

India Bulletin

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New Zealand thrash India



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As India coronavirus cases spike, experts daunted by prospect of South Asia spread

By Shilpa Jamkhandikar

MUMBAI - India has ramped up the screening of travellers to keep the coronavirus at bay but a flurry of new cases has experts warning that it may be hard to contain a spread in densely populated South Asia with its generally poor medical infrastructure.

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are home to some 1.7 billion people, or more than a fifth of the world's population, but their over-stretched health systems could struggle to handle the type of intensive care required for coronavirus patients.

On top of that, a prevalence of existing health problems such as diabetes could spell trouble while the sort of sweeping restrictions China has imposed to stifle the virus would be hugely difficult in South Asia's more unruly cities.

"The way Indian society is structured, the kind of lockdown that many countries including China and Japan have instituted, is pretty much impossible even under good circumstances," said Vivekanand Jha, executive director of the George Institute for Public Health, in New Delhi.

India's total confirmed coronavirus rose to 29 on Wednesday, from six early this week.

The coronavirus, which emerged in China late last year, has infected more than 95,000 people globally, and killed more than 3,200, most of them in China.

Some health experts fear that even with the recent spike in cases, India's actual tally could be much bigger.

"There is a strong possibility that the number of cases in India is much higher than what has been detected," Arunkumar G., director of the Manipal Institute of Virology, said, citing a virus incubation of up to two weeks.

Fears were fanned this week



Students wearing protective masks attend a class in a government-run school in Hyderabad, India on March 5, 2020.

when India's health minister disclosed that 16 foreign tourists who have tested positive had been touring since mid-February.

Last week, U.S. intelligence sources told Reuters that India's available countermeasures and the potential for the virus to spread its dense population was a focus of serious concern.

'ALL INITIATIVES'

India's government says it has screened more than one million travellers, boosted its testing capabilities and set up isolation wards in all major cities with international airports.

But 450 million of India's 1.3 billion people are estimated to be migrants, with vast numbers packing its rail and road systems daily meaning controlling any spread would be a huge challenge.

India's high number of diabetics - 77 million - and high rates

of problems like kidney disease could lead to higher morbidity, or protracted treatment, experts said.

"One particular risk of India is the co-existence of other non-communicable disease epidemics," Dr Rajib Dasgupta, who is a professor of community health at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government says it is confident of its ability to arrest the spread of the virus.

"Coronavirus is a challenge, but the government of India has taken all initiatives to ensure that it is stopped," said D.V. Sadananda Gowda, minister of chemicals, who oversees the pharmaceuticals sector.

Neighbouring Pakistan has found five coronavirus cases. A top health official was gloomy about the prospects of tackling a major outbreak.

"We don't have human resources, we don't have the required inventory, we don't have a capacity to cope with a big emergency with the given resources," Shahid Malik, secretary general of the Pakistan Medical Association, told Reuters.

Bangladesh has not confirmed any cases of the coronavirus but five Bangladeshi workers have tested positive in Singapore.

Bangladesh's health ministry said more than 300,000 people have been screened at airports and other border entry points.

But one passenger was not impressed by what he considered lax screening upon arrival in the capital, Dhaka.

"Many of us could skip the screening. Just imagine what would happen if someone infected with the virus enters. It'll be a total disaster," Farid Yamin, a Bangladeshi working in Singapore, told Reuters.

Thought of the Week: "If you let a person talk long enough you'll hear their true intentions! Listen twice, speak once." - Tupac Shakur

Wishing our Readers & Advertisers a Colorful Holi!

Amid Delhi's blood-letting, a Hindu bride weds in a Muslim neighbourhood



REUTERS/Ahnan Abidi

Savitri Prasad, 23, and her husband Gulshan pose after taking their wedding vows inside Savitri's parents' house in a riot affected area following clashes between people demonstrating for and against a new citizenship law in New Delhi on February 26, 2020.

By Zeba Siddiqui
and Aftab Ahmed

NEW DELHI - As deadly clashes between Hindu and Muslim groups rocked parts of the Indian capital Delhi this week, the family of a young Hindu woman living in a Muslim-majority area was forced to cancel her wedding.

Dressed in her wedding finery,

her hands laced maroon with henna and her skin cleansed with turmeric, 23-year-old Savitri Prasad said she was weeping in her home as violent mobs battled outside on Tuesday, which was to have been her wedding day.

But Savitri's father then organised the wedding for the following day, saying his Muslim neighbours were family and he was comforted by their

presence.

"My Muslim brothers are protecting me today," Savitri told a Reuters team that visited the house on the day of the ceremony, breaking down again as her family and neighbours comforted her.

The rituals took place at Savitri's home, a small brick building in a narrow alley in the Chand Bagh district. Steps away, the main street looked like a war zone, with cars and shops vandalised, a Muslim shrine torched and the area littered with rocks used in pitched battles between mobs on both sides.

At least 32 people have been killed in the fighting in Chand Bagh and nearby areas of the capital this week, and hundreds of Hindus and Muslims have been injured in the worst sectarian riots in the Indian capital in decades.

"We went to the terrace and just saw smoke and more smoke," Bhoday Prasad, Savitri's father, said of the scene on Monday and Tuesday. "It is terrifying. We just want peace."

Bhoday Prasad said he has

lived in the area for years alongside Muslims without any trouble.

"We don't know who the people behind the violence are, but they are not my neighbours. There is no enmity between Hindus and Muslims here."

On Monday evening, the day Savitri was to have henna applied on her hands in a pre-wedding ritual, violence had already spiralled out of control.

"We could hear a lot of commotion outside, but I had the henna applied, hoping things would be better next day," she said. Instead, they got worse.

Her father told the groom and his family it was too dangerous to come to the house.

"Our heart pains for her, who would want their daughter to be sitting home crying when she is supposed to be happy?" said Sameena Begum, one of the Muslim neighbours.

Violence ebbed on Wednesday, but markets remained shut and residents stayed indoors, fearful of further clashes. Savitri's father said he decided to organise a scaled-down ceremony.

"Hindu or Muslim, we are all humans and we are all terrified of the violence," said Savitri's cousin Pooja, as she helped the bride dress for the ceremony. "This fight was not about religion, but it has been made so."

Muslim neighbours gathered to offer blessings as the groom arrived and the wedding rituals took place, with a Hindu priest reciting holy verses and the groom and bride taking the rounds of a small pyre set up inside the house.

"We live peacefully with our Hindu brothers," said Aamir Malik, who was standing guard with several other men outside the home. "We are everything for them. It's been like that. We are here for them."

Following an exchange of garlands, Savitri, her husband and his family were escorted out of the alleys by her family and neighbours.

"Today, none of our relatives could attend my daughter's wedding," said Bhoday Prasad. "But our Muslim neighbours are here. They are our family."

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Former Outcome Health exec Rishi Shah says he needs to tap \$10.3 million in frozen funds



Former Outcome Health CEO Rishi Shah

CHICAGO - Former Outcome Health CEO Rishi Shah, 33, and former Outcome Health president, Shradha Agarwal, 34, want to access \$10.3 million the government froze as part of a \$1 billion fraud case playing out in Chicago federal court. But the government is not backing down, Chicago Tribune reported.

Shah and Agarwal, who now live in Puerto Rico and Texas, respectively, appeared in court last month for a hearing regarding the frozen funds. Judge Thomas Durkin declined to rule on the issue. He said if he did decide to keep the \$10.3 million frozen, he would give Shah and Agarwal time to discuss whether they want to find new attorneys.

Shah and Agarwal need "at least" \$14 million to \$15 million to pay their lawyers,

according to court documents filed by the former executives' attorneys last week. The document listed Shah and Agarwal's assets and argued they cannot pay their attorneys' fees without the frozen \$10.3 million.

In a court document filed last month, however, the government rebuffed that argument. Both have "extraordinary amounts of assets" they could sell or use as collateral for loans to pay their lawyers.

"Even if the court were to find the breathtaking \$14 million to be reasonable ... Agarwal has plenty of assets to pay" her attorneys' fees, the document states.

It also states that some of Shah's assets were excluded from court filings, including a Chicago condo valued at \$1.3 million, funds in a bank account in Puerto Rico and \$105,000 he wired to Tesla in October.

"Shah's extraordinary expenditures, including lavish spending even after he knew he was a target in a criminal investigation, contradicts his assertion of a 'bona fide need' to spend restrained assets on his legal defense," the document states.

Another document filed by the government last month shows Shah's American Express spending from December 2018 to October 2019. The purchases include \$5,499 on massage chairs, \$80,000 at Christie's New York, \$10,703 at Louis

Vuitton, \$32,953 at the Beverly Hills Hotel, \$17,769 at Yves St. Laurent, \$36,188 at a yacht rental company in Spain and \$51,188 at Binny's Beverage Depot.

Shah and Agarwal collected \$225 million from investors, but they paid most of that money back to settle a lawsuit those investors brought. The government argues the \$10.3 million was part of a chunk of investor funds that Shah and Agarwal did not pay back, and that the money should be frozen because it was obtained through the alleged fraud.

The argument is the latest development in an ongoing criminal case against the former executives, which Shah and Agarwal's attorneys have said they plan to fight.

Outcome Health installs screens in doctor's offices and waiting rooms that combine health information with drug advertising. Pharmaceutical companies pay Outcome to run the ads and other content on the screens.

The charges allege the former executives ran a massive fraud scheme that brought in \$487.5 million in financing, a \$110 million loan and a \$375 million loan, amounting to nearly \$1 billion. The indictment also alleges the executives lied to clients and billed them millions of dollars for ads that never ran.

Indian man indicted for international money laundering

NEW YORK - An Indian national in the U.S. has been indicted on charges of running various international money laundering schemes and operating unlicensed transmission businesses.

Amit Agarwal, who was arrested in the U.S. in December last year at Newark International Airport, operated a wholesale consumer electronics business in East Hanover in New Jersey.

He, along with six Colombian nationals, has been charged with four

indictments. The Colombians were arrested in Colombia, and the U.S. government is seeking their extradition to America.

U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman said the illegal drug trade depended on shadow financial networks to move drug traffickers' profits into the U.S. banking system and across borders.

Agarwal is charged with one count of money laundering, which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

Indian store clerk shot dead at 7-Eleven in Los Angeles

WHITTIER, CA - A masked assailant shot dead Indian national Maninder Singh Sahi at a convenience store in Los Angeles county in the early hours of February 22, local police said.

Maninder, who had turned 31 recently, was married and a father of two.

Hailing from Karnal in Punjab, Sahi had arrived in the U.S. less than six months ago and had sought political asylum.

He was working at a 7-Eleven store in the Whittier City in Los Angeles county of California.

The only earning member of his family, Sahi used to send money to his wife and two children back home, his relatives in the U.S. said.

According to the Whittier Police Department, the incident occurred at 5:43 am.

Preliminarily it appears the suspect entered the store with a semi-automatic handgun with the intent to commit a robbery.

"For unknown reasons the suspect fired the handgun killing the clerk," the police said releasing a picture of the suspect.

"The suspect fled the location and is outstanding at this time. There were two customers inside the store, both were uninjured. The suspect is described as a male black adult approximately 5 feet, 6 inches tall. Suspect had his face partially covered and was wearing a dark hoodie with a gray hoodie underneath," police said.

The victim's brother here has set up a GoFund Page to raise money so that the body of deceased Maninder could be taken back to India.

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Apple CEO Tim Cook stalked by an Indian man

SAN FRANCISCO - One night in early December, a man carrying a bottle of champagne and flowers showed up at Apple CEO Tim Cook's home. He returned a month later, entering the property's gate without permission and ringing the doorbell.

Those interactions -- along with phone calls, making what Apple describes in a legal filing as "threatening statements" -- led the company to request a restraining order this month against Rakesh Sharma, a 41-year-old San Francisco man, CNET reported.

A California court granted Apple a temporary restraining

order against Sharma, who goes by "Rocky." He has been ordered to stay away from Cook's residence in Silicon Valley, as well as the CEO's three security guards. The order lasts through March 3, when a hearing is scheduled.

In a court document, Apple security specialist William Burns said Sharma's harassment began on Sept. 25, 2019, when he left a "disturbing" voicemail on "an Apple executive's phone." Sharma allegedly made another unsettling call about a week later. After that, Sharma's behavior "escalated," Burns said, to attempting "to stalk Apple's CEO by physically

trespassing on the CEO's personal property" on two separate occasions.

Sharma entered Cook's property through a closed gate without permission at around 10:30 p.m. on Dec. 4 in an effort to deliver the flowers and champagne, a filing said. "Shortly thereafter, Mr. Sharma continued to tag the Apple executive on his Twitter account, which included sexualized and inappropriate photos of Mr. Sharma with reference to the Apple executive," it said.

Sharma returned to Cook's home on Jan. 15 but left before the Palo Alto Police Department

arrived, Burns said.

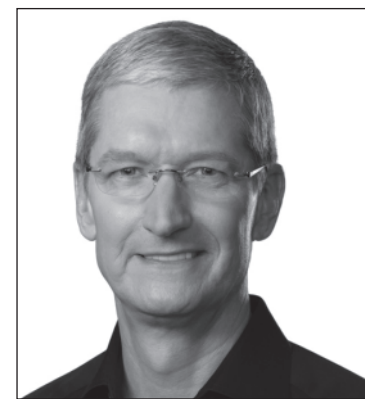
"Mr. Sharma's continuous and increasingly threatening conduct is causing me and other Apple employees significant emotional distress and gives me grave concern for our personal safety," Burns said.

Apple declined to comment. Sharma, when reached by CNET, described the interactions as a misunderstanding. He said he doesn't have an attorney representing him in this case yet.

A video Sharma posted to Twitter in early February criticized Cook.

"Hey Tim Cook, you have serious issues at your brand," he says. "You need to leave the Bay Area. Basically, I'm shooing you out. Shoo, Tim Cook, out of the Bay Area."

After allegedly trespassing on Cook's property, Sharma in February placed "two nonsensical" calls to Apple, Burns said in a filing. In one, he asked for a cash settlement because he said an "Apple employee laughed at him over the phone and hung up while Mr. Sharma was allegedly recovering in the hospital." Sharma told Apple that his attorney is Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, according to a court



Tim Cook

filing.

Apple's attorneys sent Sharma a cease-and-desist letter on Feb. 5, telling him to not contact Apple and its executive team. That same day, Sharma called Apple's AppleCare tech support line and "made a number of highly disturbing and threatening comments," the filing said.

"During the call, Mr. Sharma stated that he knows where members of Apple's Executive Team lives and stated that 'I don't use ammunition but I know people who do,' that Apple's CEO is a criminal and that Apple tried to have Mr. Sharma killed while Mr. Sharma was in the hospital," Burns said. He added that Sharma "made other delusional and paranoid comments related to Apple."

Indian man from Texas who shot his ex-wife's new husband, found guilty of murder

GALVESTON, TX - Sayantan Ghose, 41, was found guilty of murder and aggravated assault with a deadly weapon; capping off a two week trial that began on January 13, 2020. Ghose has elected the Court to assess his punishment. Sentencing will be held on February 26, 2020.

On June 28, 2017 officers were dispatched to the home of Amanda and Wayne Harris. Officers arrived and encountered Mrs. Har-

ris with a gunshot wound to her left leg and left arm and Mr. Harris with various gunshot wounds.

Ghose and Harris had divorced in December 2008. Since that time, Ghose would repeatedly come over uninvited to Amanda's home, even after she married Wayne Harris in 2012. In 2013, the couple, while living in Tomball, had a criminal trespass warning issued to Ghose. The couple would eventually move to

their home in League City in late 2015. Ghose continued to show up uninvited in attempts to visit with Amanda and Wayne Harris's daughter.

Witnesses testified that Ghose had become obsessed with the eleven-year-old girl.

Ghose fled the scene before police arrived. A warrant went out for his arrest soon afterward. He was picked up in New Mexico the next day, having fled the state.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Google employee suspected in wife's death released pending investigation



Sonam Saxena

BELLEVUE, WA - A Google employee whose wife was found dead during a family trip to Hawaii has been released from custody days after he was arrested in connection to her death.

Sonam Saxena, a 43-year-old resident of Bellevue, Washington, was released from police custody last month pending further investigation, the Hawaii Police Department said in a release.

Sonam Saxena reported his wife, 41-year-old Smriti Saxena, missing on February 18, days before his arrest, police said. One day after that report was made, the body of a woman was found on the southern shoreline of Anaeo'omaluu Bay, prompting a

criminal investigation.

After authorities positively identified the body as Sonam's wife, he was arrested under suspicion of second-degree murder, according to the authorities.

Sonam, a product manager for Google Cloud, previously told West Hawaii Today that he'd last seen his wife near the shoreline before he went back to their room at the Waikoloa Beach Marriott Resort — 20 minutes away — to get her asthma inhaler. The couple had gone to the beach after enjoying drinks at the Lava Lava Beach Club first, he said.

"She got an asthma attack right there on the beach and she was feeling weak and she didn't want to walk all the way back because it's almost a 20-minute walk back from that beach to our room," he said. "So I said, 'Hey, you know what? You stay here, you have your phone with you and I'll just go to the room, grab your inhaler and pump, and come back.'"

"I did that. Went to the room, picked up the inhaler, came back, and she was missing," he continued.

Sonam and Smriti, a business program manager for Microsoft, had been married for 17 years and shared two children, aged 8

and 13 years old, West Hawaii Today reports. The entire family had traveled to Hawaii as part of an annual trip they made to the island to celebrate the oldest child's birthday, according to the outlet.

Following the discovery of Smriti's body — but before she was positively identified — Sonam shared a message for the Governor of Hawaii David Ige on social media, writing in a tweet addressed to him, "My wife has been missing since last night and

@Hawaii_Police is busy giving interviews to media about body recovered, but is unwilling to pick up my phone."

Sonam was arrested that day but released two days later, after police conferred with prosecutors, according to the press release. Although an autopsy has been performed, a cause of death has not yet been established for Smriti, and detectives are continuing to investigate, police said.

Sonam's cousin, Garvit Gupta, told KHON2 that he has spoken

to his cousin since he was released from police custody, and Sonam is "still shocked."

Gupta also fondly remembered Smriti, who he described as a "very nice and kind person," and expressed doubt that his cousin could have killed his wife, according to the outlet.

"They had a very healthy relationship, and both of them loved each other a lot," he said. "They have two kids, and something like this to be done by my cousin is impossible."

Yoga Guru Bikram Choudhury's luxury cars to be auctioned off to pay alleged sexual assault victims

LOS ANGELES - Disgraced yogi Bikram Choudhury's luxury car collection has been seized by authorities and will be auctioned off to allow his alleged sexual assault victims and creditors to a sum of what they're owed, a new report says.

The hot yoga teacher, who taught the likes of George Clooney and Madonna, fled the country escaping rape and sexual assault allegations from his former yogis leaving behind a stash of more than two dozen cars he hid and stored in a Miami warehouse



Bikram Choudhury

in 2016, the New York Post reported.

Law enforcement seized Choudhury's cars in Miami last year, and the lot includes 12 Rolls Royces, five Bentleys, a

1966 Jaguar M10, a 1971 Pontiac Lemans, a Ford GT40, a 1969 Murano and a 1973 Ford Mustang Mach 1, in addition to six Mercedes-Benz and three Ferraris, according to court records as reported by the Post.

The estimated sales value is said to range from \$800,000 to up to \$1.5 million, and the cars are slated to be auctioned off this month at Palm Beach International Raceway with money from the sales being paid to some of Choudhury's alleged sexual assault victims, the report said.



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REUTERS/Adnan Abidi

U.S. President Donald Trump, first lady Melania Trump and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi pose ahead of their meeting at Hyderabad House in New Delhi, India on February 25, 2020.



REUTERS/Anushree Fadnavis

U.S. first lady Melania Trump is welcomed by children in traditional dresses at the Sarvodaya Co-Education Senior Secondary School in Moti Bagh, in New Delhi, during a visit by U.S. President Donald Trump in India on February 25, 2020.



REUTERS/AI Drago

U.S. President Donald Trump, first lady Melania Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visit the Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad, India on February 24, 2020.



REUTERS/AI Drago

U.S. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump attend a wreath laying ceremony at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at Raj Ghat in New Delhi, India on February 25, 2020.



REUTERS/AI Drago

U.S. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump tour the historic Taj Mahal, in Agra, India on February 24, 2020.



REUTERS/Anushree Fadnavis

U.S. first lady Melania Trump greets children at the Sarvodaya Co-Education Senior Secondary School in Moti Bagh, in New Delhi, during a visit of U.S. President Donald Trump in India on February 25, 2020.



REUTERS/AI Drago

U.S. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump shovel dirt as they plant a Magnolia tree at Raj Ghat in New Delhi, India on February 25, 2020.



Alex Brandon/Pool via REUTERS

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind and his wife Savita Kovind stand with President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump as they arrive for a state banquet at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi, India on February 25, 2020.

Delhi's displaced scrape a living after deadly riots



People crowd to receive free grocery items being distributed outside a relief camp after they fled their homes following Hindu-Muslim clashes triggered by a new citizenship law, in Mustafabad in the riot-affected northeast of New Delhi, India on March 3, 2020.

By Alasdair Pal
and Devjyot Ghoshal

NEW DELHI - Mohammed Anees fled his home in north-eastern New Delhi last week as Hindu-Muslim clashes erupted in his area, escaping with his family of four to a relative's home. He had only a few

hundred rupees in his wallet, leaving everything else behind.

Now the 37-year-old Muslim mechanic is among more than 1,000 people sheltering in a large open-air mosque that has been turned into a relief camp in the Mustafabad area of the Indian capital and opened on Monday.

"I don't have any money left now," Anees said, showing pictures of his ransacked home that he visited on the weekend on his cracked mobile phone.

With jewelry and savings looted and afraid of more violence, he moved to the camp with his wife and three children, victims of the worst communal riots in New Delhi for decades. More than 40 people were killed and hundreds injured.

Anees lived in Shiv Vihar, where two large mosques and dozens of Muslim houses surrounding it were torched. Houses with Hindu symbols were largely left untouched.

In total, some 2,000 people are believed to have been displaced, local politician Amanatullah Khan said. Hundreds of those are taking shelter on the floors of private homes.

"The police brought us and left us here," said Mohammed Uddin, 70, outside a cramped house where dozens of people packed into an entrance foyer. "They didn't even check if we were hurt."

Many of those displaced, who are overwhelmingly Muslim, have moved to the Mustafabad camp, where a kitchen provides

free meals and volunteer doctors are treating victims.

Rashid Ali, a local resident helping organise the camp, said they had received some help from the Delhi government, run by a regional party.

On a long desk outside the mosque premises, a small group of lawyers helped the victims of riots file for compensation ranging from 25,000 rupees (\$341.34) to 100,000 rupees.

Seema Joshi from Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party, who was helping the legal team, said around 500 applications had been made, though many people showed up without any paperwork since they fled in a hurry without documents or had belongings burnt.

In the narrow streets surrounding the mosque, women jostled for food supplies as children rummaged through piles of second-hand clothes donated to victims.

On a loudspeaker, an announcer asked for volunteers to clean an overflowing toilet attached to the relief camp.

"A lot of people are facing depression," said Wasim Qamar, a doctor at the camp. "People saw terrible things. Some of them

can't eat or sleep. They are very fearful."

Describing the violence as "one-sided and well-planned" against Muslims, the Delhi Minorities Commission - a government-appointed body that focuses on minority groups - said the Delhi government's compensation package was inadequate after surveying riot-hit areas on Tuesday.

Saurabh Bharadwaj, a lawmaker from Aam Aadmi Party, said the party was trying to improve its response to the emergency.

Some leaders from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party have accused opposition groups of fanning the violence, saying that Muslims targeted Hindus during the clashes.

Shabira, 55, and her family were rescued by police early last Wednesday from Shiv Vihar, leaving their home with nothing but what they were wearing.

At the relief camp, she said she was getting basic amenities - food, shelter and diapers for her infant grandchild.

"I want my house back," she said, in tears. "I just want to go back."

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After huge welcome in India, Trump clinches \$3 billion military deal

By Steve Holland
and Aftab Ahmed

NEW DELHI - U.S. President Donald Trump said last Tuesday India will buy \$3 billion worth of military equipment, including attack helicopters, as the two countries deepen defence and commercial ties in an attempt to balance the weight of China in the region.

India and the United States were also making progress on a big trade deal, Trump said. Negotiators from the two sides have wrangled for months to narrow differences on farm goods, medical devices, digital trade and new tariffs.

India's tariffs were still too high, probably the world's highest, Trump said in his only criticism of the world's biggest democracy during a visit that he said was a spectacular success.

"We are being charged large amounts of tariffs, can't do that," he said at a news briefing, again pointing to Indian duties on Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Trump was accorded a massive reception in Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat last Monday, with more than 100,000 people

filing into a cricket stadium for a "Namaste Trump" rally.

Last Tuesday, Trump sat down for one-on-one talks with Modi followed by delegation-level meetings to try and move forward on issues that have divided the two countries, mainly a festering trade dispute.

After those meetings, Trump said his visit had been productive, with the conclusion of deals to buy U.S. helicopters for the Indian military. India will buy 24 SeaHawk helicopters from Lockheed Martin equipped with Hellfire missiles worth \$2.6 billion and plans an order for six Apache copters.

India is modernising its military to narrow a gap with China and has increasingly turned towards the United States over its traditional supplier, Russia.

Trump said he hoped to secure a big trade deal, likely by the end of the year.

"Our teams have made tremendous progress on a comprehensive trade agreement and I'm optimistic we can reach a deal that will be of great importance to both countries," said Trump in remarks made alongside Modi.

The two countries had initially planned to produce a "mini

deal," but that proved elusive.

Instead, both sides are now aiming for a bigger package, including possibly a free trade agreement.

Trump said he also discussed with Modi, whom he called his "dear friend," the importance of a secure 5G telecoms network in India, ahead of a planned airwaves auction by the country.

The United States has banned Huawei Technologies, arguing the use of its equipment created the potential for espionage by China - a claim denied by Huawei and Beijing - but India, where telecoms companies have long used network gear from the Chinese firm, is yet to make a call.

Trump described in last Monday's rally in Ahmedabad, again praised Modi and spoke of the size of the crowd, claiming there were "thousands of people outside trying to get in."

"I would even imagine they were there more for you than for me, I would hope so," he told Modi. "The people love you...every time I mentioned your name, they would cheer."

In New Delhi, Trump was given a formal state welcome last Tuesday at the red



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during a business roundtable at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India on February 25, 2020.

sandstone presidential palace, with a 21-cannon gun salute and a red-coated honour guard on horseback on a smoggy day.

HUG GETS TIGHTER

India is one of a handful of countries where Trump's personal approval rating is above 50% and Trump's trip received wall-to-wall media coverage, with commentators saying he had hit all the right notes on his first official visit to the world's biggest democracy.

They were also effusive in their praise for Modi, for pulling off a

spectacular reception for Trump. "Modi-Trump hug gets tighter," ran a headline in the Times of India.

But in a sign of the underlying political tensions in India, violent protests broke out in Delhi last Monday over a new citizenship law that critics say discriminates against Muslims and is a further attempt to undermine the secular foundations of India's democracy. They say the law is part of a pattern of divisiveness being followed by Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

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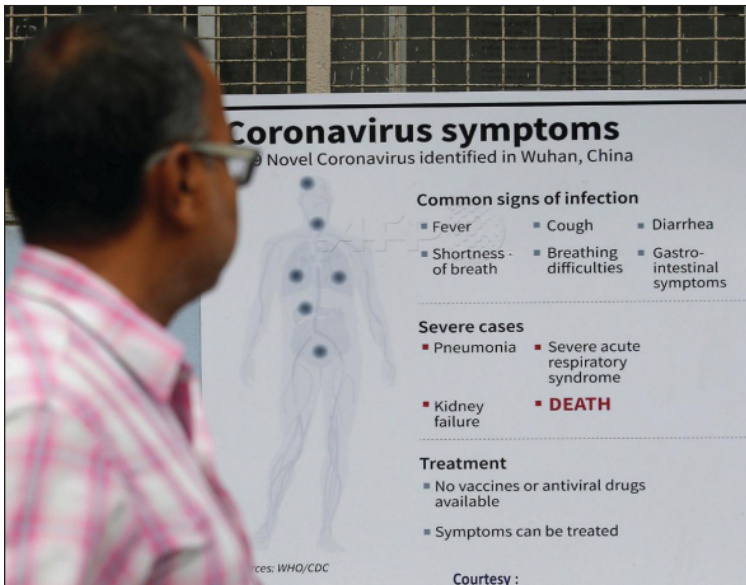
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India's coronavirus cases nears 30, hits major payments firm Paytm



A man reads a poster carrying messages on symptoms of coronavirus disease inside hospital premises in Kolkata, India on March 5, 2020.

By Alasdair Pal

NEW DELHI - The total number of known coronavirus cases in India rose sharply to 29 on Wednesday, including 16 Italian tourists who had tested positive for the disease as well as an employee of a digital payments company who had travelled to Italy.

On Monday, the world's second-most populous country had only six reported cases of coronavirus, but it is one of the

places U.S. intelligence agencies are most closely monitoring due to fears over how it would cope with a widespread outbreak.

Authorities are increasing screenings at airports and border crossings, and urging citizens to avoid large crowds.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he would not attend celebrations for the Hindu Holi festival, scheduled to be held across the country next week.

"Experts across the world have advised to reduce mass gather-

ings to avoid the (virus) spread," Modi said in a tweet on Wednesday. "Hence, this year I have decided not to participate."

An employee of Paytm - an Indian payments company whose parent firm is backed by Alibaba and SoftBank - who had vacationed in Italy and is based in Gurugram near New Delhi tested positive for the coronavirus, a spokesperson said late on Wednesday.

"We have also advised all our colleagues to work from home

for a couple of days while we get our offices sanitized," the spokesperson said in a statement, adding that daily operations and services would not be impacted.

Paytm has six offices around New Delhi, employing more than 3,000 people.

SCREEN ALL INTERNATIONAL PASSENGERS

An Italian visiting the western desert state of Rajasthan was among those who had tested posi-

tive earlier.

And on Wednesday, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said 15 of 21 tourists from Italy - Europe's worst-affected country - who had been taken to a quarantine facility on the outskirts of New Delhi had tested positive for the virus.

Their Indian driver was also placed in quarantine.

Indian stock markets slid nearly 2% after the government disclosed the rise in cases, before paring losses late in the day.

India shuts Delhi schools, imposes new travel restrictions over coronavirus

By Devjyot Ghoshal

NEW DELHI - India shut all primary schools in the capital New Delhi until the end of March on Thursday and imposed new restrictions on travel from Italy and South Korea as part of efforts to fight the spread of the coronavirus.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi postponed a trip to Brussels for a summit with EU leaders later this month.

"Both sides have agreed that due to health authorities

advising against travel between regions, it would be wise to reschedule the summit to a later, mutually convenient date," foreign ministry spokesman Raveesh Kumar told a news conference.

India's total of confirmed coronavirus cases rose to 29 on Wednesday, from six early this week.

Travellers that have visited Italy or South Korea will now be required to show a certificate of having tested negative for coronavirus, a temporary

measure to be enforced from next week, a government statement said.

India has also suspended most visas issued to nationals of Japan, South Korea, Italy, Iran and China, as well as suspending visas of any travellers who had been to those five countries since February.

Delhi's deputy chief minister announced in a tweet that all primary schools in the capital would be closed to prevent the possible spread of the coronavirus.



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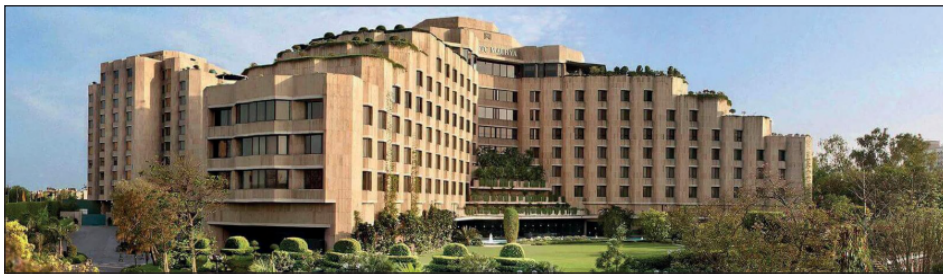
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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Trump stayed at ITC Maurya's Chanakya Suite; here's how much it costs a night



NEW DELHI - U.S. President Donald Trump was on a two-day visit to India last week, during which he stayed in the ultra luxurious Chanakya Suite of ITC Maurya hotel on Sardar Patel Marg in New Delhi. President Donald Trump, along with First Lady Melania, was the fourth U.S. President to stay at the Grand Presidential Suite in the national capital.

The grand presidential suite is on the 14th floor of the luxurious property. Chanakya suite has silk paneled walls, dark wood flooring and masterly artwork. The suite comprises a reception, living room, a study and 12-seater dining room. The suite also has a huge bathroom with pearl accessories and a mini-spa and gymnasium. The Presidential Suite also guarantees exclusive access to a business courtyard and a summit lounge.

The chefs at the ITC Maurya's hotel planned different cuisine themes for POTUS. The chefs prepared a Trump platter, along with signature Dal Bukhara. The President also experienced tandoori delights at Bukhara, which was also served to Bill

Clinton and Barack Obama during their presidential tenure. An assortment of baked delicacies, personalized with a collage of photographs of the couple, were present in the presidential suite.

Moreover, Trump had a valet waiting beck-and-call led by the presidential floor butler who ensured the U.S. First Couple's every wish was fulfilled. The Chanakya's suite was already stocked up with Trump's favorites -- Diet Coke and Cherry Vanilla ice-cream. The U.S. First Couple was also provided with their own private chef so that they can have prepared any kind of food they want in a jiffy.

The Chanakya suite spans 4,600 square feet and costs around Rs 8,00,000 (approximately \$11,000) per night. It includes steam and sauna areas in addition to living quarters. Before Trump, the other U.S. presidents who stayed in the ITC Maurya included Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Other dignitaries who had previously stayed at the facility include the Dalai Lama, Tony Blair, Vladimir Putin, King Abdullah and the Sultan of Brunei.

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U.S. first lady Melania Trump visits 'happiness' class at Delhi school

NEW DELHI - U.S. first lady Melania Trump visited last Tuesday a government school in the Indian capital of New Delhi that teaches a special "happiness curriculum", rooted in mindfulness practices.

Sporting a traditional red 'tilak' dot on her forehead and wearing a garland of marigolds, Trump watched children at the school play, do yoga, and perform a bhangra dance.

"It is very inspiring to me that the students here begin each day (with) mindfulness," said Trump. "I cannot think of a better way for all of us to start our day."

The "happiness curriculum" was launched by the left-leaning Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in 2018 as a way to foster social skills by having children engage in mindfulness practices, storytelling and drawing, the party said on its web site.

"For centuries, India has taught spirituality to the world. I am happy that she will take back the (message) of happiness from our school," Arvind Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi and a member of the AAP, said on Twitter about Trump's visit.

U.S. President Donald Trump sat down with Indian leaders last Tuesday for talks on arms sales and festering trade disputes that have strained ties in recent



U.S. first lady Melania Trump plays with children at the Sarvodaya Co-Education Senior Secondary School in Moti Bagh, in New Delhi, during a visit by U.S. President Donald Trump in India on February 25, 2020.

months.

The Trumps left India last Tuesday night.

"This is my first visit to India

and I cannot express how delightful it is," the first lady said. "The president and I are grateful to be guests."

Pakistan confirms fifth coronavirus case



Rescue workers wearing masks and protective clothing check a man's temperature during a mock drill on handling suspected carriers of coronavirus, in Peshawar, Pakistan on March 2, 2020.

KARACHI - Pakistan on Tuesday reported a new coronavirus case, taking the total in the South Asian nation to five since the first cases were confirmed

last week, officials said.

"We have now 5th confirmed case of COVID19 in federal areas," Zafar Mirza, the country's health minister said in a tweet

early Tuesday morning.

The patient is stable and being managed well, he said, without giving further details.

The local Geo television station said the patient is a 45-year-old woman from the northern mountainous region of Gilgit Baltistan, who arrived from Iran a few days ago.

She is being treated at a hospital in Gilgit, it said, and her family members are being tested for the virus. Local schools have been closed following the confirmation of the infection.

Most of the cases reported so far in Pakistan have a history of travel to Iran.

Fifteen Italians test positive for coronavirus in India

NEW DELHI - Fifteen Italian citizens in India have tested positive for coronavirus, media said on Wednesday.

State broadcaster Doordarshan as well as private TV networks NDTV and CNN-News18 all said 21 Italian tour-

ists had been tested in the capital New Delhi, citing unidentified sources.

An Italian had tested positive for the virus in the western desert state of Rajasthan, a health official said on Monday.

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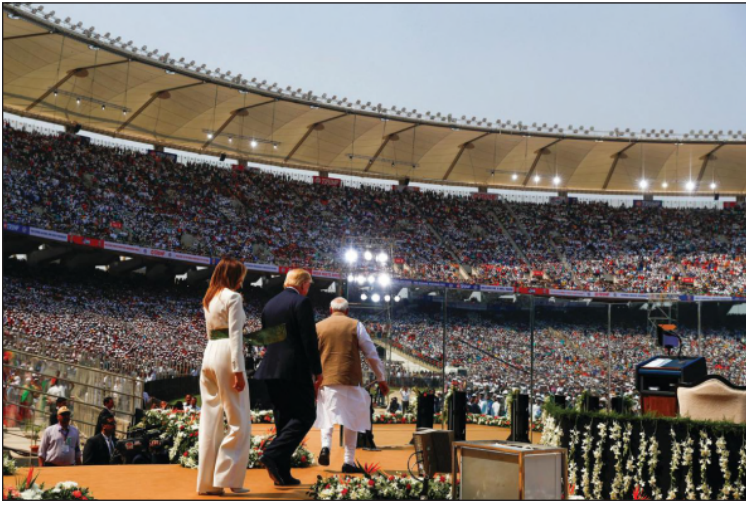
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Trump stumbles with Indian language in cricket stadium speech



U.S. President Donald Trump, first lady Melania Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi attend a "Namaste Trump" event during Trump's visit to India, at Sardar Patel Gujarat Stadium, in Ahmedabad, India on February 24, 2020.

AHMEDABAD - U.S. President Donald Trump last Monday managed to mangle his pronunciation of several Indian names and a Hindi word on an otherwise successful first day of his state visit to India.

Cheered by more than 100,000 people at the opening of the world's largest cricket stadium, Trump tried to praise his host, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for achieving high office despite his humble origins as a tea seller, or "chai wala".

"The life of Prime Minister Modi underscores the limitless

promise of this great nation. He started out by his father's side as a 'chee wala', a tea-seller," Trump said, drawing laughter, cheers and jokes on Twitter.

Modi often invokes his humble family roots at political rallies, presenting himself as a man of the people who has fought his way to the top against great odds. Trump, though from a much more privileged background, also likes to pose as a champion of ordinary Americans against a remote, uncaring elite.

"When he (Modi) was a young man, he worked at a cafeteria in

this city... I will tell you this, he's very tough," Trump said, pausing for a firm handshake with Modi, his "true friend".

Modi, a nationalist who won re-election last year and has shifted his country firmly to the right with policies that his critics decry as ethnically divisive, touts his relationship with Trump as proof of his own global standing.

In his speech, Trump also cited a famous 19th century Hindu monk - often quoted by Modi himself - Swami Vivekananda, but it came out as "Vivekamumund", to the delight of the crowd, many of whom wore Trump masks and "Namaste (hello) Trump" hats.

Trump also stumbled over the names of Modi's home state of Gujarat and its biggest city

Ahmedabad - where he was speaking - as well as the names of two Indian cricket heroes, Sachin Tendulkar and current team captain Virat Kohli.

Trump and his wife Melania later flew to the city of Agra to pay a sunset visit to the Taj Mahal, the 17th century mausoleum of love and one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world.

Death toll rises to 24 from Delhi riots during Trump trip

By Sheikh Saaliq and Emily Schmall

NEW DELHI (AP) - At least 24 people were killed and 189 injured in three days of clashes in New Delhi that coincided with U.S. President Donald Trump's first state visit to India, with the death toll expected to rise as hospitals continue to take in the wounded, authorities said.

Shops, Muslim shrines and public vehicles were left smoldering from violence between Hindu mobs and Muslims protesting a new citizenship law that fast-tracks naturalization for foreign-born religious minorities of all major faiths in South

Asia except Islam.

Twenty-four deaths were reported at two hospitals in New Delhi, officials said.

The clashes were the worst communal riots in the Indian capital in decades. The law's passage in December earlier spurred massive protests across India that left 23 dead, many of them killed by police.

The dead in this week's violence included a policeman and an intelligence bureau officer, and the government has banned public assembly in the affected areas.

Officials reported no new violence last Wednesday as large police reinforcements patrolled the areas, where an uneasy calm

prevailed.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval toured the northeastern neighborhoods of Delhi where the rioting occurred, seeking to assure fear-stricken residents including a female student who complained that police had not protected them from mobs who vandalized the area and set shops and vehicles on fire.

While clashes wracked parts of the capital, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted a lavish reception for Trump, including a rally in his home state of Gujarat attended by more than 100,000 people and the signing of an agreement to purchase more than \$3 billion of American military hardware.

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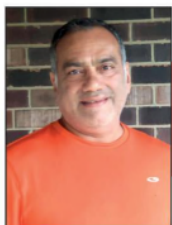
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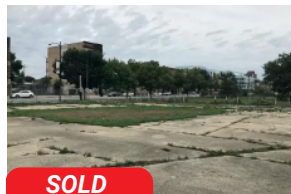
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BOLLYWOOD Insider™

Bollywood Beat

Akshay donates Rs. 1.5 crores for first transgender building



The *Laxmmi Bomb* duo - actor Akshay Kumar and director Raghava Lawrence will be building a home for transgenders for the first time in Chennai. Raghav took to his social media and informed about this new project for uplifting transgenders by providing shelter for them.

He posted, "I would like to share one good news, Akshay Kumar sir is donating 1.5 crores for building a transgender home for the first time in India.

"As everyone is already aware that Lawrence Charitable Trust has been initiating various projects for education, home for kids, medical and physically abled dancers. Our trust is now entering into its 15th year. We wanted to celebrate this 15th year by initiating a new project for uplifting transgenders by providing shelter for them. our trust has provided the land and we were looking forward to raise funds for the building, so during *Laxmmi Bomb* shoot, I was talking to Akshay kumar sir about the trust projects and transgender's home, immediately after hearing this without even me asking he told he will donate 1.5 cores for building transgender's home.

"I consider everyone who helps as a god, so now Akshay Kumar sir is a god for us. I thank him for lending his huge support for this project. Our trust next vision is to uplift transgender's and provide shelter for them all over India with Akshay Kumar's sir support. We will inform the bhoomi pooja date soon. I need all your blessing."

Angrezi Medium

Banner:
Maddock Films
London Calling Production

Producer:
Dinesh Vijan
Jyoti Deshpande

Director:
Homi Adajania

Starring:
Irrfan Khan
Kareena Kapoor Khan
Deepak Dobriyal
Radhika Madan

Music By:
Sachin-Jigar
Tanishk Bagchi
Vikram Montrose
Guru Randhawa
Score:
Sanjoy Chowdhury
Sachin-Jigar

Release Date:
March 13, 2020

Angrezi Medium is an upcoming Indian Hindi film directed by Homi Adajania and produced under the production banner Maddock Films. The film is the spin-off to the 2017 comedy *Hindi Medium* and stars Irrfan Khan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Deepak Dobriyal, Ranvir Shorey, and Radhika Madan.

A heartwarming and hilarious story of unconditional love between a father and his daughter - *Angrezi Medium* follows the story of a single dad willing

to go the extra mile to ensure that his daughter can pursue her dreams to study abroad. A tale of unbreakable friendships and small-town obsessions with the 'foreign' dream. The film's story makes us realize that sometimes people may travel very far in search of answers that were always within them.

While the film is a beautiful slice of the life story of a father-daughter relationship, it also celebrates the bond of brotherhood. Apparently Irrfan and Deepak Dobriyal have a charming, quirky and hilarious chemistry in the film. Deepak and Irrfan will be sharing scenes once again after their successful outing in *Hindi Medium*.

Filming began in Udaipur on 5 April 2019 and was completed by July in London. It will be released on 13 March 2020.

In June 2017 in an interview after the success of his film *Hindi Medium* producer Dinesh Vijan told Mid Day, "There is definitely scope for a sequel. We would certainly explore it." Vijan added, "It's too early. Also, I still have to talk to director Saket Chaudhary, who is currently working on another movie project."

On 24 January 2018, Vijan confirmed the sequel to Times Now. He said, "We have just finished typing the second part", with "Just finishing touches are being put", however, "I think you will have to wait for an official announcement for that." On 30 March 2019 it was reported that



Kareena Kapoor has been added to the cast of the film and filming will start from April.

The sequel was titled as *Angrezi Medium* and filming began on 5 April 2019 in Udaipur. On 6 April 2019 Taran Adarsh, the trade analyst introduced the characters of the film as, Deepak Dobriyal plays Khan's brother

and Manu Rishi their cousin, all are running mithai shops and are rivals in business. Pankaj Tripathi joined the cast as travel agent Tony. Jaipur actor Poorvi Jain will play Irrfan's wife Rashi. In mid July, director of the film Homi Adajania announced the completion of filming on his Twitter account.

UNKNOWN FACTS ABOUT BOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES



Deepika Padukone learned Jujutsu, a Japanese martial art form for the movie *Chandni Chowk to China* and performed her stunts herself. She was a national level badminton player before she entered Bollywood.



Pankaj Tripathi was part of the *Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad* during college politics and was jailed once for seven days during 1993 for raising voice against the state government.

Top 3 Bollywood Films

- 1) **Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan**
Directed by Hitesh Kewalya
Starring: Ayushmann Khurrana, Jitendra Kumar, Neena Gupta and Gajraj Rao
- 2) **Thappad** - Directed by Anubhav Sinha
Starring: Taapsee Pannu
- 3) **Love Aaj Kal** - Directed by Imtiaz Ali
Starring: Kartik Aryan and Sara Ali Khan

Top 10 Bollywood Film Songs

- 10) "Panga" - *Panga*
- 9) "Shayad" - *Love Aaj Kal*
- 8) "Do You Love Me" - *Baaghi 3*
- 7) "Bhankas" - *Baaghi 3*
- 6) "Ek Zindagi" - *Angrezi Medium*
- 5) "Dus Bahane 2.0" - *Baaghi 3*
- 4) "Ole Ole 2.0" - *Jawaani Jaaneman*
- 3) "Channa Ve" - *Bhoot Part One*
- 2) "Phir Na Milen Kabhi" - *Malang*
- 1) "Nachan Nu Jee Karda" - *Angrezi Medium*

Bollywood Trivia

- Who performed the lead actress in the movie 'War'?**
- 1) Deepika Padukone
 - 2) Shraddha Kapoor
 - 3) Vani Kapoor
 - 4) Katrina Kaif
- Answer: 3
- What is Madhuri Dixit's husband's name?**
- 1) Shankar Nene
 - 2) Prakash Nene
 - 3) Sriram Madhav Nene
 - 4) Srinath Nene
- Answer: 3

BOLLYWOOD Insider™

MOVIE REVIEW

Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan

Banner:
T-Series
Colour Yellow Productions

Producer:
Aanand L. Rai
Bhushan Kumar
Himanshu Sharma
Krishan Kumar

Director:
Hitesh Kewalya

Starring:
Ayushmann Khurrana
Jitendra Kumar
Neena Gupta
Gajraj Rao

Music By:
Tanishk Bagchi
Vayu
Tony Kakkar

Released Date:
February 21, 2020

Over the last three decades, Bollywood has come up with quite a few films on homosexuality like *Fire* [1996], *My Brother Nikhil* [2005], *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga* [2019], *Aligarh* [2016], *Margarita With A Straw* [2015] etc. Aanand L Rai and T-Series are now all set to bring *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* and unlike other gay-themed films, this one is light-hearted and looks quite commercial. Moreover, it stars Ayushmann Khurrana, who has become a brand in himself. So does *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* manage to entertain? Will it succeed in becoming the first legitimate LGBT-themed hit film of Bollywood? Or does it fail to succeed? Let's analyse.

Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan is the story of two men in love in Section 377 era. Aman Tripathi (Jitendra Kumar) is the son of Shankar Tripathi (Gajraj Rao) and Sunaina (Neena Gupta), who are based in Allahabad. Aman works in Delhi and unknown to his family, he's a gay and is living in with Kartik (Ayushmann Khurrana).

Jitendra's cousin sister Goggle (Maanvi Gargroo) is getting married and Neena calls Aman to come back to attend her marriage. Aman at first refuses but then gives in. Kartik also joins him and they meet the entire Tripathi family in a marriage special train called Vivah Express. In the train, Aman and Kartik kiss when they assume that no one is looking. Sadly for them, Shankar sees them and he gets the shock of his life. He doesn't tell anyone about it out of shame. At Goggle's marriage, Aman, in front of everyone, kisses Kartik, thus astonishing the Tripathi family. Thanks to this development, Goggle's to be husband refuses to get married. In anger, Goggle runs away. Kartik is asked to leave and Shankar's brother and Goggle's father Chaman (Manurishi Chadha) drops him off to Allahabad station. At the railway station, Kartik bumps into Goggle and stops her from ending her life. She tells Kartik that he shouldn't run away and that he should fight for his love. This motivates Kartik and he decides to return to win over not just Jitendra but the entire Tripathi family. What happens next forms the rest of the film.

Hitesh Kewalya's story is decent and had the potential to be a game-changer. Hitesh Kewalya's screenplay however is a big culprit. Under the pretext of making situations funny, he resorts to too many difficult-to-digest situations. This was prevalent in *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* as well but there, they kept a nice balance. Here, the balance is just not there. The first half is still decent. But in the second half, it all goes downhill. Hitesh Kewalya's dialogues are witty but some of them are just over the top. It won't be wrong to say that even the one-liners, which are supposed to be funny, take away the realism from the film.

Ayushmann Khurrana shockingly is not in his usual form. He has always played the victim but here, he plays the instigator and an



actor of his calibre should have hit the ball out of park. Shockingly, he goes overboard. The other bigger shocker is that his screen time is very limited. Believe it or not, Gajraj Rao has the maximum screen time followed by Jitendra and then comes Ayushmann! Gajraj Rao however is too good as always and performs as per the script. Jitendra Kumar fits the role to the T and few of his scenes in the first half are great. Neena Gupta is average. Manurishi Chadha and Sunita Rajwar (Champa) do justice to their respective parts. Pankhuri Awasthy (Kusum) is quite funny. Maanvi Gargroo raises few laughs. Neeraj Singh (Keshav) is decent. Bhumi Pednekar is passable while Gopal Dutt (Doctor in the train) is okay.

Music is peppy and gels with the film. 'Pyaar Tenu Karda Gabru' is the best followed by 'Arey Pyaar Kar Le', which is played in the end credits. 'Ooh La La' comes at a great point while 'Mere Liye Tum Kaafi Ho' is forgettable. The

recreated version of 'Kya Karte The Saajna' sounds great but is not utilised well. Karan Kulkarni's background score adds to the quirkiness of the film.

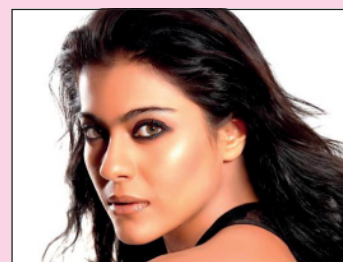
Chirantan Das's cinematography is appropriate. Ravi Srivastava's production design is in sync with the film's setting. Ankita Jha's costumes are realistic and special mention should go to Ayushmann's look. Ninad Khanolkar's editing is sans complaints.

On the whole, *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* is a decent attempt and makes an interesting comment on homophobia which exists in India. At the box office, it has the chance to work with the urban audiences, especially the youth. However, it will be a challenge to bring in family audiences and the audiences from small towns. The presence of Ayushmann Khurrana may give a boost to its collections.

Rating: ★★★★★

Bollywood Beat

Kajol says men took seven steps back after #MeToo



Many big names in the country were named and shamed, punished during the #MeToo movement in India. Kajol, one of the leading ladies of the short film *Devi*, said that men took seven steps back after the movement.

When asked whether she has observed change and difference in the industry and how women are treated, Kajol said, "Yes there is a difference. And I wouldn't say it's only on film sets. To be very honest, if you ask any man anywhere, after the #MeToo movement took a life of its own and embroiled a lot of very well known people in it, I think somewhere down the line, men - good, bad, indifferent - took seven steps back."

Recalling an incident while traveling, Shruti Haasan, who was also in attendance at the event, said that she observed someone in the plane reading 'Physical proximity and how to behave in that space'. "Like she (Kajol) said, the awareness that somebody is questioning and you are answerable. That applies to human behaviour in general... Quite honestly, I didn't think that India would take it to that level, so big and it made me really proud that people had the courage to come out and speak up," Shruti added.

Devi is a story of nine women from different backgrounds and features Kajol, Shruti Haasan, Neena Kulkarni, Mukta Barve, Sandhya Mhatre, Rama Joshi, Yashaswini Dayama, Shivani Raghuvanshi.

Celebrity Birthdays

March 7th Anupam Kher (1955)	March 11th Poonam Pandey (1991)	March 19th Tanushree Dutta (1984)
March 8th Fardeen Khan (1974)	March 12th Shreya Ghoshal (1984)	March 20th Gayatri Joshi (1974)
March 9th Darsheel Safary (1997)	March 14th Aamir Khan (1965)	
March 10th Shahbaz Khan (1966)	March 15th Abhay Deol (1976)	
Chirag Patil (1987)	Alia Bhatt (1993)	

Upcoming Films

Gulabo Sitabo Ayushmann Khurrana, Amitabh Bachchan and Nalneesh Neel	Chhalaang Nusrat Bharucha, Rajkummar Rao and Jatin Sarna	Thalaivi Kangana Ranaut and Vijay Deverakonda
Dil Bechara Sushant Singh Rajput, Sanjana Sanghi and Saif Ali Khan	Shamshera Ranbir Kapoor	Radhe Salman Khan, Disha Patani, Jackie Shroff and Randeep Hooda
Gunjan Saxena Janhvi Kapoor and Anagad Bedi	Brahmastra Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt and Amitabh Bachchan	83 Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone

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New Delhi is world's most polluted capital for 2nd straight year: study

By Neha Dasgupta

NEW DELHI - New Delhi was the world's most polluted capital city for the second straight year in 2019, according to a Swiss-based group that gathers air-quality data globally.

India was also home to 21 of the world's 30 most polluted cities, IQ AirVisual said in the study which focused on the amount of PM2.5, fine particu-

late matter, in major urban areas.

The study measured the concentration of poisonous PM2.5, particles that are less than 2.5 microns in diameter and can be carried deep into the lungs, as higher PM2.5 levels could cause deadly diseases, including cancer and cardiac problems.

In 2019, New Delhi's average annual concentration of PM2.5 in a cubic meter of air was 98.6,

the study said, more than double the level of Beijing, which averaged 42.1 during the year, making it the ninth most polluted city in the world.

New Delhi's toxic air is caused by vehicle and industrial emissions, dust from building sites, smoke from the burning of rubbish and crop residue in nearby fields.

Last year, residents of New Delhi, home to more than 20



FILE PHOTO: An aerial view of the Delhi skyline shrouded in smog, in New Delhi, India on December 8, 2019.

REUTERS/Anushree Fadnavis/File Photo

Facebook gives WHO free ads in battle with coronavirus misinformation

Facebook Inc will provide free advertisements to the World Health Organization (WHO) as it seeks to ensure users are not misinformed about the virus, its risks and how to react to it, Chief Executive Officer Mark Zuckerberg said on Tuesday.

"We're giving the WHO as many free ads as they need for their coronavirus response along with other in-kind support," Zuckerberg said bit.ly/3aqdihN in the Facebook post.

Users who search for posts on the virus on Facebook would

now see a pop-up that directs them to the WHO or local health authority for the latest information, Zuckerberg said.

He also pledged again that the company would remove false claims and conspiracy theories flagged by leading global health organizations to help combat misinformation about the coronavirus.

Facebook will be working with global health experts and give support and "millions more in ad credits" to other organizations.

In February, the company said it would ban advertise-

ments for products offering any cures or prevention around the coronavirus outbreak, and those that create a sense of urgency around the situation.

The disease, believed to have originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan, has spread around the world, infecting nearly 93,000 people globally as of March 3.

Other social media platforms have been taking steps to improve their coverage of the virus. Searches on Pinterest for "coronavirus" take users to a curated web page while WHO launched an account on video app TikTok late last week.

million people, could breathe "moderate" to "satisfactory" air only for four days in November and December, when pollution levels peaked.

Late last year, the spike in air pollution levels forced authorities, who termed the crisis as a public health emergency, to shut schools twice.

The study, however, said In-

dia did see "widespread improvements" in PM2.5 levels in 2019 compared to a year earlier, largely due to favorable meteorological conditions, government efforts to clean the air and an overall economic slowdown.

"Despite improvements, India still faces serious air pollution challenges," the study said.

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BIZ BRIEFS

India places troubled Yes Bank under moratorium

NEW DELHI - India's government on Thursday placed troubled private lender Yes Bank under a moratorium till April 3, superseding its board of directors and limiting withdrawals to 50,000 rupees (\$680) during the period.

In a statement, India's central bank said the move was necessary to quickly restore depositors' confidence in the lender after its inability to address potential loan losses and resultant downgrades.

"The bank has also experienced serious governance issues and practices in the recent years which have led to steady decline of the bank," the Reserve Bank of India said in a statement.

Vistara considering a bid for Air India

Vistara, a joint venture between India's Tata Group and Singapore Airlines, is considering a bid for the government's stake in state-run carrier Air India, Vistara's chairman said, according to local media reports.

"Which company would not be interested in evaluating a sovereign airline of the country?" Vistara chairman Bhaskar Bhat said, according to a report by Business Insider, quoting Press Trust of India.

Bhat, however, said no final decision had been made on whether it would submit a bid, the report said.

Bhat was speaking at the unveiling of Vistara's first Boeing (B.A.N) 787-9 Dreamliner plane at Delhi airport.

India fines jewellery firm Gitanjali Gems for withholding information in \$2 billion bank fraud

BENGALURU - India's securities regulator last Thursday fined jewellery retailer Gitanjali Gems Ltd and its executives 50 million rupees (\$695,700) for failing to disclose key information related to a \$2 billion fraud at Punjab National Bank (PNB).

Gitanjali's promoter and managing director, Mehul Choksi; his nephew, billionaire jeweller Nirav Modi, and others were accused of being involved in fraudulent transactions that led to losses of roughly \$2 billion for PNB.

PNB, India's second-biggest state-run bank, in 2018 alleged that a few rogue employees had issued fake bank guarantees over several years to help jewellery groups - controlled by Modi and Choksi - raise funds in foreign

credit. Both have denied any wrongdoing.

Gitanjali failed to properly disclose the withdrawal of the credit limit by PNB, actions by various enforcement agencies relating to the case and the resignation of key executives, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said in an order.

Choksi and the company's executive director, Dhanesh Sheth, were also fined by the regulator.

"The deliberate defiance of the mandatory obligations and hiding the crucial and material information from investors, regulators and Stock Exchange, as found in this case should be dealt with sternly," the SEBI said.

The regulator also said that



Nirav Modi

Gitanjali Gems failed to make proper disclosures about defaulting on bond payments owed to state-run Life Insurance Corp, India's largest insurer.

Modi was arrested in London

in March last year and is currently fighting extradition to India, while Choksi, according to reports, is residing in the Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda.

With revenues falling, India's taxmen rake up 3-year-old demonetization cases

MUMBAI - Indian jewelers have received surprise tax notices asking them to turn over money they made from customers who scrambled to buy gold after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2016 ban on high-currency notes, according to a dozen jewelers and tax officials.

When Modi announced a sudden ban on 500 and 1,000 rupee bills on Nov. 8, 2016 to weed out undeclared cash, clients thronged the store of one Mumbai-based jeweler, clamoring for necklaces, rings, bullion - anything gold.

The jeweler - who asked to only be identified by his surname, Jain, to avoid retribution - said he sold his entire stock at a steep premium that day and pocketed revenue usually earned in two weeks.

Three months ago, he received a tax notice asking for the source of those earnings and ordering him to turn in all revenue made

that night, under suspicion that black money was behind the purchase.

Jain appealed against the order, but as per Indian law had to deposit 20% of the disputed amount.

"If we lose the case, then we have to close the business to pay the remaining amount," said Jain.

About 15,000 Indian jewelers have been sent tax demands similar to Jain's, said Surendra Mehta, secretary of the India Bullion and Jewelers Association.

Mehta estimated tax authorities are seeking around 500 billion rupees (\$7 billion) from people in the gems and jewelry sector.

"This could create a problem for the industry in the long run as those who need to pay 20% to appeal may have to purchase bullion or jewelry on credit," said Mehta. If they lose their cases, the jewelers could default on the loans, potentially hurting suppliers and bankers, he said.

Indian rupee hits 15-month low after fresh coronavirus cases in country

MUMBAI - The Indian rupee weakened for the third straight session on Monday, falling to its lowest level in more than 15 months, after two fresh cases of the coronavirus were detected in the country.

One of the two new cases was detected in the capital, New Delhi, while the other was in the southern state of Telangana, the government said in a statement taking the total number of people who have tested positive in the country to five.

The epidemic, which originated in the Chinese province of Hubei, has killed 3,000 people worldwide as authorities race to contain infections in Japan, Iran, Italy, South Korea and the United States.

The partially convertible rupee INR=D4 closed the day 0.5%

lower at 72.7650 per dollar, its weakest level since Nov. 13, 2018. Over the last three trading sessions, the rupee has shed 1.6% of its value.

Traders said the rupee could weaken further with 73 per dollar level likely to be tested during the week, but expect the central bank to step in and sell dollars to prevent significant losses in the local unit.

The news of the fresh cases pushed domestic shares lower, with the broader Nifty share index .NSEI falling as much as 1.5% before closing the session down 0.62%.

Earlier in the session, the market rallied as much as 2.1% on hopes that major central banks would take steps to stabilise financial markets amid the virus epidemic.

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India housing market to keep struggling this year: Reuters poll

By Tushar Goenka

BENGALURU - India's housing market is likely to struggle throughout 2020 as sluggish demand and a weak economic outlook overpower recent government measures efforts to boost activity, a Reuters poll of market experts found.

House prices rose 5.7% on average in 2018, the weakest since comparable records began in 2010, and data available for last year suggest a much weaker market despite a rapid-fire succession of interest rate cuts from the Reserve Bank of India.

The Feb 19-March 2 Reuters poll of 17 property analysts showed average house prices predicted to rise 2.0% this year and 2.5% in 2021.

That is well below 3.0% and 4.25% expected in a poll three months ago and only about a third of the latest reported rate of consumer price inflation.

"As long as housing demand remains bereft of major booster shots, the performance will remain patchy in the near-term," said Anuj Puri, chairman at ANAROCK Property Consultants in Mumbai.

Project delays due to the recent liquidity crisis meant fewer people were buying houses, he said. "There is a dire need to address this concern immediately."

Asia's third-largest economy expanded at its slowest pace in more than six years in the last three months of 2019, with further deceleration expected from

the global coronavirus outbreak. That too will not help a market stuck in low gear.

All but one of the 12 analysts who answered an additional question said the latest union budget will have no impact on housing market activity.

And all respondents said a prolonged period of sub-par housing market activity followed by a recovery is more likely over the coming year. None chose 'an acceleration' or 'a slowdown' from the options provided.

"While green shoots are visible, the sector is in for a further period of strife with slowly improving sales and the liquidity squeeze really turning on the screws on the developers, who are struggling with project



A flock of flamingos is seen in the Talawe wetland against the backdrop of residential buildings in Navi Mumbai on February 11, 2020.

India's Supreme Court strikes down RBI banking ban on cryptocurrency

MUMBAI - India's Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed banks to handle cryptocurrency transactions from exchanges and traders, overturning a central bank ban that dealt the thriving industry a major blow.

The Reserve Bank of India

(RBI) had in April 2018 ordered financial institutions to break off all ties with individuals or businesses dealing in virtual currency such as Bitcoin within three months.

The ban led to plummeting trade volumes and exchanges

shutting their businesses.

A three-judge Supreme Court bench said in their ruling that while the central bank had the power to take pre-emptive action, the court questioned the "proportionality" of such measures.

completion deadlines," said Rohan Sharma, head of research at Cushman & Wakefield India, based in Delhi.

Mumbai, Delhi and the National Capital Region were the most over-valued, according to respondents in the poll. But Bengaluru and Chennai were rated as fairly priced - a view held by property analysts since Reuters began surveying the market in Nov 2018.

While expected house price rises in most cities over the next two years remained largely unchanged from the previous poll, prices in Bengaluru were predicted to rise by twice as much as analysts expected just three months ago.

But that expected rate - 2.50% this year and 3.75% next - is still very slow by recent standards before the current slowdown.

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Global supplier India curbs drug exports as coronavirus fears grow



Tourists wearing protective masks are pictured at the historic Taj Mahal in Agra, India on March 3, 2020.

By Chris Thomas and Neha Dasgupta

BENGALURU - India, the world's main supplier of generic drugs, has restricted the export of 26 pharmaceutical ingredients and the medicines made from them, including Paracetamol, a common pain reliever also sold as acetaminophen, as the

coronavirus outbreak plays havoc with supply chains.

The Indian government urged calm and said there were enough stocks to manufacture formulations for two-to-three months.

The government's list of 26 active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and medicines accounts for 10% of all Indian pharmaceutical exports and

includes several antibiotics, such as tinidazole and erythromycin, the hormone progesterone and Vitamin B12.

It was unclear how the restriction would impact the availability of these medicines in the countries that import from India and also depend on China. In the United States, for instance, Indian imports accounted for 24 percent of medicines and 31 percent of medicine ingredients in 2018, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn told U.S. senators on Tuesday that the agency is working to determine how the restrictions will affect the U.S. medical supply and the effect on essential medicines.

The FDA last week announced the first coronavirus-related drug shortage in the United States but declined to name the drug in question. Hahn said on Tuesday that drug was in shortage because of a lack of materials needed to make the API.

Indian drugmakers rely on China, the source of the virus outbreak, for almost 70% of the APIs for their medicines. Industry experts say they are likely to face shortages if the epidemic

drags on.

"Export of specified APIs and formulations made from these APIs... is hereby 'restricted' with immediate effect and till further orders," the Director General of Foreign Trade said in a statement on Tuesday, without explaining the extent of the restrictions.

"Irrespective of the ban, some of these molecules may face shortages for the next couple of months," Dinesh Dua, chairman of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India, told Reuters. The council falls under the federal commerce ministry.

"If coronavirus is not contained, then in that case there could be acute shortages," Dua said.

In a statement, the Indian federal government said state authorities had been asked to monitor the production and availability of APIs and formulations to prevent black marketing and hoarding.

U.S. drugmakers have said they are monitoring their supply chains and Mylan NV warned last week that there could be drug shortages. Eli Lilly and Co said on Tuesday it does not

expect the coronavirus outbreak to result in shortages for any of its therapies, including insulin products.

INDIA MONITORING PATIENTS

Separately, the Indian government said on Tuesday it had detected "high viral load" in six people who had been in contact with a patient who contracted the virus in New Delhi, the capital.

The patient in New Delhi was being monitored and was stable, the government said.

The six people have been kept in isolation and their samples are being sent to India's National Institute of Virology for confirmation, the government said in a statement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to quell public fears.

"There is no need to panic," he said in a tweet.

"Had an extensive review regarding preparedness on the COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus. Different ministries & states are working together, from screening people arriving in India to providing prompt medical attention," he added.

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New Zealand thrash India by seven wickets to sweep series



New Zealand team pose with the Royal Stag trophy at the finish of the Second Test.

CHRISTCHURCH - New Zealand romped to a seven-wicket victory over India in the second test in Christchurch on Monday for an emphatic 2-0 series sweep of the number one side in the world.

The Black Caps dismissed the tourists for 124 in the first hour of the third day before chasing down their 132-run victory target with half of the test to spare for the loss of three wickets.

Henry Nicholls hit the winning run after his openers had done most of the heavy lifting as New Zealand drove home a dominance that was only briefly

challenged over the two matches in the series.

"Outstanding," said New Zealand captain Kane Williamson.

"I don't think the end result reflected how tight that match was. As we know, there's a fine line. India are a world class side, top of the comp, so a great effort from the guys."

India succumbed to their first two defeats in the World Test Championship but their big lead means their position at the top of the standings will not be threatened any time soon.

While their batsmen stuttered, the Indian bowlers re-

fused to back down on a Hagley Oval pitch that continued to offer plenty of movement off the seam.

The efforts of Jasprit Bumrah and Umesh Yadav ultimately only spared the tourists back-to-back thrashings by 10 wickets.

The thumping victory in the first test in Wellington did much to ease the pain of New Zealand's miserable 3-0 drubbing in Australia over the New Year and the series sweep underlined how tough it is to play the Black Caps in their backyard.

"When you sit down and look back at this series, you have to give credit to the New Zealand bowlers ... you have to play extravagant shots to get runs," said India captain Virat Kohli, who managed just 38 runs from four innings in the series.

"It was a combination of us not quite having the right execution and New Zealand playing really well in their conditions."

SUBDUED ATMOSPHERE

After the drama of day two, when 16 wickets fell as India stormed back into the match only to be pegged back by the close of play, there was a more

subdued atmosphere at an overcast Hagley Oval on Monday.

India resumed on 90-6 but Hanuma Vihari, Rishabh Pant, Mohammed Shami and Bumrah all quickly departed and New Zealand were soon heading back to the dressing room to pad up with only 34 more runs on the board.

Trent Boult took 4-28 and Tim Southee grabbed 3-36 as New Zealand's experienced strike pairing did what they do in home conditions.

Their efficiency meant all-rounder Kyle Jamieson, who made an impressive test debut in Wellington, did not have a chance to add to his 5-45 in India's first innings - a fine display which he backed up with a crucial 49 in New Zealand's first innings.

India's final wicket fell when Bumrah charged down the track for a single and was left stranded as Ravindra Jadeja declined the run, a suitably chaotic end to a poor effort from a much vaunted batting order on New Zealand's green pitches.

Cheteshwar Pujara's 24 was the highest score by an Indian batsman in the second innings while his gritty half century was

one of three from the tourists in the first.

It was left to India's bowling unit, robbed by injury of Ishant Sharma, to keep the tourists in the match and they did their job to great effect on day two in Christchurch.

A magnificent display of seam and swing bowling handed India an unlikely first-innings lead of seven runs after they restricted New Zealand to 235 in reply to their 242.

Their batsmen were unable to maintain the advantage, however, and a shoulder injury sustained by Shami while batting on Monday further diminished the likelihood that the Indian bowlers could fashion a stunning victory.

New Zealand openers Tom Latham (52) and Tom Blundell (55) did most of the work in the victory chase before falling to Yadav and Bumrah respectively, the latter producing a peach of a delivery to take out the batsman's off stump.

Williamson also made a cameo with five runs before he was caught off his gloves fending another fizzing delivery from the impressive Bumrah.

India were below-par, Kohli says after drubbing by New Zealand

CHRISTCHURCH - The whitewash in New Zealand ended India's flawless World Test Championship campaign but captain Virat Kohli is not offering excuses and accepts they were just not good enough in the two-test cricket series.

Kohli, arguably the best batsman of his era, himself endured a rare failure in the series, managing only 38 runs in four innings typifying his team's lacklustre batting.

India's vaunted batting lineup looked at sea against the swinging ball or whenever it was pitched short, while their bowlers shone only in patches.

"We were not at par with New Zealand as far as competing every day of the test match goes," Kohli said after India were defeated by seven wickets with half of the second test to spare.

"It can happen to a side when the other side plays better and you can go in a downward spiral."

"If we shy away from it, we're not going to improve. So we need to accept we were not good enough in this series, we've got take it on the chin and improve

those things."

India, missing opener Rohit Sharma due to injury, fell short of the 200-mark in both innings in Wellington and were bowled out for 124 in the second innings at Christchurch.

"There was just not enough done by the batsmen in this series for the bowlers to try and attack," Kohli said.

"I think to win a series away from home, you need to have a balanced performance with both bat and ball and in the field as well. It was something we were not able to do in this series."

Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri have made it their mission to make India a team capable of winning matches regardless of toss and nature of the surface but the drubbing suggested they are still short of that target.

India lost the toss in both the tests and home captain Kane Williamson unsurprisingly elected to field, unleashing his pace attack on green tracks where the ball swung at a lively place.

Kohli, however, said that was not an excuse for India's performance.

Losses hurt but we learn from them, says Ravi Shastri

By Greg Stutchbury

WELLINGTON - The sour taste of a 10-wicket loss to New Zealand in the first test had been a good lesson for India's cricketers and there was no doubt they would be far more competitive in the second in Christchurch, coach Ravi Shastri said.

The visitors had won their previous seven International Cricket Council World Test Championship matches to lead the standings on 360 points before they were hammered at the Basin Reserve.

Shastri, however, said his side had learned a lot about how New Zealand would bowl to them at Hagley Oval when the game

starts last Saturday and the sting of defeat was on their minds as they look to level the two-match series.

"We were outplayed in the first test but I always believe that a shake-up like that is good. It opens your mindset," Shastri told reporters in Christchurch last Friday.

"If you have not tasted defeat you can have a closed or fixed mindset. Here, when you see what has happened, it is good, it gives you opportunities to learn.

"You know what New Zealand are doing and what to expect. It's a good lesson and the boys are up for the challenge."

Shastri did not confirm the play-

ing XI last Friday but hinted there was some debate over whether Ravindra Jadeja or Ravichandran Ashwin would occupy the spinning all-rounder spot in the side.

A final decision would be made just before the toss last Saturday, although Shastri said that Ashwin's batting had slipped.

The off-spinner, who has four test centuries along with his 365 wickets, has not passed 50 since Aug. 2017 and has scored a total of 126 runs in his last 10 matches.

"He is a world class bowler," Shastri said. "There is absolutely no doubt about it. But ... he will be disappointed in the way he has batted and he will need to improve that."

Indian duo urge BWF to extend Olympic qualification period amid virus threat

Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Parupalli Kashyap have urged badminton's governing body to reconsider its decision not to extend the qualification period for the Tokyo Games despite several events being cancelled or postponed due to the coronavirus.

The German Open, an Olympic qualifier which was to be held in Muelheim an der Ruhr from March 3-8, has been cancelled.

An Olympic qualifier in Viet-

nam was postponed from March to June. The China Masters and Polish Open have also been postponed and dropped from the Olympics qualifying process.

"It will be unfair for most of the players who are really close to qualifying for Olympics 2020," former world number one Nehwal, who became the first Indian shuttler to win an Olympic medal with a bronze at the 2012 London Games, said on Twitter.

The Badminton World Federation (BWF) said last Friday it will not extend the qualification period to add more ranking events in the leadup to the Olympics as it will affect different players "either positively or negatively".

Nehwal's husband Kashyap also expressed his concerns about the reduced number of qualifying tournaments, leaving athletes with fewer opportunities to collect ranking points.

Too much exercise can be harmful, but moderation benefits most

By Linda Carroll

Exercise, like most things in life, is good in moderation for most people, but extremes can hurt the heart, experts caution in a scientific statement from the American Heart Association.

While promoting regular exercise, the statement published in Circulation warns against extreme endurance sports and against couch potatoes trying to get fit too quickly.

“In many respects exercise is like medicine,” said lead author Barry A. Franklin, director of preventive cardiology and cardiac rehabilitation at Beaumont Health in Royal Oak, Michigan. “Like medicines,

exercise comes with indications and contraindications. And overdosing and under-dosing are both possible.”

For most Americans, the issue is under-dosing, Franklin said.

But there are also issues with overdosing on exercise. Studies in ultra-endurance athletes show extreme exercise can result in scarring of heart muscle, irregular heart rhythms and build-up of coronary calcium, which can contribute to atherosclerosis, Franklin said.

“More and more people are engaging in extreme exercise because they think if some exercise is good, more is better,” he said. “That is not necessarily the case.”

It’s not just endurance athletes who risk damaging their hearts.

“The biggest risk is with people who have been inactive for years, such as the person who may have been a track athlete 40 years earlier and wants to start up again, running around the block,” Franklin said. “A major take home message is that anybody middle aged or older should start with a walking program and should not start with running. But most can start a walking program without a stress test.”

Start slowly, in the range of 2 to 3 miles per hour, Franklin said. “Then you can move up to 3.5 to 4 mph and if you’re on a treadmill you can increase the grade, provided you experience



Exercise, like most things in life, is good in moderation for most people, but extremes can hurt the heart, experts caution in a scientific statement from the American Heart Association.

no symptoms,” he said. “But, if you develop pain or discomfort anywhere from the belly on up, it could be (a sign of angina) related to a blockage of one or more arteries.”

People starting to exercise should consult their doctors if they experience left arm, neck or jaw pain, an unusual, extreme shortness of breath, dizziness, or heart palpitations. “These all signify that something is wrong,” Franklin said, adding that most people who suffer a heart attack or cardiac arrest had symptoms in the preceding weeks and ignored them.

After reviewing more than

300 studies, Franklin’s team concluded that physically active people, such as regular walkers, had a 50% lower risk of heart attack and cardiac arrest. On the other hand, they found, while the risk of heart attack and cardiac arrest was low overall among participants in marathons and triathlons, it rises over time.

The important message is that regular exercise, that is, 30 minutes a day five days a week, is beneficial, said Dr. Annapoorna Kini, director of the cardiac catheterization lab at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City, who wasn’t involved in the scientific statement.

Heart failure risk with liver disease may be explained by obesity

By Lisa Rapaport

The excess weight that causes fatty liver disease also raises a person’s risk for heart failure, a recent study suggests.

While non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) has long been linked to heart failure, the current study followed fatty

liver patients over five years and found obesity may be the real culprit.

“It’s critical to both your liver health and your heart health to maintain a healthy weight,” said study coauthor Dr. Lisa VanWagner of Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

Most people have a little bit of fat in their liver, but fatty liver disease can be diagnosed when more than 5% of the liver is made up of fat. If the condition isn’t linked to liver damage from heavy drinking, it’s known as NAFLD and is most often associated with obesity and certain eating habits.

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How long can coronavirus survive on surfaces?



REUTERS/DAVID RYDER

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence, who heads the government's coronavirus task force, greets a woman at the Washington State Emergency Operations Center during a tour with Governor Jay Inslee at Camp Murray near Tacoma, Washington on March 5, 2020.

By Deena Beasley

As a new coronavirus spreads quickly around the world, U.S. health officials say they are "aggressively" assessing how long it can survive on surfaces to better understand the risk of transmission.

Based on what is known about similar coronaviruses, disease experts say the new outbreak of the virus, named COVID-19,

is mainly spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Contact with fecal matter from an infected person may also transmit the virus.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it may be possible for a person to become infected by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or eyes.

An analysis of 22 earlier stud-

ies of similar coronaviruses, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) published online this month in the *Journal of Hospital Infection*, concluded that human coronaviruses can remain infectious on inanimate surfaces for up to nine days at room temperature. However, they can quickly be rendered inactive using common disinfectants, and may also dissipate at higher temperatures, the authors wrote. It is not yet clear, however, whether the new coronavirus behaves in a similar way.

"On copper and steel it's pretty typical, it's pretty much about two hours," CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield told U.S. lawmakers on Thursday, referring to how long the new coronavirus may be active on those types of materials. "But I will say on other surfaces - cardboard or plastic - it's longer, and so we are looking at this."

The agency said there is likely a very low risk of spread from products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures.

A CDC spokeswoman, in an emailed statement, said the agency is still looking into how

contagious the virus can be when deposited on more common, everyday surfaces.

The Food and Drug Administration this week said it has no evidence that COVID-19 has been transmitted from imported goods, but the situation remains "dynamic" and the agency said it will assess and update guidance as needed.

"The important big take-home message is that this is probably a small proportion of the transmis-

sion of respiratory viruses," said Dr. Timothy Brewer, professor of epidemiology and medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles. "Out in the community, these viruses are probably not surviving for a long time on surfaces."

Brewer explained that such viruses tend to survive the longest in low-temperature, low-humidity environments, "that is why you see lots of respiratory viruses during the winter."

NBA to players: Limit contact with fans amid coronavirus

The NBA has advised players to limit contact with fans as a precaution as cases of the coronavirus are appearing in the United States. The league is recommending players "utilize fist-bumps over high-fives with fans," ESPN reported. The league also advised players not to touch anything passed by fans for autographs, such as pens and jerseys, the report added.

"The health and safety of our employees, teams, players and fans is paramount," the NBA said in a statement issued Monday. "We are coordinating with our teams and consulting with the CDC and infectious disease specialists on the coronavirus and continue to monitor the situation closely."

Guard CJ McCollum of the Portland Trail Blazers already tweeted that he was suspending signing autographs. He made his announcement last Saturday after a coronavirus case had been confirmed in Oregon.

Globally, more than 90,000 have been infected, CNN reported Tuesday.

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Hospital births far safer for U.S. newborns than home births

By Tamara Mathias

Newborns in the U.S. are much more likely to survive a hospital delivery than a planned home birth, regardless of how qualified the attending midwife may be, a new study suggests.

Researchers looked at mortality rates within 30 days of birth for newborns who were delivered by midwives, either at home or in a hospital, between 2010 and 2017.

Dr. Amos Grunebaum and colleagues found that on average, nearly 14 newborns per 10,000 live births died following

planned home births - more than four times the rate for babies born in hospitals.

"We were concerned about the rise in U.S. home births and the concomitant increase in neonatal deaths," said Grunebaum, an obstetrician and gynecologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. "We wanted to ensure that women who were interested in a planned home birth receive the best and most updated information so they can make informed decisions."

The discrepancy between survival rates for home and hospital births in the U.S. is not seen in

developed nations like England, the Netherlands, Germany and Australia.

These countries tend to screen expectant mothers for risk factors like age or obesity that might endanger their newborns if they opt for a home birth, the authors note in the American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology.

"In other high-income countries with established midwifery systems, home birth midwives are well integrated into the health care system. This is not true of the United States," study authors write.

In an earlier study, Grune-



Newborns in the U.S. are much more likely to survive a hospital delivery than a planned home birth, regardless of how qualified the attending midwife may be, a new study suggests.

baum's team found most U.S. planned home births involve women with risk factors like older age, prior cesarean delivery or obesity that would disqualify them for home birth in countries that do have such guidelines.

Most midwives who oversee home births in the U.S. work without a license that meets standards set by the International Confederation of Midwives' Global Standards for Midwifery Education.

Hospital-certified nurse-midwives, however, hold university degrees in midwifery and receive rigorous training to diagnose and manage complications.

Still, the current study found that the type of midwife was not the determining factor for infant mortality rates. Rather the location - home versus hospital - was key.

Compared to the 3.27/10,000 mortality rate when certified nurse-midwives attended hospital deliveries, mortality when certified nurse-midwives attended planned home births was almost three-fold higher, at 9.28 per 10,000. With non-certified midwives, mortality for babies born in planned home births was 12.44/10,000.

"It takes a village to safely deliver a baby," Grunebaum said. "The home is not a safe place

... complications can happen suddenly to every delivery."

Grunebaum says the lack of attendants at a home birth make it harder to monitor labor adequately and care for a newborn at risk of complications like asphyxia, or lack of breathing. Women are also deprived of the option of an epidural or a cesarean delivery.

Emergencies also mean that nearly half of women who have planned home births end up having to transfer to a hospital, which further endangers their newborns, the authors note.

Dr. Aaron Caughey, associate dean for Women's Health Research and Policy at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, who wasn't involved in the study, said its results are "very consistent with what we know."

"The United States is not guided in a single way the way some other nations are," Caughey said, adding that the strongest factor determining delivery location is the mother's preference.

"However, economic factors can occasionally play a role," he said.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends hospitals and accredited birth centers as the safest settings for birth.

Mercury exposure tied to skin cancer risk

By Lisa Rapaport

Americans who eat a lot of mercury-containing seafood might be at increased risk for skin cancer, suggests a study based on national surveys.

Data from 29,000 adults showed those with the highest mercury levels in their blood were 79% more likely to report having had a non-melanoma skin cancer than those with the lowest levels.

"People in the U.S. are generally exposed to mercury by consuming fish contaminated with methylmercury," said study coauthor Eunyoung Cho of the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

"Scientists haven't really thought about mercury causing skin cancer," Cho said by email.

The current study doesn't prove that mercury does cause skin cancer, but the research team hopes the findings will stimulate more research, Cho said.

Methylmercury is a form of the pollutant that was commonly released from factories

into waterways before environmental regulations in many parts of the world cracked down on the practice due to health concerns.

Mercury levels vary in different types of seafood, leading regulators to advise against eating lots of swordfish, for example, but not to limit salmon.

Pregnant women are advised to eat much less seafood due to potential developmental risks to babies posed by mercury exposure.

Skin cancer, however, isn't among the many risks of mercury-contaminated fish that are widely recognized, the study team notes in the British Journal of Dermatology.

Researchers analyzed data from annual health surveys of nationally-representative samples of adults between 2003 and 2016 that included blood tests. In the current study, survey participants were 49 years old, on average, and 468 of them, or about 1.6%, reported ever having had a non-melanoma skin cancer.

Risks were higher for non-Hispanic white participants, but

were similar for men and women.

One limitation of the study is that researchers lacked data from medical records to verify skin cancer diagnoses. They also lacked data on many other skin cancer risks, including hair color and skin pigmentation, number of moles and any history of indoor tanning or severe sunburns.

"Although this study reveals an association between excess mercury exposure and non-melanoma skin cancer, causation is not well understood," said Dr. Aaron Farberg of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.

While people should be aware of the potential skin cancer risk associated with mercury in fish, it's not the main cause of these malignancies and the exact skin cancer risk associated with mercury exposure isn't yet clear, Farberg, who wasn't involved in the study, said by email.

"It is well established that exposure to solar UV is the greatest risk factor for skin cancer," Farberg said.

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WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

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Aries (March 21 to April 20)

It will be better to weigh your choices before making any decision in this phase. Committing without thinking could lead to a situation where your resources get stuck and do not yield any returns.

Taurus (April 21 to May 21)

The coming week brings better mental peace as well as monetary gains. Your alertness and attention to detail may win you respect and beget you monetary gains as well. There may be a lot of soul searching that goes on and it takes you to unusual places.

Gemini (May 22 to June 21)

There will be more clarity in work-related matters. You are likely to be concerned about money and how to handle some of the big expenditures looming ahead. You are more loving and giving in your personal relationships.

Cancer (June 22 to July 22)

It is a phase that is quite emotional for individuals born under this sign of the zodiac. You could be introspective about your life and relationships, and this may lead you to develop strong feelings.

Leo (July 23 to August 22)

The coming week is indicative of good times that lie ahead, especially as gratification of senses in all possible ways. Self-esteem and confidence will be enhanced greatly. There is support from superiors and you are amazed at how productive mutually aligned energies can be.

Virgo (August 23 to September 23)

The meticulous Virgo trait is well known and has been very visible for the past few weeks. You continue to push hard at the workplace, trying to consolidate your position. You could also be opting for extra work in order to push away an emotional matter that you could find difficult to process.

Libra (September 24 to October 23)

There is much good happening this week, but there is also a cautionary note alongside. You need to watch out against being bullied or manipulated into agreeing to an unethical act/venture. You may have a tough time saying no. So think twice otherwise you may be saying yes to a long term headache.

Scorpio (October 24 to November 22)

There is some transformation that you experience this week. You are likely to put your personal relationships before other considerations during this time. You realise the importance of support and love from people who matter.

Sagittarius (November 23 to December 21)

There are some gains apparent this week. Your efforts at work will be acknowledged and you may be promised a good reward in the near future. Though there is no instant gratification, there is definitely a boost in morale.

Capricorn (December 22 to January 20)

There is a lot of intensity in life at this moment. You may have to work under pressure with strict deadlines. There are new opportunities, travel, indulgent shopping, bit of flirty romance and excitement thrown in too.

Aquarius (January 21 to February 19)

There could be new plans kicked into motion in your professional life this week. You may be meeting people for establishing partnerships or for funding a new venture. In all possibility, the outcome looks good but don't allow personal risks to go high.

Pisces (February 20 to March 20)

You may be more busy than usual as you see some avenues opening for you. There will be opportunities, but the challenge lies in being able to overcome your prejudice or think long-term success. Enthusiasm will be on an all-time high.

Toronto Raptors superfan Nav Bhatia to be in new gallery at the Basketball Hall of Fame

CHICAGO - Nav Bhatia hasn't missed a Toronto Raptors game ever since he started attending games in 1995.

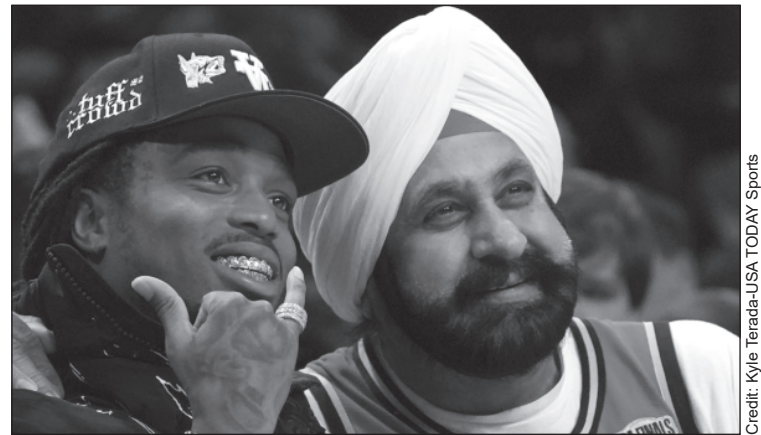
Now, the Raptors superfan will be forever memorialized in the new gallery at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, according to an announcement by Hall of Fame chairman last month during the start of NBA All-Star Weekend in Chicago.

"Can't say this is a dream come true because this isn't something you dream about as a fan," Bhatia tweeted. "To be honoured into the @Hoophall as the first honouree into the Superfan Gallery. What an incredible day. Don't wake me up please. Thank you to the Hall and the @Raptors organization."

"For all you've done for the sport in Canada there is no one more deserving," the Raptors organization tweeted from their official Twitter.

The Hall of Fame will be opening the superfan gallery later this year, said a spokesperson for the hall as reported by CNN.

Bhatia gained international



Recording artist Quavo poses for a photo with Toronto Raptors fan Nav Bhatia during the NBA Rising Stars basketball game at United Center.

attention last year during the NBA Finals when it was found he hadn't missed a game since 1995, meaning he's gone to every game in person. The Raptors won the title last year against the Golden State Warriors, making them the first team outside the United States to win the NBA Finals.

But Bhatia's story begins in 1984 when he sought refuge in Canada after anti-Sikh riots in India, according to CNN's Great Big Story. After becoming a car salesman and working his way up to

owning a dealership, Bhatia found another refuge: basketball.

Since becoming the Raptors' superfan, he's hung out with the likes of Drake, been thanked personally by Kobe Bryant and has become something of a celebrity, himself, taking photos with fans occasionally at the Scotiabank Arena.

Bhatia has started his own non-profit organization that raises money to build basketball courts and camps for kids in Canada and across the globe, according to Great Big Story.

2012 Wisconsin Sikh temple shooting survivor dies of wounds

MADISON - A man who survived being shot in the face during a white supremacist's deadly 2012 attack on a Sikh temple near Milwaukee has died of complications stemming from his injuries.

Baba Punjab Singh died on Monday, bringing the victim death toll in the temple attack to seven and making it the worst mass shooting in Wisconsin since 2005.

White supremacist Wade Michael Page burst into the Sikh temple on Aug. 5, 2012, and shot 10 people, killing six and wounding four, including Singh. Page killed himself during a firefight with a police officer in the temple parking lot.

"I think, collectively as a community, (Singh's death) reopens a lot of wounds that might have scabbed over," said Pardeep Kaleka, whose father, temple president Satwant Singh Kaleka, was killed in the shooting. "But we express condolences to his family and just hope that they over the next couple weeks can have some closure."

Page shot Singh through the cheek, causing a brain injury that left Singh completely paralyzed and struggling with breathing problems, according to the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's office. He could

communicate only by blinking once for "no" and twice for "yes," Kaleka said.

Singh had been living in a Milwaukee nursing home since the shooting. His injuries left him susceptible to urinary tract infections and pneumonia, and he was in and out of hospitals dealing with complications, the medical examiner's report said.

He was admitted to a hospital in West Allis, another Milwaukee suburb, on Sunday with suspected pneumonia and a urinary tract infection, according to the report. He died Monday afternoon. The medical examiner's office listed the cause of death as "complications of gunshot wound of the head" and the manner of death as homicide.

Singh's son, Raghuvinder Singh, said in a statement that his father spent his life as a Sikh religious teacher who traveled the country delivering kathas, which are speeches about the lessons and history of the Sikh faith. He said each time he visited his father in the hospital, he would ask him if he was living in chardi kala, which is the Sikh spirit of eternal optimism. Each time, he said, his father would blink twice for "yes."

"My father's injuries and his passing, along with the other lives that were lost that day,

are a reminder of the toxic hate that still plagues our country," Raghuvinder Singh said. "But I want (him) to be remembered by the values inspired by Sikhi, that he exemplified every day — including love, equality, humility, eternal optimism and service to others. ... Our hope is that his life serves as a reminder of an essential truth of our faith: that the number of our breaths is written by God, but it falls to us to do our best in how we use them."

The temple attack is now the deadliest mass shooting in Wisconsin since 2005, when Terry Michael Ratzmann killed seven fellow congregants at the Living Church of God in Brookfield, another Milwaukee suburb. He killed himself after the shooting. Prosecutors never determined an exact motive, although they said he blamed the church for his depression and financial problems.

Anthony Ferrill, 51, gunned down five co-workers at Milwaukee's Molson Coors brewery complex on Feb. 26 before turning his gun on himself. His motive remains unknown.

"It's been a rough week for everybody," Kaleka said. "The Sikh community is all right. We're hanging in there. We're going to be brave for the world."



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