) ਕਰਿਤ ਕੀਰਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਾ
ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ ਵਿਚ ਖਾਸੀਦੀ ਕਾਨੰਤ ਸਤਕਾਰ ਮ

ਕੋਰਟ ਵਲੋਂ ਕੇਸ ਸੁਣਾ ਲਈ ਹੈ ਕਿਸੇਵਿਧ ਵਿਚ ਸਾਂਝ
ਲੇਖੀ ਜ਼ਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਏਜਰਟਮੈਂਟ ਲੀਸਟਵਾਲੀ ਪੰਜਾਬ
ਦੇ ਮੁਕਾ ਹੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਾਉਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ।

ਜੇ ਕਾਫ਼ ਹੀ ਘੱਟੇ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਕੀਤੀ ਗਈ ਸੀ।
ਟਾਈਮਜ਼ ਮੁਕਾਬਲੇ 'ਤੇ 'ਬਾਮ ਡਰਾਪ' ਕਰ
ਨਵੇਂ ਸਾਲ ਦੀ ਸ਼ੁਰੂਆਤ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਰਵਾਇਤ।

ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੇ ਸਰਕਾਰੀ ਹਸਪਤਾਲਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਡਾਕਟਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਮੀ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਨਿਰਣਾ ਲੈਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਅਥਵਾ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਨ-ਉੱਤਰ ਮੁਲਾਂਕਣ ਕਮੇਟੀ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਜਾਰੀ ਕੀਤੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ।

Insurance
Property
(See Full Page)

Insurance
& Casualty
(See Advt. on Page 31)

**Business, Liability,
Disability, Workers
Comp., E & O,
Auto, Home**

ability,
workers
& O,
me,

917
www.whi



INSURANCE
-612-3158
testonecorpusa.com

भारतीय-अमेरिकन कम्पुनिटी द्वारा घोर निंदा



अईएस में शामिल हुई महिला को अमेरिका ने एट्री देने से किया इंक़ारार

वाशिंगटन ■ हम हिज़्बुल्ला

अमेरिका ने सीरिया में इस्लामिक स्टेट (आईएस) में शामिल होने वाली अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी एक महिला को अमेरिका के साथ वापस लाने की अनुमति देने में इन्कार कर दिया है। अमेरिकी का कहना है कि वह अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी नागरिक नहीं है, बल्कि एक अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी सेना के सदस्य है। अमेरिकी इंटरनेट सेवा प्रदाता फ़ेसबुक ने इसे भी अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी इंटरनेट सेवा प्रदाता सेना के सदस्य बताया है। अमेरिकी सरकार ने कहा है कि वह अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी नागरिक नहीं है, बल्कि अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी सेना के सदस्य है। अमेरिकी सरकार ने कहा है कि वह अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी नागरिक नहीं है, बल्कि अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी सेना के सदस्य है। अमेरिकी सरकार ने कहा है कि वह अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी नागरिक नहीं है, बल्कि अफ़ग़ानिस्तानी सेना के सदस्य है।

Downloaded from <http://ajphaphysocpharm.sagepub.com/> at 11:06 11 September 2014

Pakistan Tightens Border to Stem Influx of New Coronavirus Variants

Pakistan decided Sunday to temporarily suspend incoming pedestrian movement at overland border crossings with Afghanistan and Iran to "restrain import of any new mutation" of the coronavirus. The restriction will take effect Tuesday night and remain in place until May 20, said the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), which oversees Pakistan's response to the outbreak.

Pakistani nationals in Afghanistan and Iran, as well as Afghans seeking extreme emergency medical treatment in Pakistan will, however, be allowed to enter the country. All outbound pedestrian movement will be permissible, the statement said. The tightened border controls come a day after officials in the southern Pakistani province of Sindh said they had detected the South African and

Brazilian coronavirus variants in "some samples." The highly contagious variants have raised fears of escalations in new infections. A British variant, however, officially remains the primary source of the current surge in infections across Pakistan. The country of about



220 million people detected the virus a year ago and has since reported more than 18,000 deaths among an estimated 830,000 infections. They included 113 deaths and 4,414 new cases authorities reported Sunday. The NCOC said the border restriction will not be applicable to bilateral

and transit cargo/trade movement with Afghanistan and Iran, but that drivers will undergo "thermal scanning" at border terminals. Pakistan shares a nearly 2,600-kilometer border with Afghanistan and about a 930-kilometer border with Iran. Pakistan's special representative to Afghanistan, Mohammad Sadiq, defended the border restriction, calling it "the most important step" in curbing the wave of infections.

"The spread of COVID-19 is alarming. It is important that we take difficult decisions to protect our people from this scourge," Sadiq tweeted. Thousands of Afghan pedestrians travel daily in both directions. They are mostly members of the Afghan refugee community, students and patients seeking treatment in relatively better Pakistani health facilities.

Bangladesh boat crash kills at least 26 people



(News Agencies)-At least 26 people died and several were missing after an overcrowded speedboat collided with a sand-laden bulk carrier and sank on Bangladesh's giant Padma River on Monday, police said.

"Rescuers found 26 dead bodies and some still could be missing," said Miraj Hossain, a senior

police official of the central Madaripur district, where the accident occurred.

Five people were rescued and sent to hospital, he said.

Hundreds of people die each year in ferry accidents in Bangladesh, a low-lying country that has extensive inland waterways and lax safety standards.

**TEXT AND
WHATEVER
JUST
DON'T
TEXT
AND**



STOPTEXTSSTOPWRECKS.ORG



WE THANK OUR CUSTOMERS FOR THEIR TRUST & LOYALTY

28 YEARS OF EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



INDO US EXPRESS, INC.

HICKSVILLE, NEW YORK

WORLDWIDE COURIER FREIGHT-FORWARDER

DOMESTIC & LOCAL DELIVERY

CALL US AT: 212-447-5720 or FAX 516-932-3750

ALTERNATE NUMBER: 347-538-7041

OR EMAIL US: INDOUSEXPRESS@GMAIL.COM

www.indousexpress.com

GREAT SERVICE, 7 DAYS A WEEK, 365 DAYS A YEAR!

AUTHORIZED AGENT FOR:

UPS - FedEx - DHL - USPS - Amazon

CALL ABOUT OUR SPECIAL RATES

TO & FROM INDIA/WORLDWIDE



Smuggling charges filed after 97 migrants found in Texas home



(News Agencies)-Five people in Texas have been charged with participating in an alleged smuggling operation after 97 migrants were found in a single Houston home.

The discovery on Friday by Texas police shocked the community which is more than 300 miles (480km) from the

nearest border crossing with Mexico.

All five of those charged are in the US illegally, according to US officials.

It comes after the month of March saw the most border crossings in 20 years and a surge of children arriving.

In a statement, acting US

Attorney Jennifer Lowery said the suspects are all accused of "harbouring, concealing and shielding illegal aliens for the purpose of commercial advantage or private financial gain".

The suspects include one person from Honduras, two from El Salvador and two from Mexico, officials say. They each face 10 years in jail if found guilty.

Il of the people found in the home - which is referred to in court documents as a "stash house" - were men, except for five women. All were adults. They were all found in two bedrooms that were allegedly bolted from the outside in order to prevent escape.

The men were all found in

their underwear. Some were taken to hospital after telling police they had not had any food or water in three days.

So far five of them have tested positive for Covid-19, according to the Houston Health Department. More test results are pending.

Officials say the investigation began after a woman called authorities to say that her brother had been kidnapped.

The woman had already paid \$11,000 (£8,000) to get her brother to the US, but the smugglers were threatening to kill her if she did not pay more, police say.

After police tracked a suspect's phone to the home, a raid was carried out by the Houston Swat team.

According to investigators, one person in the home was allegedly told that if they did not pay, they would be put in "four pieces of wood", meaning a coffin.

A ledger containing names and sums paid was also found in the rental home. Officials say they do not know how long the rental home had been used for the alleged crimes.

The homeowner told KTRK-TV that she had no idea what the home was being used for.

"It's really strange that so many people can be inside a house, and we didn't notice," neighbour Kai Lynch told the Houston Chronicle newspaper. "We really need to be more vigilant."

Belgian farmer accidentally moves French border



(News Agencies)-A farmer in Belgium has caused a stir after inadvertently redrawing the country's border with France. A local history enthusiast was

walking in the forest when he noticed the stone marking the boundary between the two countries had moved 2.29m (7.5ft).

The Belgian farmer, apparently annoyed by the stone in his tractor's path, had moved it inside French territory.

Instead of causing international uproar, the incident has been met with smiles on both sides of the border.

"He made Belgium bigger and France smaller, it's not a good idea," David Lavaux, mayor of the Belgian village of Erquelinnes, told French TV channel TF1. That sort of move caused a headache between private landowners, he pointed out, let alone neighbouring states.

The border between France and what is now Belgium stretches 620km (390 miles). It was formally established under the Treaty of Kortrijk, signed in 1820 after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo five years earlier. The stone dates back to 1819, when the border was first marked out.

"I was happy, my town was bigger," the Belgian mayor added with a laugh. "But the mayor of Bousignies-sur-Roc didn't agree."

"We should be able to avoid a new border war," the amused mayor of the neighbouring

French village, Aurélie Welonek, told La Voix du Nord.

Local Belgian authorities plan to contact the farmer to ask him to return the stone to its original location. If that does not happen the case could end up at the Belgian foreign ministry, which would have to summon a Franco-Belgian border commission, dormant since 1930.

Mr Lavaux noted that the farmer could also face criminal charges if he failed to comply.

"If he shows good will, he won't have a problem, we will settle this issue amicably," he told Belgian news website Sudinfo.

Israel's president picks Netanyahu opponent Lapid to form government

(News Agencies)- Israel's president on Wednesday chose Yair Lapid, a centrist politician and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's strongest rival, to try to form a new government, but his path to success was still uncertain.

Israel's longest serving leader, Netanyahu, 71, has been fighting to hold onto office through four inconclusive elections since 2019 and corruption allegations that he denies.

President Reuven Rivlin, in a televised address announcing his choice of Lapid, said the former finance minister had the pledged support of 56 of parliament's 120 members, still short of a majority.

"It is clear that parliament

member Yair Lapid could form a government that has the confidence of the Knesset, despite there being many difficulties," Rivlin said.

In a statement accepting the nomination, Lapid, who heads the Yesh Atid party, said he aimed to establish a government of the left, right and centre "that will reflect the fact that we don't hate one another".

But Lapid, 57, has ruled out serving in a government with Netanyahu, citing the criminal indictment against the prime minister.

Appearing to hold out hope he could still stay in power, Netanyahu appealed to ultranationalist Naftali Bennett to

join him and form a "solid right-wing bloc" controlling 59 seats in parliament, a number still short of a majority.

An embrace by Bennett, of the Yamina party, would persuade other right-wing legislators currently pledged to Lapid cross back, Netanyahu said in remarks following Lapid's nomination.

"It's a simple truth: this (a Lapid-led coalition) will be a dangerous left-wing government," said Netanyahu, who last lost an election before the turn of the century. The most recent vote on March 23, held while Netanyahu is also on trial on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, yielded no majority for the



incumbent or for a loose alliance of rivals from across the political spectrum aiming to topple him.

A 28-day mandate to put together a coalition ran out at midnight after Netanyahu failed to agree terms with potential right-wing partners, opening the way for Rivlin to assign the task

to another member of parliament. Lapid also has 28 days to try to form a coalition.

POWER SHARING

A power-sharing agreement to end the political stalemate has been widely mooted, in which Lapid would rotate in office with Bennett, 49.

Wildlife officials find human remains in bears suspected of killing a woman in Colorado



The 39-year-old woman was found dead on Friday in Durango, and bear scat and hair was found at the scene. Officials later found three bears -- a mother and her two yearling bears -- near the woman's mauled body and euthanized them to keep them from attacking humans again, said Cory Chick, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Southwest Region manager.

A Colorado Parks and Wildlife pathologist who performed necropsies on the three bears said nothing looked abnormal -- all three bears were healthy, with adequate fat stores and no signs

of disease, according to a news release from the agency.

But two of the bears -- the mother and one of the yearlings -- had human remains in their stomachs, the wildlife agency said.

It's not clear yet why the bears consumed human remains, but bears can grow aggressive if humans are "in the way" of their food sources, Chick said.

"Bears will return to a food source over and over," Chick said in the release. "A bear that loses its fear of humans is a dangerous animal. And this sow was

teaching its yearlings that humans were a source of food, not something to fear and avoid."

The La Plata County coroner's office will identify the remains found in the bears and conduct an autopsy on the woman found last week. CNN has reached out to the coroner's office for more information and is waiting to hear back.

Bear attacks on humans are extremely rare in Colorado -- the only recorded fatal attacks happened in 1971, 1993 and 2009, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

(News Agencies)-Human remains were found in the southwestern Colorado, state wildlife officials said.

Pennsylvania man sentenced to 5-year probation after voting in name of dead mother

(News Agencies)-A Pennsylvania man has been sentenced to five years of probation after pleading guilty to casting a vote in the name of his deceased mother in an effort to reelect then-President Donald Trump, according to court records and Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer's office.

Bruce Bartman, 70, received the sentence Friday after entering a guilty plea to two counts of perjury and one count of unlawful voting. Bartman will also lose his right to vote for four years, pursuant to Pennsylvania statute, the district attorney's office said in a news release.

Voter records show that Bartman

used Pennsylvania's online voter-registration portal to register both his late mother, Elizabeth Bartman, and his deceased mother-in-law, Elizabeth Weihman, who died in 2019 -- illegally registering both as Republican voters, the district attorney's office said. Bartman then requested, filled out and sent in the absentee ballot for his deceased mother for the 2020 general election. Bartman's attorney, Samuel Stretton, told CNN that his client regrets the decision. Stretton said Bartman had explained to the court that because of the coronavirus pandemic, he had been isolated at home and was misled by "propaganda and statements"

that were made about voter fraud. "This was his way of misguided political dissent," Stretton said. "He accepts the responsibility." Trump repeatedly sought to sow doubt about the integrity of the general election and even falsely claimed victory over Joe Biden despite there being no evidence of widespread voter fraud in any US state. Republican state lawmakers across the country have echoed Trump's voting conspiracy theories and, in some cases, advanced new election bills that disproportionately affect Democratic voters. A tally by the left-leaning Brennan Center for Justice at New York University found that 361 bills with provisions that restrict voting had



been introduced in 47 states as of March 24. In the last month, the effort to restrict voting has intensified as state legislatures begin to head into the final months of their sessions. "Our Office has done what it can to ensure our elections are both secure and

accessible but the next fight is in Harrisburg. To those reviewing voter systems, I say, 'Remove failed systems, not ballot boxes,' " Stollsteimer, a Democrat, said Friday, noting that this was the only known case of a dead person voting in the county.

Ex-Minneapolis policeman Chauvin asks judge for new trial



(News Agencies)-Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin asked a judge on Tuesday for a new trial, court records showed, two weeks after he was found guilty of murder and manslaughter in the killing of George Floyd. In a series of motions filed to District Court Judge Peter

Cahill, attorney Eric Nelson said his client was deprived of a fair trial, adding there was prosecutorial and jury misconduct, errors of law at trial and that the verdict was contrary to the law. Prosecutors did not immediately file a response to the motions for a new trial. On April 20, a 12-member jury found

Chauvin, 45, guilty on all three counts he faced after considering three weeks of testimony from 45 witnesses, including bystanders, police officials and medical experts. The charges were second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. The rare verdict against a police officer is considered a milestone in the fraught racial history of the United States and a rebuke of law enforcement's treatment of Black Americans. In a confrontation captured on video, Chauvin, a white veteran of the police force, pushed his knee into the neck of Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man in handcuffs, for more than 9 minutes on May 25, 2020. Chauvin and three fellow officers were attempting to arrest Floyd, accused of using a fake \$20 bill

to buy cigarettes at a grocery store.

Floyd's death led to protests in the United States and abroad about excessive use of force by police against people of color.

Nelson said the court abused its discretion when it did not grant his motion for a change of venue and when it did not sequester the jury. He also said the court abused its discretion when it denied his initial motion for a new trial based on the enormous publicity the trial received, threatening its fairness.

The day before the jury reached its verdict, Cahill harshly criticized U.S. Representative Maxine Waters' remarks on the case, saying she might have given the defense grounds for appeal in the event of a conviction. After the jury got the

case and was sequestered, President Joe Biden also commented on the trial, saying that he hoped "the verdict is the right verdict." Nelson also accused the Minnesota state prosecutors of misconduct when they disparaged the defense and said the court failed his client when it did not force Morries Hall, who was in the car with Floyd when police arrived, to testify. A photo circulated by several news organizations has also raised questions about the impartiality of one juror, Brandon Mitchell, the Washington Post reported. The photo shows Mitchell wearing a T-shirt with the words "get your knee off our necks" around a picture of Martin Luther King Jr. Mitchell was also wearing a Black Lives Matter baseball cap.

2020 Census Apportionment Results Delivered to the President

APRIL 26, 2021 - The U.S. Census Bureau announced today that the 2020 Census shows the resident population of the United States on April 1, 2020, was 331,449,281.

The U.S. resident population represents the total number of people living in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The resident population increased by 22,703,743 or 7.4% from 308,745,538 in 2010.

"The American public deserves a big thank you for its overwhelming response to the 2020 Census," Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo said. "Despite many challenges, our nation completed a census for the 24th time. This act is fundamental to our democracy and a declaration of our growth and resilience. I also want to thank the team at the U.S. Census Bureau, who overcame unprecedented challenges to collect and produce high-quality data that will inform decision-making for years to come." "We are proud to release these

first results from the 2020 Census today. These results reflect the tireless commitment from the entire Census Bureau team to produce the highest-quality statistics that will continue to shape the future of our country," acting Census Bureau Director Ron Jarmin said. "And in a first for the Census Bureau, we are releasing data quality metrics on the same day we're making the resident population counts available to the public. We are confident that today's 2020 Census results meet our high data quality standards."

The new resident population statistics for the United States, each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico are available on census.gov.

"The most populous state was California (39,538,223); the least populous was Wyoming (576,851).

"The state that gained the most numerically since the 2010 Census was Texas (up 3,999,944 to 29,145,505).

"The fastest-growing state since the 2010 Census was Utah (up 18.4% to 3,271,616).

"Puerto Rico's resident population was 3,285,874, down 11.8% from 3,725,789 in the 2010 Census.

In addition to these newly released statistics, today Secretary Raimondo delivered to President Biden the population counts to be used for apportioning the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. In accordance with Title 2 of the U.S. Code, a congressionally defined formula is applied to the apportionment population to distribute the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states.

The apportionment population consists of the resident population of the 50 states, plus the overseas military and federal civilian employees and their dependents living with them overseas who could be allocated to a home state. The populations of the District of Columbia and

Puerto Rico are excluded from the apportionment population because they do not have voting seats in Congress. The counts of overseas federal employees (and their dependents) are used for apportionment purposes only.

"After the 1790 Census, each member of the House represented about 34,000 residents. Since then, the House has more than quadrupled in size (from 105 to 435 seats), and each member will represent an average of 761,169 people based on the 2020 Census.

"Texas will gain two seats in the House of Representatives, five states will gain one seat each (Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina, and Oregon), seven states will lose one seat each (California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia), and the remaining states' number of seats will not change based on the 2020 Census.

Upon receipt of the

apportionment counts, the president will transmit them to the 117th Congress. The reapportioned Congress will be the 118th, which convenes in January 2023.

"Our work doesn't stop here," added acting Director Jarmin. "Now that the apportionment counts are delivered, we will begin the additional activities needed to create and deliver the redistricting data that were previously delayed due to COVID-19."

Redistricting data include the local area counts states need to redraw or "redistrict" legislative boundaries. Due to modifications to processing activities, COVID-19 data collections delays, and the Census Bureau's obligation to provide high-quality data, states are expected to receive redistricting data by August 16, and the full redistricting data with toolkits for ease of use will be delivered by September 30.

The Census Bureau will notify the public

Bill and Melinda Gates agreed 'separation contract' before announcing divorce

(News Agencies)-Bill and Melinda Gates agreed how to divide their property and assets before announcing their divorce on Monday, US media report.

The billionaire couple, who have been married for 27 years, reportedly signed a separation contract outlining how their estate would be split.

But they did not sign a pre-nuptial agreement before their wedding in 1994.

The couple run the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has spent billions on charitable causes around the world.

They have pledged to continue to work together at the foundation once their divorce is finalised.

"Gates divorce puts spotlight on their foundation

"Bill and Melinda Gates: A life in pictures

"The Bill Gates 'microchip' claim fact-checked

"Solving Covid easy compared with climate - Gates Bill Gates, 65, is the fourth wealthiest person in the world, according to Forbes, and is worth \$124bn (£89bn).

He made his money through the firm he co-founded in the 1970s,

Microsoft, which is the world's biggest software company.

The couple's estate is believed to include multi-million dollar properties in Washington, Florida and Wyoming. Their main residence is a lakeside mansion in Medina, Washington that is reported to be worth at least \$127m.

'Irretrievably broken'

The couple filed for divorce at a court in Seattle on Monday, according to documents obtained by a number of US media outlets and published by the TMZ website. "This marriage is irretrievably broken," the

petition for divorce states. "We ask the court to dissolve our marriage."

It says the couple's property, business interests and assets should be divided "as set forth in our separation contract". That contract, however, has not been made public.

The pair have three adult children and spousal support is not needed, the documents state. They have each hired three lawyers to represent them. The lawyers for Melinda, 56, include Robert Cohen who has previously worked for clients such as Ivana Trump,



Michael Bloomberg and Chris three lawyers based in Los Rock. Bill, meanwhile, has hired Angeles.

There were four attacks, including an assault with a hammer, on Asian Americans in New York over the weekend

There were at least four attacks on Asian Americans, including an assault with a hammer, in New York City over the weekend, according to the New York Police Department.

The spate of attacks occurred as the city is grappling with a rise in bias crimes on Asian Americans this year, with 42 incidents reported in the first four months of 2021, according to the NYPD Hate Crimes

Dashboard. During that period, 17 arrests were made, according to the data.

In comparison, the NYPD dashboard shows 28 anti-Asian incidents in all of 2020, with 23 arrests.

There were two attacks on Sunday and two on Saturday, according to the police department.

In Manhattan, two Asian women, ages 29 and 31, were

approached from behind Sunday by a person who asked them to remove their face masks, the NYPD said. Video shows the person swung a hammer at the women, who tried to fight off the attacker before walking away. The attacker wounded the 31-year-old in the head, and she was taken to a hospital, according to NYPD's hate crimes Twitter account. No arrests have been made yet, and the department is

asking for the public's help in identifying the attacker whose pictures and video were posted on the Twitter account.

In Queens on the same day, a man approached a 22-year-old Asian man from behind at the Queens Plaza subway station and punched him in the back and chest before fleeing the scene, the NYPD said in a press release, which called the assault a hate crime.

Why did the BJP lose Bengal 2021?



digits, that figure is huge. Honed old minds in Delhi have still not had the time to sit and analyse the BJP's deafening defeat in Bengal. After all, the final word on Suwendu Adhikari's win in Nandigram came pretty late. He snatched victory from Mamata Banerjee by 1,956 votes and left doomsday predictors in a fix. That seat saw much drama. The results were 'declared' three times. First, Mamata won. Then Suwendu won. Then Mamata accepted the verdict. Her party did not. And finally, the EC declared the result after 11 pm on counting day: Banglar Meye Mamata Banerjee had indeed lost the seat to Nandigram Chhele Suwendu Adhikari. Victory was Pyrrhic for both Suwendu and Mamata. He won, his party lost. Her party won, she lost. The vote in the North echoed the vote in the South. It was all for identity. For one, it was for the hope of an acknowledgement of their identity. For the other, it was to keep their identity from being snatched by the 'Goondas from Gujarat'. Mamata Banerjee played it well.

She hurt the BJP where it hurts most: identity. Week after week, as BJP national leaders went out to talk religious identity in Hindi, Mamata addressed the masses in coarse Bangla, the Bangla they understand. Every time the average Bengali saw the respected Prime Minister take digs against their CM, Mamata consolidated her base. And then, the final nail in the coffin for Bengal BJP flew in on the sturdy arms of a virus.

People have mobile phones and data in rural Bengal. As they went to fill water at the municipality tap and lamented lack of direct pipelines, they saw scenes of dead bodies piling up outside crematoriums in North India. The BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh; Delhi, where PM Modi sits (no one quite cares about Kejriwal), were overflowing with the sick and the dead. They gasped, switched to a lighter video, lifted their water cans and went back home heaving a sigh of relief: 'At least we are not in that state in this state.' Then there is the question of machismo too. Bengal has never quite

responded well to men who flaunt their muscle. The BJP never got that. Women here voted for a woman. The woman in power promised them money and a better tomorrow. For Mamata, people had a reference frame. She has done a lot for the villages. There is no industry and jobs are still a far cry but in the villages, there are roads. Every house has heard the promise of money if Didi comes back into power. The BJP had nothing to play with. Statues don't get votes. Promises of alleviating the plight of Hindu Bengalis in another country don't win votes in this one.

Since last night, my parents' phone has been flooded with WhatsApp messages. One of the forwards rued how North Bengal should not be part of Bengal any more because our politics doesn't match theirs (South Bengal). Another said Bengalis deserve 'Bhikkhasree' (alms - a play on Kanyasree, a TMC scheme for girls in Bengal) and not a better future. Yet another summed it up for everyone: "The vote for TMC was not for TMC. It was against BJP. We want jobs. We don't want a (TMC) government whose representatives want cut-money and indulge in tolabaazi. We voted for you because we did not want our fate in the hands of unknown people."

The BJP, after all, got all its votes in the name of Modi. No CM candidate was projected. Internecine battles that plague the party, don't really reach the ears of higher-ups. Down among the BJP cadres, a prevalent word goes: for every two people in the BJP, there are three factions. The party had no ground presence. Its biggest performers in the North are all ex-TMC. BJP got the TMC leaders, but the workers remained with Mamata. When the ex-TMC folks received tickets, the old BJP fumed. There is no way to know who they voted for. Soon after the TMC was declared leading in more than 200 seats, we left Cooch Behar yesterday for a drive to Chilapata. We wanted some time off before another week pounced upon us.

At the Patlakhawa bazaar, TMC supporters were readying for a rally. A man crossed our car. As he pulled up his trousers, the katta peeked out.

A five-year khela has just begun.

misconception in TV studios in Delhi and Mumbai was that people wanted anyone but Mamata Banerjee. The BJP went to town asking for votes on the shoulders of 'cut-money, tolabaazi'. In constituency after constituency, the Home Minister spoke about Didi's regime. Deeper inside, BJP local leaders asked 'Pishi' to go to Bangladesh. Their speeches had nothing new. Their promises sounded hollow. The lower-middle-class man who spent Rs 92/litre on petrol to take his bike to the Home Minister's rally and braved the April sun, came back home disappointed. There was no word about his

plight. All he heard was the promise of statues and cries of Jai Shri Ram spoken in a tongue that's not his own. For Bengalis, identity is a big player. You would realise that if you were to look at the results of Matigara-Naxalbari. The Trinamool Congress first fielded a Bengali from the seat. They then replaced him and named Rajen Sundas, a Nepali man, from a constituency that's in Darjeeling but has mostly Bengalis. The Bengali vote went to the BJP's Anandamay Barman, a Rajbongshi man, who now has won the seat by 70,848 votes. In a state where the BJP hasn't even crossed double

India, UK adopt 'Roadmap 2030', Elevate relations To 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'

"British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said: "The UK and India share many fundamental values. The UK is one of the oldest democracies, and India is the world's largest. We are both committed members of the Commonwealth. And there is a living bridge uniting the people of our countries.

The two leaders discussed the Covid-19 situation and ongoing cooperation in the fight against the pandemic, including the successful partnership on vaccines.

Nine MoUs/Declarations were agreed/announced at the summit in the areas of Enhanced Trade Partnership, Global Innovation Partnership, India-UK Migration and Mobility Partnership, Intent on cooperation in the fields of Digital and Technology, cooperation in the field of Telecommunications/ICT, Agreement on Customs Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in customs matters, on new joint



work between India and the UK on the India Energy Security Scenarios Calculator, medical products, pharmaceuticals, To a question on whether if AstraZeneca vaccine would be produced in the UK at the briefing held by the Ministry of External Affairs in India, Joint Secretary Europe (West), Sandeep Chakravorty responded in the affirmative.

He said, "Vaccine is an important area of bilateral discussion... Prime Minister Johnson did mention and inform Prime Minister Modi that Serum Institute

is investing in the UK and they will also be manufacturing in the UK. He, in particular, referred to research and collaboration on nasal vaccines,"

AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine is a collaboration between Oxford University, AstraZeneca and the Serum Institute of India and is 'developed in UK', 'Made in India', distributed globally'.

"They agreed to expand and enhance the existing UK-India vaccines partnership, highlighting the successful collaboration between Oxford University, AstraZeneca and the Serum Institute

of India on an effective Covid-19 vaccine that is 'developed in UK', 'Made in India' and 'distributed globally'. They emphasized that the international community should learn lessons and agreed to work together to reform and strengthen WHO and the global health security architecture to strengthen pandemic resilience," said the joint statement.

The two sides also discussed the early conclusion of the Free Trade Agreement between two sides. "They agreed to continue removing trade barriers on the path to an FTA, and an ambitious target of more than doubling India-UK trade by 2030," said the joint statement.

To a question whether if there is a timeline, the Indian diplomat said, "FTAs are long-drawn-out discussions but today the two leaders agreed that they will not draw it out for too long and it is in our mutual interest to conclude the FTA at an early date."

How does Covid-19 spread? Airborne possibility included in WHO's updated guidelines

understood by the scientific community. Covid-19 is still an invisible enemy. It is highly contagious. Every new strain or mutant variant of SARS-CoV-2 appears to be more infectious than the previous one.

What the doctors know for sure is that the coronavirus infection spreads fastest during pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic phases of Covid-19. This is the time when even the patient does not know that she is carrying and transmitting the virus.

HOW COVID-19 SPREADS

Transmission of Covid-19 from an infected person to a healthy one has been a matter of intense



debate ever since the disease broke out in China in December 2019. During the initial months, the WHO was not even advising masking up to prevent Covid-19 spread insisting that only

infected persons should wear a face mask.

In July 2020, independent health experts raised the pitch for a change in WHO guidelines and declaring Covid-19 as an airborne

disease. The WHO appeared to acknowledge the airborne nature of Covid-19 spread saying it could not be ruled out. However, soon the agency said there was no evidence to suggest that Covid-19 was airborne. In its July 2020 guidelines, the WHO maintained that contact and droplet transmission, and infection through fomites were the principal modes of Covid-19 spread. These modes of transmission still remain significant.

IS COVID-19 TRULY AIRBORNE?

The Covid-19 transmission debate revived this year when a

group of scientists put forth a hypothesis in The Lancet in April this year claiming "10 streams of evidence" to argue that coronavirus infection was airborne.

An MIT study in the US on reducing the risk of transmission took into account of the airborne nature of Covid-19 transmission. It said the six-foot rule of social distancing might not be valid any longer.

The growing chorus among health experts and researchers for identifying Covid-19 as an airborne disease saw the WHO updating its scientific brief on April 30.

For IPL Organisers, Loss Of Revenue Seems More Important Than Loss Of Lives Due To COVID

League (IPL). Ostensibly held in a secure 'bio-bubble' in various cities across India, where support staff, cricketers, coaches and others associated with the league are not allowed to have contact with outsiders, it seems that this edition of IPL is held in a bubble completely detached from the realities outside. Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, and Chennai, the six venues for IPL, are probably the city's worst affected by the second wave of Covid19, where thousands of patients are seen to be pleading for oxygen cylinders, medicines and

hospital beds. However, totally unaffected by the bodies piling in crematoriums and queues outside hospitals, IPL matches are being held in these cities daily, albeit mercifully without the usual razzmatazz of skimpily clad cheerleaders dancing to every boundary or wicket. It has been argued that besides causing a risk of infection to the hundreds of cricketers, staff and commentators involved in the league and potential of being a super spreader event (claims of being a secure bio bubble notwithstanding), IPL also puts pressure on the existing system and frontline workers, since the

venues and cricketers require heavy police protection as well as medical equipment, repeat RT-PCR tests as well as doctors and ambulances on standby. WASTING RESOURCES

At this hour, when the country needs to utilise all possible medical and testing resources, it is argued that diverting and wasting such scarce resources for IPL is the last thing that is required.

Although many writers and citizens have urged the BCCI to postpone IPL and hold the remaining matches at a more appropriate time (BCCI has rejected this demand as per

latest reports), almost no sportsperson, retired or active has asked for a rethink on the conduct of IPL. The honourable exception to this silence is Olympic gold medalist and ace shooter Abhinav Bindra, who poignantly noted that he is unable to tune in and watch any sport at the moment. He further rightly chided sports administrators for continuing the games despite the sad health crisis unfolding across the country and noted that cricketers or officials should not be totally blind or deaf to what is happening around them. Diehard fans of the league

say that IPL provides at least some entertainment and relief in these difficult times and helps relieve the stress and tension faced by people all through the day. They also say that since no other recreation or activity is permitted, people tune on to their televisions every evening to watch IPL and it actually makes lockdown and curfew orders bearable.

It is further argued that through commentary and other messaging, a wide section of citizens is actually nudged into wearing masks and following other COVID-appropriate behaviour.

Why do Americans die earlier than Europeans?

were attributable to Covid-19. This means that the mortality penalty that the US pays every year is equivalent to the number of American pandemic deaths in 2020. And since people tend to die from Covid at much older ages than America's typical excess deaths, the total number of years of potential life lost in an average year is three times greater than those lost to Covid in 2020 (13.0 million versus 4.4 million).

There have been many efforts to account for the US mortality disadvantage. There is no single answer, but three factors stand out. First, death rates from drug overdose are much higher in the US than in Europe and have risen sharply in the 21st century. Second is the rapid rise in the proportion of American adults who are obese. In 2016, 40% of

American adults were obese, a larger proportion than in Europe. Higher levels of obesity in the US may account for 55% of its shortfall in life expectancy relative to other rich countries. Third, the US stands out among wealthy countries for not offering universal healthcare insurance. One analysis suggests that the absence of universal healthcare resulted in 45,000 excess deaths at ages 18-64 in 2005. That number represents about a quarter of excess deaths in that age range.

Why does the US perform so poorly in these realms? We would argue that a lack of federal oversight and regulation, powerful lobbying structure, deindustrialization of American jobs, and systemic racism combine to create an annual tsunami of excess deaths.

Both supply and demand factors are involved in the increasing number of US deaths from drug overdose. Large pharmaceutical companies marketed pain relievers without adequate federal oversight of their safety claims in the 1990s, fueling overdoses of prescription opioids. Big pharma's lobbying power protected their sales campaigns. Although restrictions were eventually put in place, the damage had been done. Illegal use of opiates grew dramatically, especially among people in economically depressed areas and with lower levels of schooling.

Noting that this increase coincided with increases in mortality from suicide and alcohol-related deaths, the economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton have argued that American society is suffering from



a growing tide of despair. They argue that one of the main drivers is de-industrialization, which eliminated millions of well-paying jobs for people who did not attend college. This is the group with the largest increase in premature mortality during the 21st century. Above age 65, healthcare insurance coverage is nearly universal via Medicare. An

international review of medical practice by the National Academy of Sciences suggested that the US does comparatively well in identifying and treating cardiovascular diseases and many cancers. But the prevalence of these diseases, the principal killers in wealthy countries, is unusually high in the US.

Will corporate greed prolong the COVID-19 pandemic?

The only way to end the COVID-19 pandemic is to immunize enough people world-wide. The slogan "no one is safe until we are all safe" captures the epidemiological reality we face. Outbreaks anywhere could spawn a SARS-CoV-2 variant that is resistant to vaccines, forcing us all back into some form of lockdown.

Given the emergence of worrisome new mutations in India, Brazil, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, this is no mere theoretical threat. Worse, vaccine production is currently nowhere close to delivering the 10 billion to 15 billion doses needed to stop the spread of the virus. By the end of April, only 1.2 billion doses had been produced world-wide. At this rate, hundreds of millions of people in developing countries will remain unimmunized at least until 2023. It is thus big news that President Joe Biden's administration has announced it will join the 100 other countries seeking a COVID-19 emergency waiver of the World Trade Organization intellectual-property (IP) rules that have been enabling vaccine monopolization. Timely negotiations of a WTO agreement temporarily removing these barriers would create the legal certainty governments and manufacturers around the world need to scale up production of vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics.

Last fall, former President Donald Trump recruited a handful of rich-country allies to block any such waiver negotiations. But pressure on the Biden administration to reverse this self-defeating blockade has been growing, garnering the support of 200 Nobel laureates and former heads of state and government (including many prominent neoliberal figures), 110 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, 10 U.S. Senators, 400 U.S. civil-society groups, 400 European parliamentarians, and many others.

An unnecessary problem

The scarcity of COVID-19 vaccines across the developing world is largely the result of efforts by vaccine manufacturers to maintain their monopoly control and profits. Pfizer PFE, 0.14% and Moderna MRNA, 2.12%, the makers of the extremely effective mRNA vaccines, have refused or failed to respond to numerous requests by

qualified pharmaceutical manufacturers seeking to produce their vaccines. And not one vaccine originator has shared its technologies with poor countries through the World Health Organization's voluntary COVID-19 Technology Access Pool.

Recent company pledges to give vaccine doses to the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility, which will direct them to the most at-risk populations in poorer countries, are no substitute. These promises may assuage drug companies' guilt, but won't add meaningfully to the global supply.

As for-profit entities, pharmaceutical corporations are focused primarily on earnings, not global health. Their goal is simple: to maintain as much market power as they can for as long as possible in order to maximize profits. Under these circumstances, it is incumbent on governments to intervene more directly in solving the vaccine supply problem.

In recent weeks, legions of pharmaceutical lobbyists have swarmed Washington to pressure political leaders to block the WTO waiver. If only the industry were as committed to producing more vaccine doses as it is to producing specious arguments, the supply



problem might already have been solved.

Instead, drug companies have been relying on a number of contradictory claims. They insist that a waiver is not needed, because the existing WTO framework is flexible enough to allow for access to technology. They also argue that a waiver would be ineffective, because manufacturers in developing countries lack the wherewithal to produce the vaccine.

And yet, drug companies also imply that a WTO waiver would be too effective. What else are we to make of their warnings that it would undermine research incentives, reduce Western companies' profits, and when all other claims fail—that it would help

China and Russia beat the West geopolitically?

Obviously, a waiver would make a real difference. That is why drug companies are opposing it so vehemently. Moreover, the "market" confirms this thinking, as evidenced by the sharp decline in the major vaccine-makers' share prices just after the Biden administration's announcement that it will engage in waiver negotiations. With a waiver, more vaccines will come online, prices will fall, and so too will profits.

Still, the industry claims that a waiver would set a terrible precedent, so it is worth considering each of its claims in turn. Big Pharma's big lies After years of passionate campaigning and millions of deaths in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, WTO countries agreed

on the need for compulsory IP licensing (when governments allow domestic firms to produce a patented pharmaceutical product without the patent owner's consent) to ensure access to medicines. But drug companies never gave up on doing everything possible to undermine this principle. It is partly because of the pharmaceutical industry's tight-fistedness that we need a waiver in the first place. Had the prevailing pharmaceutical IP regime been more accommodating, the production of vaccines and therapeutics already would have been ramped up. The argument that developing countries lack the skills to manufacture COVID vaccines based on new technologies is bogus. When U.S. and European vaccine makers have agreed to partnerships with foreign producers, like the Serum Institute of India (the world's largest vaccine producer) and Aspen Pharmacare in South Africa, these organizations have had no notable manufacturing problems. There are many more firms and organizations around the world with the same potential to help boost the vaccine supply; they just need access to the technology and know-how.

Fact check: COVID-19 deaths have occurred in developing countries and among the U.S. homeless

Social media users have been sharing posts which seek to undermine the global COVID-19 pandemic by claiming that "3rd world countries" have "basically no deaths" due to COVID-19 and that there have been no deaths among homeless people in America. This claim is untrue: although the health impact of COVID-19 on the least developed countries has thus far been less severe than initially expected, there have been COVID-19 deaths recorded in developing countries as well as among the homeless population in the United States. The posts (here, here, here) show a screenshot of a tweet from July 9, 2020 (here), which says, "IF this was actually a deadly GLOBAL pandemic bodies would be PILING UP in 3rd world countries that can't socially distance & have no sanitation. But there are basically NO deaths occurring there. NOBODY in the media is even curious about this. That's all I need to know." Captions on some of the posts question COVID-19 death rates

among homeless people too, for example, "I would also appreciate someone explaining to me how the entire homeless population in America is magically immune" and "Have you seen any of the homeless dead on the sidewalks of American cities from the Chinese virus?"

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced that COVID-19 could be characterized as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (here, here). A pandemic is by definition 'global', as the word pandemic means the worldwide spread of a new disease (here). At the time of publication there had been 2,543,755 reported COVID-19 deaths worldwide, according to WHO data (covid19.who.int/).

Reuters has previously debunked other posts falsely claiming that COVID-19 is not real (here, here, here). COVID-19 DEATH TOLLS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES The term "third world country" is no longer used (here), and defining a developing or emerging market country can be difficult

(here). The World Economic Situation and Prospects report for 2020 produced by the UN principally classifies all countries into three categories: developed economies, economies in transition and developing economies (here). A list of which countries are classified in which categories can be seen here. A World Bank classification of countries by income levels is visible here.

According to WHO statistics about COVID-19 deaths worldwide (covid19.who.int/table), at the time of this article's publication, three of the five countries with the highest COVID-19 death tolls were developing economies: Brazil had the second highest total with 255,720 deaths; Mexico was third with 186,152 deaths; and India fourth with 157,346 deaths. Brazil, Mexico and India are not part of the World Bank's definition of high-income economies, either. Notably, COVID-19 deaths in Ecuador - also not a high-income country - made headlines in April

2020 when bodies piled up on the streets as authorities struggled to contain outbreaks and deaths from the disease

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LESS AFFECTED THAN EXPECTED

While some developing countries occupy high positions on the world list of total COVID-19 deaths, some of the least developed countries (LDCs) (here) are in lower positions: highest of the UN LDCs were Bangladesh in 39th place, followed by Myanmar in 63rd; and highest of the World Bank low-income economies was Afghanistan, ranked 70th in the world. The UN Conference on Trade and Development's "The Least Developed Countries Report 2020" (here), published on Dec. 3, 2020, explains (here) that although it was feared the LDCs would be the worst affected by the pandemic, the health effects had not been as serious as initially feared in the period to mid-September, for which data was available.

Covid-19 Vaccine Patent Waivers Could Take Months to Benefit Developing Nations

Lengthy international negotiations and technological challenges mean countries wouldn't immediately get relief. The U.S. decision to back an effort to open up the intellectual property underpinning Covid-19 vaccines is stirring hope that more drug manufacturers, particularly in poor countries, can start churning out shots they sorely lack.

But trade officials, health authorities and pharmaceutical executives say lengthy international negotiations required to lift patent protections and technological challenges involved in making new vaccines mean the impact of such a move may not be felt for months or years.

Instead, in the short term, additional supply could come from extra capacity drug companies are currently adding, as well as new licenses they might extend to more contract manufacturers around the world. Developing-world countries have also been pressing rich countries to release unneeded vaccines to them. On Wednesday, the U.S. said it would support a temporary waiver of provisions protecting the intellectual property associated

with Covid-19 vaccines, a move developing countries have pushed for as coronavirus infections and deaths surge in poor nations. "On the current trajectory, if we don't do more, if the entire world doesn't do more, the world won't be vaccinated until 2024," said Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday during an interview on MSNBC. "We can speed this up and get that done, I think, in a much shorter time." In early October, India, which is currently at the epicenter of the pandemic, and South Africa introduced a proposal to the World Trade Organization to waive patents linked to Covid-19 vaccines, treatments and diagnostics. They have since gained the support of more than 100 countries. People were escorted to register for a Covid-19 vaccination program in Brits, South Africa, on Friday. The country, along with India, is pressing for patents to be waived. South Africa and India will present a revised waiver proposal later this month at the WTO, said Mustaqeem de Gama, an official at South Africa's mission to the trade body. After that, talks on the scope and duration of the

waiver could take months. Lukewarm reactions in Europe to the U.S. move suggest negotiations could drag on. "We are ready to assess how the U.S. proposal could help" increase global vaccinations, Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, said Thursday. The government in Germany, home to BioNTech SE and CureVac NV, two of the leading developers of mRNA vaccines, came out against the waiver on Thursday. Even with U.S. support, governments might not agree on the details of the waiver for several more months, said WTO Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Even then, other challenges remain, she said, such as the terms under which drugmakers would transfer technical know-how to manufacturers who lack the expertise to produce vaccines. Despite momentum behind a waiver, "it will still take time," she said. "I think it would be naive to think that all of a sudden this thing is going to be resolved." It could take six to nine months before plants produce their first doses, she added. India's Covid-19 Surge Puts Pressure on Global Vaccine

Effort- India has put vaccine distribution to other countries on hold as the country battles the world's fastest-growing Covid-19 surge. The delay in distribution is hampering the global vaccination effort. Photo illustration: Laura Kammermann While negotiations continue, the WTO has hosted talks between vaccine manufacturers and drugmakers in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Egypt, Indonesia, South Africa and Senegal, that could generate new production agreements. That, along with less demand in Europe and America, may help ease acute shortages toward the latter half of this year. By August, the World Health Organization expects doses to be more widely available in developing countries. Still, poor countries are concerned that a new coronavirus variant or another pandemic altogether could once again spark a global scramble for vaccines made almost exclusively in a small number of mostly wealthier states. "You can see the concentration of manufacturing in the world and you can see that the politics of that doesn't work," said Dr. Okonjo-Iweala. "When countries are caught, it's very

difficult for them to tell their populations, 'We are going to export.' " "We don't know whether this pandemic is going anywhere. Nobody knows," she added.

Drugmakers say that waiving the intellectual property wouldn't relieve shortages quickly because contract manufacturers aren't familiar with the know-how required to make the vaccines-technical knowledge that isn't shielded by patents. Those manufacturers would also need to secure regulatory approval as well as large-scale funding to buy new machinery and adapt their production to the new technology. Brook Baker, a professor of law at Northeastern University, said that the most immediate impact of the U.S. decision would be to push companies now to cooperate in voluntary transfer of technology globally, before they are compelled. Vaccine makers also appear to be trying to increase supplies. BioNTech, which developed a Covid-19 shot with Pfizer Inc., said Thursday that it is seeking to establish a network for manufacturers to expand supply of its shot.

In developing countries, the COVID-19 crisis has not affected everyone equally

The past year has been one of the toughest in recent history, due to the harsh health, economic, and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. The impacts have been felt everywhere, with no country spared. Yet, they have not been felt the same way by everyone. Women, young and less-educated workers - groups that were likely at a disadvantage in the labor market even before the shock - were more likely to lose their job in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. This is the main finding of our recent study using data collected at the onset of the crisis in 34 mostly low and middle-income countries around the world, which account for a combined population of almost 1.4 billion. Relative to men, women were 11 percentage points more likely to have lost their job; a similar gap was found between tertiary-educated workers and those with primary education or less. Young and older workers also bore the brunt of the pandemic's jobs impact,



compared to prime-age workers. While many developing countries deployed emergency social transfers to try to mitigate the negative welfare impact of the pandemic, these have not been enough to offset the pandemic's impact. For instance, low-income countries spent about \$6 per person on COVID-19-related social protection, while lower middle-income countries spent an average of \$26 per head. As a result, job losses translated into income losses for two-thirds of households on average - more severe for households with women, young and less-educated workers - and deprived many of even the most basic

needs. The evidence from the study shows that, on average, 15.3 percent of people interviewed saw one or more adults in their household going without eating for a whole day because of lack of resources, and this was higher in households who were affected by jobs and income losses. This resonates with global estimates suggesting that between 119 and 124 million people were pushed into poverty in 2020, reverting years of hard-earned gains. One of the most unfortunate and potentially most damaging effects of this crisis will however only be visible in the longer run: The impacts of the widespread and unprecedented disruption in

learning. As schools around the world closed to contain the spread of the virus, a whopping 1.6 billion of children saw their education disrupted. The disruptions have been most severe in countries with the lowest human capital index to begin with, widening the gap with richer countries. Within countries too, the most disadvantaged children - children in rural areas in low-income households with little-educated parents - were most affected by the learning disruptions. The magnitude of this effect is substantial and could put many children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, on a more unfavorable path throughout their life.

Across countries, as vaccines are being rolled out and prospects for economic growth point to some recovery this year, we are starting to finally see some light at the end of the tunnel. However, in the same way that impacts of the pandemic have been uneven, the

recovery risks being uneven as well. The evidence from the World Bank's high-frequency surveys used for the study shows that, once more, women, little-educated workers, and young workers are returning to work at a slower pace than other groups. Our study also shows that the pandemic's effects have been most unequal in countries where pre-existing inequalities were greatest - where access to such key opportunities as basic education, clean water, and electricity are largely determined by circumstances such as location, parental background, and household wealth. In these countries, the pandemic risks further cementing inequality of opportunity unless swift action is taken. The crisis provides a reform opportunity to, once and for all, address the barriers to equal opportunities that existed pre-crisis (in access to learning, health, good jobs, child care services, and others), and that have made some groups more vulnerable.

World's Most Vulnerable Countries Lack the Capacity to Respond to a Global Pandemic Credit: MFD/Elyas Alwazir

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting people across the world. Cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus have now been detected - with the exception of a handful of countries - in the majority of the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS); three vulnerable country groups with a combined population of over 1 billion. From AfghanistanExternal link to Trinidad and TobagoExternal link and many others, borders have shut, national emergencies have been declared and restrictions in the movement of people and goods are being enforced. By their very nature, these three groups of 91 countries are particularly vulnerable to external shocks given their limited means to respond.

The pandemic threatens to impact the LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS disproportionately with potentially devastating impacts on human health, including through social and economic effects of the virus and containment policies through the months and years to come. The lack of domestic financial resources, high debt levels and fragile health systems presents an urgent challenge. What has emerged as a health crisis in the short term may well have far reaching impacts on education, human rights, food security and economic development in the long term.

The pandemic is also having a dramatic effect on global migration and tourism. Remittances comprise important revenue for most LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS, which overall provides more funds than Official Development Assistance.

As the trade impacts of the pandemic are emerging, an estimated \$50 billionExternal link drop in global exports in February 2020 alone, this has the potential to impact severely the ability of vulnerable countries to access what are increasingly precarious international markets. LDCs for instance, account for less than 2 percent of world GDP and about 1 percent of global trade in goods. LLDCs are highly dependent on international trade and?in particular, on?commodities.?A fall in commodity prices and reduction in demand for exports poses a



balance of payment challenges?and further marginalization of LLDCs in global trade. Due to their landlocked geographical location, restrictions on trade and cross-border transport may interrupt needed aid, medical equipment and basic goods flowing into LLDCs.

As advanced economies announce large-scale economic assistance and healthcare interventions, it is critical that the international community not neglect the fundamental responsibility to support those vulnerable members of the global family who have the least capacity to respond.

Supporting these vulnerable country groups will need a three-pronged approach to: (1) provide resources to stop the spread of COVID-19, (2) rapidly build capacity to curb the outbreak and (3) provision of resources to avoid economic collapse.?Both financial and technical support will be necessary to limit the impact on the most vulnerable countries.

A statement by the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, stresses that to avoid a truly devastating global tragedy, in the days, weeks and months ahead, it will be critical that the international community urgently support vulnerable countries to strengthen their health systems and their capacity to halt transmission. In an ever more interconnected world, we are only as strong as our weakest health system.

How is the United Nations responding to the pandemic? The United Nations system through its global network of regional, sub-regional and

responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19PDFExternal link. The report is a call to action, for the immediate health response required to suppress transmission of the virus to end the pandemic and to focus on people - women, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and on vulnerable groups who are already at risk.

The report calls for enhanced international support, for countries with limited ability to fund expansionary stimulus, which has been further limited in recent days by currency instability. It also calls for debt relief for countries at high risk of or in debt distress, especially LDCs and for new solutions to mobilize large injections of concessional finance - not only from multilateral development banks but also from private lenders such as pension funds,

who will be in a hunt for low-growth investment opportunities. The Secretary-General has also launched a Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19PDFExternal link, a comprehensive inter-agency response plan that aggregates and up-dates relevant existing humanitarian appeals from UN and non-UN entities.

There are three main funds and appeals launched by the UN:

1. Solidarity Response Fund: To address immediate health needs, WHO, UN Foundation and partners have launched a first-of-its-kind COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund to raise money to address immediate health needs. The Fund supports the work of WHO and partners to help countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, raising over \$150 million so far, as part of over \$800 million WHO has raised in total.

**Some Call us a Media House
Others call us an Institution to learn from**



**Delivering News,
Uncompromised
& Unbiased for the
Last 19 years**

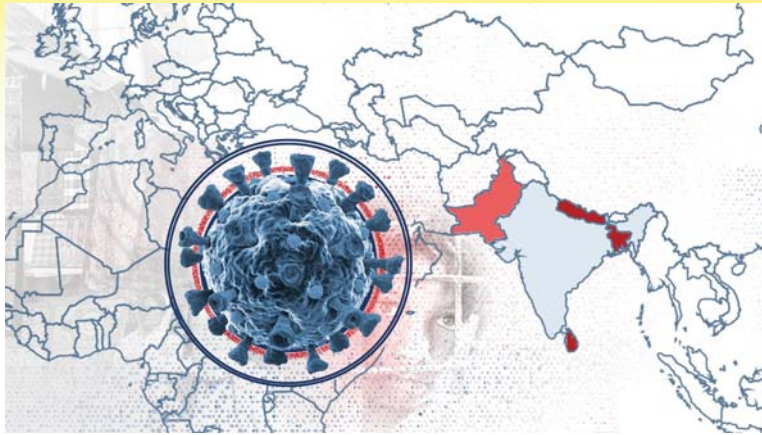
Email: editor@thesouthasianinsider.com
www.thesouthasianinsider.com

COVID-19: Is India's coronavirus crisis spilling into neighbouring countries?

India is continuing to set daily COVID case records as hospitals run out of oxygen while people die on the streets. Sky News analysis has found coronavirus infections in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka are also rising - but in Bangladesh, they are falling. Weekly infections in Nepal are 14 times higher than at the beginning of April. Cases have also increased in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, although not at the same level as in Nepal. The increase in Nepal, which has a population of 29 million, is the highest out of India's neighbours but remains less than half that of India's.

Advertisement

In fact, the four countries also have much lower infection rates than nations in several other regions in the world, including



Europe and South America. Uruguay is a current hotspot, with rates in Nepal just 14% of the South American country. However, like India, there are issues with underreporting of cases and the numbers also depend on the testing capacity in each country.

In India's four direct neighbours, there are between five and 17 tests taken for every positive case, according to Our World in

Data. The UK is currently doing more than 400 tests per case. The number of people dying with COVID-19 in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka is increasing, however, their weekly deaths are still among the lowest in the world.

Fewer than five people are recorded to have died out of one million people with coronavirus. But, because testing capacity is limited, the actual number of

people dying with the disease is likely much higher.

The number of vaccine doses given in those countries is low when compared with richer nations who are steaming ahead with their inoculation programmes.

In comparison, the UK has administered 71 doses per 100 people.

Despite Nepal having more doses delivered than Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, it has only received 15% of the more than 74,000 doses per 100,000 people delivered to the UK.

All four countries are part of the COVAX alliance, which aims to provide access to vaccines for 92 poorer countries.

Some COVAX doses have already been delivered to Bangladesh, with a population of 164.7m, and Sri Lanka, which has a population of about 21m,

UNICEF says.

These vaccines were supplied by India - which has temporarily banned vaccine exports to help bring the pandemic under control there.

Each country has also made bilateral agreements with pharmaceutical companies to supply vaccines.

Bangladesh has mainly relied on India, making a deal with laboratories there for 33.3m doses - three-quarters of the doses it will receive in total, including from COVAX.

A third of those 33.3m doses have already been shipped to Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka is also relying heavily on India for vaccines, with about half of its total doses coming from Indian labs.

It has already received 12% of the doses agreed through bilateral deals.

In India, Second Wave of Covid-19 Prompts a New Exodus

As dawn broke over Mumbai, India, on Wednesday, Kaleem Ansari sat among a crowd of thousands outside the central rail station waiting for his train to pull in. Mr. Ansari, a factory worker, carried old clothes in his backpack and 200 rupees - not quite \$3 - in his pocket.

His factory, which makes sandals, had just closed. Mumbai was locking down as a second wave of the coronavirus rippled through India. Mr. Ansari, originally from a small village nearly 1,000 miles away, had been in Mumbai a year ago when it first went into lockdown, and he had vowed not to suffer through another one.

"I remember what happened last time," he said. "I just have to get out of here."

Cities in India are once again locking down to fight Covid-19 - and workers are once again pouring out and heading back home to rural areas, which health experts fear could accelerate the spread of the virus and devastate poorly equipped villages, as it did last time. Thousands are fleeing hot spots in cities as India hits another record, with more than 200,000 daily new infections reported on Thursday. Bus stations are packed. Crowds are growing at railway stations.

And in at least some of their destinations, according to local



officials and migrants who have already made the journey, they are arriving in places hardly ready to test arrivals and quarantine the sick.

"We are less prepared," said K. Srinath Reddy, the president of the Public Health Foundation of India, who is part of the national Covid-19 task force. "The speed and scale is catching us off-balance."

India risks repeating the traumatic mass movement that occurred last year after it enforced one of the world's toughest national lockdowns, eliminating millions of jobs virtually overnight. That lockdown fueled the most disruptive migration across the Indian subcontinent since it was split in two between India and Pakistan in 1947.

Tens of millions of lowly paid migrant workers and their families fled cities by train, bus,

cargo truck, bicycle, even by blistered feet to reach home villages hundreds of miles away, where the cost of living was cheaper and they could help and be helped by loved ones.

Hundreds died on the sweltering highways. Even more died back home. The migration also played a significant role in spreading the virus, as local officials in remote districts reported that they were swamped with the sick.

This time, the Indian government has not locked down the whole country. But India's cities are increasingly enforcing lockdown-like restrictions, meaning the tide of migrant workers leaving will most likely get worse. The authorities are reluctant to use the word lockdown - like shouting "fire!" in a crowded theater - but they are tightening up.

On Tuesday night, for example, the state government of

Maharashtra, which includes Mumbai, banned public gatherings and ordered most businesses to close for the next two and a half weeks.

The authorities had little choice, health experts say. New daily infections are exceeding the heights of the first wave. Testing per capita is far behind that in the United States and other Western countries, so the true number of new infections is likely to be many times higher.

The official death rate, while still low compared with that of the United States and elsewhere, is rising. In the city of Surat, on the west coast, cremation grounds have been so relentlessly busy in recent days that some of the iron frames on which the bodies are placed have melted. In Chhattisgarh, a rural state in central India, morgues have overflowed with decomposing corpses. With the virus closing in, many people have decided to flee. "I didn't want to get sick all alone," said Ajay Kumar, a vendor of mobile phone covers, who left Bangalore this past weekend for a village in Jharkhand State. "In Bangalore, the cases are increasing. And my wife said, 'Business is not so good. Why don't you come back?'"

"At least we are together," Mr. Kumar said.

The full scope of India's ability to monitor the migration is not clear. But in some places the sudden rush of migrants appears to be taking local officials by surprise. The lack of preparations seems to mirror the larger sense that this country, whether because of fatigue or familiarity, has been more nonchalant during this second wave than it was during the first one.

Last year, officials in the large eastern state of Bihar, which supplies millions of laborers to other parts of India, intercepted migrants when they arrived at train stations. They were screened for the virus and sent to mandatory two-week quarantine whether they had symptoms or not to keep them from mixing with uninfected villagers. This time, the migrants from cities like Mumbai - where the Covid-19 positivity rate recently hit 30 percent - are simply stepping off trains or buses and walking into their communities, said Nafees Ahmad Sheikh, a cafe worker who left Mumbai last week, and two other recent arrivals. Mr. Sheikh left after rumors of an impending lockdown began spreading. He said that the train he took had been packed with migrant workers and with people traveling for a short festival period.

The Captain's Lonely corner

Ahead of Punjab Assembly election in February 2022, the desecration issue has resurfaced, disrupting CM Amarinder Singh's efforts to build bridges with party rivals.

There's hardly a year left for the next assembly election, and Punjab chief minister, Capt. Amarinder Singh can ill afford to be seen stranded alone in a political crisis. On April 10, the Punjab and Haryana High Court quashed the SIT (special investigation team) report in a 2015 case on the desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib. Seen by many in the state as a travesty of the judicial process, the issue has snowballed into a political crisis for the chief minister. The latest to join the band of critics are two of his confidants—Congress state unit chief Sunil Jakhar and cooperatives minister Sukhjinder Randhawa. Both of them resigned from their posts on April 26.

The chief minister has rejected their resignations for now. Amarinder had ticked them off for making public statements that the state government had mishandled the case. Meanwhile, his usual baiters in the Congress, cricketer-turned-neta Navjot Singh Sidhu, Rajya Sabha MP Pratap Singh Bajwa and Ludhiana MP Ravneet Bittu are busy taking potshots. These

are all powerful leaders the Captain can't afford to ignore—Sidhu has mass appeal among young Sikh voters; Bajwa is a former PCC chief and five-time cabinet minister; and Bittu is the grandson of assassinated chief minister and fallen hero, Beant Singh.

On April 27, Amarinder reacted to Sidhu's charges, alleging that the latter was once again building a case for his exit from the Congress party. In all this, the continued silence of the party high command must be worrying the chief minister. The party's top leadership has mostly ignored his complaints, especially against Bajwa (indeed rewarding him with more responsibilities), which has only further weakened Amarinder's grip on the party's state unit. Meanwhile, Jakhar in a statement has blamed the SIT fiasco on "overconfidence and a lack of political supervision". The desecration incident was first reported at a gurudwara in village Bargari of Faridkot district, and was followed by 122 similar incidents in nearby Ferozepur, Amritsar, Ludhiana

and Tarn Taran districts in October-November 2015. It's a sensitive issue for Sikhs everywhere, especially after the police firing on protesters at Kotkapura town killed two people. A section of the Sikh community sees the hand of Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, the jailed chief of the Dera Sacha Sauda sect in Sirsa, and his Dalit Sikh followers, in the incidents. Reports of the desecration of the holy book came after the Akal Takht jathedar (the highest temporal seat for the Sikhs) accepted the apology of the controversial leader for a 2007 incident, where he had allegedly worn clothes similar to those donned by Guru Gobind Singh. That decision had led to violent protests against the Dera chief, and the spiral of anger among the Panthic (religious Sikhs) voters later scorched then chief minister Parkash Singh Badal and his son Sukhbir Badal of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

In the 2017 assembly poll, Amarinder had called out the Badals as the perpetrators and vowed to put them on trial along with the cops who had opened



fire. But now, with the SIT report falling flat in the high court, his own partymen are baying for the Captain's blood. Immediately after returning to power, Amarinder had constituted an inquiry panel under retired high court judge Ranjit Singh. The judge's report called the police firing "unwarranted" and also indicted Sumedh Singh Saini, the top cop during the Badal regime, among others. The report had also hinted at the role of top functionaries of the Dera Sacha Sauda in the incidents. In the past, Amarinder had openly taken the support of Dera chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim and his son-in-law, former Congress MLA Harmander Singh Jassi. The Dera has considerable support base among the Dalits in the Malwa region of the state, perhaps why the Ranjit Singh report got a quiet burial. After the

HC verdict, the SAD is now claiming their stand has been vindicated, but other opposition parties like the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the (Sukhdev) Dhindsa-led SAD (Democratic) and the BJP are railing against Amarinder for playing politics and allowing the perpetrators to get away. On April 30, all the Sikh Panthic factionsexcept the Badal unit—are to gather at Kotkapura town to burn copies of the high court order. Even as Amarinder was dealing with the political fallout, his IGP (Inspector General of Police) Kunwar Vijay Pratap, who was heading the SIT, put in his papers. The court's adverse comments while dissolving the SIT—that the investigation report was based on the IGP's "fantasies" and asking for his removal from the case—probably led to the resignation.

Investigation of Rudy Giuliani is ramping up in a big way



Eighteen months ago, media reports indicated that Rudy Giuliani, former President Donald Trump's personal lawyer, was under scrutiny by federal prosecutors at the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York for actions related to his involvement in the Ukraine scandal that led to Trump's first impeachment. Given the time that has passed, one could be forgiven for thinking that the investigation

had petered out and that Giuliani was in the clear. All that changed early Wednesday morning, however, when FBI agents showed up at Giuliani's home and office to execute a search warrant approved by a federal judge, and later did the same with respect to fellow lawyer Victoria Toensing, a major sign that the investigation is not just still alive, but that it is ramping up in a big way. (In a statement to The Wall Street

Journal, Ms. Toensing's law firm said she had been informed she wasn't a target of the investigation.) The crimes under investigation, according to The New York Times, relate to whether Giuliani acted as an unregistered foreign agent -- namely, that if while he was working on Trump's behalf to get Ukrainian officials to announce a criminal investigation into the Bidens, Giuliani was also lobbying US officials about matters of interest to Ukrainians with whom Giuliani was working, like the removal of then-US Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch. Pursuant to the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), trying to influence US policy at the direction of a foreign actor without registering as an "agent of a foreign principal" is illegal; for national security reasons, the US government wants to know the identities of the interests behind

those lobbying US officials on matters of US and foreign policy. One may ask: why did it take so long to get around to executing search warrants? We don't know for sure, and likely never will given the confidentiality around internal deliberations involving criminal investigations at DOJ, but The New York Times is reporting that there may have been politically motivated action taken to delay and then refuse to approve the warrant under the Trump administration. Search warrants involving lawyers like Giuliani carry particularly onerous approval requirements, because of concerns around breaching the attorney-client privilege by gaining access to communications between a lawyer and his client. That means that these particular warrants would have been sent through the chain of command at the US Attorney's Office, up to

Acting US Attorney Audrey Strauss, and then down to the Justice Department in Washington for another set of approvals. In the past, approval was required from a special unit at DOJ called the Office of Enforcement Operations that handles particularly sensitive search warrants, including warrants for lawyers; now, due to a rule change, billed as a "clarification," by former Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen shortly before he left office at the end of the Trump administration, search warrant requests involving lawyers also must be approved all the way up to the Deputy Attorney General him- or herself.

Thus, in this case, before presenting the warrant to a judge, the Giuliani and Toensing search warrants also would have been approved by DOJ's second-in-command, now Lisa Monaco.

Rajasthan opens flood gates for microbreweries

Rajasthan government, on April 1, issued a notification allowing bars in the state to operate microbreweries

Marking a major departure from its conservative liquor policy, the Rajasthan government, on April 1, issued a notification allowing bars in the state to operate microbreweries. The state's excise department is its second-largest source of tax revenues and, after 15 years of stagnation, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has finally ushered in changes. The move has surprised many since Gehlot, a teetotaler and professed Gandhian, is not known to be sympathetically inclined towards stakeholders in the liquor business. The apparent change of heart and the new liquor policy are, in fact, driven by the desperate need to shore up state revenues-for possible government interventions during the ongoing pandemic. The loss of revenue has, of course, been exacerbated by the pandemic and its devastating effect on tourism. A new, more liberal liquor policy, it is reasoned, might ease the flow of revenues into the state coffers. To this end, aside from the go-ahead for microbreweries in bars, new excise rules were

also announced on February 6. The state has also allowed an additional 2,100 urban vendors to sell both IMFL (Indian-made foreign liquor) and country liquor, raising the total number of vendors selling both IMFL and country liquor from 5,600 to 7,700. The new policy also does away with the lottery system for allotment of liquor shops. In its place, an e-auction system has been introduced. Welcoming the move, Nilesh Mewara, president of the Rajasthan Liquor Welfare Society, says: "This will give genuine bidders better choice and a chance to own two shops in a city and five in the state, as opposed to the earlier lottery system. Many winners used to sell off their shops."

The policy has also done away with the much-reviled Covid surcharge, which will reduce the rates of beer and other ready-to-drink bottled alcoholic beverages by 20 per cent. The excise department has set a revenue target of Rs 13,000 crore this year against Rs 11,500 crore last year, when, due to the Covid lockdowns, the state could only

reach Rs 9,700 crore, says T. Ravikant, secretary, revenue. "This year, the government has already earned Rs 9,890 crore from the auction, with another Rs 500 crore expected from the auction of the leftover 600 shops," he adds. An additional Rs 3,500 crore will come from the various fees applicable. Gehlot has also earmarked Rs 500 crore for tourism in the state. "These are pleasant surprises," says Randhir Vikram Singh Mandawa, president of Indian Heritage Hotels Association, co-chairman of FICCI Rajasthan State Council, and CMD, Mandawa Hotels. "Gehlot has thought about us when the Centre has been indifferent to the Corona-massacred tourism sector."

Tourism in Rajasthan, despite being a major source of revenue, has not been lavished the kind of attention many feel it deserves. The sector contributes, according to some estimates, about 15 per cent (much higher than the national average of 9 per cent), to the desert state's GDP, which lacks



big industry or major trade and agriculture. In fact, tourism was granted industry status in Rajasthan in 1989 without the state government having done much about it.

The tourism bodies are now working on a proposal demanding that industry benefits-relief in electricity rates and urban and municipal taxes, currently being charged on commercial basis-be extended to the Covid-hit sector. "The government should be rushing to bring tourism on par with industry if it wants to save its golden goose," says Kuldeep Singh Chandela, president of the Hotel and Restaurant Association of Rajasthan and of the Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators. Many, however, believe that these liquor- and tourism-related

measures are too little and have come too late. "People, including women and the youth, have moved on from beer to whisky. I wonder if anyone will be able to recover the heavy investment required in setting up a microbrewery when half a dozen good brands of beer are available easily," says Ajay Singh Balunda, who runs The Rocks, a restobar in Jaipur. The excise department has fixed the licence to establish a microbrewery at Rs 5 lakh with a daily production cap of 1,000 litres. The excise duty imposed will be Rs 60 per litre. Balunda feels that allowing the sale of hard liquor in restaurants and bars would have been better. Rajasthan currently allows the sale of hard liquor only in hotels with a minimum number of 20 rooms.

Inside a smuggling operation moving migrants across the US-Mexico border



The blue sedan looked like any other driving along a Mexican highway until the mid-morning sun glinted off long, thin pieces of metal lashed to the car's left side: A column of rebar about 20 feet long was tied precariously to the side mirror. In most other places in Mexico, this might have just been some workers doing construction without the right truck for the job. But this car was driving right along the border wall in Ciudad Juárez, a city just south of the US-

Mexico line, with El Paso, Texas on the other side -- a city where human smuggling abounds.

Two human smugglers, called polleros in this part of the world, were in the car along with two migrants in the backseat who wanted to cross illegally into the United States. And as we would soon see, the group would use that rebar column as a makeshift ladder to hoist those two migrants up and over the wall and into the US. Tens of thousands of migrants arrive at the US border

each week, with record-setting numbers of unaccompanied minors among them. The spike in numbers has once again overwhelmed an unprepared US immigration system, which has faced this type of crisis repeatedly in years past but has yet to resolve entrenched problems like overburdened asylum courts and facilities ill-equipped for housing children.

The resurgence has also put a renewed focus on the role human smugglers play in getting so many migrants to the border.

The business of migrant smuggling

The smugglers are brothers and run the business out of their family home, smuggling people into the US with the help of one brother's 14-year-old son. Makeshift ladders laid out in the backyard were the only real giveaway of the family business. "It's super light," said the 14-year-old, picking up one of the ladders.

He works with his father and uncle moving somewhere between 10 to 35 migrants per week on average, he says.

Lately, that number has been on the high side.

"Dozens are crossing everyday around here, it's very high," said one brother. "From the top of the wall in my backyard you can see people running, so many are jumping the wall."

There is scant data to quantify the exact number of migrants using smugglers' services to make this journey. But most experts agree that many have used a smuggler for at least a part of their journey, in ways that can vary from a taxi ride between towns to an "all-inclusive" service that takes migrants from start to finish.

A 2018 report from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimated that more than 800,000 migrants from around the world were smuggled into Mexico and from

there, smuggled or attempted to be smuggled into the US annually, based on a review of data from 2014 and 2015.

Only a fraction of migrants avoid being caught before making it to their final US destination, despite the enormous fees required to make the trip.

Costs can range from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands depending on a number of factors, largely based on the total distance of the journey and how many borders need to be crossed, according to the report. The amounts can leave migrants penniless, many of whom are migrating in the first place due to extreme poverty in their countries of origin.

The UN report estimated that the business of trying to get people into Mexico and the US illegally was worth about \$4 billion annually using data from 2014 and 2015, an estimate it calls conservative.

Covishield production in full swing, will return to India in few days, says SII's Adar Poonawalla from London



Serum Institute's Adar Poonawalla, who is currently in the UK to meet his family members, has said he will return to India in a few days. The SII CEO also has said that the production of Covid vaccine Covishield is in full swing in Pune and that he will review the operations once he is back in India.

Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla has said he will return to India from London in a few days.

Speaking about the pressures he was under over the production of Covid-19 vaccines to meet the ever-increasing demand in India, Adar Poonawalla posted a midnight tweet that he will return to India in a few days.

"Had an excellent meeting with all our partners & stakeholders in the UK. Meanwhile, pleased to state that Covishield's production is in

full swing in Pune. I look forward to reviewing operations upon my return in a few days," Adar Poonawalla wrote on Twitter.

Coronavirus Live Updates

Adar Poonawalla also added that the production of Covid-19 vaccine Covishield is in full swing in Pune and he will review the operations once he is back in the country.

Why is Serum Institute CEO in London? Adar Poonawalla answers

In an interview with 'The Times',

Adar Poonawalla talked about receiving aggressive calls from some of the most powerful people in India, demanding supplies of Covishield -- the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine that the Serum Institute is producing in India.

That pressure was largely behind his decision to fly into London to be with his wife and children, the 40-year-old entrepreneur had said in the interview on Saturday.

"I'm staying here [London] for an extended time because I don't want to go back to that situation. Everything falls on my shoulders but I can't do it alone...I don't want to be in a situation where you are just trying to do your job, and just because you can't supply the needs of X, Y or Z you really don't want to guess what they are going

to do," Poonawalla had told the newspaper.

Last week, Adar Poonawalla was accorded 'Y' category security in view of "potential threats" to the businessman.

"The level of expectation and aggression is really unprecedented.

It's overwhelming. Everyone feels they should get the vaccine. They can't understand why anyone else should get it before them," Poonawalla had said.

The businessman had indicated in the interview that his move to London is also linked to business plans to expand vaccine manufacturing to countries outside India, which may include the likes of the UK.

"There's going to be an announcement in the next few

days," Adar Poonawalla had said when asked about Britain as one of the production bases outside India.

'Really grasping for all the help we can get'

According to the newspaper, by the time the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine was approved in January this year, the Serum Institute of India (SII) had increased its annual production capacity from 1.5 to 2.5 billion doses at a cost of USD 800 million, and stockpiled 50 million doses of Covishield.

The company began exporting to 68 countries, including Britain, as India seemed to have been over the worse, until the situation worsened in recent weeks.

Walmart to donate 20 oxygen-generating plants, cryogenic containers to India to fight Covid-19



Walmart will donate up to 20 oxygen-generating plants and 20 cryogenic containers to India for the storage and transportation of the life-saving gas, and also provide USD 2 million to non-governmental organisations to help them fight the devastating surge in coronavirus cases, the American retail giant has announced.

Walmart will donate up to 20 oxygen-generating plants and 20 cryogenic containers to India for the storage and transportation of the life-saving gas, and also provide USD 2 million to non-governmental

organisations to help them fight the devastating surge in coronavirus cases, the American retail giant has announced.

The decision by Walmart came as India continues to witness a steep increase in the number of

COVID-19 cases and deaths, crippling its health facilities, especially the supply of oxygen. "Walmart will donate up to 20 oxygen-generating plants and 20 cryogenic containers for oxygen storage and transportation, as well as more than 3,000 oxygen concentrators and 500 oxygen cylinders for delivering oxygen therapy to patients at home or in hospital," Arkansas-headquartered company said in a statement.

These are being sourced globally

and will be donated to hospitals and NGOs in India for distribution.

Walmart and the Walmart Foundation have also committed to fund an additional 2,500 oxygen concentrators as part of the US-India Business Council and US-India Strategic Partnership Forum's joint relief effort, the statement said.

According to the statement, the Walmart Foundation is donating USD 2 million to support various NGOs in India.

A total of about USD 1 million will be allocated through the Walmart Foundation Disaster Relief Fund, a donor advised fund, to recommend support for Doctors for You to operate isolation centers and temporary hospitals, as well as provide personal protective equipment for frontline medical workers.

The other USD 1 million will be allocated to GIVE Foundation Inc. to support GiveIndia's COVID response fund, which will support physical infrastructure and equipment for the medical sector in India, prioritising the most impacted and vulnerable communities, it said.

Walmart Canada will also support relief efforts through the Canadian Red Cross India COVID-19 Response Appeal, funding ambulance and transport services for patients, quarantine isolation centers and other services, the media release said. Till Saturday, coronavirus cases in India hit a record daily high with over 4 lakh new infections being reported in the last 24 hours, while the active cases crossed the 32-lakh mark, according to data updated by the Union Health Ministry.

CVS and Walgreens wasted more COVID-19 vaccines than most states combined

Two major U.S. pharmacies are responsible for wasting thousands of COVID-19 vaccine doses, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CVS and Walgreens accounted for 70% of wasted vaccines in the country, nearly 128,500 shots, according to government data obtained by Kaiser Health News. The CDC reported 182,874 shots were wasted through the end of March.

CVS accounted for around 49% of shots wasted while Walgreens accounted for 21%, the data shows.

The vaccines wasted from pharmacies



surpassed the number of shots wasted from all of the U.S. states combined. Indeed, states and major cities made up just 23.3% of wasted COVID-19 vaccines

while federal agencies accounted for only 1.54% of unused vaccines, according to the Daily News.

The Pfizer vaccine, the first vaccine to become available in the U.S., accounted for the most wasted vaccine dosages making up 60% of shots that were thrown out. CVS spokesperson Michael DeAngelis told KHN in an email that wasted doses were a result of "issues with transportation restrictions, limitations on redirecting unused doses, and other factors."

When to stop drinking caffeine to get a good night's sleep



You may want to say, "Well, let's try to cut down caffeine and not drink it after a certain time in the afternoon and see if that improves my sleeping habits." So it's really something every individual has to experiment with for themselves -- how much caffeine they drink and when they drink it.

CNN: What factors affect how we react to caffeine?

Van Dam: Your lifestyle makes a difference. For example, people who smoke metabolize caffeine in the liver about twice as fast. If you're a smoker, likely you can drink caffeine up to a later time and still be OK in terms of sleeping.

But there are other factors, like if you use oral contraceptives as a woman, it takes twice as long to metabolize caffeine. It may be that you were able to drink caffeine in the evening and still sleep well, and then you start using oral contraceptives and you may see that you can't sleep as well anymore.

Genetics also plays a role, since some people have variants in their genetic code that affects

enzymes in the liver that metabolize and get rid of the caffeine. This can make you metabolize it slower or faster, too.

CNN: How much caffeine is too much?

Van Dam: In general, it's recommended by associations like the U.S. Food & Drug Administration to keep caffeine at 400 milligrams per day or less. If you look at a normal 8-ounce cup of coffee, that has about 100 milligrams of caffeine, so that would be up to four cups of coffee per day.

Another recommendation is to keep it to no more than 200 milligrams per sitting. Even though you may drink four cups a day, you don't want to drink four cups in one go -- that will be too much for the body to metabolize, for most people at least.

CNN: Is caffeine for everyone?

Van Dam: Caffeine does truly pick you up a little bit and make you even more alert. So particularly for people with routine tasks, it can be beneficial. For example, if you

must drive a lot at nighttime, or if you're in the military and you're on duty to monitor, but nothing is really happening for hours on end.

But not everybody will need it. You may have enough energy or get good enough sleep that you can go through the day without any caffeine.

And there's no reason to drink it if you don't want to. Because even if you like the taste of coffee, you can always drink decaffeinated coffee, and there's nothing wrong with that either.

CNN: Is caffeine safe?

Van Dam: Recently, people have been very concerned about caffeine in relation to cancer risk, cardiovascular risk or other health outcomes. And the research on that has actually been very reassuring. By now, coffee is probably one of the most studied beverages.

So, if you're enjoying coffee, you're enjoying caffeine, and you can consume it in moderation and you don't have any detrimental effects -- you don't really have to worry too much about the health effects of coffee or caffeine.

Many of us start our days the same way: with a cup of coffee or tea. Caffeine is as much a part of our routine as brushing our teeth or getting dressed for the day.

Maybe your habit extends to a cup of coffee in the afternoon, or you have a soda with your dinner. And maybe as a result, you laid in bed awake later thinking of where you went wrong instead of getting needed sleep.

Rob M. van Dam, a researcher in epidemiology and nutrition from the National University of Singapore, explains when to wisely consume caffeine, what qualifies as too much and what to know about why it affects each of us differently.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

CNN: How do we know when it's time to stop drinking coffee during the day so we can still get a good night's sleep?

Rob van Dam: That sounds like a simple question, but unfortunately there's not one answer to it. And that's because different people react very differently to caffeine.

If you're getting tremors, feeling suddenly nervous, or your heart rate is changing, it could well be that you're drinking too much caffeine. And similarly, it can interfere with a good night's sleep.

Americans are not getting the mental health treatment they need, report says

Americans are not getting the mental health assistance they need during the worst pandemic of the last century, according to the inaugural State of the Nation's Mental Health report released Monday by Anthem, the largest for-profit managed health care company in the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. That is especially true for the youngest, oldest and most impoverished -- the very groups often hardest hit by the sickness, death and economic uncertainty brought on by Covid-19, the report said. "Rates of anxiety and depression reported by patients went up and yet the ability to access mental health services actually went down," said Dr. Shantanu Agrawal, Anthem's chief health officer. The Anthem publication follows a report released Friday by the US Government

Accountability Office exploring the country's ability to access mental and behavioral health services during the pandemic.

The GAO reported that 68% of nearly 3,400 community clinics that serve low-income people with mental health and substance abuse conditions had to cancel, reschedule or turn away patients over the past three months due to lack of staff or funds.

"Our community health clinics were already underfunded before the pandemic, so if you then have any reduction in

revenue that has an immediate effect," said Chuck Ingoglia, the president and CEO of the National Council for Behavioral Health, which represents many of the nation's community clinics.

"Covid has disproportionately impacted low-income

individuals, and these are the same individuals that are served by our member agencies," Ingoglia said. "Yet at the same time it has been harder for them to continue to access their necessary mental health or substance abuse treatment."



'A perfect storm for mental health needs'

For over a year now, the pandemic has shaken the United States to its core, delivering one devastating blow after another and cracking the very foundations of our lives -- mentally, physically,

emotionally. Add to that the stress of "a burgeoning alcohol and drug crisis ... deep structural problems related to social injustice in our country" and we have "a kind of perfect storm for mental health needs," said Dr. Charles Marmar, the chairman of the department of psychiatry at NYU Langone Medical Center. "There is a profound increase in the need for high quality, accessible, equitable mental health care for all Americans. There is

no question about that," said Marmar, who also directs the Center for Alcohol Use disorder and PTSD at NYU. Warning signs of what Marmar calls a "wave of devastation" due to the mental health consequences of Covid-19 have been mounting for some time. Within two months

of lockdown in 2020, a Kaiser Family Foundation poll found worry or stress had led 56% of US adults to experience at least "one negative effect on their mental health and well-being, such as problems with sleeping or eating, increased alcohol use or worsening chronic conditions." Almost 41% of Americans were struggling with mental health issues stemming from the pandemic, including depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts, according to a US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey conducted in June 2020. In August of last year, the Commonwealth Fund looked at mental health concerns around the world and found the US ranked first among nine nations, including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK.

The Disciple movie review

A demanding drama from master-in-the-making Chaitanya Tamhane

The Disciple movie review: Director Chaitanya Tamhane's new film, out on Netflix, is a demanding drama about obsession; another major step in the creative evolution of one of India's most promising young filmmakers.

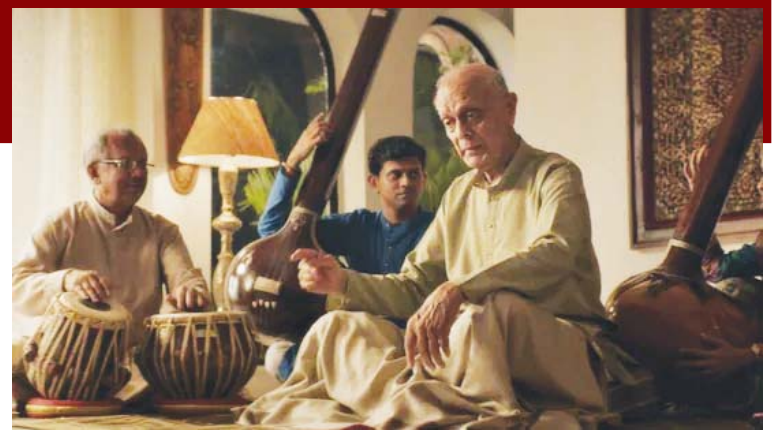
The Disciple

Director - Chaitanya Tamhane
Cast - Aditya Modak, Arun Dravid
The music in The Disciple brings to mind that scene from La La Land, in which Ryan Gosling's Seb, a lifelong devotee, explains jazz to Emma Stone's Mia, who thinks of it as elevator music. "It's not relaxing," Seb says, on the verge of losing it. "It's conflict, and it's compromise, and it's new, every time. It's very, very exciting." There are several scenes in The Disciple, director Chaitanya Tamhane's second feature film, in which discerning crowds gather to watch a performance of Indian classical music. They bob their heads gently, their bodies swaying in near-unison to the 'raagas'. I have read foreign journalists who watched the film at the Venice and Toronto International Film Festivals describe the music as 'soothing', mistaking it, perhaps

like Mia, for what you'd hear in the lobby of a Taj, or at Saravana Bhawan. It's likely that you're reminded of Damien Chazelle's films while watching this one, obsessed as it is with obsession. But thematically and tonally, Tamhane's follow-up to his modern masterpiece Court has more in common with Japanese cinema.

"Till the age of 40, we didn't think of anything but practice," the aspiring 24-year-old musician Sharad Nerulkar's 'guruji' tells him in one scene, after Sharad displays a hint of impatience. Guruji isn't a hothead like JK Simmons' instructor from Chazelle's Whiplash, but more reserved, like chef Jiro Ono, whose relationship with his son was documented so thoughtfully in Jiro Dreams of Sushi. Guruji's expectations of Sharad aren't dissimilar to what the greatest sushi chefs

demand of their apprentices - years of dedication perfecting knife work and rice-making, before they can even attempt crafting the actual dish. Sharad reminded me of director Goro Miyazaki, a man who reluctantly followed in his illustrious father's footsteps, but learned some time later that he simply wasn't cut out for it. Like Studio Ghibli's internal affairs, succession plays a key role in The Disciple as well. Sharad grew up hearing his father wax lyrical about the legendary Maai, an idealistic singer who refused to perform for crowds, or allow her music to be recorded. One of Maai's disciples was Sharad's own Guruji; this isn't conveyed in as many words, but it's almost as if Sharad believes that he belongs to some sort of holy bloodline.



Conquering the world of classical music isn't merely his artistic ambition, but a spiritual quest. He is a samurai, a monk who goes on nighttime bike rides in Mumbai, almost as an act of meditation. On his rides, filmed entirely in slow-motion, he listens to rare recordings of Maai's lectures, in which she speaks about resisting temptation - Bollywood is but a block away - and the importance of remaining 'lonely and hungry'. Later, when he is getting pictures taken for his website, the photographer asks him to loosen up a little. "Smile, you enjoy singing, don't you?" he asks. The

look on Sharad's face suggests that the photographer might as well have asked for his mother's hand in marriage; it's been a while since he 'enjoyed' doing anything. As languidly paced as it is, there is a claustrophobic quality to The Disciple that is hard to ignore. Like its protagonist, the film never takes it easy; Sharad has no friends to speak of, he has no hobbies, no real job, and no interests beyond singing. There's a sense that he's continuing down this demanding path because of an escalation in commitment - he has invested far too much energy into this to turn back around.

Without Remorse movie review:

Magnetic Michael B Jordan can't save Amazon's flimsy franchise-starter

Without Remorse movie review: Michael B Jordan stars in director Stefano Sollima's franchise-starter, out on Amazon Prime Video.



Without Remorse

Director - Stefano Sollima
Cast - Michael B Jordan, Jamie Bell, Jodie Turner-Smith, Guy Pearce
A lot of people watched Sicario, but no one was more impressed by the film than director Stefano Sollima, who has since dedicated his career to mimicking it. Not only did Sollima direct the actual sequel - Sicario: Day of the Soldado - but he also brought the same, spare style to his terrific crime series ZeroZeroZero, and now, to Amazon's Without

Remorse. But what worked marvellously in the past has proven to be the absolute worst approach this time around. Sollima's minimalist style simply doesn't translate to Tom Clancy's maximalist world - the Ryanverse. He has dealt with themes of institutional corruption before, but he puts that on the back burner in Without Remorse, a film that is stitched together by a series of action set pieces with the barest hints of a plot. As an action director, his bare-bones style leaves a lot to be desired. In many

ways, Sollima represents the utopian ideal of what many, including myself, often desire of mainstream Hollywood - filmmaking that refuses to conform to familiar old tricks. But there's a reason why Nicolas Winding Refn never actually directed a James Bond film, despite having come very close at one point - as tantalising as the prospect might sound, finding a common ground between his arthouse sensibilities and Bond's bombast would have been too wide a chasm to cross.

The closest analogy I can think of also involves Refn, and his 2011 cult classic Drive. Marketed as an action-heist film in the vein of the Fast & Furious franchise, the film earned a 'C-' CinemaScore from audiences, despite glowing critical reviews. An angry woman actually filed a lawsuit against the distributor for

the 'misleading' trailer that they cut. I can imagine baffled Boomers tuning into Without Remorse and contemplating legal action as well. Not because it's bad - it isn't; it's mediocre - but because it really isn't what you'd expect. A blatant attempt to appeal to a younger demographic - as has become rather common these days, the protagonist has been racially overhauled here - Without Remorse bears little resemblance to Clancy's Cold War thrillers. Michael B Jordan stars as John Clark, the writer's second most popular character, after Jack Ryan, who has a series that airs on the same streamer. Previously played on film by Willem Dafoe and Liev Schreiber, John Clark gets an origin story in Without Remorse. It establishes, in its opening scene, not only his formidable physicality, but also his ideology. We watch as multiple

members of his SEAL team are assassinated one by one, in abruptly structured scenes. When they come for Clark, they find his pregnant wife instead. Her brutal murder compels him to go rogue. This might seem like a tired trope in spy thrillers, but it's really radical, if you consider it in an Indian context. While our industry has virtually made it impossible to question institutions, here's a movie, muddled as it might be, that features a protagonist who not only actively turns his back on his nation, but also questions how men and women like him have been exploited by it. "I'll show them what a pawn can do to a king," he says in one scene, before unleashing a tirade of vengeful violence that attracts the attention of the President and his cronies.



Farhan Akhtar's Toofaan postponed due to Covid crisis

The release date of Farhan Akhtar's Toofaan has been postponed. Directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, Toofaan's release has been delayed due to the severity of the second wave

of the novel coronavirus pandemic in India. The sports drama was supposed to premiere on Amazon Prime Video on May 21, but has been pushed keeping the current crisis in mind.

TOOFAAN RELEASE DATE POSTPONED

Toofaan is produced by Ritesh Sidhwani, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra and Farhan Akhtar. Announcing that Toofaan's

release date has been pushed, the makers wrote in a statement, "The situation in India is truly heart-breaking, and we at Excel Entertainment and ROMP Pictures send our thoughts and

prayers to everyone affected by the pandemic. In light of the the severity of the situation, our focus is completely on the pandemic and on supporting our employees, their families and in helping the wider community. Therefore, we have taken the decision to postpone the release of our film Toofaan until the situation improves. We will issue an update regarding the new release date in due course of time (sic)."

It further read, "Please continue to observe Covid Appropriate Behaviour. Also, please register and get vaccinated when it's your turn. On behalf of the entire team of Toofaan, we urge you to Stay Home, Stay Safe and Stay United. Jai Hind (sic)."

ABOUT TOOFAAN

Besides Farhan, Toofaan also stars Mrunal Thakur, Paresh Rawal, Supriya Pathak Kapur and Hussain Dalal. The film was earlier set to hit the big screen on September 18, 2020. However, due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, the makers have opted for the OTT route. Now, its new release date is awaited.

Kangana Ranaut Permanently Removed From Twitter After Controversial Post



Actor Kangana Ranaut's Twitter account has been permanently suspended after a controversial tweet related to the post-election result violence in Bengal. The account repeatedly violated Twitter policy on "hateful conduct and abusive behavior", the social media site said on Tuesday. The 34-year-old actor, unfazed, accused Twitter of race bias. "I have many platforms I can use to raise my voice, including my own art in the form of cinema," she told news agency ANI. In the tweet that appears to

have spurred this action, the actor seems to urge Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "tame" Mamata Banerjee using his "Virat Roop" from "early 2000s" in Bengal. She was reacting to a tweet by journalist-BJP leader Swapan Dasgupta on the violence in Bengal since election results were announced on Sunday; Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress - which won a landslide victory - and the BJP have blamed each other for the clashes and arson. Kangana Ranaut's tweet sparked outrage

and calls for action against the strident actor, whose timeline is filled with vitriolic posts.

"We've been clear that we will take strong enforcement action on behavior that has the potential to lead to offline harm. The referenced account has been permanently suspended for repeated violations of Twitter Rules specifically our Hateful Conduct policy and Abusive Behaviour policy," a Twitter spokesperson said, adding that the rules were applied judiciously and impartially to all.

"I'm In The Worst Shape Of My Life": Will Smith's Latest Post Is As Real As It Gets

Attention folks! Will Smith has got something to confess about his physique - he is "in the worst shape of his life." In his latest post on Instagram, the 52-year-old actor, in the most honest way, showed that he has gained those extra kilos amid the coronavirus pandemic but he doesn't shy away from revealing it. Will Smith posted a picture of himself wearing a pair of tight black shorts and a blue unzipped hoodie exposing his stomach and chest. "I'm gonna be real wit

y'all," he wrote in the caption and added: "I'm in the worst shape of my life." In the comments, friends



and fans of the actor applauded him for his brutally honest photo. "You're a real one for this,"

commented YouTuber Casey Neistat while musician Ahmir Khalib Thompson wrote: "This is the most amazing post in the history of social media." British singer-songwriter Sonna Rele commented: "You're Will Smith!! You can be in whatever shape you want." Celebs like King Bach, Joel Kinnaman and singer Harry Hudson dropped several laughing icons in the comments section. Will Smith's Instagram feed is the best source of laughter if you are having a bad day.

Huma Qureshi shares her poster for Zack Snyder's Army of The Dead with note about Covid

Huma Qureshi on Thursday, April 29, revealed her character poster for Zack Snyder's Army of the Dead. The actress plays the role of a mother named Geeta in the film. She also shared a note about the current Covid-19 condition in the country. Director Snyder shared the character posters

of other lead actors of the zombie thriller. The trailer of the film was released on April 13. Alongside Huma, the film also stars Dave Bautista, Ella Purnell, Omari Hardwick, Ana de la Reguera, Theo Rossi, Matthias Schweighöfer, Nora Arnezeder, Hiroyuki Sanada, Tig Notaro,

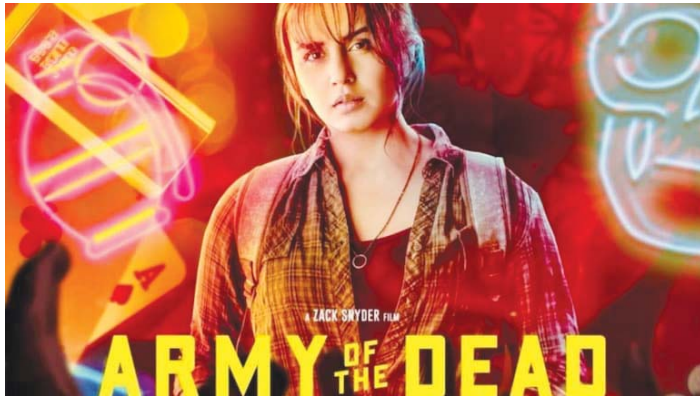
Raúl Castillo, Samantha Win, Michael Cassidy, Richard Cetrone and Garret Dillahunt.

WHAT DID HUMA QURESHI POST?

Huma Qureshi shared a motion poster of her character from the zombie film, Army of the Dead, which will release on Netflix. Sharing the poster, she wrote, "Another reason to stay at home #ArmyOfTheDead @netflix @netflix_in #Geeta #HumaQureshi @netflixgeeked (sic)."

HUMA'S NOTE ABOUT INDIA'S COVID CONDITION

Along with the motion poster, Huma also shared a note expressing her concern about the rising Covid-19 cases in the country and how people are struggling to find medical care. She wrote that she is extremely saddened to hear about the pain of people affected by the pandemic, however, she has to fulfil her



work commitments and therefore shared the poster. Her statement reads, "My heart bleeds as my country and my fellow Indians fight personal loss, hurt, pain and devastation every day because of the Covid-19 pandemic. I stand alongside them in sharing every bit of it with them. With a heavy heart however, in keeping with my duties as a professional, I share my work for all of you to view. 'Army of The Dead' the Zack Snyder film I shot through 2019. Releasing on May 14th 2021 in select theatres and 21st May on Netflix

(sic)." She added, "Urging those who are safe to continue staying safe and follow every possible regulation in these torrid times, while dedicating my work to those who have encountered the wrath of this pandemic and wishing them health & peace (sic)."

H U M A Q U R E S H I MAKES BLINK AND MISS APPEARANCE IN THE TRAILER

The trailer of Army of the Dead was dropped on April 13. It is gripping from the word go. High-octane action sequences and some edge-of-the-seat moments in the trailer promises the film will be equally thrilling. Huma Qureshi is making her Hollywood debut with the film. In the trailer, however, she makes a blink-and-miss appearance.



Deepika Padukone tests positive for Covid-19 after her family

Deepika Padukone has tested positive for Covid-19. While the actress hasn't posted any update about this, according to reports, she tested Covid positive on Tuesday (May 4). She is currently with her family in Bangalore.

DEEPIKA PADUKONE IS COVID POSITIVE - Earlier in the day, Deepika's father and ace badminton player Prakash Padukone, was hospitalised after

experiencing prolonged fever. He, his wife and younger daughter Anisha are also Covid positive. Now, even Deepika has tested positive according to reports.

WHAT'S ON THE WORK FRONT?

Deepika Padukone has a host of films lined up. She will be seen sharing screen space with husband Ranveer Singh in 83. Ranveer is playing the role of Kapil Dev in the film while Deepika will be seen playing

his wife Romi Dev. The actress has wrapped up the shooting of Shakun Batra's yet-to-be-titled film with Siddhant Chaturvedi. Deepika will also be seen in Shah Rukh Khan's Pathan. The actress also has Fighter with Hrithik Roshan and an untitled project with Prabhas lined up. Additionally, Deepika Padukone and Amitabh Bachchan will reunite for the Indian adaptation of The Intern.



X-Men star James McAvoy urges fans to donate to India for fight against Covid

India has been battling the second wave of the novel coronavirus pandemic. The crisis has received global attention. Recently, James McAvoy made an appeal to his fans on social media to contribute to India's fight against Covid-19. The actor is best known for X-Men series.

JAMES MCAVOY ASKS FANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO INDIA'S FIGHT AGAINST COVID

James McAvoy asked his fans and followers to make donations to India's fight against Covid as the country



Bio. @daivikfoundation (sic)."

is struggling with "massive" shortage of oxygen amid the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

He is heard saying, "I think everyone is aware of the situation in India right now. It is really bad. There is a massive crisis and there is a lack of oxygen." He then asked his fans to donate or spread the message so that others can. James captioned the video, "India needs help. You can help donate what you can if you can. Link to just giving page in my



The South Asian

INSIDER

Voice of South Asian Community

Since March 2002



Vol. 20

Issue 10

Friday 8 May to 15 May 2021

\$1

www.thesouthasianinsider.com

Why did the BJP lose Bengal 2021?

The BJP was handed a resounding defeat by Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress in the West Bengal State Assembly Elections 2021. How did the BJP, who claimed Ab Ki Baar 200 Paar, get it so wrong?

(SAI Bureau)- It is a new day in Bengal. As I hear the koel call out to its mate from the thin mattress in my home, the call sounds particularly melodious this morning. No, not because of the election results. But because it is finally over. It has been a long election. This election has drawn blood, pushed people to the all-devouring mouth of Covid, and burnt homes. This election has seen violence till late last night. BJP offices have been set on fire and BJP MLAs have been attacked. The media has been heckled. It has been a long election. It has been an election on the hope of change. People voted for change; change of their fate; not necessarily for a 'bahiragoto' (outsider) government. The common



(Contd on page 32)

How does Covid-19 spread? Airborne possibility included in WHO's updated guidelines



(SAI Bureau)- It has been 13 months since the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 a pandemic. Since then, the world has got several vaccines against it - a record for fastest vaccine development. An Indian pharmaceutical company has announced a drug that can potentially treat Covid-19 giving hope that doctors will now actually be able to control the disease rather than just manage symptoms while the virus runs through its course in a patient's body. Yet, Covid-19 and SARS-CoV-2, the pathogen, are far from being completely

(Contd on page 32)

Why do Americans die earlier than Europeans?



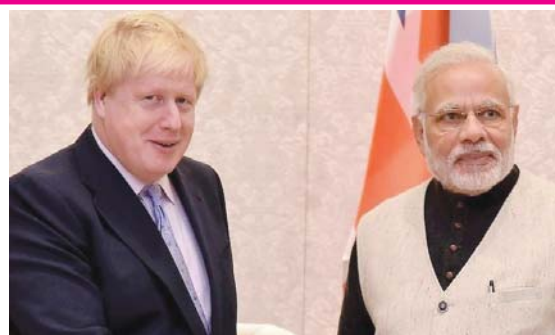
(SAI Bureau)-30-year-old American is three times more likely to die at that age than his or her European peers. In fact, Americans do worse at just about every age. To make matters more grim, the American disadvantage is growing over time. In 2017, for example, higher American mortality translated into roughly 401,000 excess deaths - deaths that would not have occurred if the US had Europe's lower age-specific death rates. Pre-pandemic, that 401,000 is about 12% of all American deaths. The percentage is even higher below age 85, where one in four Americans die simply because they do not live in Europe.

The tremendous losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have been widely publicized. The US government estimates that 377,000 deaths in 2020

(Contd on page 31)

India, UK adopt 'Roadmap 2030', Elevate relations To 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'

(SAI Bureau)- India and the UK on Tuesday adopted the ambitious 'Roadmap 2030' during the virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Boris Johnson, to elevate bilateral ties to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'. "The Roadmap will pave the way for a deeper and stronger engagement over the next ten years in the key areas of people to people contacts, trade and economy, defence and security, climate action and health," said the statement. In a tweet, Prime Minister Narendra



Modi wrote, "We welcomed the launch of an Enhanced Trade Partnership as a roadmap to a comprehensive FTA, with a target to more than double the bilateral trade by 2030. We also agreed upon several new initiatives in health, technology, energy, etc."

(Contd on page 31)

For IPL Organisers, Loss Of Revenue Seems More Important Than Loss Of Lives Due To COVID

(SAI Bureau)-As India grapples with an unprecedented health crisis, with hundreds of thousands of daily reported cases of COVID-19, tens of thousands of patients ill without oxygen or hospital beds, there is a general sense of gloom and despair prevailing in the country. However, in this war-like medical emergency that the country is going through at a scale hitherto witnessed in the last century, where all sense of normalcy is disrupted, one activity that continues as if everything is hunky-dory is the annual summer tamasha called the Indian Premier

(Contd on page 32)

