

CURRENT AFFAIRS

News You May Have Missed by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

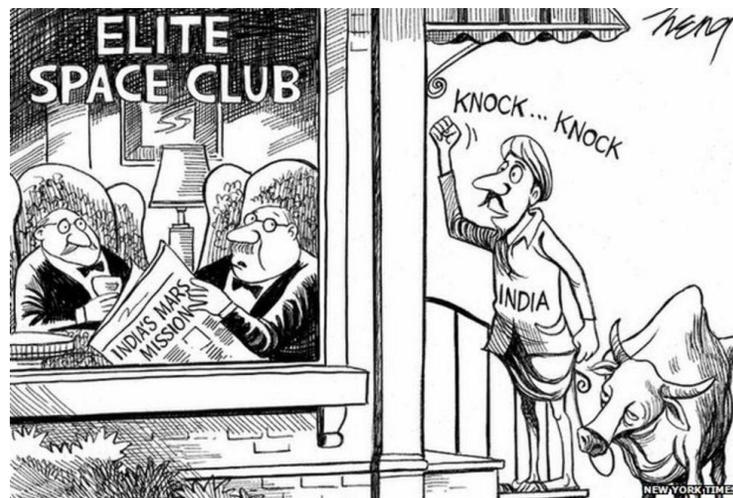
Traditionally, the U.S. TV news channels do not cover any good news about India, nevertheless, it is very important to be aware of what's happening in the world's largest democracy.

The first and foremost story is India launching the world's largest vaccination campaign. India kicked off its nationwide vaccination drive this month (January 2021) and it plans to immunize 300 million people this winter. India, UK and USA are the first countries to develop COVID vaccines indigenously. India's Bharat Biotech (a pharmaceutical company) developed and produced Covaxin, a treatment for COVID-19 in January 2021. Other than developing and producing Covaxin, India is also the hub for manufacturing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine developed in the UK and distributed in India as Covishield. The Serum Institute of India (manufacturer of Covishield) plans to manufacture and distribute at least 1 billion Covishield doses worldwide in the near future.

What makes India a global leader is that besides vaccinating its own people, it is giving away millions of vaccines to its

neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. As I am writing this article, India has begun shipping Covid-19 vaccines to Brazil, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa. Here are a few excerpts on this topic:

"Since Wednesday, the Indian government has sent free doses to Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives — more than 3.2 million in total. Donations to Mauritius, Myanmar, and Seychelles are set to follow. Sri Lanka and Afghanistan are next on the list." (Washington Post).



"India is a vaccine powerhouse: it makes 60% of the world's vaccines and is home to half a dozen major manufacturers." (BBC).

On another topic, India took a major step regarding clean energy. This too was completely ignored by U.S. news channels. Mr. Modi, the prime minister of India inaugurated the world's largest solar and wind energy park in the Gujarat state of India near the Indo-Pak border with a capacity of 30,000 megawatts (MW). Just to understand the magnitude of energy production, the top 8 power generating plants in the U.S have a combined capacity of producing 32,000 megawatts of

electricity. India's energy park will be spread over 281 square miles which is equivalent to the areas of metro Philadelphia and Atlanta rolled in one.

Another news that was absent from the U.S. sources relates to bullet train initiatives started by India last week. India announced the construction of an ambitious high-speed train between Mumbai and Ahmedabad connecting with other major industrial towns such as Surat. The train will be similar to the Tokaido-Shinkansen high-speed line in Japan. The proposed railway line will go through sea tunnels and elevated tracks. Five more such corridors are planned to connect other metropolitan areas of India.

Despite all those significant events happening in India, the only news about India was covered by CBS television network last week that reported, "A fire broke out Thursday afternoon in a building still under construction on the 100-acre site in the southwest city of Pune."

This is nothing new. The TV news channels have always ignored India. There are reasons why the Western media only covers violence, poverty and social discontent, and other half-truths about India. The first and foremost reason is hatred towards Hinduism. India is still a majority Hindu country. Hinduism is a non-Abrahamic religion; thus, the Hindus are considered pagans. The Christian missionaries and Muslim fundamentalists want to transform India into a Christian and Muslim majority country.

They want to project India as the land of elephants, naked fakirs, and snake charmers where people are routinely butchered and women raped. Ironically, most of these negative articles are written by Indian journalists who are hired by Western media to give their reporting an authentic look. These western-educated journalists often write negative columns

and reports on behalf of western media. Let me expose some of them here. They are Vinu Goel of The New York Times, Vibhuti Agarwal and Rajesh Roy of The Wall Street Journal, Aatish Taseer of Time (Magazine) and Naga Munchetty of BBC to name a few. They all start with confirmation bias which is starting with false premises and then reaching a conclusion about those premises.

Another reason to portray India in a negative light is jealousy. The West wants to ensure that any ruling government anywhere outside the west looks as weak as possible. Alternatively, they want to prevent the rise of any developing country that can challenge their superiority. During the insurrection on January 6, 2021, in Washington, DC, the U.S. media kept on repeating that the U.S.A was the only country that believed in a peaceful transfer of power. They undermined India there also.

The negativity about India has increased since Mr. Modi's party, BJP assumed power in India. The Modi government and the BJP are staunch nationalists. This is terrifying to the west because they feel that the BJP could easily position itself against western political and economic interests. This is why Reuters, BBC, NYT, WAPO, CNN, etc. routinely attack the ruling government and act as a front for the opposition parties. This is why the once inept nobodies like Arundhati Roy, John Dayal, Kancha Ilaiah, and Farid Zakaria have become celebrities in the western world. This is why Kashmir isn't on the Indian map on western news channels. This is why Hinduism is portrayed as primitive and violent. This is why women are viewed unsafe in India. This is why the "Make in India" scheme is repeatedly undermined.

That's the truth. Let's accept it and move on.