

UK wants India to take on more important role within Commonwealth: Diplomat

LONDON, APRIL 15 /-/- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the UK for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) this week will mark India's enhanced engagement with the multilateral organisation, including increased financial and other contributions, according to senior Indian diplomat here.

An Indian Prime Minister will attend the summit, which is held every two years, after a hiatus of nearly a decade, having skipped CHOGMs in Perth, Colombo and Malta since 2009. The Indian government has said that Prime Minister Modi's attendance at the summit, from April 18 to 20, symbolises the country's wider efforts to step up its role across global forums. "India's engagement with multilateral bodies has been increasing consistently and the Commonwealth is no different.

There is a clear desire to play a greater leadership role in the international arena and the UK wants India, as the largest country in the Commonwealth, to take on a more important role within the organisation," said Dinesh Patnaik, the Deputy High Commissioner of India to the UK. This is the first time since 2009 that the Indian Prime Minister will attend the summit, which is held every two years, after a hiatus of nearly a decade, having skipped CHOGMs in Perth, Colombo and Malta since 2009. The Indian government has said that Prime Minister Modi's attendance at the summit, from April 18 to 20, symbolises the country's wider efforts to step up its role across global forums. "India's engagement with multilateral bodies has been increasing consistently and the Commonwealth is no different.



Dinesh Patnaik

influenced by a very personal letter addressed to him by Queen Elizabeth II, the Head of the Commonwealth. As Britain takes over the two-year Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth at the heads of government deliberations, it will mark the last such summit to be hosted by the Queen. With the 91-year-old monarch having ruled out long-haul travel, she is unlikely to travel to any future CHOGMs to be hosted by other member states. This has also triggered widespread speculation over whether her son and heir, Prince Charles, would be anointed as the next Head of the

organisation. As the position is not hereditary, a decision on succession will be taken collectively by the 53 heads of government of the Commonwealth. This subject is expected to be the central feature of deliberations when the leaders get together for the CHOGM leaders' retreat on April 20 at the grand Waterloo Chamber of Windsor Castle.

The retreat is described as the high-point of the summit, when the leaders get together in an informal setting without any pre-set agenda or being accompanied by their usual coterie of civil servants and advisers. "At the retreat unique to the Commonwealth heads meet privately to discuss collaboration on global and Commonwealth priorities. They will also consider reform and renewal of the Commonwealth," a Commonwealth statement said.

Israeli PM voices 'total support' for strikes against Syria

JERUSALEM, APRIL 15 /-/- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday voiced his "total support" for US-led air strikes against Syria over its alleged use of chemical weapons.

A year ago I gave Israel's total support for (US) President Donald Trump's decision to mobilise against the use of chemical weapons," he said, referring to American strikes against the Syrian regime in April 2017 after a sarin gas attack on a rebel-held town. "Israel's support remains unchanged," Netanyahu said. "This morning the Prime Minister's office announced that their commitment is not limited to declarations of principles," he added in a statement.

The three countries had carried out a wave of pre-



Benjamin Netanyahu

dawn missile strikes, hitting targets near Damascus and in Homs province, Western officials said. Netanyahu warned Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that his "ceaseless efforts to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction... put Syria in danger." Israeli public radio reported that Western allies had given Israel, which remains technically at war with neighbouring Syria, advance notice of the air strikes. (AFP)

Storm blasts central US with snow, ice and wind, kills 3

MINNEAPOLIS, APRIL 15 /-/- A storm system stretching from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes has buffeted the central US with heavy snow, wind, rain and hail, forcing flight cancellations, creating treacherous road conditions and killing at least three people, including a sleeping two-year-old Louisiana girl.

In the Upper Midwest, the early spring storm brought snow to a region pinning for sunshine and warmth. Around 400 flights were canceled at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, which grounded all flights starting this afternoon as heavy snow made it difficult to keep runways clear and planes and pilots in danger. Blizzards forced the airport in South Dakota's biggest city, Sioux Falls, to remain closed for a second straight day.

The Minnesota Twins home game against the Chicago White Sox was snowed out Saturday, marking the first back-to-back postponements of baseball games in the stadium's nine seasons. Sunday's game was also called off because of the storm, which by Saturday night had buried Minneapolis under more than 13 inches of snow (33 centimetres).

The Yankees and Tigers were rained out Saturday in Detroit. The National Weather Service predicted that a large swath of southern Minnesota, including Minneapolis and St. Paul, could get up to 20 inches of snow (51 centimetres) by the time the storm blows through on Sunday.

Kim Jong Un meets high-ranking Chinese diplomat in Pyongyang

PYONGYANG, APRIL 15 /-/- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has met with a high-ranking Chinese diplomat in Pyongyang, amid a flurry of diplomacy following Kim's recent surprise visit to Beijing.

Song Tao, who heads the ruling Communist Party's International Department, led an art troupe to Pyongyang to attend an arts festival, according to China's foreign ministry. Kim made an unannounced trip to Beijing last month ahead of potentially breakthrough meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and U.S. President Donald Trump. Kim's trip, during which he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping, was considered an attempt to repair traditionally warm ties with China that have deteriorated over North Korea's development of ballistic missile and nuclear weapons technology and China's enforcement of United Nations economic sanctions.

Kim said during his meeting with Song on Saturday that he and Xi "reached important consensus" in Beijing, according to China's official Xinhua News Agency. Song agreed that the two leaders had reached consensus, and said China is willing to work with North Korea to safeguard peace on the Korean Peninsula. Xinhua reported. The North Korean leader is scheduled to meet with Moon on April 27 in the Demilitarized Zone that divides the Koreas. He is expected to meet with Trump in May or June. (AP)



A man wearing American flag costume and Trump's campaign hat gestures near demonstrators protesting after the missile strikes on Syria, outside the White House in Washington, U.S.—REUTERS

Modi to pay tribute to 12th century Lingayat philosopher in London

LONDON, APRIL 15 /-/- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be paying tribute to 12th century Lingayat philosopher and social reformer Basaveshwara at his statue on the banks of the river Thames during his visit to the UK this week.

The event will be organised by The Basaveshwara Foundation, a non-profit organisation based in the UK that has installed the statue of Basaveshwara on the bank of river Thames. Former Mayor of London borough of Lambeth Neeraj Patil & Chairman of The Basaveshwara foundation have received the official confirmation from the Prime Minister's office about Modi's visit to the statue on Wednesday. Patil told news agency PTI during Patil's tenure as the Mayor of The London Borough of Lambeth, a prime piece of land was secured along the bank of Thames for installing the statue of the Indian philosopher. The project was approved by the planning department of The London borough of Lambeth and subsequently by the British Cabinet minister for culture media and sports as per the Public Statues Act, 1854.

UK historian wants 1857 revolt soldier's skull buried in India

LONDON, APRIL 15 /-/- A British historian wants the skull of an Indian soldier who was among those executed after the revolt of 1857 against the East India Company to be repatriated to India and buried where he participated in his last battle.

Dr Kim Wagner, Senior Lecturer in British Imperial History at Queen Mary College in London, believes the time is right for Havildar Alum Bheg a principle leader of the revolt, which the British characterise as a sepoy mutiny to be buried

in his country of birth. His skull had been brought to England by Captain A R Costello, who was on duty when Alum Bheg was executed after the revolt in India.

It was discovered years later in a pub in the eastern English coastal town of Walmer in Kent. "His regiment was originally raised at Kampur, but my suggestion would be for his skull to be buried near the Ravi River, at the border between India and Pakistan, where we know Alum Bheg participated in the Battle of Trimmu Ghat,"

said Wagner, the author of 'The Skull of Alum Bheg: The Life and Death of a Rebel of 1857', which was released recently. "I don't perceive of the repatriation of Alum Bheg's skull as a political PR exercise. My focus is simply on returning the remains of Alum Bheg to what was once his homeland so that he can be put to rest 160 years after he died," he added.

The historian has triggered "tentative discussions" on the issue with diplomats in India and the UK, but acknowledges that these things take time and

does not expect a resolution in the immediate future. His journey to researching and writing the book on the 1857 revolt around the story of Bheg's tragic killing began in 2014 when he was contacted by the family who had come into possession of the skull.

In 1963, the new owner of The Lord Clyde pub discovered the skull stowed away in a small storeroom. Inserted in the eye-socket was a handwritten note that briefly outlined the skull's history.

The note revealed that the skull belonged to an Indian soldier in the service of the East India Company named Alum Bheg, who was accused of murdering an entire family of Scottish missionaries. He was captured and executed by being blown from a cannon. Capt. Costello, an Irish officer serving with the East India Company, brought it back to England as a kind of war trophy but how it eventually ended up in the pub in the coastal town of Deal remains unknown. "My research revealed several surprising

discoveries, not least of which was that Alum Bheg was most likely innocent of the crimes for which he was executed," said Wagner.

"What happened to the skull of one sepoy offers a disturbing narrative of life and death in British India that speaks directly to contemporary debates about the legacies of the Empire as well as the darker side of conflict, past and present," he said.

In a post-Brexit era of "swelling imperial nostalgia and revisionism", the academic feels that given Bheg's innocence, he remains deserve a final resting place in his homeland. According to the note found inside his skull, Bheg was about 32 years of age, 5 feet 7 and a half inches high, belonged to the 46th Bengal Infantry Regiment and was "by no means an ill looking native".

The British High Commission in New Delhi, the Royal Asiatic Society and some non-governmental organisations in India are now reportedly in talks to find a way of returning the "native" to his homeland.

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WordWheel

No.262

Insert the missing letter to complete an eight-letter word reading clockwise or anticlockwise. Solution No.261: EERINESS

5x5

Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

No.162

C	A	R	A	T
A	B	A	S	H
M	O	T	T	O
P	R	I	E	S
S	T	O	R	E

← OUR SOLUTION TO PUZZLE 161 (Other combinations may be possible.)

B	E	O		
B	R	O		
L	O			
S	I	E		
S	E			

Reference: C.O.D. 1995

WORD-BUILDER

162

O	H	R		
E	S			

How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or ones beginning with a capital are allowed. There's at least one five-letter word.

TODAY'S GOALS:
Good - 9 Excellent - 13 Amazing - 19

SOLUTION 161: amp, apt, arm, art, map, mar, mart, mat, par, part, pat, pram, prat, ram, ramp, rap, rat, ramp, tap, tar, tram, tramp, trap

Reference: C.O.D. 1995