



PRESS RELEASE

"50 DAYS TO GO! 81st S.S. TILAWA COMMEMORATION, THE FIRST IN THE UK"

by www.tilawa1942.com

LONDON, UK

In just 50 days, the first U.K. commemoration of the ill-fated S.S. Tilawa will be held at the London Greenwich National Maritime Museum. The 81st anniversary of the forgotten tragedy is Thursday November 23rd 2023 at 6pm, by invitation only. For the first time on British soil a full Leopold Muller theater will officially acknowledge the incident, and memorialize the loss of 280 lives.

This is a story mainly of the Indian people, hence described as "*The Indian Titanic story.*" The S.S. Tilawa was a British ship bound for Durban, South Africa. It departed from Bombay India on November 20th 1942. The ship carried over 6,000 tons of cargo, including 60 tons of silver purchased by the Republic of South Africa for the purpose of coinage. There were 732 passengers, 222 crew members, and 4 gunners. The passengers were mainly Indian nationals. The ship was twice torpedoed by the Japanese Imperial Army in the early hours of the morning on November 23rd 1942. Hundreds fought for dear life, in life boats or floating for 2 days in the middle of the Indian Ocean. There were random barracuda and shark attacks to contend with, in addition to the weather and stomach churning sea movement. Thanks to the rescue mission of HMS Birmingham and S.S. Carthage, 678 people were rescued. It is believed this is the only passenger cargo-liner attacked in the Indian Ocean during the Second World War.

In the U.K, there are countless families connected to the tragedy who either had loved ones perish or survive. In South London Mr. Arvindhbai Jani age 83, was 3 years old when his mother the late Mrs. Vasantben Jani, "wrapped him in her sari and jumped into the lifeboat". Mr. Mervyn Macial from South London, in his mid 90's was a teenager when he lost both his parents and 3 young siblings and is looking forward to the event. Mrs. Tejparkash Manget, age 90, is living in Cincinnati Ohio, and hopes to attend the commemoration. She was 9 years old at the time, and lost her 3 brothers and mother.

There are many stories to be told. An informative and memorable program is being prepared for the 81st anniversary. This will be a



special opportunity for many families in the U.K. affected by the incident to come together and share their story.

Last year the Solanki family from Canada and the U.K hosted the first commemoration in history of the forgotten tragedy at the Grand Hotel, South Mumbai, India on its 80th anniversary. Over 100 people attended. The location was fitting since the S.S. Tilawa last left this very port, and the survivors were brought back here on November 27th 1942. His Majesty's British Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Alan Gemmell was chief guest and delivered a speech including a pledge for the commission to place a wreath each year in memory of the S.S. Tilawa incident and lives lost.

Recently the U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's office wrote a letter to the Solanki family. Emile Solanki, great-grandson of the drowned and founder of tilawa1942.com says:

"The tragedy was acknowledged, and our efforts commended. The letter mentioned the Mumbai commemoration and Mr. Gemmells support, as well as the commitment to a Tilawa annual wreath at the High Commission. In response to that letter, I asked Mr. Sunak for his support with access to archives, featuring Tilawa in U.K. maritime museums, etc. I also wrote to the Prime Ministers of India and Japan to provide us similar support, and acknowledge the tragedy. So far there has been no response."

Interestingly, a few days after the U.K. commemoration, starting Monday November 27th 2023, the U.K. Supreme Court will hear an unprecedented Maritime case on the matter of a state immunity claim. In 2017 Argentum Exploration Limited discovered the S.S. Tilawa! They salvaged 60 tonnes of silver bullion, with an estimated value of £32 million. They declared the cargo at the Southampton Receiver of Wreck. The courts of the land have twice ruled in favour of Argentum Exploration Limited against the Republic of South Africa (RSA). Whilst the silver bars are stated to be the property of RSA, the justices previously ruled there was commercial interests demonstrated between the transaction of silver bars in 1942 between the Government of India and South Africa. Therefore RSA would need to pay a salvage fee to Argentum in order for the silver to be released. As matters currently stand, the two parties have not come to a settlement.

Commenting on this latest legal development, Emile states: *"How wonderful it would be to touch items that once sat on the ship with our loved ones! I personally have no interest in the legal conflict in*



itself. As far as I am concerned, access to the ship's information is key to our current helpless circumstance in not knowing the truth of what happened 81 years ago. Essentially there are 2 ways of finding out more to this forgotten tragedy. First is visiting the wreck site which is very expensive and practically difficult, and the other is a government inquiry. We respect the fact that Argentum is focused on the current legal matter with RSA, and we look forward to the time when they will be in a position to reveal their findings of the ship. We can only wonder what their research, videos, and photos reveal. Regardless of Argentums business and commercial interests, we remain objective and appreciative of any efforts made to visit the wreck site. I yearn for the time when more will be shared. Hundreds of families around the world are anxious to see what is left of Tilawa, and learn more of the incident. Argentum is one key, government support is the other. We hope one day the governments of Japan and India can work with Britain to extract any archival or classified documentation. At the core, this is my focus. 2023 continues to be an interesting year."

Tilawa 1942 The Forgotten Tragedy and our website tilawa1942.com is beyond a one time project. It has become a comprehensive resource and mission to increase awareness, memorialize the loss of life, help bring closure to hundreds of families, and continue to seek answers as to why this tragedy took place.

Please visit www.tilawa1942.com for a comprehensive review on S.S. Tilawa. Any remaining survivors, descendants of victim's, or others with information are encouraged to share what they know and email info@tilawa1942.com

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