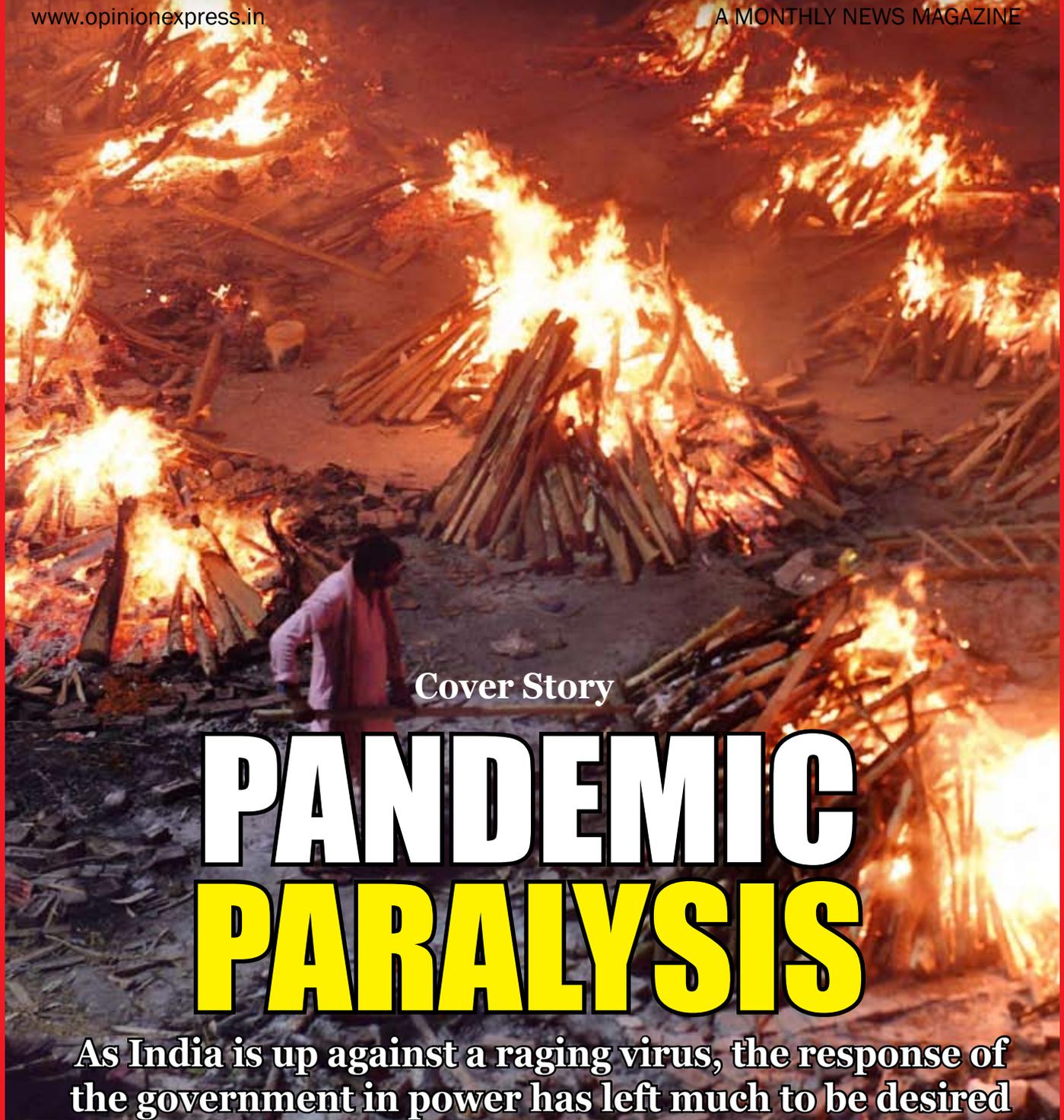


Vol: 29 | No. 6 | June 2021 | ₹20

OPINION EXPRESS

www.opinionexpress.in

A MONTHLY NEWS MAGAZINE



Cover Story

PANDEMIC PARALYSIS

As India is up against a raging virus, the response of the government in power has left much to be desired

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The magazine is published and printed by Rajiv Agnihotri for Opinion Express Communications & Entertainments Pvt Ltd, from Kumpu Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow & printed at Kumpu Graphic Press 2 Ashok Nagar, Lucknow - 226001
Tele : 91-522-4060880 &

Nikhil Offset An ISO 9001 : 2008 Certified Company
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Indian Policymakers have failed the nation in Covid 19 pandemic

Modi government and several state governments incompetence is largely responsible for India's pandemic disaster, as infections and deaths mount at a terrifying pace in India, the prime minister's team culpability for the crisis has become startlingly clear. A literate leader might have saved India from this manmade disaster.



India might have been spared this humanitarian crisis had Modi and his team not neglected their duties and vilified those who offered him constructive counsel. He had the time, means, and access to expertise to proof the country against this inferno. As early as last November, a parliamentary committee had issued warnings of a second wave and urged the government to stockpile oxygen. But rather than bolstering India's capacities, Modi used the virus to burnish his cult and pillage the country.

Last March, days after plunging India into chaos by announcing a nationwide lockdown with a four-hour notice, he sought tax-free donations for a fund called PM CARES to help the poorest of the poor, buy personal protective equipment and build oxygen plants across India. The equivalent of more than a billion dollars flowed into it during the first week. What did Modi do with all that money? Nobody knows and nobody is allowed to know.

Like those other leaders, Modi has spent more time diminishing the pandemic's seriousness than combating it. In early March, even as cases in India rose alarmingly, he again boasted that the country would serve as "the world's pharmacy," churning out vaccines for developing nations. His health minister judged India to have entered the "endgame" of the pandemic. In a new cricket stadium named after Modi, tens of thousands of largely unmasked people turned out to watch matches between India and England last month. Many more unprotected people turned out for Modi's recent election rallies in the state of West Bengal, and an estimated 3.5 million people have attended, with the encouragement of Modi's Hindu nationalist colleagues, the Kumbh Mela religious festival.

COVID-19 has shown that we have underestimated the insidious nature of and the menace posed by biological weapons to humanity. It is difficult to anticipate new, highly infectious, and deadly bioagents like COVID-19. The absence of immediate bio-defences and the timelag in finding treatment(s) and vaccine(s) enables the invisible enemy to inflict high morbidity and mortality. The latency period and mutation into virulent and different strains, along with the chances of a recurrence in waves, makes disease detection and control more challenging.

Mass contagion and efforts to contain it, including through the Great Lockdown, has brought even the most powerful countries to their knees and economies to a grinding halt. It has pushed robust democratic societies into turmoil and has led governance into crisis. The pandemic has generated a psyche of fear, uncertainty, and helplessness among people everywhere.

Wish the ruling class in India should be literate enough to understand the scientific inputs rather than the usual election dynamic of dividing communities on the communal, caste and class lines.

—Prashant Tewari,
Editor-in-Chief

JUNE 2021

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TEAM MODI PARALYSED WHILE INDIA BURNS

Modi government incompetence is largely responsible for India's pandemic disaster, as infections and deaths mount at a terrifying pace in India, the prime minister's team culpability for the crisis has become startlingly clear. A literate leader might have saved India from this man-made disaster?

By Prashant Tewari

India's healthcare system has collapsed under the weight of the Covid-19 pandemic. The country registered more than 3500 deaths and nearly 400,000 infections daily, off-course the official figures are always inaccurate. Videos of crowded mortuaries and funeral sites, and grief-stricken relatives outside packed hospitals are circulating among middle-class Indians on social media. This is after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared victory against COVID-19 in Jan 2021. Addressing a virtual summit of the World Economic Forum, he sought applause for saving "humanity from a big disaster by containing the coronavirus effectively." Three months on, India is the epicenter of the pandemic and completely on its knees. The country's health care system is on the precipice of

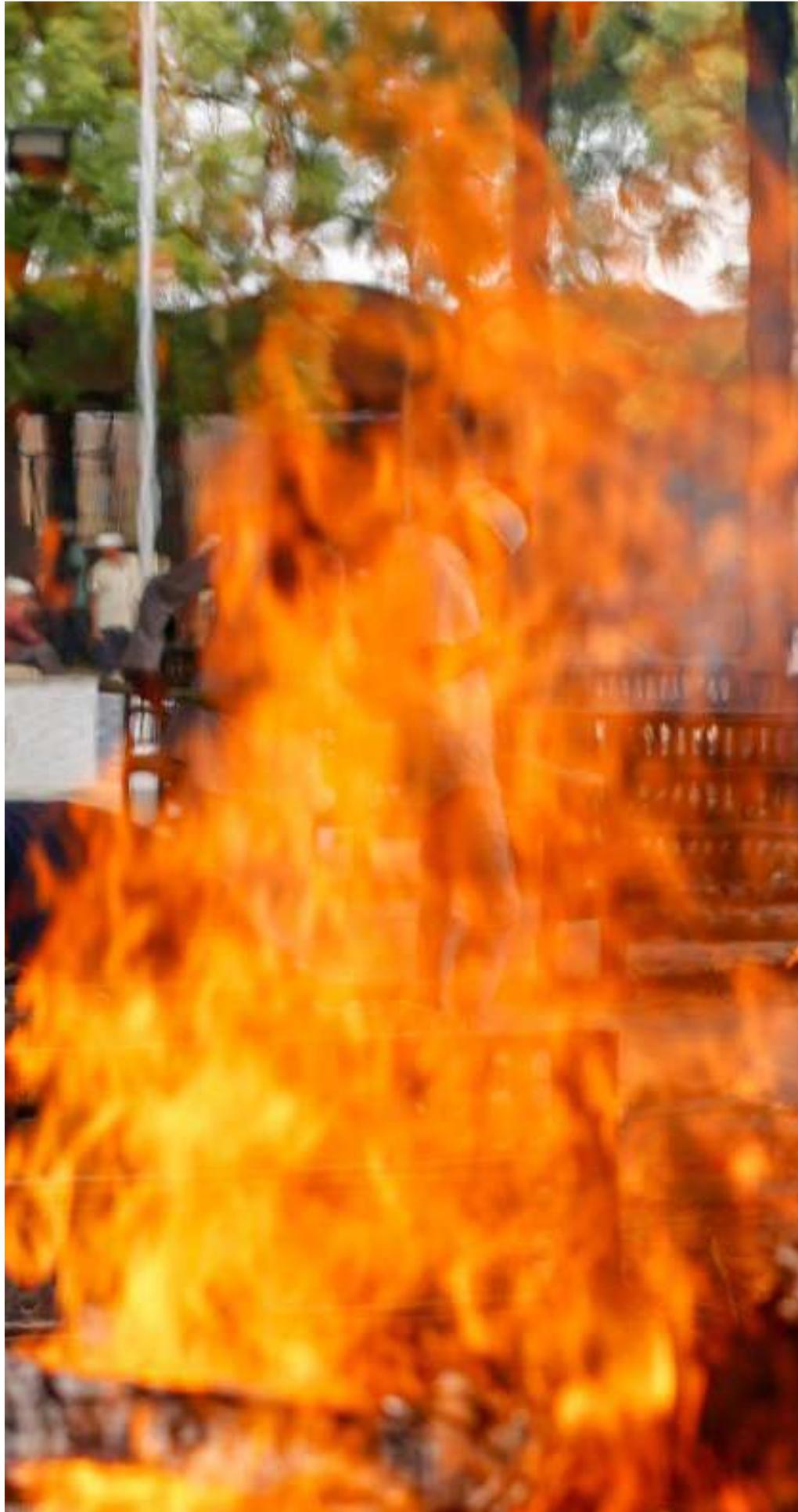
total collapse, patients are suffocating to death, relatives are scrambling for beds, the most advanced hospitals have been reduced to begging the government for emergency supplies of oxygen, and crematoriums blazing nonstop have run out of hospital room and cremation wood. Social media is inundated with agonizing pleas for help, leading to a thriving black market for oxygen and essential medicine has emerged, and a nation acclaimed in 2015 by the International Monetary Fund as an economic powerhouse poised to overtake China is now lobbying for emergency foreign aid.

India might have been spared this humanitarian crisis had Modi and his team not neglected their duties and vilified those who offered him constructive counsel. He had the time, means, and access to expertise to proof the country against this inferno. As early as last November, a parliamentary committee had issued warnings of a second wave and urged the government to stockpile oxygen. But rather than bolstering India's capacities, Modi used the virus to burnish his cult and pillage the country.

Last March, days after plunging India into chaos by announcing a nationwide lockdown with a four-hour notice, he sought tax-free donations for a fund called PM CARES to help the poorest of the poor, buy personal protective equipment and build oxygen plants across India. The equivalent of more than a billion dollars flowed into it during the first week. What did Modi do with all that money? Nobody knows and nobody is allowed to know. Because despite offering tax subsidies to contributors and using government organs to promote the fund, PM CARES cannot be reviewed by the state auditor because it is structured as a private trust.

As in so many of the pandemic's worst-hit countries, this tragedy was avoidable and is largely the fault of a boastful and incompetent government. Yet, judging by the fate of other bungling far-right politicians such as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, the U.K.'s Boris Johnson, Hungary's Viktor Urban, and the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi may well suffer few political consequences for his devastating misdeeds.

Like those other leaders, Modi has spent more time diminishing the pandemic's seriousness than combating it. In early March, even as cases in India rose alarmingly, he again boasted that the country would serve as "the world's pharmacy," churning out vaccines for





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The result? Faced with a crushing case load and an acute shortage of vaccines, India has stopped exporting doses and is importing new jabs from Russia. Indian states are desperately fighting over the supply of something as basic as medical oxygen. He has also survived, already, blunders that would have wrecked any other political career: demonetization in 2016, hasty GST implementation and a botched lockdown last year that caused the biggest and most desperate internal migration witnessed in India since 1947.

The current crisis does seem more serious than others Modi has faced. Until now, his claims for instance, that Indian airstrikes in 2019 killed scores of terrorists in Pakistan or that withdrawing almost all currency notes in circulation punished corrupt businessmen with an exception of his favorite Gautam Adani could never be adequately tested against reality, especially because Modi

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skillfully constructed each time an alternative reality with the help of loyal journalists and social media trolls. The facts of extensive death and bereavement among India’s middle classes, and shortages of hospital beds and oxygen, cannot be denied so easily; they require no external verification. Even an illusionist as masterful as Modi will find it difficult to spin them to his advantage.

An ex-bureaucrat revealed his ‘control freak’ nature, his deliberate bypassing of his ministers. Modi soon sized up his secretaries, not necessarily correctly, and his permanent scowl started sending cold shivers. He then resorted to his unabashed mode of operating through favorites namely PK Mishra and Ajit Dowal, both bureaucrats given

cabinet minister status, which demoralised other equally or more talented officers. The latter had not crawled to ingratiate themselves. Lightning transfers became commonplace, and the PMO controlled every appointment to senior posts, as well as to boards and committees. Though inputs were taken from the RSS, the Intelligence Bureau and the spy chief, the NSA, mattered more. Stalinist shadows grew longer and head-less organisations suffered when appointments took years. Babus and businessmen, however, learnt to fake everlasting loyalty and started wooing Sanghis.

But no government could function with just handpicked cheerleaders, and experienced bureaucrats stopped

sharing their lifelong experience, out of fear, and the political savvy of ministers was treated with contempt. Modi brilliant idea of 75+ retirement to remove experienced politicians from the active politics backfired. He can tolerate 75+ PK Mishra and Ajit Dowal but he has an aversion for 75+ politicians. As the Cabinet system crashed and responsibility became opaque, India's performance ranking in all internationally comparable indices started tumbling, every year. And the inviolability of statistics disappeared, as fudging began. Officers realised that only style and spectacle mattered, not substance.

Covid 19 broke the spine of an already badly slip-disc'd economy. Just because the home minister was/is Modi's most trusted factotum, all decisions, even those well beyond its limited competence, were decided by the lathi-wielding home ministry, not the health ministry. Regular imperious edicts flowed, without consultation. Relief work has always been an integral part of Indian administration, but since the two leaders maintained an eerie silence on the plight of migrant workers, no relief camps came up to alleviate such an enormous human tragedy.

While every sensible nation planned the production, import and distribution of vaccines and oxygen several months ago, India illiterate leadership backed by mediocre RSS ideological guidance woke up to issues like pricing, supplies and international obligations only a couple of months ago. Even simple arithmetic of supply versus demand was hardly understood, advice from specialists received lower priority and the regime let its defenses down.

The invincible 'spell' is finally breaking, but what we need immediately is fire-fighting and imaginative response, not vengeance. Today, India has become the new global epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic, with daily infections surpassing 400,000 per day and the official death toll—likely a massive underestimate—nearing a quarter of a million people. Hospitals are being overrun with patients, and the crisis is exacerbated by a devastating shortage of oxygen. The Indian judiciary has gone as far as threatening capital punishment for anyone caught trying to divert shipments of oxygen from around the country to affected areas. There have been dozens of deaths documented directly tied to a lack of oxygen. So, what happened?

Modi government suffered from "arrogance, policy paralysis, incompe-





tence, and no efforts to learn from the past year.” A government with a religious fundamentalist ideology that has taken aim at minority groups and elevated a form of mediocre fascist Hindu supremacy has failed its people spectacularly.

Modi has also refused to negotiate with tens of thousands of poor farmers who began a mass occupation on the outskirts of the capital New Delhi last year in protest of new harsh privatization farm laws. While the number of farmers protesting declined during the annual spring harvest as they returned to pick crops on their farms, an estimated 15,000 still remain, many more are ready to return if needed. “What choice do the farmers have at this point?”. “The farm laws will kill them in the next few years, and, heaven forbid, if the virus comes, it will kill them quickly. So,

death is on both sides.

In spite of being the world’s largest manufacturer of COVID-19 vaccines, India has exported far more doses to other nations than were deployed internally. Modi has been accused of engaging in “vaccine diplomacy,” giving away millions of vaccines to other nations to shore up his international support. The “vaccine has been put on the open market with limited provision from the government to inoculate citizens.” In other words, poor Indians have to wait far longer to obtain the vaccine compared to wealthier Indians who can walk into a private clinic and purchase a dose.

In the meantime, Indians continue to die in numbers so large that the capital New Delhi glows at night from the fires of mass cremations. The state governments have let down the country badly. Health is a state subject, yet

ordinary leadership largely propelled by Mandal commission aftermath with zero competence fueled the disaster. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh (post Panchayat Elections), Rajasthan, Gujrat state leadership remained clueless despite there is a gap of 14 month between the first wave and second wave. Delhi Joker Chief Minister was crying for oxygen and medicine when the people started dying on the street. As the hashtag #ResignModi began trending to new heights, at least, Modi to save his face must sack his cabinet and PMO to bring fresh faces to tackle the crisis with a new approach and prospective. However, the narrative has consolidated with the large section of Modi supporters that “the government has failed on all accounts.”

*Writer is Editor-in-Chief of
Opinion Express*

Biological weapons and biosecurity

Lessons from the COVID-19 war

Lakshmi Puri

In the first of a two-part series on how the COVID-19 pandemic has raised consciousness about the dangers of biological warfare Ambassador Puri writes on how bioweapons and biosecurity have overtaken violent conflict as the primary global security concern.

Jasmin Merdan/Getty

- Biological weapons
- Biosecurity
- Covid-19
- Rogue regimes
- Weapons of mass destruction





The United Nations was founded at the end of the Second World War “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold suffering to mankind” and “towards that end to unite our strength to maintain peace and security.” Seventy five years later, we are being ravaged by another scourge of war — the COVID-19 pandemic — and we find ourselves ill equipped as an international comity of nations to win over it. It has shaken our national and international economic, social and political order to its foundations. It has also exposed the weaknesses of the global health and biosecurity system and the overall peace and security architecture. It will require our going back to the drawing board and reimagining the world as we did in 1945, for the survival of humankind.

“It’s an ideal weapon because it only destroys people. It’s a virus — airborne, indestructible, self-perpetuating, multiplying beyond our calculations — and all life will cease to exist everywhere. Nothing can stop the Satan Bug.” Thus, did Dr Gregor Hoffman, the insane bioscientist in the 1965 Alistair MacLean science fiction book and movie *The Satan Bug*, ominously but not inaccurately describe a biological weapon. Despite being such a cataclysmic force, biological weapons, unlike other weapons of mass destruction or WMD — nuclear and chemical — have escaped public consciousness and scrutiny.

The advent of the COVID-19, originating in China, has suddenly awakened the world to the destructive potential of a pandemic and has painted a vivid picture of what a biological



war would look like.

Biosecurity as a defence against biological warfare, bioterrorism, and pandemics has been underemphasised in national and international security agendas. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, originating in China, has suddenly awakened the world to the destructive potential of a pandemic and has painted a vivid picture of what a biological war would look like. It has taught us many lessons which India and the world would do well to learn.

Significance of the COVID War

Compared to some other pandemics, like the Spanish Flu and smallpox epidemics of the 20th century and the bio-weapons used in the Second World War, the death rate of

COVID-19 is not high — 2-8%. COVID-19 has, however, not only hurt the country of origin, but has gotten exported to 212 countries and territories due to China's extensive global economic and human footprint and connectivity. An alleged lack of transparency and absence of early warning as to its virulence is said to have contributed to COVID-19's intractable global spread. With 3.9 million infections and 270,000 deaths and counting, it has been labelled a quasi-biological war in its scale, scope, duration, and impact.

Most leaders around the world refer to their strategies to prevent and respond to COVID-19 as an existential war and see themselves as health and biosecurity generals.

UN Secretary General, António Guterres, has called this pandemic the biggest crisis since World War II and some, like Bill Gates, have termed it a World War by other means. Most leaders around the world refer to their strategies to prevent and respond to COVID-19 as an existential war and see themselves as health and biosecurity generals. Understanding what a biological holocaust would portend has jolted us into

The advent of the COVID-19, originating in China, has suddenly awakened the world to the destructive potential of a pandemic and has painted a vivid picture of what a biological war would look like.

prioritising biosecurity in national and international security in this turnpike year of 2020.

Menace and deception of bioweapons

COVID-19 has shown that we have underestimated the insidious nature of and the menace posed by biological weapons to humanity. It is difficult to anticipate new, highly infectious, and deadly bioagents like COVID-19. The absence of immediate bio-defences and the timelag in finding treatment(s) and vaccine(s) enables the invisible enemy to inflict high morbidity and mortality. The latency period and mutation into virulent and different strains, along with the chances of a recurrence in waves, makes disease detection and control more challenging.

Mass contagion and efforts to contain it, including through the Great Lockdown, has brought even the most powerful countries to their knees and economies to a grinding halt. It has pushed robust democratic societies into turmoil and has led governance into crisis. The pandemic has generated a psyche of fear, uncertainty, and helplessness among people everywhere.

The relative low cost and ease of developing bioweapons, including by rogue regimes and private labs, and the possibility of stealthy deployment of bioagents — through animal or human carriers or other special purpose delivery vehicles — raises the stakes.

Particularly worrisome is that any state or non-state actor or entity with hostile intent could develop and wield a bioweapon undetected, as production facilities require little space and microbial agents as well as technologies are easy to procure. The relative low cost and ease of developing bioweapons, including by rogue regimes and private labs, and

the possibility of stealthy deployment of bioagents — through animal or human carriers or other special purpose delivery vehicles — raises the stakes.

We, therefore, need to identify extant and potential bioagents that exist in nature or that are human engineered to become dangerous bioweapons. Epidemiologists have categorised these as:

A — most lethal and transmissible,

B — moderately threatening, and

C — emerging bio-agents engineered for mass dissemination in the future.

We must build our capacities to anticipate, detect, and defend ourselves in a timely manner from these dangerous bioagents, which will be a complex, resource intensive, but necessary undertaking.

Our biodefence/vaccine stockpiles for existing and eradicated diseases, like smallpox — which could be used as a bioweapon by Satanic entities in the future — should be replenished.

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Additionally, to respond to unexpected and emerging biological threats, all normal labs, medical facilities, and hospitals should be made re-purposable so that they can transform into a seamless infrastructure for quick and reliable testing and therapeutics development. Public-private partnerships should be forged for vaccine development, testing, and deployment within telescoped timeframes. Our biodefence/vaccine stockpiles for existing and eradicated diseases, like smallpox — which could be used as a bioweapon by Satanic entities in the future — should be replenished. More evolved IT-based telemedicine and health status surveillance technologies, information networks, and contact tracing apps are more enduring bio and health security measures.

Dilemmas of Dual use bio agents

Micro-organisms and their related



infrastructure are essentially dual in nature — their use in nature and in research and development for bio-defence, can easily be re-oriented for bio-offence. The Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWTC) permits states to produce, use, and stockpile biological agents for medical, pharmaceutical, and defensive purposes; and in small quantities for prophylactic, protective, and other peaceful purposes. We need to overcome this “dual use” challenge

that comes with the territory of scientific and technological development, and reengineer verification and certification systems for effective differentiation between bio-defence and bio-offence. This will also be addressed when a credible verification and compliance system under the BWTC is established.

Biosecurity and health security are two sides of the same coin.

There is only a thin line between biological weapons — a WMD deliber-



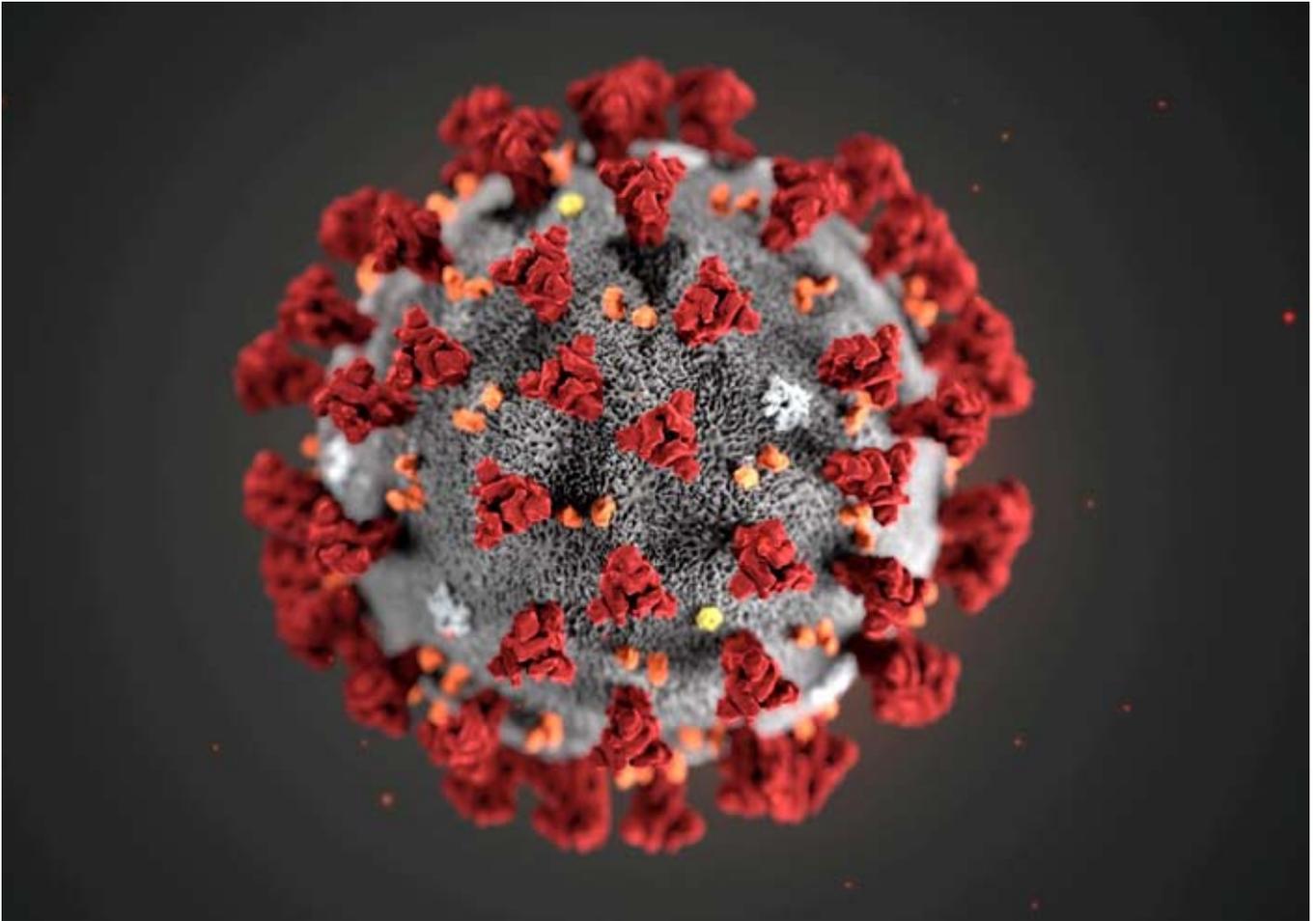
ately wielded — and a COVID-19 type pandemic caused by spontaneous or accidental virus release, in terms of their impact and the response required. Biosecurity and health security are two sides of the same coin. Those consciously infecting people with harmful intent are bio-terrorists. Those flouting health security norms in communities are morally culpable of the same harm. But the stigmatisation of those spontaneously infected or those on frontline duty, like

those dubbed the “COVID-19 warriors”, is unconscionable and counter-productive. Citizens must be vigilant, responsible, empathetic, and perform their civic duty during a war against a pandemic — whatever the origin.

Military force and biosecurity

When we speak of wars, our first thought is of the armed forces. A war against a pandemic impacts the mili-

tary in less obvious ways than a conventional war would. Bioweapons and pandemics considerably affect the preparedness of the armed forces to deal with WMDs, as well as conventional and terrorist threats. The double jeopardy of the armed forces getting weakened by the disease — witness the infections among police, border security forces, CRPF, army, navy, and airforce in India — and their being deployed for pandemic response can pose major se-



curity challenges. Reports of increased terrorist mobilisation and regrouping on our border with Pakistan, and of infected COVID patients being infiltrated across the border are proof. COVID-19 triggered defence spending cuts affect defense preparedness too, as does economic infrastructure degradation.

Victories are won on and off the “battlefield”, with economics and politics becoming the battlefields of an unconventional modern war. This War is fought simultaneously in different spaces — local, national, regional, and global.

It is uncanny how the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) officers Qiao Liang and Wang Xiasu’s book, on the “Unrestricted Warfare” strategy, seems to apply to the impact of bioweapons/pandemics on national security. We would contend with the “alternative methods” of war by disease being employed with the same or greater destructive force than military warfare, with unprecedented and multidirectional impact.

Boundaries between military and non-military assets, operations and personnel, and between weapon and non-weapons are dissolved. Victories are won on and off the “battlefield”, with economics and politics becoming the battlefields of an unconventional modern war. This War is fought simultaneously in different spaces — local, national, regional, and global. Deviating from the centre and finding the enemies’ weak point is a key strategy — in this case sickening an entire population in a democracy — when a technologically stronger adversary is to be conquered.

Our bio-defence against such “unrestricted warfare” must take its cues from these basic premises. It must be agile and “multidirectional”, and must straddle the civilian and military, the economy and society, technology and communication, the local and global. While keeping our military guard up on all fronts, we need to incorporate biosecurity into our overall defence, security, and counterterrorism strategies and planning. There needs to be a critical and predetermined role for our defence infrastructure and its logistical capacity to meet any bio/health security challenge on a war footing.

China’s deployment of the PLA for lockdown enforcement and vaccine development is instructive even with our systemic differences.

A dedicated National Rapid Deployment Biosecurity Force comprised of the armed forces, the police, and health responders — who are well-protected and equipped against contagion — should be set up with frontline, security and pandemic related, disaster reduction, relief and response functions. China’s deployment of the

PLA for lockdown enforcement and vaccine development is instructive even with our systemic differences.

These lessons about pandemics/bioattacks being in the nature of “unrestricted warfare” and the China experience will no doubt inform our current fight against the COVID pandemic. It must also shape preparedness strategies for fending off and responding to biological attacks from both hostile states and bioterrorists in the future and prompt a churning in current military doctrines and security architectures — nationally and internationally.

China’s deployment of the PLA for lockdown enforcement and vaccine development is instructive even with our systemic differences.

India's concern and situation in Afghanistan after proposed US and NATO troops withdrawal

The US President Joe Biden's announcement regarding the complete withdrawal of American and NATO forces from Afghanistan by 20th anniversary of 9/11 has prompted the discussions on the subsequent security vacuum as well as changing geo-strategic situation in India's contiguous neighbour as well as strategic partner Afghanistan. India has been supporting Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled peace process as India's foreign minister S. Jaishankar has

In which, Iranian Foreign minister Javad Zarif has argued that the US decision should be taken in the light of the reality of the region that foreign forces has never contributed to peace and stability to the region and their removal will lead to at least less chances for violence.

reiterated in the Raisina dialogue on the theme "Junction Kabul: the Road to Peace" held on 16th April. In which, Iranian Foreign minister Javad Zarif has argued that the US decision should be taken in the light of the reality of the region that foreign forces has never contributed to peace and stability to the region and their removal will lead to at



least less chances for violence. Pointing out the opportunities for Afghan forces to take full control, Afghanistan's NSA Hamdullah Mohib has claimed that Afghan Taliban is possessing no religious legitimacy and nationalistic causes due to its relentless attacks over \$900 million dollars worth of national infrastructure annually.

But it is noteworthy that US withdrawal without any final outcome regarding the power sharing proposal accompanied by President Ghani's contention pertaining to transfer of power through democratic processes merely would have been provoking Afghan Taliban to suddenly increase attacks. Moreover, latest intelligence report has pointed out that Pakistan is planning to expedite anti-India activities by facilitating Afghan Taliban's

India is concerned about the “vacuum” erupting in Afghanistan following the proposed withdrawal of foreign forces, as chief of defense staff General Bipin Rawat has pointed out that it can be utilized by “disruptors”.

“spring offensive” alongside mobilizing all terrorists of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba, who were shifted to Afghanistan by Pakistan for diverting extreme pressure exerted by FATF over it.

India is concerned about the “vacuum” erupting in Afghanistan following the proposed withdrawal of foreign forces, as chief of defense staff General Bipin Rawat has pointed out that it can be utilized by “disruptors”. India's big concern is that instability in Afghanistan can be used by Pakistan to further the proxy war against India. Furthermore, it will also be inimical to the counter terror operations in Muslim-majority union territory of Kashmir as many militants, who were eliminated here last year, had been trained in different terrorist camps located in Afghanistan. By highlighting Pakistan's relentless support to Taliban alongside other active militant outfits including Haqqani network and Islamic States Khorasan Province (ISKP), which are creating par-



allels in Afghanistan, Hamdullah Mohib has manifested the challenges ahead in his country. Any frictions among these parallel militant groups for capturing power can also destabilize the entire nation. A United Nations report, published in January, confirming that there are as many as 500 al-Qaeda militants in Afghanistan who are in close relationship with Afghan Taliban has also reflected the seriousness of the prevailing situation.

Moreover, reconciliation of the interests of the multiple ethnic groups including Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek in Afghanistan has always been emerging as a big challenge, regardless of the regimes prevalent at the different

span of time in this country. Afghan minorities encompass 27 percent Tajiks, 9 percent Hazara and 9 percent Uzbek, etc. It is noteworthy that Taliban, an essentially “Pashtun formation”, has remorselessly repressed all the ethnic groups except Pashtun during 1990s; which has fuelled the ethnic rivalry among minorities and Pashtun, which covers 42 percent of the Afghan population. Although Pakistan, which has been relentlessly oppressing the Pakistani Pashtun people seeking peaceful redressal of grievances, basic human rights, social justice, equality of opportunity, etc through the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement; has been striving to gener-



ate a favorable majoritarian environment in Afghanistan by strengthening the Afghan Taliban- a Pashtun formation. Furthermore, the prevalent ethnic disharmony can also be used by Pakistan indirectly to fuel the ethnic clashes by spreading rumours for weakening the Afghan government and making subsequently a favourable condition for Afghan Taliban. Canada's former ambassador to Afghanistan Chris Alexander has also contended that Pakistan's proxy war is an impediment to restoring peace in Afghanistan and there will be no peace without dismantling this covert proxy war.

Moreover, Afghanistan is a gate-

way to the oil and mineral rich Central Asian republics. The decision of the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces and intelligence report on Pakistan's conspiracy accompanied by over aggressive postures of terrorists in Afghanistan have intensified the security concern for India's strategic interests including energy security. But it is noteworthy that Afghan forces, as Hamdullah Mohib has presented in Raisina Dialogue, has led over 94 percent of the counter terror operations launched after 2014. India-Afghanistan defense cooperation will definitely enhance the capability of counter terror operations of Afghan National Defense and

Security forces. India's developmental projects strengthening the ease of living of the Afghan peoples, inculcation of democratic values including minority rights and respect for will of the peoples, development of civil society, improvement in education facilities, etc have made impossible to return to Afghanistan of 1990s. Furthermore, Iran's support, as Javad Zarif has contended in Raisina Dialogue, for Afghanistan's trade and commerce through Chabahar port instead of exploitation of Afghan natural resources by militant groups will enhance its development leading to strengthen the long-lasting and sustainable peace. **Courtesy IANS.**

Indian black money in white western banks

The United Kingdom holds the distinction of being the dubious money laundering capital of the world. India's financial fraudsters find safe haven and sanctuary to park the looted booty in the British little Island as the corrupt British regime continues breaking International laws by helping fraudsters to salvage their sagging economy

Joginder (Jo) Singh Biring

The Indian banks, their overseas branches, corrupt employees, the greedy NRI lawyers, NRI Indian think tanks and many uneducated corrupt politicians in India are to blame for the decline and destruction of present-day India. India is the only country in the East that rejoices and feels proud to have a "Special relationship" with the British. It is extremely sad that the real freedom fighters of India who freed India from the murderous, raping, robbing British thieves died for the present Indian traitors who steal resources from their own people to give the loot to British Western warmongers. Today's India should not be begging for Oxygen tankers bottles, medicinal supplies, hospital equipment from the West. There should be enough money in the present Indian government's budget to have already built top class hospitals, medical equipment, infrastructure and educational institutes. But how everything got destroyed?

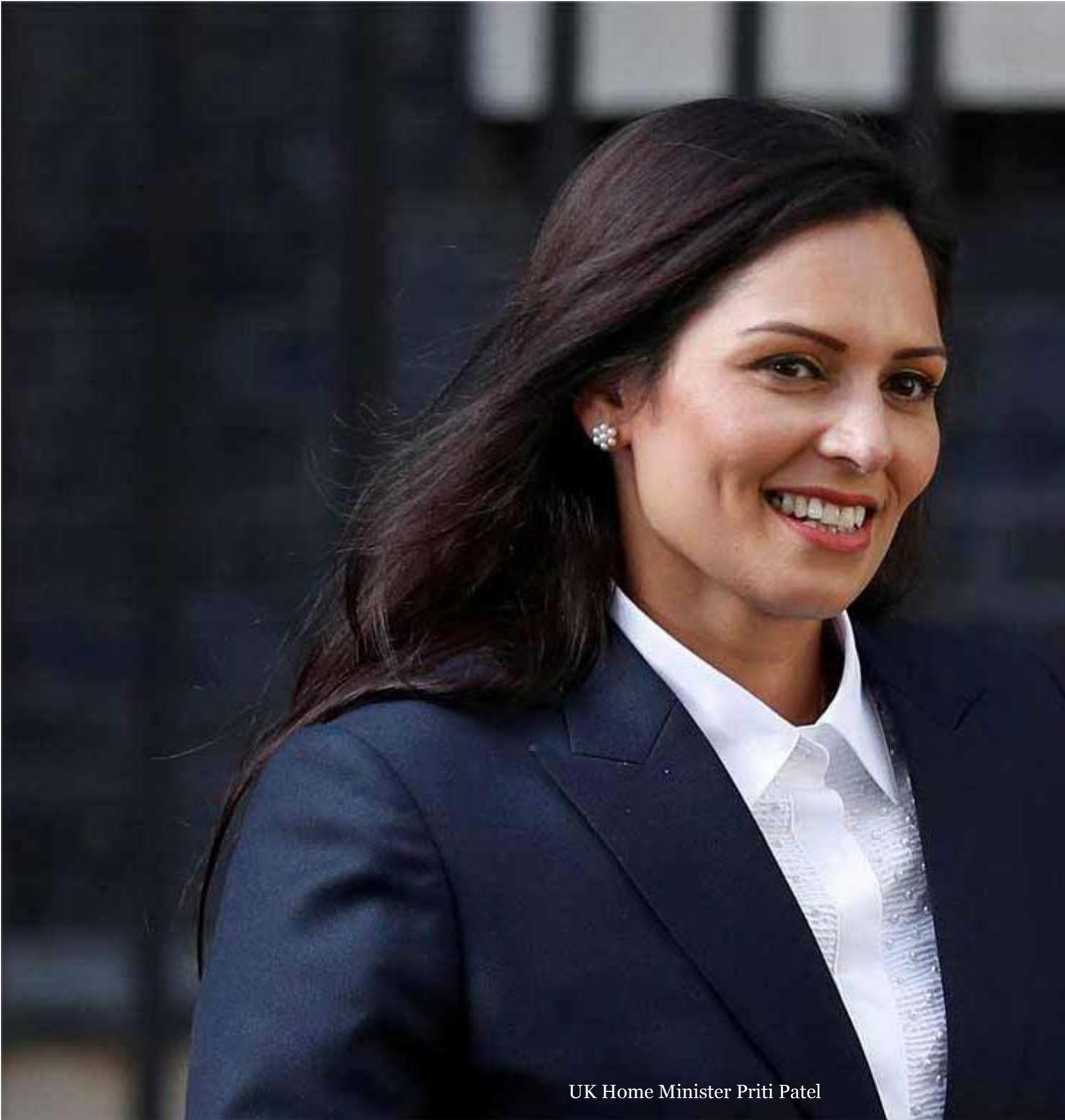
The Fugitive Billionaire Vijay Mallya of the Kingfisher Airlines fame remains on bail in Britain until the UK Home Secretary Priti Patel signs off

on the order for him to be extradited to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering. Vijay Mallya has applied to UK Home Secretary Priti Patel for "another route" to be able to stay in the UK, the liquor tycoon's barrister representing him in bankruptcy proceedings in the High Court of London confirmed. The UK Home Office has so far only confirmed on background that a confidential legal process remains ongoing before the extradition order can be executed. This had raised widespread speculation that Vijay Mallya had sought asylum in the UK, details of which are neither confirmed nor denied by the Home Office in Britain while an application is pending.

"The extradition was upheld but he (Vijay Mallya) is still here because as you know there is another route for him to apply to the Secretary of State for status," said Vijay Mallya's barrister Philip Marshall, when specifically asked by Deputy Insolvency and Companies Court Judge Nigel Barnett about the status of the extradition proceedings. "He would need to argue much stronger grounds. There are specific rules that detail when asylum is a bar to extradi-

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UK Home Minister Priti Patel

tion, it is clear that claiming asylum after all appeals have been exhausted is unlikely to be considered a valid claim to asylum protection,” explains Toby Cadman, co-founder of Guernica 37 International Justice Chambers and a UK-based extradition specialist. The remote hearing in the commercial division of the High Court in London was to establish whether the court can sanction substantial sums towards Vijay Mallya’s living expenses and legal fees

from the sale of a French luxury property Le Grand Jardin last year.

The Present UK Home Minister Priti Patel certainly plays the part well of a calm law abiding British NRI willing to benefit India and Modi’s BJP party because of her Indian cultural roots. Recently in Feb 2021 she has done one big positive thing for India: She has approved the Extradition of The Jeweller, Nirav Modi who is accused of bank fraud in India. Nirav Modi is being in-

vestigated by India’s Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for money laundering, said to be in the region of \$2 billion and involving loans from Punjab National Bank (PNB). On February 25, Westminster Magistrates’ Court said there was prima facie evidence against Modi, and that there was no evidence that the jeweller would not get justice if he was extradited, paving way for his extradition. The court said it was satis-



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justice are being made fools of by The UK Government's Home Office and UK Legal system. The UK Government trumpets their Human rights laws and how fair British justice is? What about human rights and fair justice for Julian Assange? Why is he not out on bail and having the right legal teams to represent him in his extradition to the USA? What makes Vijay Mallya so special to the UK Government, UK home Office and Home Minister Priti Patel? Who in Indian politics is promising the UK Government ministers and benefitting from this Vijay Mallya Extradition delays?

The UK has over the years become the most preferred tax haven destination for economic offenders like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Nadeem, Robert Vadra, Sanjay Bhandari just to name a few. Before being taken into custody by the ED, YES bank founder Rana Kapoor was camping in London. Had an intricate entrapment by Indian agencies not succeeded in luring him back into India, he would have joined the list of fugitive financial fraudsters who are living the high life in the United Kingdom. Among the hundreds of entities that the Sandesara brothers of the Stearling Biotech group incorporated many were in the UK and British Virgin Island among other places. Barring Kapoor, all these businessmen facing charges are subjects of extradition effort by the Indian Government to return to India to face charges of financial crimes.

The Hinduja Brothers, one of India's richest families and their Hinduja Group of Companies remains the most preferred Indian family aided and promoted by the various British governments in the past are facing major legal problems in Geneva, Switzerland in relation to a charge of forging a document at a bank. The Swiss prosecutor believed that there were grounds to proceed for prosecution. Ajay Hinduja has denied any wrongdoing and the Geneva prosecutor's office confirmed that he had challenged what the Swiss term in French an *Ordonnance Penale* or criminal order and the matter are due to be heard in court, but has been delayed due to Covid. The Hinduja Group's companies are controlled by holding companies situated in tax havens like Mauritius and Geneva. The elder three Hinduja's names cropped up in the Bofors scam as the main middlemen. The four brothers Srichand P Hinduja, Gopichand Hinduja, Prakash P Hinduja

and Ashok P Hinduja are for the past two years bickering over the transferring of shares to the next generation. Now the family tussles have led to the youngest Ashok P Hinduja and Prakash Hinduja's son Ajay facing legal troubles in Mauritius and Geneva court. According to lawyers, the eldest brothers Srichand and Gopichand are unhappy with the younger brothers handling of the affairs of the companies across the world. Aikant Bhatti, a minority shareholder at the Chennai-based Ashok Leyland and at the Hinduja Global Solutions where Ashok P Hinduja is the Chair Emeritus, claims that billions of rupees in company funds were used to benefit promoters and records of a recent AGM were false and did not include objections raised by shareholders. Bhatti has already filed a complaint to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to intervene in the illegalities in the Hinduja Group of Companies.

There will also be much more in-depth reporting on perhaps India's biggest financial scamster Anil Ambani's Reliance Group - Reliance Communication, Reliance Telecom and Reliance Infratel. The total amount that the three firms of Anil Ambani owe to banks is over RS 49,000 crore. The Swiss authorities in recently agreed to disclose full details to the India's Finance Ministry's Foreign Tax and Research Division of the personal bank accounts of Anil Ambani, his wife Tina Ambani, their two children Jai Anmol and Jai Anshul Ambani. A few months ago, Anil Ambani deposed in a London, UK Court that he has no money in a case filed by the Chinese banking consortium. The London, UK Court had asked the Anil Ambani to pay 770 million dollars to Chinese banks for non-payment of loans 14 billion dollars. It is learned that after the London court's order, Anil Ambani has limited his foreign travels fearing Chinese banks move on issuing red alerts in foreign airports through Interpol. The Chinese are ruthless in business, the Chinese banking consortium will get their money back as unlike corrupt UK system, the rest of the world is quite transparent.

UK - The Money Laundering Capital of the World. Since the UK is often cited as "the money laundering capital of the world," with an estimated £90bn laundered through the City of London every year, according to figures from the UK's National Crime Agency. London has not become the global capital of money laundering by accident. Money

fied there was enough evidence against Modi for his conviction. "I do not accept that Nirav Modi was involved in legitimate business. I find no genuine transactions and believe there is a process of dishonesty," said Westminster Magistrates' Court judge Samuel Goozee. The judge said there were links between Modi and conspirators, including PNB officials and top ruling elites in India.

Many in the present Indian Government and many Indian banks seeking



launderers and those financing terrorist activities have two main requirements. The first is a place crowded with financial transactions, in which their own will be easy to lose. The second is a place where those who enable the setting up of companies and opening of bank accounts are prepared to turn a blind eye to who is the owner of a business. Secrecy over the beneficial ownership of companies is the main conduit of money laundering. Contrary to what you might think, it is more than three times harder to obtain an untraceable shell company in tax havens than in rich, developed countries.

At the moment, the UK is a member of two organizations, the OECD and the European Union, which routinely publishes blacklists of countries that are deemed “high risk” when it comes to money laundering and a “danger to the international financial system”. The UK, US, and Switzerland have never been blacklisted. Instead, the usual pariahs of the west—Cuba, North Korea, Iran and so on appear, along with small states such as Antigua or St Kitts and Nevis. This money collection of countries presents the most marginal threat to the international financial system.

They are merely powerless to respond to being listed. Former US official Juan Zarate has boasted that a dedicated team at the US Treasury uses its influence to get American enemies blacklisted and friends left alone, in the name of counter-terrorism. Banks face large fines for facilitating transactions with countries on these lists, and as a result, they have withdrawn services, leaving these countries stranded financially. Caribbean countries have lost the most correspondent relationships with international banks. The EU and OECD are in danger of pushing countries into the



hands of the very people they listed them for helping. There is a word in German: Lebenslüge meaning the lie you have to tell yourself to live your life. We prefer to think that the success of the City of London and our property market relates to our skills honed in ancient universities, not the banking of nouveau riche criminals. Once British newspapers have salivated over the details of the latest money laundering ring, they quickly return to the narrative that the real threat lies on small, palm-fringed islands. The politicisation of the black-listed small islands has enabled London

to become the global centre of money laundering. Some in the City of London think that Brexit will allow them to prosper but it will bring dooms day to the country. English education has facilitated creation of corrupt bankers and shyster lawyers who twist the truths towards lies that free the guilty criminals across the globe. The British offshore banking tax evasion is destroying Eastern countries infrastructure growth and prosperity by facilitating flight of illegal capital from East to West.

Many NRIs, Lawyers and business people, living in the UK-West continue

singing the high praises of the Britain as they continue to park their loot by selling their souls to the British. The Indian financial fugitives continue to disrespect their forefathers, disrespecting the memories of the Great Brave Freedom Fighters of India who sacrificed their lives making India free from the corrupt British Raj.

The writer is the Global Chairman/ Group President of the World Homeland Security/Smarttechno Group of Companies. www.worldhomelandsecurity.one The views expressed by the writer are personal.



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5G IS OUR ONLY CHANCE TO GROW

By Pradeep Baijal

Everyone talks of China overtaking the USA in GDP and 5G (in a digital world with multiplying 5G usages). Indians have always been ahead in the digital and mobile technologies, till of course, regulations and crony capitalism blocked growth. What is so special about 5G? Is it just a communication technology? 5G is the new global wireless standard after 1G to 4G networks, much faster and having lower latency, packing density etc. 5G enables a new kind of network that is designed to connect virtually everyone and everything together including machines, objects, and devices, both static and

moving, and like everything in new technologies, evolving and changing fast. 4G Broadband earlier delivered deep web functionality to our latest technology Smartphones. 5G also requires new kind of regulation internalizing content and pricing regulation.

The US and other liberal democracies are falling behind China in the global 5G race. "I estimate that China is about 10 times ahead of us in the 5G space. This is a national emergency. The US needs to get the necessary bandwidth and funding to the telcos to get that built out, we may have already lost that one, that's how dire the situation is," Schmidt told CNN recently. "If these technologies are built in China,

for example, they are not necessarily going to follow our privacy rules or our ethics We have to be careful to win this battle," Schmidt said, pointing to the Chinese government's plan to lead the global market for AI by 2030. Indians have proved that they can move ahead very fast as they did both for liberalised 2G and 4G networks.

China's 5G networks are among the most advanced in the world, unless India is enabled to challenge them like the US did that to China, post 1980. According to CCS Insights, China will account for more than half of all 5G users by 2022. China is also expected to dominate through 2025, at which time it might represent 40 percent of global



5G connections, according to the GSMA. Mainland China is already the world's largest Smartphone market, and it also boasts the largest 4G market, with 843.7 million 4G subscribers. Based on a 5G study published by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, China's aggressive investments in 5G infrastructures will be key to the country's status as the world's largest 5G market soon, unless India challenges like it did for 2G and 4G.

We must also remember that seven Presidents after Nixon, helped China for political reasons. They might now help India and Japan in the peculiar politi-

China earlier grew with the help of stolen technologies from the US and the rest of the world. The US collaborated. It can no longer do so and hence China has invested hugely in R&D, and commercial use of new technologies- "David G. Goldman".

cal/geographical environment in Asia, where China can never collaborate with India or Japan.

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The US, India and some other countries flourished when they started operating on far better and fully digital 2G to 4G standards/technology and regulation (converged network and regulation). But there was a problem in some countries like India, where we could not migrate to a converged network/regulation due to the opposition of incumbent telecom operators, and tried to inefficiently operate on Unified Access License in 2004, and later moving to case to case regulations for 4G networks.

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Late, late 5G in India: GOI is looking at issues around high prices of spectrum and its limited availability/usage. We faced similar problems for 2G/3G in 2004, but were carefully dealt with in



new unified access regulations, license fee and connectivity charges.

In its report titled 'Making India 5G Ready' in August, 2018 Inter-Ministerial High Level Forum for 5G (Paulraj Committee)', India anticipated the start of 5G in 2020. Based on the Report, the Government is creating an enabling framework for development of 5G services in India. Progress is slow as many new developments have taken place and the 5G services are expected to be introduced gradually and advance

to a full range of services as ecosystem and demand for services grows. Indian IT technologists are far ahead of those in the world. 5G can unleash new economic opportunities and societal benefits giving it the potential for being a transformational force for Indian society. It can help the country leapfrog the traditional barriers to development as well as advance the Digital India Mission. The cumulative economic impact of 5G on India can reach \$1 trillion by 2035. But the progress in development

in new services/usages is slow in India, and does not match with the high anticipated fee. There are thus apprehensions that India is set to miss the 5G bus due to lack of preparedness, spectrum issues, inadequate use-case development, uncertainty around sale of radio waves for 5G, etc. Inadequate availability of spectrum, high spectrum prices, poor development of use cases, low status of fiberization, non-uniform RoW issues, deficient backhaul capacity, etc. are some of the factors coming



in the way of rolling out of 5G services in India, missing the target dates in the Report.

Globally 118 operators in 59 countries have deployed 5G network, though only China and S. Korea has progressed to significant commercial operation. China has already developed more than 5 lakh 5G base stations covering around 7-8 per cent of their population. Regarding status of deployment of 5G in India, 5G High Level Forum has given its report titled

'Making India 5G Ready' to the Government in August, 2018. 5G Hackathon had been organized and the Department have shortlisted 100 use cases for further development. Thirty out of 100 use cases will be demonstrated along with TSPs to learn 5G use cases and roll out challenges. The current reserve price of spectrum is one of the highest in the world, which needs to be rationalized taking into account per capita income, extremely low usage, and reserve price benchmarks of

other countries, 5G trial applications have been submitted by the TSPs in the month of January, 2020, however, till date the guidelines for trials have not been made clear and there is no set date for commencement of these trials. Spectrum allocation is also posing to be a big problem.

We have four times more people and four times less spectrum which means that spectrum available to one person is 1/16th of the global average. Availability of 175 MHz only in 3300 MHz



to 3600 MHz band will mean that approximately 50 MHz or so spectrum per operator could be allocated, which is far below the global average.

TRAI had recommended Rs.492 crore per MHz as reserved price for spectrum in 3300 MHz to 3600 MHz for 5G which is far higher than the auctioned spectrum price in other countries. Comparison of unit pricing of 5G spectrum with other countries indicates that it is 07 times costlier than UK, 14 times

costlier than Australia, 35 times costlier than Spain and 70 times costlier than Austria. Price recommended by TRAI is exorbitantly high and ranges from 3-70 times of the market determined price of the spectrum in other countries in absolute terms and is 16 times of the price in relative terms. They are of the view that there is a need to strike a balance between the Government's expectation to generate revenue from the auction and growth of the sector and the overarching impact of 5G across the sectors.

Fear of 5G deployments in China: Many reports overstate the extent of Chinese 5G deployment for several reasons. Chinese government's push to "accelerate user migration to 5G through measures such as package upgrade offer, and credit purchases, etc." Service providers then start encouraging customers to upgrade to 5G subscriptions regardless of their actual need, use, or device. Some companies reduce 5G subscription prices so much they are even cheaper than staying on a 4G plan. ITIF report suggests that by counting anyone on a 5G plan, even if they only have a 4G device connecting to 4G infrastructure, as a 5G subscriber, and measuring individual base stations instead of cell sites, China's 5G stats paint a misleading picture. Consider that China Telecom and China Mobile (the two largest operators in China) reported 150 million "5G package customers" as of September 2020. But according to China's Academy for Information and Communications Technology, only 94 million 5G devices had been shipped for all of China during the same time frame, indicating a sizable gap between the number of "subscribers" and actual 5G users. The number of 5G-capable devices alone is impressive, and the competitive threat from China justifies a thoughtful policy response, but no one should be worked into a panic by goosed stats.

Slow and steady may win the race. India won the race in 2G growth after 2010 (Comparison with Chinese growth ever.) Whereas the United States is pursuing a gradual, economical deployment of 5G, the problems with China's rushed 5G deployments are already starting to show. One of Huawei's own executives went so far as to call China's 5G "fake, dumb and poor," mostly due to poor integration with the 4G network. Another former official warned in a recent speech that China's 5G push could become a failed investment. While China is no doubt investing substantially in the expansion of its 5G network, including by

Fear of 5G deployments in China: Many reports overstate the extent of Chinese 5G deployment for several reasons.

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pressuring its state-owned carriers to invest faster than the market demands, Chinese figures must be properly scrutinized when using them to make U.S./ other country policy decisions.

National Strategy of 5G

5G, will be a key driver of our Nation's prosperity and security in the new age economy towards which we are progressing fast. It will provide consumers, businesses, and governments with remarkably fast network connections that will enable tens of billions of new devices to harness the power of the Internet, transforming the way we live, work, learn, and communicate. Whole of government and industry led approach should be launched for faster rollout with demonstrable use cases. Spectrum cost should be rationalized to remove the artificial cost barrier.

Indigenous and demonstrable use cases are the backbone of 5G because that will create the new economy.

Indian government has to finalise the list of industries where it needs to achieve indigenous technological innovations, and handhold them for a profitable start.

(Pradip Baijal is former Chairman, TRAI, and has authored many books on Indian reforms)

BALKANISATION OF CHINA BY 2027

Afghan war broke USSR.
The Wuhan virus will
balkanise China



You will wonder, how is it possible? You will also say that the mighty military and economic power, coupled with the totalitarian regime will never allow this to happen. The very same questions were asked for USSR too. But USSR balkanised. It will happen, and happen soon to China too.

It does not matter if the Wuhan virus escaped from a laboratory, was deliberately made to escape or originated in wetmarkets; China will pay the price. The western powers have had a heavy death toll that surpasses the number of US soldiers who died in Vietnam War or the civilian casualty during 9/11.

To put things in perspective 2043 Americans were killed in Pearl Harbour, but Japan paid the price, multiple times when 'little boy' and 'fat man' were released from B-29 bomber. The Wuhan virus toll in the USA is nearing 70,000. Cowboy justice will be implemented. Very basic justice. You hit us we will hit you. Virus killed our people; we will make you suffer.



The sequence of events will be as under

1. When the world limps back to normalcy, businesses will pull out of China. All major western multinational companies manufacturing in China, will either move back to their home countries or will relocated to other non-threatening nations.

2. Anyone who trumpets the benefits cheap Chinese labour leading to higher profits for western multinationals will be either a non-conformist or a Chinese.

3. Western nations will correct the presently skewed trade balance in favour of their countries, and China will suffer a trade deficit.

4. A US led campaign will bring all developed and developing countries under one umbrella to isolate China. Only Pakistan and North Korea will remain in the China camp.

5. China will flex her military might by increasing presence in the South China Sea. This will make other countries feel threatened. This fear will be leveraged by the western powers. Australia and

New Zealand will seek help from the US, leading to increase its military presence in the region.

6. A cornered China will start bullying smaller countries who refuse to trade with it in consonance with the international anti-Chinese mood.

7. This will trigger even greater military deployment in land, air and sea, of western powers as a deterrent.

8. Western Intelligence agencies will release report that the Wuhan virus was man made. WHO will counter this report by its own research findings that the Covid-19 has originated in nature and China is not to be blamed?

9. Western powers will discredit WHO and its funding pattern will change. China will go against the tide and try to keep WHO afloat.

10. China will approach UN to protest against presence on other Navies and Forces in Chinese waters and 'area of influence'.

11. Belligerent statements will emanate from Chinese Govt mouth piece on how strong China is and can match any western power in firepower.

12. Aggressive patrols of Chinese nuclear tipped submarines and aircraft carriers will start.

13. Sterner trade sanctions will be imposed on China.

14. It's double-digit growth rate will come down to negative growth.

15. Unemployment will increase in China.

16. The citizens who were on a tight leash will protest.

17. Massive demonstrations will breakout in major cities and villages in China.

18. The resistance to the Communist government will be fuelled and fanned by the western powers.

19. A Govt under pressure will try to brutally suppress the protests.

20. UNCHR will be activated.

21. Videos of brutal suppression will escape out of

China and will be broadcast on all major channels.

22. A western collation to rein in the communist government of China will get active militarily. All major bases in an around the neighbourhood of China will be activated to protect human rights abuses.

23. In the meantime North Korea will implode and both the Koreas will be unified.

24. The authoritarian Chinese government will find it untenable to continue.

25. The leaders will go into hiding or will escape in exile to South American tinpot dictator country and African banana republics.

26. There will be unrest in China.

27. Many of PLA soldiers will join protesters.

28. There will be mass desertions in PLA.

29. Western collation will disarm the residual PLA.

30. A "Beijing Human Rights Tribunal" (BHRT) will be constituted with judges from 42 countries to try the PLA leadership for excesses. The trials will be conducted 'in absentia'.

(Just like the post WWII Nazi trials)

31. A geographical longitude will be decided by the UN and the 'Chinese Melon will be cut' into two administrative zones of East China and West China.

32. UN Administrative Mission in China (UNAMC) will help develop democratic institutions in both these countries.

33. The UNAMC will provide stability for 2 years after which the first democratic elections would be held in East China and West China.

34. After which the UNAMC will be dissolved.

35. The two new democratic countries will proud new members of the United Nations.

36. Tibet will gain independence. Dalai Lama and Tibetans will leave India for their promised land.

*By Prakhar Misra,
writer is a China Expert and
political editor of Opinion Express*





Vienna Talk: Need to think about more than Nuclear weapons

By Hanuman Prasad Singh

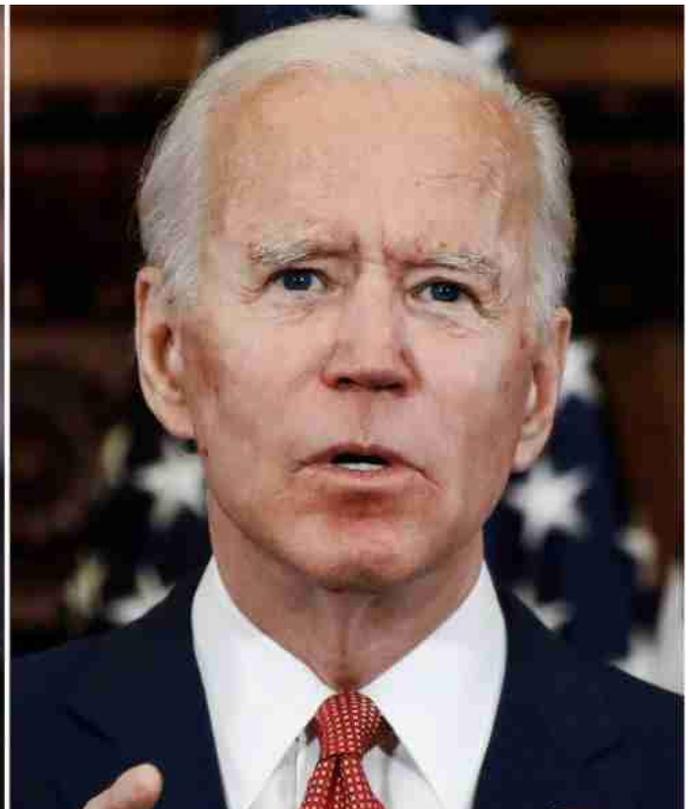
Subtle diplomatic effort of the European intermediaries in Vienna talk to reinvigorate the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA) by persuading USA for returning into the deal and Iran for ensuring full compliance has presented the major breakthrough in this way. Iran's previous demand of nothing less than lifting all sanction has been a major restraint in this progress. But Vienna talk has opened a path, from where deadlock can be dismantled through negotiations and renegotiations. Although Iranian nuclear deal concentrates particularly on non-proliferation of nuclear weaponization, but a number of other strate-

gic issues are inherent in it.

In spite of rest of the participant's appeal to stay in the JCPOA, President Trump's decision to withdraw the US unilaterally and subsequent re-imposition of economic sanctions for exerting "maximum pressure" over Iran to compel it for renegotiations have been conceived as the US betrayal by Iran. It has relegated Iran in isolation, which has culminated in the worsening the Iranian economy alongside fueling the bitterness. In fact, the US sanction restraining global economic activities with Iran has relegated it in the situation of self-help for his security and survival, the vital interests of any country, for which any country can go to even war.

More importantly, hostility between

Iran and Israel has been relentlessly stimulating both the nations to further enhance its arms and ammunitions including an Iranian ambition to attain nuclear compatibility with Israel. With the obstructed economy due to global sanctions, in the self-help conditions, Iran has also been motivated to rethink about strengthening its security as well as uranium enrichment capability. That has been catalyzed by reduction in Iran's commitment as a response to USA abrogating JCPOA. Consequently, Iran has developed the underground missile city in Tehran and started the production of Uranium metal and heavy water beyond the stipulated limit of the nuclear deal. Moreover, Iran has also cooperated with North Korea for the develop-



ment of long-range ballistic missiles. Such cooperation of the countries facing strict global sanctions has been eye opener for the US economic sanctions strategy.

China-Iran strategic and economic partnership signed on 27th March, in which China has agreed to invest \$400 billion in Iran over twenty-five years in exchange for a steady supply of Iranian oil in comparatively lower cost, has rendered the economic sanctions redundant. Furthermore, the investment plan in the field of banking, telecommunications, ports and railways as well as mutual consent for deepening military cooperation through joint exercises, joint research and weapon development, and intelligence sharing have explicitly undermined the Iranian isolation. Wang Yi's assertion regarding Chinese support to Iran for safeguarding its national dignity and state sovereignty as well as his demand for removal of all US sanctions over Iran have placed China as "Iran's friend for hard times".

It is noteworthy that China's venturing for mutual cooperation with Iran by defying all global challenges and spurning economic sanctions has strengthened the Chinese stronghold in the Iran- the strategic gateway for Eurasian countries. Wang Yi's insistence for China's help in resolving persistent disputes of Middle East including Israel-Palestine issue during his visit to Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, Bahrain, and Oman has manifested the Chinese ambition to supersede USA in this strategic part.

In fact, The US economic sanctions have helped China indirectly in getting Iranian oil in comparatively cheap prices. But by contrast, it has obstructed the India's engagement with Iran. It has even impeded Indian plan to develop the International North South Transport Corridor- an alternative to the Chinese Belt and Road initiative. OPEC nation's decision of cutting oil production alongwith lack of sufficient oil trade with Iran has exerted over pressure on Indian economy. Thus, economic sanctions have pushed Iran far from India but closer to China simultaneously.

So the USA must strive to reconsider its policy of economic sanctions as well as Iran's strategic situation emanating after latest Iran-china negotiations. Undoubtedly, Nuclear issue encompasses very profound stake in this entire diplomatic effort. But failure of the global sanctions in preventing the nuclear acquirement attempts alongside the strategic chal-



lenges after Chinese involvement has highlighted the need of policy review. There is a need to establish complex interdependence between Iran and rest of

the world, that will not only dismantle the special environment for China but it will also remove all the restraints on Iran-India mutual cooperation leading



to establishment of regional balance of power between India and China. Containing China in Iran is prerequisite to the continuous US hegemonic and stra-

tegic forwardness in the Middle East. So, removal of irrelevant global sanctions and subsequent cordial relations between Iran and USA is very necessary.

Writer is JRF qualified professional and Post-Graduate of Political Science from University of Allahabad, India.

Ninth Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur led a dharmic path

By Dattatreya Hosabale

In Indian history, Guru Shri Tegh Bahadur's personality shines resplendent like a bright constellation. He was born in Amritsar to Guru Hargobindji and Nankiji on Krishna Panchami in the Baisakhi month. As per the Nanakshahi calendar, Guru Tegh Bahadur's 400th birth anniversary falls on May 1 this year.

Guru Tegh Bahadurji was born into a tradition that challenged Mughals of Central Asia that had occupied vast tracts of Indian territory. He is a symbol of tenacity, sacrifice and his life is a wonderful example of physical and mental valour.

In fact, Shri Tegh Bahadur's life stands out as one of the greatest experiments in character-building. By reining in one's negative instincts, even ordinary men can follow the path of dharma. Those who are trapped in the chakravayuha of blasphemy, avarice and pride cannot remain stable in crisis.

Whilst the behaviour of ordinary men changes in the midst of joy and sorrow, men of great attainment rise above these considerations. Guruji proclaimed that one should be beyond "praise and slander, look upon gold and iron alike" and not be "touched by pleasure or pain, greed, emotional attachment and egotistic pride" (Shlok Mahalla 9 - page 1426 onwards of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib).

In his teachings, Guruji exhorted, "One should neither frighten away anyone nor be scared of anyone". The greatest fear is the fear of death, that goads a person renounce his values and turn a coward. Guruji said, "I cannot forget the fear of dying, and this worry has torched my body".

Through his preachings and selfless work, Guruji sought to create a society in which one could walk the path of dharma, free from worry and fear. Guruji's life is perhaps the finest exam-





ple of attaining the four purusharthas (goals of human existence) e dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), kama (desire) and moksha (liberation).

He successfully demonstrated excellent human values in his family and the society whilst accomplishing the goals of artha and kama in his domestic life. He attained martyrdom for the cause of dharma. He envisions hope and trust even in the worst of crises. Guruji famously said, "I have regained my power, my bonds are broken and all options are open on to me."

Guru TeghBahadurji's thoughts and actions had such an inspiring impact that they broke the bonds shackling the country and unlocked the path of liberation. His messages in the Braj language is a unique exposition of Bharatiya culture, philosophy and spirituality.

Guruji's abode, Anandpur Sahib, emerged as a centre of mass struggle against the injustice and atrocities of the Mughals. Aurangzeb wanted to make Hindustan Darul-Islam. Kashmir, an intellectual and spiritual centre, was his key target.

The people of Kashmir approached Guruji for guidance, following which he held a lengthy discussion. Situation everywhere was grave. How could the cruel Mughal ambitions be frustrated was the question.

There was only one route e a great

man would have to martyr himself to protect his nation and the faiths of her people. Through this sacrifice, a tide of public consciousness would galvanize the nation and shake the walls of the foreign Mughal empire. Who would make this sacrifice? This quandary was resolved by Guruji's son, Shri Govind Rai, who asked his father if there was anyone who commanded more respect and stature than him.

Aurangzeb's army imprisoned Guruji along with his three disciples and brought them to Delhi, where they were subjected to inhuman torture and pressured to convert to Islam. All kinds of alluring assurances were made. But, Guruji stood firm on the path of dharma. Angered by his defiance, the Mughals forced Guruji to watch as his disciples were tortured in Chandni Chowk e Bhai Mati Das was ripped with a saw, Bhai Diyala was drenched in boiling oil and Bhai Sati Das was tied and burnt in a heap of cotton.

The Mughal regime probably felt that he would be frightened by the treatment meted out to his disciples. Guruji knew that the very essence of dharma was to fight injustice and tyranny. As Guruji did not waver, the qazi ordered the executioner to behead him. This act of martyrdom led to a reawakening across the nation. On the martyrdom of his father, tenth guru Shri Govind Singh

said,

"He protected the tilak (mark on the forehead) and janevu (sacred thread). His martyrdom is a significant event of the Kali Yuga. For the sake of saints, he laid down his head without even a sigh."

On a day when the whole country is celebrating Guruji's 400th birth anniversary, let us be reminded that the best way to honour his memory was to follow his path. Today, there is a scramble for enjoying material pleasures. Guruji, however, showed the path of renunciation and restraint.

Envy, malice, selfishness and discrimination are prevalent all around. But, the revered Guruji spoke about creativity, harmony and conquering disorders of the mind.

One of the lasting effects of his teachings was on the people he passed en route to Delhi, who refrain from cultivating tobacco till date. Fundamentalist forces are rising to gain dominance. But, Guruji showed the path of valour, selflessness and sacrifice. At a time when mankind is entering a new phase of change, the sacred memory of Guruji propels us to follow his path and build a new India that is rooted in its soil.

(Writer is the General Secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh)

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The journey of passion continues with your blessings as we enter our 20s

Beauty personified in an entrepreneur package

Mary Radenkovic is a Serbian born entrepreneur and fashion designer. She grew up in Greece in the Mediterranean. Mary has been in the fashion industry since the age of 15. She initially worked as a model for beachwear, make-up and hair products and was a face of several European brands. She graduated with a BSc in Art and Poetry and has worked a designer of women's clothes. She is currently working on her own luxury London based swimwear brand Lavishly Appointed. She is the founder and designer of a luxury resortwear brand Lavishly Appointed. Excerpts from an Interview of a wonderful human being and beautiful lady by Opinion Express Fashion & Entertainment bureau Chief **Ms Nithya Ramesh (Online)**.

Can you take us through your journey to where you are now?

I have been in the fashion industry since the age of 15, initially working as a model, then as a designer and now as an entrepreneur as well.

How did you launch Lavishly Appointed and can you tell us since we last spoke, where you are at today with the brand?

We opened our very own in-house boutique luxury production. Now, that our production is in the house, we feel like we gained more credibility and can produce orders of different sizes for our respected clients. In addition, we are now preparing our fifth collection and are very excited about it.

Who does the team involve behind you at Lavishly Appointed?

We have two separate teams, the first one is focused on sales & advertising and is very well organised and entrepreneurial whereas the second team is our hard-working design team consisting of pattern makers and tailors.

Having come back from a successful presentation during the





Paris fashion week, where can you see yourself within the next 3-5 years?

We are hoping we will have our own fashion show at Paris Fashion Week.

What strategies do you have in place when looking at the expansion of Lavishly Appointed?

Opening our first branch store would be the next challenge and the next step, but we have not yet decided the details.

Can you tell us what areas you have struggled in professionally?

Mostly in our financial plans and

forecasts as we want to produce truly valuable and luxury products, but also still need to make the commercially appropriate.

Have you ever had any other mentor? If so, how has this benefited you to grow?

Well, certainly have a few friends and colleagues who are successful entrepreneurs and often willing to share their words of wisdom. Nevertheless, my true mentor was my late grandfather who was also a fashion designer. He helped me develop a genuine passion for fashion that has been with me since my early years.

What outlets do use to market Lavishly Appointed?

I still love the good old fashion magazines, so we will be featured in the Tatler magazine December issue. However, we are also very much up to date with the new wave of digital influencers and are very active on Instagram and also work with the famous bloggers.

What would you like to see changed for millennials in business?

I would like to see more space for young designers and smaller companies to work. With imperialism in which we currently live in, it is often difficult for young talented people to succeed unless they join the large corporates and I would like to see more visibility of millennials and their smaller scale start-ups.

What is the best piece of business advice you have received to date?

Hard work will always pay back!

What is the critical lesson you have learned in your career so far?

That I need to be more serious about my company's business plans. As an artist, I usually struggle with that!

How do you create an evenly balanced work and personal life?

I ensure I always allow protected time for my family and also some personal time for my hobbies and give my self-time to enjoy art and attend exhibitions.

The highlight of your career so far?

Definitely, starting my own business Lavishly Appointed.

What gives you ultimate career satisfaction?

I love what I do, working in fashion is fun because we work with media, tech, celebrities and beauty industry. We are at the intersection of business and creativity, so the work is quite variable. Moreover, we organise the best parties and events.

What challenges have since been presented during the growth of Lavishly Appointed in this last year?

Well, my challenge is to ensure that each new collection is better than the previous one and that is not always easy.

Which other leading entrepreneurs and pioneering game changers do you also admire and why?

I admire Anna de la Russo, who had turned Vogue brand into an established luxury brand over a very short period of time. Also, Ashley Graham is fantastic role model for success story.

What is a good article or book you have read recently?

I enjoyed reading the Grit from Angela Duckworth. It is an excellent easy read and it tries to explain why resilience is more important than talent for success and it gives a different perspective when thinking about every day business problems. I read Prashant Tewari editorials on geopolitical matters on regularly.

How do you measure your own terms of success?

Well, I think success is when you wake up and are happy that you're about to start work and are also getting paid well for it.

What does #BEYOUROWN mean to you?

I think it is when you turn behind and reflect on everything that happened and you realise that despite all the difficulties, you managed to get your idea and your dream to come true.

What is next for you and Lavishly Appointed?

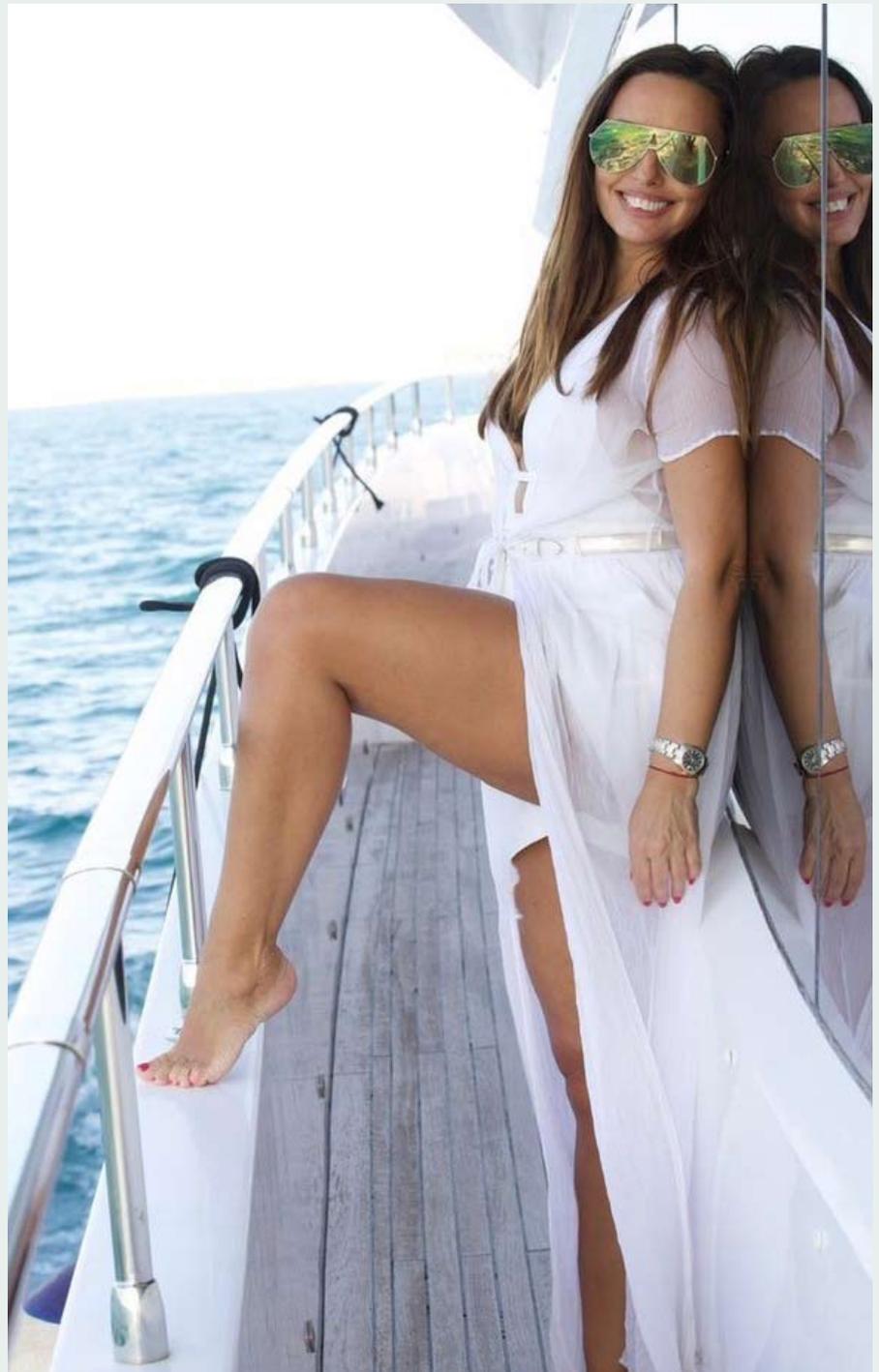
We will participate in the huge project MTV EMA Awards where most of the A list celebrities will be wearing Lavishly Appointed, so stay tuned and follow the EMAs!

Where do you intend to go with it?

We are based in the UK and our current market is in Europe, but next year we are planning to extend a business to Miami and are exciting about prospects of our business in the USA. We will attend the Miami Swim Week this year.

Have you ever had a mentor?

Well, certainly have a few friends and colleagues who are successful entre-



preneurs and often willing to share their words of wisdom. Nevertheless, my true mentor was my late grandfather who was also a fashion designer. He helped me develop a genuine passion for fashion that has been with me since my early years.

How do you think mentors can really help new founders and CEO's?

Certainly, they can help by making useful introductions, expanding networks and pointing towards the right people.

We saw Eva Longoria most re-

cently looking fabulous wearing a piece from your swimwear collection, however what has been the most rewarding moment for you since building your brand?

Yes, having Eva wearing our signature piece was amazing. We are very thankful and have decided the piece after her (every model of Lavishly Appointed has a unique name). We also got quite a lot of celebrities asking for our pieces for their private boat parties. I guess our line is very attractive and glamorous, so goes well with women who want to be different.



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Living A Life Of Hopes And Dreams While Shredding Barriers, One Adventure At A Time

Back in 1984, in the sweltering heat of Dholpur (Rajasthan), Anamika Tomar would run on the edge of a hillock, in love with the idea that the warm loo winds would sweep her right up. She successfully managed to fall off this hillock, however, and tried again the next day, and the day after. And now she has a wonderful story that speaks volumes about her sparkly-eyed dynamic self.

A woman who built herself to success, Anamika singularly moved to Mumbai (Maharashtra) from Noida (Uttar Pradesh) in 2004 while working in the international trade and textile industry. With a natural inclination towards design and a stunning understanding of aesthetic appeal, she launched her own interior design brand - Anamika Design Co. - not long after migrating. She bagged numerous prestigious projects all over the country and was repeatedly a jury member of the celebrated ACE Design Convention. She masterfully sustained herself as her business grew multifold until finally it was time to let her true passion make a place in her professional and personal life.

Anamika has had a demanding professional life that had a tendency to encroach upon her time in a way that made clocks futile. For a single woman to build a business from scratch in India is Herculean - kudos and salute to all who have broken barriers, irrespective of the labels that try to define them. To make space and time for something exciting everyday was a deliberate decision. She started Eco Adventure with the value she created for people through her skills and talent. The purpose was straightforward - combining passion with responsible and educational adventures that would add excitement to her life and to everyone else's.

The prep for this new journey of fun and self-discovery was everything. Anamika invested in an Isuzu 4x4, with an eye-catching imprint of Eco Adventure's brand design on it. And with this vehicle as her beacon she traversed up and down and here and there and everywhere she could, to the point where she had to be rescued from a canyon's edge by a rescue team in Khandala (the child in her was laughing).



A rather memorable journey was to Spiti. Anamika took a road-trip from Delhi to Spiti and back, and if that wasn't enough excitement, she went ahead for one of the most treacherous treks of Spiti - Triund. The struggle of breathing at an altitude of over 4000 feet is an experience that results in many ephemeral revelations that have a permanent impact. It was a reminder of why she loves what she loves - willingly stepping outside your comfort zone is exciting. It separates you from the crowd. It offers profound learnings.

The learnings from multiple adventures to Rajasthan, Goa, Karnataka, Uttarakhand and Maharashtra culminated into numerous awards and widespread

recognition. Fish that flow against the stream are easily spotted. With her Isuzu V-Cross, she participated in many off-roading events and was often the only female contestant. She bagged the first position in Force Motors' nationwide women's off-roading event. She also completed the rally lap of Ford Motors' off-roading event in the shortest time. She was also the only woman to receive an invite from Apollo Tyres' specially off-roading event amongst celebrities including Sachin Tendulkar. Seems like auto sports won't be part of "a man's world" in India for long.

Eco Adventure is Anamika's beloved baby project, a founding of years of self-growth and toil. To embrace a lifelong passion is a difficult achievement - not everyone is able to gather the means (or maintain the willingness) to make their dream an enjoyable hustle. The process was slow and undoubtedly painstaking, albeit extremely rewarding and fun.

Eco Adventure is an ode to the same Anamika Tomar who fell off a hill but couldn't care less. She has always been the person to take a goat-track off of an asphalt road. Anything extraordinary and purposefully difficult is exciting. Going with the flow may be the norm, but is it not more fun to raft against the current? The dare is an accolade itself. Time and again she has challenged what life threw at her and came out on top. This is not difficult for her - it's in her blood.



Rock-n-Mob embellishing the music industry

Riya Gulati

Rock-n-Mob is the Russian Army of Rock who started off its journey from Moscow in 2016 and has blossomed in Macedonia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Mexico, and Malaysia. From veridical to virtual performances, it has not only gained wide popularity but has also melted everyone's hearts. R-n-M is well known for providing a stage to beautiful ordinary souls which not only sets it apart but also adds an emotive flavour to the music. Here is the list of reasons which will propound why R-n-M is a rising star in the music industry(?)

GLOBAL OUTREACH

R-n-M is not only constricted to Russia but has its glorious presence all over the world. The wide-ranging international participants, admirers, members, patrons, and journalists are segregated by distance but are united by R-n-M. The sensational Quarantine Mob#1 (In the End-Linkin Park) which comprised of 266 musicians from 35 countries had hit more than 1M views in less than a year. Also, the recent buzz-worthy Quarantine Mob#2 (System of a Down- Chop Suey) which had 177 musicians from 34 countries have gained im-

mense love and support from all over the world.

APPRECIATED BY ALL THE AGE GROUPS

The R-n-M has shrewdly maintained an equilibrium in terms of music production. It produces music from all the genre which keeps the spirit young and old soul dance. Also, the collaboration is not only confined to a particular age group but is general. Here, the participants from all over the age groups are whole-heartedly welcome. Certainly, R-n-M has wider acceptance and is enthralled and cherished by people from all age groups.

CREATIVITY

The artistic and creative skills add splendour to the music. From shooting the video to the editing process to the style of uploading the video, all counts. From personal experience, a random search for Linkin Park's In The End video got me to discover Rock-n-Mob's channel. Undoubtedly, the intercontinental participation of diverse age groups, the cover page per se, theme, colour scheme, participants' expressions, fun element, picturization, recognition, and praise-worthy comments were magnificent in the R-n-M channel.





UNITY IN DIVERSITY

R-n-M is a catalyst in connecting people from all over the globe. R-n-M explores divergent forms of music which makes it ahead of its time. The versatile feature of R-n-M is that it has provided a single platform to the Keyboardists, singers, drummers, bassists, and guitarists to rock together. Whether it is a real or virtual concert, the soulful melody of the (global) musicians have given R-n-M a total Thumbs Up.

THE MUSIC NOT ONLY GIVES GOOSE-BUMPS BUT ALSO DRAINS OUT A VARIETY OF EMOTIONS

R-n-M's artistry in choosing the songs of the commended bands make people somehow connected to the channel. Also, in the case of a virtual concert, seeing one's country's performer(s) and national flag raise up the spirits. Literally, within a timeframe of 30 seconds, one needs to make a connection with the audience wherein the euphony and videography skills play a pivotal role.

FACILITATES ORDINARY TALENTED PEOPLE TO REALIZE THEIR EXTRAORDINARY TALENT

R-n-M graciously provides an opportunity to the ordinary talented people to realize and develop their potential, skills, and sometimes latent talent. You will justly feel the energy, enthusiasm, unity, and radiance of the performers in the Michael Jackson- BEAT IT video.

LOYAL FAN BASE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Apart from commendable devotion to work, R-n-M has verily attained a true-blue intercontinental fan base due to its kindness, love, compassion, and humility. Also, there is a fair flow of interest in demography. R-n-M has equitably reached out to everyone irrespective of their age, gender, and location. Moreover, it has received bountiful admiration from Thirty Seconds to Mars, Linkin Park, Metallica, Pain, Kiss and Bon Jovi.

THE GLITTERING STYLE AND CHARISMA

R-n-M is indeed people's music, i.e., music of the people, by the people, and for the people. One need not to be a perfectionist, but one must have a passion for music. R-n-M has managed to pour out a lot of musical variation into phenomenal synchronization. The music is beamed in different styles of the commoners' genuine selves and this is what makes R-n-M unique.

I am sure that you will certainly like RocknMob's channel. So don't miss out the chance to add sweet melody to your life and explore the channel by clicking on the link provided below.

LINK:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rYNNkkUu6U>

Writer is Paralegal at Law Offices of Caro Kinsella, Ireland+ India.

VISION UNLIMITED

It is hard to typecast or describe **Bandana Sondhi**, a Model, Brand Influencer, in logistics for WLM India, stylist and now Designer for her very own new brand called 'Supergirl@ttitude'. Bandana is a total fashion buff since she was a child.

With no formal training or professional course in fashion or style, she believes that she is excellent professional because she is blessed with impeccably good taste and knows what works, she feels 'these things can't be taught or learnt, it is an inborn talent'.

She has been associated with fashion world in different ways over the years. Bandana journey was totally unplanned and unraveled. She just followed the path with conviction as a stylist and styling people, their look, their wardrobe to being a very successful model and doing countless Ad-films for famous and renowned brands like BMW, Shangri La Hotel, IPL, Samsung, Philips, Apollo Hospital, Max Hospital, Coca Cola: Bollywood movie 'Setters' and now starting her own line in clothing called Supergirl@ttitude.

She enjoys styling people because the amount of joy when they start looking good and how it starts changing their life is her payback. "It is extremely gratifying for me to make a tiny difference in someone's life through my work" says Bandana. The key is for people to understand that they must choose to wear what suits them, their complexion, body type etc. It's not about blindly following trends. One has to also keep in mind one's lifestyle, family background and then decide how to dress up and what look to portray.

While styling her first ad shoot, she was noticed by a very famous photographer and advised that she should be in front of the camera and not behind it and that was the start of her career as a Model. Over a 100 Ad films for all the major international brands done. Today she continues to model for brands she believes in and likes on her own terms. The best part she says about being a model is the different characters



you get to dress up as and enact, very often very different from what one is in real life and that is what makes it interesting and challenging.

While doing all of the above activities, many brands would approach her for advice on how to promote themselves, social media promotion, endorsements and she started spearheading her own events as a Brand Influencer and curated her own shows for them. From store openings, to specially created evenings for hospitality brands, trunk shows for designers, shows to promote new age brands she does it all and more.

The most interesting thing recently has been her foray into a totally different sphere from all of the above. The world of logistics. She was introduced to it by her partner through his company WLM Courier & Freight and is Director - Sales & Business Development for the company which has a worldwide presence with its HQ based in London, United Kingdom.

Bandana says, I learnt something totally new from scratch and it was not easy. It has got a lot to do with people and the movement of their packages



within India or Worldwide. Making clients aware about the various modes of services namely Road, Air, Sea for Door 2 door delivery movements. 'To make

new clients and have them come back again and again because of the superb service we provide gives me extreme satisfaction'.

Bandana never imagined that she would become a Designer one day but here she is today launching her own brand in fashion - 'Supergirl@ttitude'. She has come up with a tee shirt line which is India centric and is a fusion of a western and Indian sensibilities. She says "there is so much culture and rich heritage in India itself that you don't have to look outside and far and that is the reason her designs will always have the Indian element and promote Indian craftsmanship. She believes that the best of fashion should be affordable and within reach of everyone. Bandana says "You don't have to make things frightfully expensive for them to be classified as exclusive and high fashion and I hope to break this barrier with my brand - Supergirl@ttitude".

Lastly but definitely not the least she is the founder of an all-women's forum called 'Supergirl Chronicles'. The idea behind the name and its inception is that she strongly believes that every woman has a super power, a gift, a talent, something they are good at. Some know their powers and some are yet to discover them. Supergirl Chronicles is a platform for women to showcase themselves, their work, their talent, express themselves freely regardless of whether they are professionals or not.

Her message for everyone is that nobody is perfect, recognize what you are good at and use it wisely and kindly.



Live telecast of Supreme Court proceedings will be a landmark reform to bring transparency

By Adv Vishnu Sharma

Chief Justice of India N V Ramana is planning a landmark solution to bring transparency in the judicial system by stating - he is “actively considering the proposal to telecast live the proceedings of the Supreme Court”, but “before initiating concrete steps in this regard”, he plans “to seek general consensus among... colleagues in the court”.

Speaking at the launch of a mobile application that would enable reporters to access virtual court proceedings, the CJI pointed out that transparency is a time-honored principle when it comes to the country’s judicial process and it’s important for the public to be able to access court proceedings since the ruling of the court has a bearing on the lives of people and the media’s role assumes importance in the process of disseminating information.

In a September 2018 judgment, a three-judge bench headed by then CJI Dipak Misra had given its nod to live stream court proceedings, saying this will bring more accountability and enhance the rule of law.

e-committee, headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, has suggested that “The judges will draw inspiration from the practise prevalent in other countries, if there is any, and also study the 2018 verdict in the Swapnil Tripathi case as well as the suggestions that were furnished by the Attorney General in that matter,” a senior court officer, familiar with the development.

Justice Chandrachud revealed that at present the Supreme Court is focusing on enhancing the video conferencing facility. “The idea is to have one video conferencing facility for all High Courts and district courts and a separate facility for Supreme Court. Bids have been invited for managing the entire videoconferencing facility,” Justice Chandrachud said.

The rules for conducting such hearing have been finalised by a committee of High Court judges. District courts too would be able to virtually record evi-



Chief Justice of India N V Ramana

dence during trial as 11 out of 25 High Courts have adopted these rules as per area-specific requirements and changes. The remaining High Courts have the option to adopt Rules framed by the e-committee, the bench said.

Saying “sunlight is the best disinfectant”, it ordered that the project “must be implemented in a progressive, structured and phased manner, with certain safeguards to ensure that the purpose of live-streaming of proceedings is achieved holistically and that it does not interfere with the administration of justice or the dignity and majesty of the court hearing the matter and/or impinge upon any rights of the litigants or witnesses”.

Following the pandemic, the judicial system has had to adapt quickly, the CJI said, talking about how cases began to be heard through video conferencing.

This also created problems for the

media to access the courts and some provision was made to allow reporters to watch proceedings at specific locations. However, this also faced certain difficulties, the CJI said, adding he received several requests to make changes to the system.

The CJI said he then took it up with the SC e-Committee and other court officials who then came up with the new app which will allow reporters to watch the proceedings on their mobile phones.

He also announced the introduction of a new feature on the SC’s official website and mobile application. The feature, ‘Indicative Notes’, is aimed at providing concise summaries of landmark judgments in an easy-to-understand format, the CJI said, adding, “this will serve as a useful resource for media persons and the general public who wish to be better informed about the rulings of the Court”.



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