

# Voice Asian VOICE®

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Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

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## WHY HIGHER BAME DEATHS?



Clockwise from left to right: Adil el-Tayar, Alfa Saadu, Mohamed Sami Shousha, Amged el-Hawrani, Anton Sebastianpillai, Jitendra Rathod, Habib Zaidi, Abdul Mabud Chowdhury, and (in the middle) Fayaz Ayache

**- Rupanjana Dutta & Priyanka Mehta**

On Saturday, April 11th, Britain had lost almost 1000 people to coronavirus within 24 hours. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has announced for three weeks extension of the UK lockdown. Most UK newspapers said that BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) people

are highly vulnerable to this virus and three times more likely to end up in the ICU. Some media organisations even attributed that an absence of “culturally sensitive message” in multi-lingual languages is one of the causes of higher coronavirus infection rates within the BAME community.

Continued on page 6

### inside:

Indian students stranded in the UK face harassment from landlords and caretakers



SEE PAGE 2

Old and forgotten: Care homes fighting Coronavirus



SEE PAGE 4

Lockdown in India extended till May 3



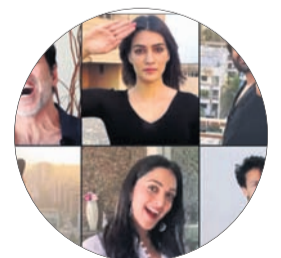
SEE PAGE 10

265 Britons fly back home from Ahmedabad



SEE PAGE 11

Bollywood stars join hands to raise funds



SEE PAGE 12

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with Keith Vaz

# one to one

## Mahantesh Karoshi

Mahantesh Karoshi is a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at the Barnet Hospital of Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust, London. He has written four stand alone textbooks in the field of Women's Health and this has been distributed worldwide for free through Global Library of Women's Medicine.

He believes in technology which can positively bring change to public health and with that ethos in mind, he and his two more colleagues set up a company called Zottii in 2019 (<https://www.zottii.com/>). The objective of Zottii is to deliver prescription medicines for free in London. It turns out to be the best put efforts for Covid-19 Pandemic. In 2006, HRH Princess Anne, launched Mahantesh's book on Postpartum Haemorrhage at the Royal Society of Medicine.

Karoshi worked in 2007 as Volunteer Obstetrician to work in Ethiopia's Gimbiie Adventist Hospital where he covered all aspects of Obstetric and Gynaecological emergencies working with limited resources as well as teaching healthcare professionals. His Textbook of Obesity and Pregnancy won the Highly Commended Award from British Medical Association Book Awards (2009)

In 2010, Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, awarded him the prestigious Bernhard Baron Travelling Fellowship. This gave him the opportunity to work in University of Buenos Aires on the advanced surgical management of morbidly adherent placental disorders. A serious condition that can happen in women with multiple caesarean deliveries.



### 1 Which place, or city or country do you most feel at home in?

London, London city gave me an opportunity to cherish, which I was longing all through till I came to the UK. I am a proud Indian, but the discrimination I faced at every level was very obstructive and was not progressing and the barriers I have to pass through were immensely difficult.

### 2 What are your proudest achievements?

My proudest achievement was my book launch by HRH Princess Anne in 2006 and making friends with the then Queens Gynaecologist Sir Marcus Setchell.

### 3 What inspires you?

A challenge which is not explored well. I refer this to my day to day clinical practice, be it in NHS or in the private, a complex medical condition, where many doctors have given their best, but still patient continues with the problem she presented with. This is my day to day inspiration.

### 4 What has been biggest obstacle in your career?

Coming from a poor family and working my way through the barriers and get to where I wanted to be.

### 5 Who has been the biggest influence on your career to date?

Late Prof. Louis Keith of Northwestern University, Chicago, USA. Prof. Keith was inspirational in the sense that, he valued my ideas and he constantly provided the support I needed to excel in my career. With Prof. Keith's help, I manage to publish four textbooks in the field of women's

health for healthcare professionals all over the world.

### 6 What is the best aspect about your current role?

Delivering the babies, be it a natural, or caesarean delivery.

### 7 And the worst?

When you think, baby will make it through natural route and suddenly emergency happens and end up with emergency caesarean or a difficult instrumental delivery.

### 8 What are your long-term goals?

Become a philanthropist, to give what I have learnt to my students, my trainees, so that baton is passed on.

### 9 If you were Prime Minister, what one aspect would you change?

Value health care professionals, they deserve more than how government has treated the whole industry. Over the years, healthcare sector has been systematically undervalued and undermined by the politicians.

### 10 If you were marooned on a desert island, which historical figure would you like to spend your time with and why?

Steve Jobs, In his commencement speech at Stanford University says, he walked 5 miles a day to get one good meal by walking to Hare Krishna Temple and I ran 5 miles a day six days a week to get to school on time, and I want to tell him about my struggle. Steve had the hunger and aspiration and visionary, which I want to polish.

## Indian students stranded in the UK face harassment from landlords and caretakers

- Rupanjana Dutta

Indian students and citizens visiting friends and family abroad have encountered an unfortunate fate, when they could not make it back to India before the lockdown was announced in March and all international flights were cancelled. Now the lockdown has been extended till 3 May, to keep out any risk of importing the virus into the country by citizens or foreigners, travelling from the rest of the world.



Vignesh Karthik

Sameer Dhore

Naveen Naidu

The Times of India reported that India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has informed the Supreme Court that there are around 13 million Indians living abroad, including NRIs and students. In the process of minimising any risks of transmitting this disease by the passengers coming from Covid-19 stricken areas, they have decided not to evacuate Indian citizens in flights repatriating foreign nationals from India. This answer came after a plea was filed in the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Centre to evacuate a group of nearly 380 Indian students stranded in the UK without any delay. But the government has urged that all Indians to stay put wherever they are, and the embassies have been empowered to help the stranded Indians to help in every possible way, including with accommodation, health and medical support.

In the UK, there are reportedly about 400,000 Indian nationals, including about 50,000 students. The UK government has now extended visas till May 31 and has issued necessary guidelines. But all is not good with every student, awaiting to go back to India, to the comfort and security of their family.

Sameer Dhore from Mumbai, studies in the University of Greenwich and is also the President of Indian Society. He is in his second year with a paid job which is a part of his degree. Speaking to Asian Voice, he said, "I stay in a flat-share and have given my three months' notice. But the caretaker of the house, wants me out as soon as possible. As students, we are running short of food and we want to go back to our families. If I am infected with Covid-19, I will have no one to look after me. Even if I am in the hospital, no one from the family will be able to reach out to me and this accommodation will not take me back. Where will I go then? Students who are new here, many of them are not being allowed by their flatmates to even step out for grocery in fear of bringing germs back home from shops. How will they survive?"

"My rent is not on freeze. Same with many other students. Many landlords feel that we will leave without serving our notice, so they are not ready to give the deposits back."

Speaking highly of his university, Sameer added, "My university is doing a lot. They have

approached the issue very professionally. If you can't go out for grocery, they are even bringing that to you in 48-72 hours. NISAU is also helping us with a helpline and providing many more required assistances."

There have been Indian students who have been relying on part-time work and the money earned through that to survive in this country, while families provided with rent. But now many have had families unable to extend any financial support, due to failing businesses or job losses. This has resulted into students having as less as £30 to survive the whole month.

Naveen Naidu, who is a student at the Edinburgh Napier University, came from Hyderabad in India in January and lives in a private flat-share with three other people. He said, "UK does not care about the international students who are stuck here unfortunately. We came here to study and not work. Our university is closed and has not helped much after this closure. We can't even go back home. Landlords are harassing us for rent and I have had to borrow money from friends to pay my rent and bills, which is around £350. Indian and Pakistani grocery shops are hiking up prices for food items, which is not the same for big supermarkets like Tesco. We are left on our own to fend for ourselves."

Vignesh Karthik, national officer, member of the founding team of NISAU, an umbrella organisation for India and India-related student societies in the UK, is doing his PhD from King's College London since 2019. Speaking to Asian Voice, he said, "NISAU is getting many queries including from non students, some are emergency queries, which we are re-directing towards the High Commission of India. We are dealing with general queries at the moment. The main problem with many of the students is that they rely on part-time work for living in the UK. Many are homesick, which is understandable. So they really want to go back to their family. We don't want to advice people on the travel situation. But we are doing events online to provide company to people called 'home away from home', conducting quizzes, career and brand building workshops-whatever possible to keep students engaged. Any emails written to us, our response time, unless it is urgent, is usually 24 hrs."

## Repatriation of Indian nationals a 'concern of the Indian Government'

The FCO in collaboration with the Indian government announced a series of chartered flights for Britons stranded across the various states of India. Flights will repatriate Britons from Amratar to London on 17th, and 19th April. Another flight from Hyderabad via Ahmedabad to London is scheduled on 17th April and one from Chennai (via Bengaluru) to London on 20th April. The repatriation flights operating from various Indian states to the UK are going back empty after evacuating those stranded in India. A single-way journey has therefore resulted in ticket prices shooting up to as high as £600 each. Speaking to Asian Voice, Lord Tariq Ahmad, Minister of State for South Asia and Commonwealth said,

"We have recently announced a support package for British nationals seeking to return to the UK especially for those families who may not have funds readily available under such circumstances. We are now making interest-free loans available for them from our High Commissions which are repayable within six months' time. We have also had assurances from Etihad, Emirates and British Airways that refunds will be available to all those who had made prior bookings but are unable to travel to the UK owing to the lockdown imposed in India."

Former Labour MP for Leicester Keith Vaz in an interview with the Times of India had suggested another alternative. These repatriation flights can carry

the stranded Indian nationals in the UK to India which may lead to a decrease in the cost of these flight tickets. Responding to this insertion, Lord Ahmad said,

"The matter of repatriation of Indian nationals stranded in the UK remains a concern of the Indian government. India has to define its priorities and they are imposing heavier restrictions to ensure that those returning from the UK do not further spread the virus there. From our end, we are working with the Indian high commissions in the UK to ensure maximum support to them."



**MAJOR**

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## READERS' VOICE

Please email your letter within 125 words to Asian Voice at [aveditorial@abplgroup.com](mailto:aveditorial@abplgroup.com) by Sundays.

## Need for stronger protection for renters

With a quarter of Londoners living in the private rented sector, we need to see stronger protections put in place for them over the coming months. It has been welcome to see that the Government have announced that all court proceedings relating to housing possession should be suspended for 90 days. In turn, landlords have been given a three-month mortgage payment holiday, where needed.

However, many Londoners are asking what will happen after this period. A significant number of renters have already fallen into financial hardship and are unable to cover the costs of living.

It is inevitable that leaving tenants to negotiate the repayment of any rent

arrears with their landlords and agencies, without adequate support, will lead to widespread cases of unfair and unregulated disputes.

To prevent this from happening, the Chancellor should proportionately increase local housing allowance and statutory sick pay to cover average London rents. On top of this, we must also see an end to the five-week wait for initial Universal Credit payments.

If we continue to kick the can down the road, we could sadly be facing a flood of evictions in the Autumn. Let's stop that from happening.

**Navin Shah AM**  
London Assembly Member for  
Brent and Harrow

## Tablighi Jammah

An irresponsible act by a few members of Tablighi Jammah (AV dated 11-17 April) added the economic cost India is paying in terms of prolonged lock down and human sufferings especially daily wage earners. Religious leaders should build bridges of harmony in society, improve emotional bonds amongst various sectors of society and create brotherhood.

To trace a few hundred misbehaving Jammah members, the government of India had to spend lots of human and financial resources because they did not

come forward voluntarily to isolate themselves to prevent highly contagious Covid19 virus.

I think, to avoid recurrence of such incidents, more intelligence, policing and CCTV surveillance will be needed. Prior registration with full contact details will be required and the relevant laws may need to be amended so that the enforcement authorities can get hold of concerned individuals quicker and respond swiftly.

**Hitesh Hingu**  
By Email

## Reward our dedicated NHS staffs financially

While our politicians are paying lip service in abundant to hard press, dedicated NHS staffs; some have come out of retirement to work in front-line, losing their lives, it is time to reward them financially so that their family members are taken care of.

Every public worker, including bus drivers, who may lose their lives, should be compensated to the tune of at least £100,000, in addition to their legal entitlement. It will be drop in the ocean com-

pared to £3 billion daily cost of fighting Coronavirus, if necessary, fund should come out of Defence and Overseas Aid budget.

While most citizens are united in fighting Coronavirus, tiny minority is fleecing public, especially OAPs, playing on their fear, selling fake medicine, even vaccination, especially online. So be warned!

**Kumudini Valambia**  
By Email

## Unequal Treatment

At 0.1%, our bank rate is one of the lowest among industrialized world, any lower and it would be negative rate, in line with Japan where consumers have to pay banks to deposit their cash! Low rate is supposed to boost economy but in reality it may lower spending power, especially of OAPs who rely on their interest income to boost their miserly pension.

While OAPs are losing income, bor-

rowers are not benefiting, as financial institutions have failed to pass on benefits to their clients, instead using it to boost their profits, as some of them still charge interest of 20% and mortgage rate has gone up since the change in BOE lending rate.

It is high time there is justice, balance between savers and borrowers.

**Bhupendra M Gandhi**  
By Email

## Keep positive

We read your article about people keeping positivity while the virus has completely uprooted us from our normal lives. Medics are mentally and physically taxed so much, yet they are doing their best. I have heard of people who have suffered from coronavirus too, yet they have recovered and come out with success stories that give us positivity.

The bottomline remains, that 98% of those admitted with coronavirus, will get better and go home safe. A doctor friend

once explained, that every year a lot of people die of the usual flu. The problem with the coronavirus is, people falling ill at the same time- the NHS is not equipped to look after so many people with same problems, and same requirements.

But as the Queen said, this too shall pass. And we will be part of history- where the whole of mankind together fought to defeat a common enemy.

**Anurag Ravichandran**  
By Email

## New Asian Voice

When I was first handed over the new Asian Voice and Gujarat Samachar- a combination of the two in one newspaper 2 weeks back, I was not sure how to react. Thoughts were many, I was a bit apprehensive of the quality and the quantity.

But I must say this stop gap period arrangement reads fine, and my family and I are enjoying your two-in-one version of the newspaper.

**Kartik Shah**  
By Email

## New Labour

I read your article on the front page of Asian Voice last week. It is good that Sir Starmer is trying to mend the relationship with the British Indians. When we came to the UK in the 60s, the Tories were not welcoming towards us. The Labour party was our natural choice. Today's Labour party which is so

divisive is something we could never imagine of. I hope the party will bridge the gap between the Indians, especially Hindus and themselves. It is important to have a choice for Indians voting in this country as well.

**Pradip Sinha**  
London

## Boris Johnson has blood on his hands

Britain has crossed 10,000 deaths over three weeks. In a western country with the best medical facility like Britain, this is a matter of shame. Most UK newspapers said that the BAME community is most vulnerable to this virus and three times more likely to end up in the ICU. Some medical bodies are demanding answers, hinting at discriminations leading to disproportionate deaths among the BAME.

Mr Johnson is out of the hospital now, thanking doctors and nurses. Some are demanding medals and honour for those nurses who stood by his head for 48 hours. Interestingly both are migrants. His pregnant partner, self-isolating, also thanked the NHS profusely.

But there are many families here, who are not even being able to say goodbye to their loved ones, as coronavirus deaths are increasing by manifolds every day- something this government could have controlled, if they had let go of their impractical and absurd ideas like that of 'herd immunity'. Mr Johnson was wrong to refuse ventilators from the EU. He was wrong not to arrange for tests and PPE for frontline staff earlier.

What's happening in UK care homes today is a scandal our generations should be ashamed of. Local MPs believe the time has come to radically think how to deal with the most vulnerable in our society. As Paula Barker, MP for Liverpool Waverley said, everybody's life should be valued equally.

Whether Mr Johnson agrees now or not, with all that monetary benefits rolled out for businesses and companies to stay afloat by Chancellor Rishi Sunak, will come with a baggage in the coming years, making holes in our pockets, if not souls. The world will not be the same after this pandemic ends, we will not be the same either. But whether Mr Johnson accepts or not- he has blood on his hands- and no amount of hand washing, even for 20 seconds each time, would let that stain go off, ever.

## Hancock should take stock of his statements

These are unprecedented times for all governments. Regardless, the British Government was misguided in its "herd immunity" approach to deal with coronavirus, wherein the UK is likely to record the most number of deaths across Europe surpassing Italy.

At the heart of this mismanagement of the crises is Health Secretary Matt Hancock who recently urged medics to not "overuse and abuse" Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and instead use it as "precious resources". Understandably, he has faced severe backlash from frontline medics who have constantly appealed the government to be supplied with adequate PPE in wake of the number of doctors who passed away due to coronavirus where some reported of treating Covid-19 patients with plastic bags as substitutes for hand gloves.

Not all hospitals report of shortages though- across the Midlands, doctors have said that there is no shortage of PPE and that Hancock's statement had been taken out of context. Some PPE especially the N95 surgical face masks are re-usable therefore, should not be disposed off after treatment of every Covid-19 positive patient, since the virus is not airborne and can be contracted only through human contact. Meaning that only the gloves and suits are disposable. However, the situation remains grave in London where the curve appears to be flattening in comparison to other parts of the UK.

Regardless, Hancock's obtuse outlook to Covid-19 is further reflected in his apparent feud with chancellor Rishi Sunak in his reluctance to map and collaborate on an "exit strategy" once the pandemic is over.

He has been embroiled in another controversy; his refusal to consider an increment in the salary of the nurses. Rightly so, perhaps, considering the shape of the economy. However, on the flip side, in March the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) informed MPs of a £10,000 increase to the office costs budget, an increase in the credit limit of MPs payment card to £10,000 from £4,000 and changes to the claims process and the staff absence budget. In a petition now more than 130,000 people have demanded that the MPs be stripped of this privilege. MPs can already claim £26,000 a year to cover their office costs.

Hancock has also faced considerable flak for setting "unrealistic" daily coronavirus testing targets, promising 100,000 tests each day by the end of April. But halfway through the month, only 20,000 tests are conducted everyday at the highest capacity falling short by a massive 80,000. Hancock's statements are becoming mortal to the standard and miserable politics of over-promising and under-delivering.

## Extension of lockdown

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced the extension of nation-wide lockdown till May 3. While announcing the extension, he has taken into account the rising number of the Covid-19 cases as well as protecting the livelihood of the daily wage earners. He said that till May 20, identified hotspots will see even more strict checks and only when there is some success in dealing with the outbreak in designated hotspots, will some freedom of mobility be granted, especially for hawkers and daily-wage workers. Most of the state governments also favoured the extension of the lockdown. Any relaxation at this moment will be dangerous as number of Covid cases are on the rise everyday.

Addressing the nation, PM Modi said that while the efforts to fight coronavirus were keeping the situation under control, it was not time to relax one's guard and that the economic cost "may appear big, but is not so when compared to the lives of our citizens. I keep in my mind our poor brothers and daily-wage workers when I speak of opening spaces."

He said that Indians had displayed exceptional discipline and resolve during the lockdown and managed to keep the number of cases at a level that was favourable compared to several rich countries. He said that the government was making all efforts to help farmers with the ongoing Rabi harvest and procurement and said that the country had adequate stocks of both food items and medicines. He asked the countrymen to follow seven steps - take care of elderly at home, be vigilant in maintaining the lockdown and social distance, follow the advisory of Ayush Ministry, boost immunity, try and help poor and indigent, be sympathetic to colleagues and avoid retrenchments, accord respect and dignity to corona warriors.

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# Old and forgotten: Care homes fighting Coronavirus

- Priyanka Mehta

**Ignored. Neglected. And forgotten about. Britain has about 410,000 elderly residents across 11,300 care homes now invisible in the government's mishandling of coronavirus.**

Lack of adequate PPE for carers. Unaccounted COVID-19 elderly deaths excluded from the NHS daily death tolls. And bare minimum testing kits being delivered to them even as latest figures from five European countries including the UK note that care home residents have accounted for between 42% and 57% of all deaths related to COVID-19. This is the grim misery under which the old suffering from mental illnesses self-isolate themselves from families and other social interactive activities.

"We look after 1400 elderly people in our 20 care homes across the UK. 70% of our patients have dementia so it is difficult to explain to them why they cannot meet their family members and have to remain isolated within their wards.

"We believe that there are people in six of our care homes who are potentially suffering from coronavirus. It is very frustrating that the hospitals and government have refused to test our patients. We have had ZERO patients tested despite flagging up that dozens at our care homes have already died perhaps of COVID-19 or other underlying health conditions- we do not know the cause as we are not equipped to make such a medical assessment," said an owner of a Hertfordshire based care home who requested to remain anonymous in a statement to Asian Voice.

On April 14th as Asian Voice went to press, two of the largest providers of care homes in the UK revealed the



deaths of 521 residents from coronavirus in the last few weeks. In the meantime, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has started gathering care home figures from death certificates where doctors report that a fatality was confirmed or suspected of having occurred because of the virus.

## Points-based system to save our elderly

Now, sources suggest that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is coming out with a points-based scheme where infected people aged 65 or over will be given points based on their age, frailty and underlying health conditions such as heart conditions, asthma, kidney malfunction among others. According to these guidelines still under consideration, someone over 71 years old, will automatically receive 4 points and any patient having over 8 points will not be given access to a ventilator or critical care. The scheme comes at a time when an overburdened NHS is struggling to save lives of young Britons being infected with the virus. But health professionals have been issued with a "clinical frailty scale" to identify "who may not benefit from critical care interventions", the NHS has

confirmed.

"Do you allow a healthy 70-year-old person to have 20 good years of life ahead if they have contracted the virus? Or do you consider saving a 50-year-old person with an existing health condition who has coronavirus only because he happens to be younger

than the former?" asked the source. However, in a recent letter to The Times, Professor Mayur Lakhani, President of the Royal College of General Practitioners presented a different outlook to this situation. He wrote,

"Instead of offering futile invasive treatments, providing palliative care to keep the patient comfortable and allowing them to die a naturally dignified death in their home is the best thing to do. Admission to hospitals for severely frail patients with incurable diseases is usually unhelpful and may even be harmful and is not what most people want."

Some care homes have been foresighted in stocking up adequate PPE ensuring that care home staff are following proper disinfection guidelines and sanitisation so as to minimise the impact of coronavirus.

"At TLC Care we have worked together to minimise the impact of Covid-19 on our residents, team members, and relatives. We have worked really hard to source an appropriate supply of PPE and have ensured that our team members, residents and relatives are educated on all the steps we are taking and that they need to take to stay safe and well in line with both government and Public Health England guidance," said Paavan Popat of TLC Care.

## Tilda and United Nations World Food Programme partner with celebrity chef Cyrus Todiwala to provide nutrition-boosting meals

**Tilda and the UN World Food Programme are bringing back the 'Helping Mums Together' campaign this year, partnering with TV chef, author and sustainability champion Cyrus Todiwala OBE DL. Every specially marked Tilda Pure Basmati Rice pack will fund an equivalent of one nutrition-boosting meal to a new or expectant mother or young child in Bangladesh to help fight malnutrition and low birth weight.**

Over the past five years Tilda has donated the equivalent of almost 6 million nutrition-boosting meals through the World Food Programme, helping communities in Bangladesh affected by malnutrition.

Commenting on the campaign, Cyrus said: "It's an honour to be partnering with Tilda to support the World Food Programme. "Nutrition is important to children in their first 1,000

days, in ensuring proper physical and cognitive development. The

Helping Mums Together campaign directly targets this vulnerable group of people." Cyrus has created and shared one of his favourite recipes that is perfect for any occasion.

The nutrition-boosting meals come in the form of Super Cereal for mothers and Super Cereal Plus for children, which are vitamin- and mineral-enriched porridges that help provide the nutrition needed to combat low birth weight.

Jane Howard, Head of Communications, Advocacy & Marketing at the World Food Programme's London Office explains: "The work that we do with both refugees and local people in and around Cox's Bazar is a vital part of our programme. We want to help create a



strong community that can cope better with emergencies. We are actively working to provide more economic opportunities, such as setting up a farmers' market where local smallholders, including women who have received WFP training in entrepreneurship, can sell their produce to refugees.

Tilda's support over the past five years has contribut-

ed to the wellbeing of malnourished mothers and children under the age of five. We are grateful for the support of Tilda for the 6th year."

The special packs of Tilda Pure Basmati Rice and Tilda Basmati Rice pouches are available at all major retailers nationwide.

To find out more, visit [tilda.com/mums](http://tilda.com/mums)

## in brief

### PATEL ACCUSED OF AVOIDING MPS SCRUTINY OVER "BULLYING CLAIMS"

Home secretary has been accused of avoiding scrutiny over accusations of bullying after several officials at different government departments insisted working in an "atmosphere of fear".

Yvette Cooper, the chair of the home affairs select committee, has written to Patel six times in an attempt to fix a date for her to present evidence in public to the committee in relation to these bullying claims. Patel has reluctantly agreed to appear before the MPs at the end of the month. The committee has been pressing Patel to provide evidence since the end of January, during which time the secretary of state has been accused of belittling officials and presiding over an "atmosphere of fear" at the Home Office. Sir Philip Rutnam had resigned as permanent secretary at the Home Office, claiming constructive dismissal and accusing Patel of bullying her subordinates.



### SIMA KOTECHA TO HOST BBC BREAKFAST SHOW

The BBC made history last week after airing Britain's first Gujarati television presenter - Sima Kotecha - to host their prime-time BBC Breakfast show. It was the first time any British born Gujarati had presented the popular morning show.

Sima, originally from Basingstoke, has been working with the BBC from 2003. Throughout her time at the BBC, Sima has worked as a Radio Presenter, News Correspondent and International Correspondent. In recent weeks, Sima was posted out to Italy, where despite the danger, she was providing the BBC's exclusive daily news coverage of the impact Coronavirus in Europe's worst effected country.

Sima is the daughter of East African Asians who came to the UK in the 1970s. Sima's place on the famous BBC red sofa was therefore a moment of great pride for British Indians as they witnessed British born Indians on prime-time TV.



### FATHER AND SON BOTH JOIN SAME HOSPITAL IN DEVON TO TREAT CORONAVIRUS PATIENTS

Pakistani-origin father and son have both become doctors for coronavirus patients at Torbay hospital in Devon.

Tayyib Mubashar, a first-year junior doctor, was reportedly inspired by his father Yahya, who moved to the UK from Pakistan about 20 years ago.

The BBC reported that he said that he coronavirus pandemic has pulled everyone at the NHS "closer together".



### LEICESTER COFFEE-SHOP OWNER PASSES AWAY DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

A Leicester based coffee house owner died on Thursday 9th April after reportedly contracting coronavirus. 51-year-old Raj Aggarwal ran the Spar in Queens Drive, Wingston and the Insomnia Coffee Shop, in Market Harborough. Staff at the Insomnia Coffee Shop, in Adam and Eve Street, informed customers on its Facebook page of the death of the father-of-two. The post read:

"Dear all customers. It is with great sadness to have to announce that Raj, the owner of our coffee shop, passed away yesterday morning. This is difficult news for his family, friends and the Insomnia family, to who we send out loving thoughts and prayers at this devastating time.

Harborough MP Neil O'Brien also paid tributes to Aggarwal saying it was fitting that Mr Aggarwal's last post on his personal Facebook page was about him delivering supplies to the local NHS.

There are more than 1000 cases of coronavirus reported across Leicestershire





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## WHY HIGHER BAME DEATHS?

"That is not the reason. There is plenty of awareness within the BAME community with regards to coronavirus. The increase in the coronavirus deaths within the BAME community can be attributed to a mix of co-existing health issues and poor socio-economic conditions in which they live.

"The health conditions can vary from diabetes to skin diseases to asthma. Some concern was expressed earlier about certain blood pressure tablets possibly increasing the risk to coronavirus. Please note that is not true. We have strictly advised patients not to change their tablets unless medically specified and prescribed," said Dr. Adnan Sharif, a consultant transplant nephrologist at Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) Birmingham.

QEH is part of the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, and as of April 11th, the hospital had recorded over 400 COVID-19 deaths—the highest toll of any hospital across the UK. According to Dr. Sharif, the hospital had tested over 5,000 patients with over 2,000 of them reportedly positive of Coronavirus.

"We have witnessed that for every 10 patients who are being admitted of coronavirus in our hospital, four of them are from BAME backgrounds. Most of them are predominantly Asians."

There is no definitive study or research conducted by any health institution within the UK which enumerate the reasons for BAME members being disproportionately affected by the virus. But there are several factors which explain this trend.

First, poverty is the highest in the BAME community, especially among Blacks, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis. Many of them live in overcrowded houses. Though Indians are comparatively richer, they also live with extended families- elderly parents and grandparents, making them more vulnerable to the illness.

Second, people from ethnic minority backgrounds have more underlying conditions like hypertension, blood pressure, and diabetes. Their food habits are generally spicier with a higher BMI (Body Mass Index) thus, making them more susceptible to the virus. Evidence from doctors so far shows, that most admitted in the ICU from the Asian community are between 45-55 years old.

Third, BAME members tend to live in urban areas. And given the proportion of BAME residents in a certain local borough, there is a likelihood of seeing disproportionately higher patients of BAME background than whites. Channel 4 reported that ICNARC researchers compared the ethnicity of COVID-19 patients with the make-up of the ethnicity of those patients who live there. They found that 65% of COVID-19 patients receiving critical care are of white background from areas that have 74% white residents. The proportion of Asians in that area is around 13% and the patients in ICU are almost the same-around 13%.

"Asian families have multiple generations living in a single household which leads to an increase in their everyday social interaction. What kind of social distancing would be followed by a family of 11 members living in a 3-bedroom house?" asks Dr. Adnan.

Fourth, since colonialism, especially after the second world war, Asians were brought into this country to rebuild the devastated nation. The highest population among ethnic minorities in the UK is that of Indian origin- 1.5million according to the 2011 Census. Many of whom are the frontline staff- mainly doctors and nurses. Since the result of Brexit, BAME doctors have migrated to the UK to fill in the increasing gap in the market.



Dr Arjun Ghosh

Dr Adnan Sharif

Dr Parijat Bhattacharjee

### Councils and local authorities not collating deaths

The NHS has not been filtering and recording the COVID-19 deaths according to their ethnic background. In the meantime, one would expect that these deaths would be registered locally with their council bodies. However, some council bodies have reportedly stopped collating the COVID-19 deaths.

"We are no longer officially notified, as the local authority about any deaths due to COVID-19. The total number of deaths is recorded nationally but not broken down further," said a council authority of London who did not wish to be identified.

In the meantime, congressional prayers and gatherings within the Asian community has also raised red flags. Whilst the annual Vaisakhi procession in Southall has been cancelled, healthcare professionals are concerned with fellow Muslims gathering for Ramadan prayers and therefore, breaking the chain of social isolation. The epidemic which had first clutched onto Wolverhampton seems to have spread to Dudley and then, throughout Birmingham which remains a densely populated area.

Recently 10 doctors who passed away due to coronavirus, were of BAME background, with ancestry from regions such as Asia including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Middle East and Africa. The head of the British Medical Association Dr. Chaand Nagpaul has called on the government to investigate if and why BAME people are more likely to die from coronavirus.

Although BAME staff make up 44% of medical personnel in the NHS, Dr Nagpaul said that the fact that those who have died were all from ethnic minority backgrounds is 'extremely disturbing'. Besides the 10 doctors, three out of six nurses who died from the virus were from the BAME community, as was a hospital pharmacist and at least one healthcare assistant.

The Labour party has acted on Dr. Nagpaul's concern with Shadow equalities minister Marsha de Cordova insisting that "the Government must urgently investigate why BAME communities are more vulnerable to this virus."

Some of the British media have been busy ridiculing India for how the country's poor have been suffering. It's not wrong to be critical of a nation, where class disparity has always been a stark reality, but frankly, Britain criticising India on coronavirus effect is more like the 'pot calling the kettle black'!

When thousands have died in a day in the UK (a death rate/day higher than Italy so far), the media has been focussing on Prime Minister Boris Johnson's recovery or on the herculean effort of the government to procure 3000 PPEs. With all that blasé logic of 'herd immunity', the reality remains that, our Prime Minister Mr. Johnson, was a month late to take necessary actions.

A member of BAPIO, Dr. Parijat Bhattacharjee, is a consultant across North-west London hospitals including Northwick Park, Central Middlesex, and Ealing. Speaking exclusively to Asian

Voice, he said, "Deaths among ethnic minority doctors and nurses are indeed disproportionate. But are we more susceptible to coronavirus related deaths? I can't say. Hypertension, diabetes and higher BMI among South Asians in the UK are prevalent. These could be contributing risk factors. On top of this cultural factors may add to the absence of social isolation, especially in families with elderly members."

He added, "There is no concrete evidence that medics from ethnic minority backgrounds are being discriminated against or forcefully being exposed to coronavirus more than others. Doctors who have died have been senior consultants in various hospitals. It shows that as a community, we are very hardworking and highly committed to our jobs. There is, in fact, a possibility, that there is a cultural implication here- gratefulness towards this country as migrants, leading to certain ethics, values, professionalism, and dedication towards our jobs. And there is a strong possibility that these are causing higher deaths among ethnic minority medics."

Dr. Arjun Ghosh is a Consultant Cardiologist at Barts Heart Centre (BHC), St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London and at University College London Hospital (UCLH). His normal duty has now changed into a covid duty. Speaking to Asian Voice, he said, "It is difficult to say whether the BAME community is more susceptible to the virus. But among BAME medics, there is a possibility, because we make up more of front line acute staff."

### Vaccination and the future

Researching on the progress of the vaccination to fight the deadly virus, Dr. Parijat said, "The first human trial of a vaccine has started in the USA (by Modern) on 16 March 2020. This is an extremely rapid progress (unprecedented in the history of vaccine development). The genetic sequence of the virus was published by China on 11 January 2020. There are 115 different developers, 78 of which are open/ public - out of which 73 are still in a preliminary developing stage in Lab. 72% are private companies including Glaxo and Janssen. 28% are government or academic institutions. 46% in the USA, 18% each in China, Asia, Europe.

"The aim is to release it in early 2021 under 'Emergency Protocol'. Traditionally, vaccines take an average of 10 years to be released for public use. Even the deadly Ebola vaccine was released after 5 years as 'urgent'.

"90% of all vaccines developed on average for a particular disease are rejected. Therefore, gross modifications of development, regulatory & manufacturing processes will be needed. Most importantly there may be gross concerns about the safety & effectiveness of the vaccine when it is released.

"Finally just finding a vaccine is not the endpoint. Funding will become paramount to ensure wide, rapid and most importantly for government agencies and health organisations for equitable uptake, particularly in poorer countries, else it will be pointless for a disease like this."

## in brief

### TAX NOTICE INCORRECTLY SENT TO A PATEL

On Sunday 10th April, The Times reported that the HMRC had admitted about posting a tax windfall to the wrong person because they had the same name.

According to the HMRC it made out a refund for £4,553.32 to the wrong "Mrs Hansa. Patel" and the person who had the cheque has cashed it. According to the

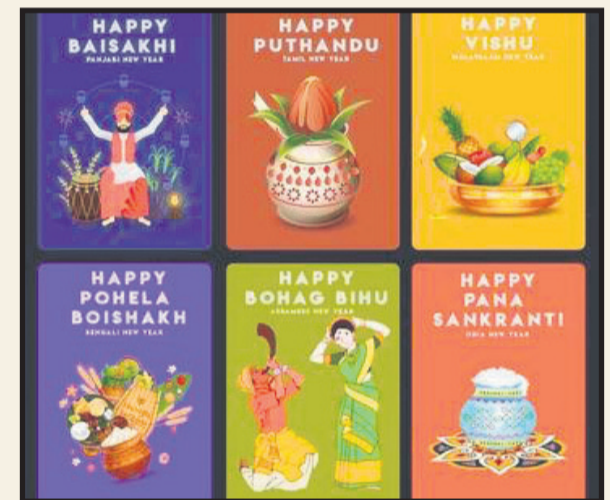


Hansa Patel, 68, from Borehamwood in Hertfordshire, asked Sunday Times Money to investigate after spending six months trying to get the money she was owed. HMRC told the family that the matter had been escalated to the fraud department, but did not ring them back.

The HMRC has now admitted that they had mixed up these people due to their same last names, though it was not clear whether this was a computing or human error. There are 100,000 people in Britain with the surname Patel. HMRC would not say what would happen to the recipient who cashed the cheque but it is likely to ask them to repay the money.

Patel's refund had been issued again, this time by bank transfer.

### COMMUNITIES CELEBRATE E-VAISAKHI



Punjabi communities across the world celebrated Vaisakhi on Monday 13th April. This time however, leading organisations such as City Sikhs UK have hosted online Vaisakhi celebrations through zoom calls, webinars among other such activities.

In the UK, usually large annual Vaisakhi celebrations are hosted at London's Trafalgar Square, where more than 30,000 have gathered in past years, and Birmingham's Handsworth Park, where up to 100,000 attend the event. But in the wake of coronavirus outbreak they have been cancelled besides an annual procession in Southall.

"I want to wish all those celebrating in London and around the world, a happy Vaisakhi. Of course this year it won't be possible for many Sikh Londoners to mark this sacred festival in the usual way.

"But during this difficult time I believe that we can all learn a huge amount from the selflessness of the Sikh community. From feeding the hungry, to supporting the elderly, your actions are a source of inspiration and hope to so many in these testing times," said Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London.

Extending his greetings, Prince Charles in a video message posed by Clarence House on Twitter said,

"Vaisakhi diyan lakh lakh badhiyan. In these challenging times, the Sikh community is making an extraordinary and invaluable contribution to the life of this country, and to so many others, just as it has always done."

### PHARMACIES APPEAL FOR GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Industry reports indicate that chemists require extra money to cover exceptional costs, with some even being forced to hire security guards as they deal with an unprecedented number of prescriptions. The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, which represents the industry in financial discussions with the government, said that the sector was heading towards a "cliff-edge".

According to the chemists there is a sharp rise in demand for prescription medication which has exacerbated an existing problem, with the NHS drugs tariff, which pharmacies receive for selling generic prescription drugs, in some cases being considerably lower than the prices they pay suppliers, raising the prospect of heavy losses.



# More than 40 Indian-Americans die of Covid-19 in US

**WASHINGTON:** More than 40 Indian-Americans and citizens of India have reportedly lost their lives due to the deadly coronavirus and the number of those having tested positive for the dreaded disease is likely over 1,500, according to community leaders in the US, now the global Covid-19 hotspot.

The US has become the world's first country to have registered more than 22,000 Covid-19 deaths till Monday, while the number of infections has crossed 5,54,007, according to latest Johns Hopkins University data.

New York, which has emerged as the epicenter of the Covid-19 in the US, along with adjoining New Jersey, account for majority of the death cases reported so far. Notably, New York and New Jersey have one of the highest concentrations of Indian-Americans in the country.

Among those who have died in the fight against the coronavirus, at least 17 are from Kerala, 10 from Gujarat, four from Punjab, two from Andhra Pradesh and one from Orissa. Majority of them are more than 60 years of age, except for one who was of 21 years

## Indian expat faces jail in UAE

An Indian expat in the UAE has been sacked and is now facing police action for allegedly insulting Islam on social media in response to a Facebook post on the coronavirus, according to a media report. Rakesh B Kitturmath, who worked as a team leader at Emrill Services, was sacked after his post sparked an outrage on social media, the Gulf News reported. "Kitturmath's employment stands terminated with immediate effect. He will be handed over to Dubai Police. We have a zero-tolerance policy towards such hate crimes," said Stuart Harrison, CEO of Emrill Services.

## Indian workers in Nepal shelter camps

Around 39 Indian labourers are stuck in Nepal due to the closure of India-Nepal border after the coronavirus outbreak and are living in shelter camps in western Nepal's Jhapa district for the past three weeks. The labourers had entered Nepal to earn livelihood after celebrating Holi festival in India. However, they got stuck in the border area as both the countries closed their borders to check the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. The Nepal government intensified lockdown in western districts bordering India after two people who returned from India tested positive for coronavirus.

of age. The death toll also included an Indian-American CEO of a New Jersey-based pharmaceutical company and several New York City cab drivers. Some of the victims are dying alone in hospitals, with family members and friends unable to be in close proximity during their final

hours because the restrictions, and in some cases Indian citizens have had to be buried or cremated with minimum or no ceremony because of the travel ban.

The New York Taxi Workers Alliance, which is led by the Indian-American activist Bhairavi Desai, has said a business already in a

crisis because of ride-hailing apps has been decimated by the coronavirus, with drivers' WhatsApp groups filled with messages about those who are in hospital and those who have passed away. Although Indians in America are counted among the country's elites in terms of education and income,

many work in areas that constitute the frontlines in the pandemic: doctors, nurses, cab drivers, truckers, grocery and convenience store workers, gas station attendants etc. Also among the dead are more than 40 workers of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority that runs the New York City

subway and employs a large number of Indian-origin personnel.

Reports in the Pakistani media speak of more than 100 Pakistanis, who now dominate the cab and limousine trade, having died in the NY-NJ region, attributing the figure to Pakistani diplomats.

# VYMAN

S O L I C I T O R S

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The Covid 19 pandemic is creating a human crisis with enormous health, social and economic consequences.

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- ✓ Rent Concessions and Review of other Lease Obligations
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- ✓ Mortgage Holidays
- ✓ Insolvency
- ✓ Government Schemes

Some guidance is provided on our website [www.vyman.co.uk](http://www.vyman.co.uk) and we are currently offering free initial consultations to all.

Please feel free to contact one of our solicitors by phone or email:

Matthew Whaley | [matthew.whaley@vyman.co.uk](mailto:matthew.whaley@vyman.co.uk) | Wills  
 Zharna Sutaria | [zharna.sutaria@vyman.co.uk](mailto:zharna.sutaria@vyman.co.uk) | Family Law  
 Sheetal Badiani | [sheetal.badiani@vyman.co.uk](mailto:sheetal.badiani@vyman.co.uk) | Property Matters  
 Marcella Cox | [marcella.cox@vyman.co.uk](mailto:marcella.cox@vyman.co.uk) | Insolvency/Litigation  
 Anup Vyas | [anup.vyas@vyman.co.uk](mailto:anup.vyas@vyman.co.uk) | Contractual/Commercial

In these extremely trying and testing times, we wish all sections of the community the very best of health.

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18 April - 24 April 2020

## LET'S LOOK FORWARD TO POST COVID19

Subhash V Thakrar

At this time I am reminded of the story of a famous Guru who was known for giving blessings that always delivered. People with pain, illness, financial problems etc all flocked to seek his blessings. The Guru will raise his right hand and say 'yeh din be chele jayenge' (these days of difficulty will also pass).

There was one person who had only the good news of having been blessed with a grandson seeking the Guru's blessings. Again the the Guru gave the same blessings, yeh din be chele jayenge! The Guru was right. The bad times will pass and so also good times will pass.

With Covid 19, these hard times will also pass and good times will emerge. We can debate when things will start improving. We are already hearing about the lockdowns being softened. My own feeling is that in the UK we shall see a turnaround in May when lockdown will get slowly relaxed.

The world has seen similar challenges in its history. We have had world wars. We have had Spanish flue pandemic when 50 million died. We have had tsunamis and we have had earthquakes. This is a resilient world with ingenious humans who are so very adapt at facing any calamity.

One must look back and reflect on so many lives that have been lost including those in the frontline fighting to save us. All of a sudden our normal defence forces like army, navy and airforce have become ineffective and our real army fighting this war is actually the team of doctors and nurses. I salute their efforts and no doubt they will be recognised in the good times.

The World economy will decline by estimated 2% and we shall experience pressures of economic decline.

However, what is most noticeable is the economic stimulus that has been announced by various countries supplemented and supported by substantial loans from world bank. This is unprecedented and much more than economic support during the 2008 global recession. The stimulus consists of soft loans but also forgiving of rates and giving of grants to businesses and individuals. All this money will work it's way in the economy and will mean the downturn will be short lived.

So we shall see some pent up demand rising. Apart from groceries and medicines, none of us have had any opportunity to spend even if we intended. Many of us will be eager to spend as soon as things get better.

One thing is for sure. The world will be different than before COVID19. People have learnt to be more with their families. They have learnt to cook and enjoy home food. It's amazing how families are active in connecting with each other which is more than before. Our monthly family prayers are not stopped but digitised using Zoom! Business meetings are getting conducted using modern technology with ease. Many people will find that they do not need to travel to have a face to face meeting. So travelling is bound to reduce. This will help our environment. We have learnt that we hardly use our cars. Many will realise the need to reduce cars that we own. We have witnessed wonderful acts of humanity everywhere. People are very willing to help others in need and openly donating to support all those working in the front line. We have had time to reflect and look in to our inner selves. Many will no doubt develop stronger faith in God. This is supported by various Mandirs streaming prayers and darsans. We are also learning about how not to waste. All this will lead to a better and cleaner world.

Even our funeral's have become small and the prayers are already becoming digitised.

This downturn will turn in to an upturn. There is no doubt. It may take 6 months or a year but we shall see an upturn. This poses a great opportunity to look out for good investment opportunities. Both stock market and real estate will provide great opportunities for those sitting on cash. So after these hard times we can look forward to better times ahead.

## China's central bank raises stake in HDFC

China's central bank, People's Bank of China (PBOC), reportedly raised its stake in India's mortgage lender HDFC to 1.01 per cent from the existing 0.8 per cent, said news reports. The report of PBOC's stake hike in HDFC reportedly raised concerns of the government though there is no rule to ban investment by any Chinese company in an Indian entity.

The People's Bank of China had held 17.5 million shares of HDFC as per the shareholding disclosures for the March quarter and it is not clear if the PBOC purchased the shares between January and March. HDFC stock fell about 40 per cent this year from a high of Rs 2,493 to a low of Rs 1,499 last week, the report said adding the stock jumped 14 per cent last week to close at Rs 1,702 on Thursday. HDFC vice-chairman and CEO Keki Mistry said the PBOC has been an existing shareholder and had owned 0.8 per cent in the company as of March 2019. "The disclosure has been made now since the stake has hit the 1 per cent regulatory threshold. They have been accumulating the shares over a year and are now holding 1.01 per cent," added Mistry. The PBOC's 1.01 per cent consists of 17.49 million shares of HDFC.

## Evidence show that global recession is already here

The evidence is mounting that March marked the start of a deep global recession.

The breadth of the collapse is beginning to appear in the initial trickle of economic data across the world, revealing a cratering of trade, reined-in business investment, cowering consumers and surging unemployment that's sparing few industries. After the US reported a higher-than-expected job losses, other figures for March have illustrated how the Covid-19 pandemic is extending the paralysis from producers to households,

from big trading powers to more insulated economies and emerging markets.

In Germany, new-car registrations in March - usually a peak month - plunged 38% from a year earlier, and a reading in the UK tanked 44%. Three of the biggest Arab economies buckled, a services index in Brazil was the lowest since 2016 and vehicle sales in South Africa slid 30%. In Australia, which has dodged recession for three decades, job advertisements plummeted by the most since 2009.

From India to Italy, coronavirus lockdowns



have closed businesses and kept billions of people homebound for weeks, provoking a simultaneous supply and demand shock that's snarled global production and logistics networks built without sufficient capacity to absorb a jolt of this magnitude.

With investment set to slide and more people out of work, global GDP rates could dip lower depending

on how long governments maintain their lockdowns - many of which are expected to last into May or June. Unless the virus is contained within several weeks, declining output and falling demand for trade may provoke a vicious cycle that only worsens the outlook for corporate investment and employment, compounding the labor market's problems.

## Cash flow problem haunts Rishi Sunak

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has a whopping cash flow problem. Locking down the economy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic means that tax revenues have dried up at a time when the state is promising to spend billions more on health, wage subsidies, small business grants and universal credit. It's not unusual for the state's spending to exceed its revenue and when it does the gap is normally covered by borrowing. The government sells bonds - or gilts - to investors and uses the proceeds to plug the hole.



understanding bank manager in the form of Andrew Bailey. The governor of the Bank of England, has agreed to solve the Treasury's cash flow problem by printing as much money as the chancellor needs provided Sunak agrees to pay off his overdraft by the end of the year.

This may sounds a bit technical, but it matters a lot. For the time the economy is effectively being kept going by the state. Only bits of the

private sector are operating as normal and the longer the lockdown the bigger the bill for the Treasury. All of which raises the question of how it is to be paid for. More specifically, does the use of the government's overdraft facility mean that the UK is heading down a road that ends with the Bank printing money to pay for government spending?

How the government goes about footing the bill for Covid-19 depends on the scale of the economic damage, but it is already clear that early estimates of a short, sharp shock were too optimistic. The current crisis looks likely to prove more costly than the recession of 2008-09, until now the deepest slump of the post-war era.

Sunak has options. Do what George Osborne did

in 2010 and impose a period of belt-tightening as soon as the recession ends. This would involve an austerity budget - or more likely a series of austerity budgets - in which taxes would be raised and spending cut in order to reduce the size of the government's annual budget deficits.

This option is unlikely to prove all that attractive. The lesson of the Osborne experiment is that trying to get the deficit down too fast leads to sluggish growth, which reduces tax revenues and means it takes longer to reduce borrowing. Moreover, the tightest financial settlements on the NHS in its history left the health service poorly prepared to cope with a pandemic. There will be political uproar if Sunak goes to the austerity route.

## Virgin boss Branson faces backlash over bailout plea

From his private island in the Caribbean, Sir Richard Branson is trying to convince the UK government to give his Virgin Atlantic airline a £500m bailout to help it survive the coronavirus pandemic and the economic fallout of the lockdown.

The billionaire, who also wants £700m from the Australian government to bailout Virgin Australia, has the backing of bosses at Airbus, which makes Virgin's planes, and Rolls-Royce, which makes its jet engines, who have warned ministers that if the airline collapsed it could drag them down too.

But Branson's plea has prompted a substantial backlash, with many pointing out that the entrepreneur has paid the exchequer no personal income tax since moving to the tax free British Virgin Islands (BVI) 14 years ago. Former shadow chancellor John McDonnell said it was unacceptable that "rich billionaires [were] milking the system" at a time of national crisis.

Angela Rayner, deputy leader of the Labour party, tweeted: "Richard flog your private island and pay your staff, we are in unprecedented times here."

## UK house sales to collapse as market goes into deep freeze

In the first reassessment of the property market by one of the major forecasters, Knight Frank said the number of house sales in the UK would plummet from 1,175,000 last year to just 734,000 this year. Many of the "lost" sales will not be carried forward to next year, spelling disaster for estate agents and other firms in the property chain - from valuers to removals companies - that rely on transactions for their business.

But the consultancy is not predicting a collapse in house prices, which were starting to revive in the early part of 2020 before coronavirus took hold. It forecast that mainstream UK house prices would fall 3% in 2020, but then bounce back by 5% in 2021. Behind the Knight Frank forecasts is an assumption that the British economy will shrink by 4% in 2020 before growing by 4.5% next year as the pandemic recedes.

Liam Bailey, the global head of research firm, said: "The housing market was in a strong position in

January and February. A sharp uptick in sales and price growth was seen across the UK, with even the prime central London market seeing a reversal of a five-year-long price decline. "We [now] have to expect weaker economic activity in the first half of 2020, the dislocation in the jobs market and weakened consumer sentiment will impact on prices - however, the relatively finite time span of the crisis means declines will be limited."

The agency only forecasts rents for prime central London, and it expected them to be flat in 2020, then rising 3% next year. Nationwide building society issued its monthly house price index at the end of last week, showing a more than £3,000 surge in the average price of a home in Britain in March, the fastest pace for two years. But it stressed the figures did not take into account the lockdown in the market since then, and that "housing market activity is now grinding to a halt".





## Going against the grain

Suresh Vagjiani, Sow & Reap Properties Ltd

The current environment is certainly conducive for buying. Fear causes instability, and irrationality, this gets reflected in the property market.

When people are fearful it leads to pessimism, which means they weigh losses much more heavier than the equivalent gain.

This make them irrationally more fearful of getting a loss.

The deals are almost in plain site. The first step is to take a view on the market which goes against the grain of most of the market.

There is an added problem in this environment which is unique. Ordinarily, if there was a down turn in property values, one could take comfort in the rental yield which stays robust, and at times increases in down turns. The rationale being people need a place to stay; if they cannot purchase they need to rent.

However, currently we do not have the comfort of a tenant and rental income. Therefore, you could purchase something which cannot be rented and may stay vacant for many months to come.

This whole saga can be viewed as a temporary blip when contrasted with the London property market. You have to look at this in perspective of the grander framework. We are looking at a 500 year old mature property market.

The robustness of the residential sector can be demonstrated as follows. It's been attacked with rounds of stamp duty hikes and a completely unreasonable form of taxation. However, is still survives and thrives.

Looking at the fundamentals, there is simply a housing shortage in this country which is not and will not be satisfied. In fact, recent events will compound this issue.

It's with this perspective in mind that we feel this is a good market to purchase in.

We have exchanged on two deals, on behalf of clients, this week; which we will be featuring shortly. You will need to get comfortable with purchasing blind, or with a video of the property if you're lucky.

The two we purchased were bought extremely well. The kind of deals which people will look back on in disbelief. Too good to be true they will say in times to come.

In truth, they were available in plain sight. However, there are a few angles to them where we expect to be adding value.

There are many more to be had. There is no guarantee of a capital uplift, so when you purchase a deal it should be bought on the basis the potential yield is strong, despite my earlier comment regarding yields. In my opinion, the rental element will bounce back quicker and closer to what they were previously, than the capital values.

If you purchase a property on the basis the yield works, then the capital uplift will be a bonus.

At some point this surreal science fiction like episode will run its course.

We will be left with the stark reality, which is there are more people requiring homes than there are homes.

One of the deals we purchased is a commercial. On commercial you benefit from the decrease in stamp duty. There are also some very interesting things you can do which circumvent the planning process. They can be done under permitted development. This is a process which is laid out in legislation and has very tight parameters and also a time period.

The concept of the investment is to add enough value in order to return the clients money back to them, and then leaving them with the property for 'free' or get as close to this idea as possible, meaning very little of the original funds are left in the property.

The building will be refinanced on high street rates once the project is completed.

## Indian American entrepreneurs donate Hydroxychloroquine tablets

**CALIFORNIA:** Amneal Pharmaceuticals, founded by Indian-American entrepreneurs Chirag and Chintu Patel, donated 400,000 hydroxychloroquine sulfate tablets to the state of Louisiana to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. It already has donated millions of the tablets to New York and Texas.

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry, working with state Senate Health and Welfare chairman Fred Mills, announced the significant donation by New Jersey-based Amneal Pharmaceuticals of the hydroxychloroquine tablets. These drugs have been identified as a possible treatment for Covid-19 virus. The donation will go toward clinical trials and patient treatment in Louisiana, said an Amneal Pharmaceuticals statement.

"On behalf of Louisiana, I want to thank Amneal for this generous donation," said Landry.

# Trump praises Modi as India lifts hydroxychloroquine export ban

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump praised Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for lifting the ban on the export of anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine to help the US fight coronavirus. "I bought millions of doses (of hydroxychloroquine). More than 29 million. I spoke to Prime Minister Modi, a lot of it (hydroxychloroquine) comes out of India. I asked him if he would release it. He was great. He was really good," Trump said.

The ban placed by India on the export of this generic drug was lifted last week, hours after Trump talked to Modi in connection with orders placed by the US. Trump has called the drug 'game-changer' in the fight against coronavirus. Experts so far have not endorsed the president's opinion. There have been very few scientific



Narendar Modi and Donald Trump

trials in this regard so far.

"You know they put a stop because they wanted it for India, but there are a lot of good things coming from that (hydroxychloroquine)," Trump said, responding to a question on the usage of hydroxychloroquine. Trump and Modi spoke over the phone last week. During the call, Trump had requested Modi to lift the hold on the American order of hydroxychloroquine, of which India is the major producer. Hydroxychloroqui

ne has been identified by the US Food and Drug Administration as a possible treatment for the Covid-19 and it is being tested on more than 1,500 coronavirus patients in New York. Anticipating that it will work, given initial positive results, Trump has bought more than 29 million doses of hydroxychloroquine for the potential treatment of Covid-19 patients. India has allowed the export of the medicine to the US, which has emerged as the global hotspot of Covid-

19. Over 503,177 Americans tested positive for the coronavirus and the fatalities were more than 18,761. During the interview, Trump described hydroxychloroquine as a powerful malaria drug. "Lot of people are looking at it and saying, you know I don't hear bad stories, I hear good stories. And I don't hear anything where it is causing death," said the US President.

India had also received requests to lift the export ban from several other countries, including its immediate neighbours Sri Lanka and Nepal. The government has said that it is reviewing its export ban order. Notably, the government's decision to ban the exports of hydroxychloroquine was driven by its desire to take stock of the domestic requirements and ensure that the country has enough of the drug.

## Ex-army officer convicted of killing Bangabandhu hanged

**DHAKA:** Abdul Majed, a sacked Bangladeshi Army officer and one of the convicts in the killing of the country's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was executed on Sunday, according to a prison official. "The convict was hanged at 12:01 am Sunday," Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen AKM Mustafa Kamal Pasha was quoted as saying.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, known as the architect of Bangladesh's independence, was killed along with most of his family members at his home in 1975. His daughters, Sheikh Rahina and Sheikh Hasina, the incumbent Prime Minister of Bangladesh, survived because they were living abroad at that time.

Majed, one of the 12 assassins who were awarded death sentence for the 1975 killing, fled the country after Hasina led Awami League came to power in 1996. After being on the run for 20 years, Majed's death sentence was carried out within four days after Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid turned down his clemency plea. He was hanged at Dhaka Central Jail.

Majed, who was arrested in Dhaka on April 7, said during initial interrogation that he was living in India for the last two decades. According to local media, the convict crossed over into Bangladesh on March 15 or 16 through the border in Mymensingh following the coronavirus pandemic. Majed's wife and four other relatives met him for nearly two hours in the prison.

President Abdul Hamid had earlier rejected his mercy plea, removing the last hurdle for his hanging. Home Minister

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the 'self confessed killer' was not only involved in Bangabandhu's assassination but also took

part in the subsequent killing of four national leaders in high security Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

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Dr. Hari Desai

## Dr. Ambedkar's Politics and Spirituality

• Ambedkar was seriously exploring various alternative ways of renouncing his Hindu faith • Babasaheb defined: "A person whose mind is not free, though he is not in chains, is a slave."

On 24 March 1956, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (14 April 1891 - 6 December 1956) sounded his followers that he was going to convert to the religion of Buddha which he thought was "excellent amongst all the religions" but advised them to embrace only if their "will and conscience" allowed.

He did announce: "After my conversion to Buddhism, I will not be able to lead you either, I will be able to remain in the (Scheduled Caste) Federation." He wanted someone else to assume the leadership in his place; "otherwise our Federation will collapse like a tent on a single pole." He was firm not to contest election on SCF ticket but would contest "on my own strength" and "I don't care whether I win or lose."

As the most literate political leader of his times, Dr. Ambedkar is most celebrated for two of his outstanding endeavours and achievements like his battle for the annihilation of caste and the framing of Indian Constitution. Of course, his extraordinary contribution was his insistence on a spiritualization of human life. In October 1956, Ambedkar and half a million of his followers, converted to Buddhism. Less than two months later, only days after he had completed his definitive study of Buddhism "The Buddha and His Dhamma", Ambedkar passed away. His sudden demise, at the relatively young age of 65. Ambedkar was seriously exploring various alternative ways of renouncing his Hindu faith for many decades before his formal conversion. It was at the Yeola Conversion Conference in October 1935 in Nasik that he first made a public declaration of this intent: "Unfortunately, I was born a Hindu



Dr. Ambedkar in his Deeksha robe

Untouchable. It was beyond my power to prevent that. But it is within my power to refuse to live within these humiliating conditions. Though I was born a Hindu, I solemnly assure you that I will not die as a Hindu." Dr. Ambedkar's lifelong mission was presented in his speech on 31 May 1936 at Mumbai while addressing the Bombay Presidency Mahar Conference: "A person whose mind is not free, though he is not in chains, is a slave. One whose mind is not free, though he is not in jail, is a prisoner. One whose mind is not free, though he is alive, is dead. Freedom of mind is the proof of one's existence. What is the proof, then, to judge that the flame of mental freedom is not extinguished from a person? To whom can we say that his mind is free? I call him free who with consciousness awake, realises his rights, responsibilities, and duties; he who is not a slave of circumstances, and is always bent upon changing them in his favour, I call him free. One who is not a slave of usage, customs, and traditions, or of the teachings because they are brought down from the ancestors; one whose flame of reason is not extinguished--I call him a free man." For him the spirituality was more important to political power. Unfortunately, after his death every political party in India has been busy trying to encase his name to woo the Dalit vote-bank.

## Lockdown in India extended till May 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced the extension of a nationwide lockdown till May 3 to contain the spread of Covid-19 as the number of novel coronavirus cases surged past 10,000-mark on Tuesday. Hinting at partial relief, however, the Prime Minister said there could be some relaxations after April 20 in places where there is no hotspot.

Lockdown 2.0 will come into force from April 14 till May 3, PM Modi said in a televised address to the nation on Tuesday. The 19-day extension of the lockdown till May 3 is an attempt to contain the spread of novel coronavirus which has affected over 10,000 people in India.

PM Modi said the Centre will closely monitor hotspots in states across India and added that those areas where there are no hotspots will get partial relief. "Till April 20, all districts, localities, states will be closely monitored, as to how strictly they are implementing norms. States where hotspots are contained could be allowed to resume some important activities, but with certain conditions," the PM said.

### Seven things the PM wants citizens to do:

- 1 Take care of old people, senior citizens
- 2 Use home-made masks sincerely
- 3 Download Aarogya Setu App and ask others to download too
- 4 Take care of poor people, their food needs and other things
- 5 Don't snatch anybody's job
- 6 Respect people who are helping us in this tough time like healthcare workers, sanitation workers and the police.
- 7 With all dedication, follow the lockdown till May 3. Stay wherever you are and be safe.



Narendra Modi

Detailed guidelines on extension of the coronavirus lockdown will be issued on Wednesday, the PM added. The Prime Minister began his address by lauding the efforts of Indians in the fight against novel coronavirus. "Covid-19 is spreading fast but India's fight against coronavirus is going strong. It is because of your efforts that we are able to put up a fight," the PM said as he thanked people for their co-operation.

PM Modi said India received huge benefits from the 21-day lockdown in checking the pandemic and added that the country has dealt with the situation better with limited

resources. "People have gone through hardships to save India. I know how many difficulties you faced. I respectfully bow to the people of India for their sacrifice," PM Modi said.

### Death toll rises to 353

The death toll due to coronavirus rose to 353 with 29 fatalities reported since Monday evening, while the number of cases jumps to 10,815, according to the union health ministry.

Of the total deaths, Maharashtra tops the tally with 160 fatalities, Madhya Pradesh 50, Delhi 28, Gujarat 26, Telengana 17, Punjab 12, Tamil Nadu 11 while Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have reported nine deaths each. West Bengal reported seven deaths while five died in Uttar Pradesh. J&K reported four deaths, while Kerala, Haryana and Rajasthan recorded three each. Jharkhand two, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Assam reported one fatalities each.

### In loving memory of



**Donald William Ebrahim**  
General Practitioner & Psychotherapist  
Died from dementia 20 March 2020

Donald William Ebrahim ("Don" or "Don Willy") was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1926. He was one of six children of Florrie, a 'Cape Coloured' and Mohamed Cassim Ebrahim, an Indian business man who had migrated from India in 1899. Florrie was a devout Christian who brought her six children up in this faith. Don became a deeply religious boy but he decided on medicine rather than the priesthood, enrolling in University of Cape Town medical school in 1948, the year apartheid started. The family decided that he should go to the UK to complete his training, and to return as the first 'Cape coloured' doctor to provide services to District 6, an inner-city area of Cape Town.

After qualifying from Sheffield University Medical School in 1952 he married Marjorie Evans, a nurse, and they had their first child - Shah, followed in rapid succession by Rustum, Kim and Omar. He did 2 years of national service in the Royal Army Medical Corps, stationed in Trieste and in Hanover.

In 1956 he attempted to return to South Africa with his family to see his ill father and set up practice in Cape Town. The Commissioner for Immigration & Asiatic Affairs decided that if his wife was a European "there is no objection to his re-admission to the Union (of South Africa) but that his wife and children will in no circumstances be allowed to enter this country." This was the end of Don's dream of a return to South Africa.

The family moved to Coventry in the 1960s and Don became a single-handed GP providing services for over 3500 people living on a newly-built housing estate. After 25 years he gave up general practice to specialize in psychotherapy which he continued until he was in his 80's. He became famous for his work with disturbed children developing innovative techniques in group hypnosis. He lectured widely for British, Swedish, Danish, Canadian and South African societies. He was awarded the Annie Fasth Foundation Prize for his development of Traumatic Separation Theory. He was also a hedonistic party person. Raucous parties were frequent with his children passing out canapes and mixing drinks. These were followed by quiet solo contemplation listening to jazz and drinking into the early hours. He always observed Lent by 40 days and nights of abstinence.

His first wife, Marjorie, died in 1971 aged 40 which was a terrible blow as she had been the centre of the family. Don married Ivy in 1982 and had a happy time, leaving the housing estate for a grand house on the smarter side of Coventry, but sadly she died in 1992. His health began to decline and in his last years he struggled with dementia and was no longer able to manage despite family and carer support in his own home. He moved from Coventry to a nursing home in Swansea to be closer to family. This was a success and his final years were comfortable and his care was exceptional. He leaves his four sons and two grandsons.

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# 265 Britons fly back home from Ahmedabad

Emotional scenes were on display at the Ahmedabad Airport on Monday as the first British Airways flight took off from Ahmedabad Airport with 265 British Nationals on board.

A 16-year-old medical student flying back with joyous smile on face and elderly UK nationals expressing relief and gratitude was for all to see. None of this would have been possible but for the superbly coordinated effort of Ahmedabad Airport Director Manoj Gangal, who stood quietly by soaking in the emotions.

He not just threw open

the Ahmedabad Airport for its first international flight since the lockdown but also ensured that the health checks, security checks, immigration and boarding was performed smoothly.

Gangal coordinated with the British High Commission besides the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), the customs and immigration authorities to ensure that the flight takes off smoothly from the Ahmedabad airport.

Praising his efforts, Deployment Officer at British High Commission in Delhi David French said, "We wish to place on



record our thanks to the Ahmedabad Airport Director Manoj Gangal who opened the Ahmedabad Airport specially for these flights. Without the help of the airport director, these flights would not have been possible." "The British High Commission informed us that there were about 3,000 UK nationals in Ahmedabad

and across Gujarat that needed to be flown back. Once the permission from the Ministry of Civil Aviation came, we pooled in all our resources to complete the task," Manoj Gangal said. Two more flights are expected to operate from Ahmedabad airport on Wednesday and Friday. Each will ferry approximately 300 passengers.

## Gujarat woos US and Japan firms from China

Looking to capitalize on growing trust deficit among countries for China where the Covid-19 global pandemic first broke out, Gujarat has written to political and business authorities of US and Japan, inviting them to shift their commercial units and operations from China to Gujarat.

The state government has in the letters assured all

required assistance and incentives to companies which decide to relocate their operations from China to Gujarat. US and Japanese companies already have a sizable presence in Gujarat and the recent visits of US President Donald Trump and Japanese PM Shinzo Abe to Gujarat have further strengthened the bond.

Confirming the development, principal secretary, industries, Manoj

Das said the state government has written to the Japan government, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), US-India Business Council (USIBC) and US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), inviting US and Japanese companies yet again in the changed geopolitical situation. While the Japanese government has already announced a package for companies to shift their operations out of

China, we have a dedicated Japanese park in Gujarat," the official said.

"After the lockdown period ends, we will aggressively start a campaign to attract US and Japanese companies to Gujarat, especially those companies who are considering shifting their operations out of China," said Das. Mona Khandhar, minister, (economic & commerce), embassy of India, Tokyo said Japanese companies lead in manufacturing of high standards in a number of sectors. "In the global perspective, Japanese companies have highest number of foreign subsidiaries in China, followed by ASEAN countries. For attracting relocating Japanese companies, India will see tough competition with ASEAN peers."

Commenting on Gujarat's scope of attracting Japanese companies looking to relocate their Chinese units, Khandhar said, "At present, the service sector is the growth driver for Indian economy. Gujarat has a better manufacturing base, and being so, better prepared for attracting Japanese companies."

Up to December 2013, FDI from Japan to Gujarat was close to £80 million. This FDI has risen to over £1.57 billion as of September 2019. Up to December 2013, FDI from USA to Gujarat was about £550 million. This has doubled to £1.07 billion as of September 2019.

As per a report by US India Strategic Partnership Forum dated April 2019, nearly 200 US based companies were willing to shift their operational base from China to India. This has been further compounded by the disruption of supply chain and business losses experienced by US companies due to COVID 19 outbreak in China.

## INTROSPECTION

### Stay HOME: Healthy; Optimistic; Managed; Energetic

Rohit Vadhwa

On Sunday 15 April, the Friends of India Society International, UK (FISI-UK) & Indian National Students Association, UK (INSA-UK) jointly organised a live webinar on the topic of 'Art of Remaining Positive', the first under its newly introduced 'Positive Connect Webinar Series during Covid-19'. I was invited to be the Keynote Speaker in this first live webinar to address Indian students and professionals stranded in the UK during the lockdown imposed in India. As there are no flights operating to India from anywhere in the world, some of the Indian nationals are not able to go back home. It is understandably due to the unprecedented situation created by the coronavirus pandemic.

This situation has created anxiety and stress amongst all of us, especially who are living abroad, away from family. We are worried for our parents and siblings. Their wellbeing and our safety are cause of concern for each other. It is natural that many of us suffer through depression, disappointment and discouragement. In this situation, remaining positive is vital not only for us but also for our families back home. Some of the points I made during my live talk, and while answering questions, are as following:

To stay safe, we all must stay HOME. HOME means H - Healthy, O - Optimistic, M - Managed & E - Energetic.

To stay healthy, we must be mindful of our food, exercise and sleep. Do not eat more than required. Do not miss nutritional food. Exercise to keep your body active. It may be simple stretching, yoga or home based bodyweight exercise. Having proper sleep is the most important. Stress causes sleeplessness. It has to be avoided.

To stay optimistic, we need to engage our mind with good reading, positive affirmations and forward looking attitude. Remember, life does not depend on what will happen in this short period of a few weeks or months. Focus on long term goals of life. Be it study or career. See your longer future. It will hardly be affected by this situation. So remain forward looking. Remain Optimistic.

To stay managed, we must take care of the supply of our basic necessities like groceries and medicines. Manage your time and routine. Manage your thoughts and emotions as well. By giving affirmative inputs, you will avoid negative emotional outputs. If you face any difficulty in terms of food, medicine, any other basic necessities, or emotional wellbeing - contact someone whom you know. You may also contact some organisations and request for help. Remember, this should be for necessities, not for wishes.

To stay energetic, you have to keep your body and mind fit.

(Expressed opinion is personal)

## Punjab cop's chopped hand reattached

Doctors at the Chandigarh's PGIMER successfully reattached an ASI's hand which was chopped off by a group of Nihangs in Punjab's Patiala, officials said. Assistant Sub-Inspector Harjeet Singh's hand was cut with a sword while three other Punjab policemen and a mandi official sustained injuries when the Nihangs attacked them after being asked to show curfew passes at a vegetable market in Patiala district.

Eleven people, including five attackers, were arrested hours later after an exchange of fire at Nihang Dera complex which also houses Gurdwara Khichdi Sahib at Balbera village, about 25 km from Patiala city, after the group fled from the scene of crime, police said. A video clip on social media appeared to show ASI Harjeet Singh seeking help after his left hand was severed in the attack. A man picked up the portion of the hand that was ripped off and gave it to the officer who kept it with him. He was then taken away from the scene on a two-wheeler. The ASI was rushed to a nearby local hospital and then referred to PGIMER in Chandigarh. With a lockdown in place to contain the spread of COVID-19, barricades were put up outside the wholesale market and entry restricted to those with curfew passes.

The Nihangs - members of a Sikh sect whose adherents carry traditional arms and wear blue robes - arrived in an SUV and were told to stop by mandi officials, police said. "They were asked to show passes. But they rammed the vehicle against the gate and the barricades," said Patiala's Senior Superintendent of Police Mandeep Singh Sidhu. The group then attacked the police personnel and fled to the Gurdwara managed by them.

**In Loving Memory**

**Amratbhai Ghelabhai Desai MBE**  
Demise: 17/4/2018

Father to Unmesh Desai, loving husband to Urmilaben Desai and doting grandfather to Kavita Priyadarshini Desai, Amratbhai was born in Amri village, near Navsari, Gujarat, India, on 18/9/1929. He made a name as his village's youngest-ever Sarpanch- head of the Village Council- and took part in the independence movement marches.

He followed his father, Ghelabhai Vasanti Desai to Tanzania in 1954 where he was a teacher at Karimjee Jivanjee Secondary School and Hindu Mandal Secretary, Tanga, for many years.

Amratbhai came to the UK in 1976 and settled in Brent, London. He ran a Post Office/News Agency in Canons Park and eventually retired in 1996 after working as the Manager of Brent Indian Association.

A committed community activist, he received the MBE in 2004. Amongst many events, he organised Brent's Indian Independence 50th Anniversary celebrations at Brent Town Hall in 1997.

A progressive man with liberal values and a firm believer in women's equality and education, Amratbhai died after a short illness in Newham General Hospital on 17/4/2018, having moved to the area in 2017.

He will be remembered for his humility, kindness and generosity of spirit. In these difficult times with the corona virus, he would have been more concerned about its impact on others and especially the world's poor. We don't think anyone ever had a bad word to say about him!

He never stopped caring about us until his last breath and we in turn will never forget him. His memory will always be cherished.

**Rest in eternal peace, father, husband and grandfather!**  
Unmesh Amratlal Desai  
Urmilaben Amratlal Desai  
Kavita Priyadarshini Desai



# Bollywood stars join hands to raise funds

Bollywood has a new anthem, and it's called Muskurayega India. This song is intended for the noble cause of raising funds for the PM-CARES initiative and the Maharashtra CM's Relief Fund. Actors including Akshay Kumar, Ayushmann Khurrana, Vicky Kaushal, Kiara Advani, Ananya Panday have come forward to be part of the song, which is sung by Vishal Mishra.

Talking about the song Ayushmann said that in a crisis every helping hand counts. "As responsible citizens of this nation, we all have to do as much possible to help our brothers and sisters. We need all the help to make our nation bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic. The moment I heard that the members of my industry are uniting for an initiative to help raise funds, I readily agreed."

The 'Bala' actor was touched by the lyrics of the song because it resonates the situation in the country today. "And it hopes for a brighter and better future. We all need to be positive at a time like this. We have been resilient. We have been patient and we shall overcome this. We need to stay united and fight this together."

Ayushmann expressed his gratitude to all the stars of Bollywood who've come forward to support this cause. "It has Akshay Kumar sir lending his massive support and leading this initiative, which is a brain child of producer Jacky Bhagnani. I'm honoured to be part of this campaign. And I thank all the members of my industry for joining the cause."



## Amitabh Bachchan recites his father's poem of hope

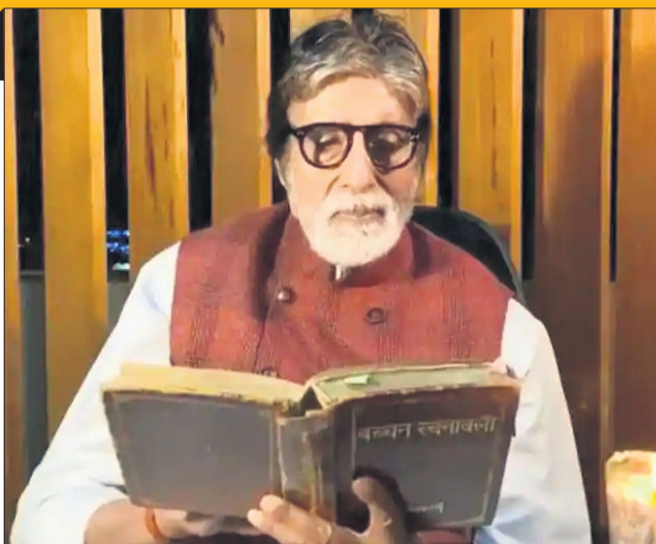
Megastar Amitabh Bachchan tried to spread some hope amid the ongoing health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. He recited a poem by his late father Harivansh Rai Bachchan to inspire people. "I reminisce my Father and his poem, which expresses hope and strength. The singing is exactly how Babu ji recited it at Kavi Sammelans, which I attended with him," Big B wrote.

He posted a video in which he is seen reciting the poem, which would aptly seem to describe the current situation of the world.

"Hai andheri raat par diva jalana kab mana hai, kya ghadi thi ek bhi chinta nahi thi paas aayi, Kya ghadi thi ek bhi chinta nahi thi paas aayi," Big B recited the poem in the four-minute, 10-second video, accompanied by soothing music in the backdrop.

Big B featured in a made-at-home short film titled "Family" that also stars Alia Bhatt, Ranbir Kapoor and Priyanka Chopra, along with superstars from regional cinema such as Rajinikanth, Mohanlal, Mammootty, Chiranjeevi, Prosenjit Chatterjee, and Shiva Rajkumar, besides Dilit Dosanjh and Sonalee Kulkarni.

The four-minute, 39-second film has been conceptualized and virtually directed by Praseon Pandey in collaboration with Big B. It talks about how staying at home, staying safe,



maintaining hygiene, working from home and maintaining social distancing can be productive. At the end of the video, Big B also appeals in favour of the film industry's daily wage workers who are currently left with no income owing to a complete halt in filming activity due to the lockdown, which began last month.

## AR Rahman is furious over Masakali 2.0

Music maestro AR Rahman is known for his calm and composed temperament. But a recent Bollywood remix of one of his songs has irked the Oscar-winning composer. Rahman expressed his anger on social media after the remake of his chartbuster song Masakali was released this week. The remake Masakali 2.0 is produced by T-series and is sung by Sachet Tandon and Tulsi Kumar. Tanishk Bagchi has rendered music for the latest version. It crossed 13 million views in less than 24 hours of its release.

Featuring Tara Sutaria and Sidharth Malhotra, the song not only received terrible reviews but also angered Rahman. Rahman took to twitter to express disappointment subtly by posting the original link and said, "No short cuts, properly commissioned, sleepless nights, writes and re-writes. Over 200 musicians, 365 days of creative brainstorming to produce music that can last generations. A team of a director, a composer and a lyricist supported by actors, dance directors, and a relentless film crew. Lots of love and prayers, A.R. Rahman." That's not all, he also posted an ambiguous quote talking about patience and anger on Instagram that confirmed that he is not happy with the remake.



## Salman enjoys horse ride at his farmhouse

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, Salman Khan is having fun at his Panvel farmhouse where he is spending the quarantine. A video of him eating grass with his horse went viral on social media. Now, the actor has uploaded another video on his Instagram account in which he can be seen enjoying a horse ride at his farmhouse. Salman is seen feeding the horse grass. Later, the 54-year-old actor could be seen riding a horse making the most of his 'me' time. He captioned it, "Being taken for a ride (sic)."

Earlier, the Bharat actor had shared a video of him enjoying breakfast with his



horse, where he can be seen feeding the horse some grass and also munching on it himself, much to the surprise of everyone. Salman happily ate the stuff and even said, "It's damn good ya."

## Lights, Camera and Reaction



### Two boys break the barriers and dance their way to the top

Yeh Ballet is a film based on a true story of two dancers Nishu and Asif who were discovered by an Israeli ballet teacher and are selected to attend a prestigious ballet school in America.



Back in 2017, a documentary was made based on Manish Chauhan and Amiruddin Shah and this is the fictional story of the same. Manish Chauhan plays a fictional version of himself, in the portrayal of Nishu, and Asif is played by Achintya Bose. Both hail from different areas of Mumbai. Asif is a break dancer who likes to dance with his friends whereas Nishu is seen participating in a dance competition.

Nishu and Asif meet when Asif's brother delivers pizzas to a dance academy and manages to secure him a place. Nishu is seen by a manager at the dance school and is offered a fee discount due to his talent. In the midst of all this is an Israeli ballet teacher, who has moved back to India to teach dance and discovers the boys' talent. Although we know dance is huge in India, ballet itself is a pretty untapped dance genre and it is not actually made clear what makes these two boys fall in love with ballet which requires discipline and elegant movements, hence many men do not take up ballet. Both characters have their girlfriends meaning that they are not gay and they are just dancers who love ballet.

Julian Sands who plays the dance teacher Saul, isn't used to his full advantage. Sands is an amazing actor but through the film he seems to come across lost and as a character playing a dance teacher we don't actually see the teacher dance, which is a shame. Yeh Ballet is a brilliant film depicting the essence of two young boys doing something that is completely out of the norm. The shots showing intricate dance moves leave tears in your eyes as these two young men make waves in the dance world. Manish, who is trained in ballet, stuns you with his sophisticated and complex moves and Achintya went out of his way to learn ballet for the film and also keeps you intrigued as he dances his way through the film. It is a wonderful feeling watching these two boys from humble beginnings becoming world class dancers and being accepted into the amazing Oregon ballet school.

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