

London Eye bends rules for International Yoga Day

A POPULAR London tourist attraction was taken over by yoga practitioners last Sunday (18), ahead of International Day of Yoga on Wednesday (21).

India Tourism's British division and representatives of UK-based

yoga organisations united in a "wheel of yoga" peace class as they staged a takeover of the 32-capsule Coca-Cola London Eye.

Yogis, both new to yoga and with decades of practice among them, performed gentle asana and medi-

tative breathing. As Eastern Eye went to press on Tuesday (20), yoga day celebrations were set to be held at London's Trafalgar Square from 3pm-8pm.

In the US, veteran Indian actor Anupam Kher turned on the illumi-

nation at the UN building in Manhattan, in preparation for International Day of Yoga.

"Great honour to illuminate the United Nations building, New York in preparation of International Day of Yoga," Kher tweeted.



Portrait of presidents

SOCIETY SHOWS LINKS WITH ASIA

by AMIT ROY

AN ARTIST who specialises in painting portraits of academics, especially Cambridge dons, has done a new work featuring the present and past presidents of the Royal Asiatic Society.

The society wants more people – especially *Eastern Eye* readers – to know of its existence and make use of its collections, which include Persian, Arabic, Pali, Sanskrit, Malay and Javanese manuscripts.

There is also an important collection of paintings, prints and drawings which have been donated by fellows.

The new painting by Louise Riley-Smith will go on display this month at the headquarters of the society in 14 Stephenson Way, in Fitzrovia in London, roughly midway between the British Museum and the British Library.

The painting draws attention to the unique status of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, to give it its full name, which was founded by the eminent Sanskrit scholar Sir Henry Thomas Colebrooke on March 15, 1823.

It received its Royal Charter from King George IV on August 11, 1824, "for the investigation of subjects connected with and for the encouragement of science, literature and the arts in relation to Asia".

Many distinguished scholars have been members of the society, including Sir Richard Burton (1821-90), the noted explorer and translator of *One Thousand and One Nights* and the *Kama Sutra*; Sir Aurel Stein (1862-1943), the renowned archaeologist of the 'Silk Road'; and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the Bengali poet and the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize.

The society's collections began with Indian art. Over the centuries, members have donated paintings, prints, manuscripts, books and five thousand early black and white photographs from China and Japan. Celebrity members include travellers and writers, among them Michael Palin, William Dalrymple, Rory Stewart and Colin Thubron.

During its first century, members were well-born entrepreneurs with a zest for the study of Asia, especially India. Other members included Indian princes and maharajahs as well as kings of England and European states, dukes, prime ministers, British nobility and gentry.

Prince Charles, the society's patron,



EDUCATION: Louise Riley-Smith's painting of (from left) Gordon Johnson, Peter Robb, Alison Ohta, Tony Stockwell and Francis Robinson

said: "There is no doubt that the pace of globalisation is bringing people around the world inexorably closer together. I have taken great interest in the many important ways in which the society has been working to enhance our knowledge and understanding of Asia."

The current president, Gordon Johnson, was deputy vice-chancellor (2002-2010), Cambridge University; former president (1993-2010), Wolfson College; Provost (2000-2010); and Gates Cambridge Trust president (from 2009).

His publications include *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism* (1973), *University Politics: F M Cornford's Cambridge and his advice to the young academic politician* (1994) and *Cultural Atlas of India* (1995).

Riley-Smith's painting features the following: Gordon Johnson, president, (2009-2012 and 2015-); Peter Robb, president (2012-2015); Alison Ohta, director (2003-); Tony Stockwell, president (2000-2003, 2006-2009); and Francis Robinson, president (1997-2000 and 2003-2006).



HISTORY: Madhu Rao Narayan, the Maratha Peshwa, with Nana Fadnavis and attendants, by James Wales, 1792; and (inset) the approach of the emperor of China to his tent in Tartary to receive the British ambassador, by William Alexander, 1799



Free flights for baby born on jet

AN INDIAN woman gave birth to a baby boy on an international commercial flight as it flew at 35,000 feet, the airline said on Monday (19).

The unnamed woman, in her 20s, went into premature labour on last Sunday's (18) Jet Airways flight between Damman in Saudi Arabia and Kochi in the southern Indian state of Kerala.

"The guest delivered a baby boy at 35,000 feet," Jet Airways said in a statement, adding that a paramedic on board and airline staff helped with the delivery.

The Boeing 737 flight, which had 162 passengers on board, was diverted to Mumbai where the woman and her newborn were rushed to a hospital near the airport.

An official at Mumbai's Holy Spirit hospital said on Monday that both the mother and baby boy were doing well.

The woman was believed to have been around 32 weeks pregnant when she gave birth on the plane.

Jet Airways said it was the first time a baby had been born on one of its flights and it had given him free travel for life on the airline.



Drive to save our girls

A GROUP of Indian women dressed in red saris drove from London to Leicester to raise awareness of a campaign to save the girl child.

India's prime minister Narendra Modi started the "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" or "Save our girls, educate our girls" campaign to end the gender-selective abortion of female foetus.

Earlier this month, on June 10, more than 100 women set off from the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in north London for the BAPS Shree Swaminarayan temple Wellingborough.

Bharulata Kamble, who led the rally, said: "Education is critical to end child marriage and giving girls and women the confidence and knowledge to take part in the sustainable development of their communities and countries."

"Every girl has the right to life and should have the right to education."