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Calcutta's poor carry on after loss

CALCUTTA, India (AP) — Bijoy Mallick spent the morning after Mother Teresa's funeral like any other, scraping up rotting food from the streets of his Calcutta slum to feed his family's pigs.

"I travel two hours with this pushcart every day to collect the waste," the teen-ager said Sunday while washing out the cart. Inside was a small oil drum filled with lumpy, mustard-colored muck.

The day after India and the world bid final farewell to the nun who devoted her life to this city's poor, it was business as usual for Calcutta's millions of slum-dwellers. On the city's eastern edge, they picked through garbage heaps for recyclables, hawked chunks of fly-covered pork or earned a few cents hauling rawhide off a truck into a tannery.

The problems of the

Despite Mother Teresa's death, citizens continue work

Tengra neighborhood — overcrowding, open sewers, contaminated drinking water, lack of jobs and education — are the problems of Calcutta, and illustrate how deep-rooted and persistent the poverty is that Mother Teresa spent her days fighting.

"Things haven't really changed here," said Vikram Jairath, who owns a tannery in Tengra where workers make about \$2 in an eight-hour shift. "Things have gone from bad to worse."

Calcutta presents challenges that rival any of the world's impoverished cities. Up to 40 percent of the area's 13 million residents live in slums. With no social safety net, they scrape out a living any way they can.

History, geography and politics conspired to

transform Calcutta from an industrial center to a byword for deprivation.

The British built Calcutta 300 years ago as the capital of their empire in India. The Hooghly River on one side and the wetlands on the other meant the city was easily defended — and easily overcrowded.

The partition of Britain's colony into Hindu India and officially Muslim Pakistan in 1947 strangled Calcutta's economy by depriving it of jute-growing areas taken by nearby East Pakistan. Hindu refugees also flooded the city.

Already stretched to the limit, hordes of the hungry and desperate fleeing the 1971 Bangladeshi war arrived in Calcutta. The flight of capital following the communist takeover of

West Bengal's state government in the 1970s sapped what was left of the city's economy.

The Marxist government has tried in the few years to streamline the city's cumbersome bureaucracy and eschewed communist rhetoric in hopes of attracting investors and rebuilding the city's infrastructure.

The city is attracting more business, improving solid waste management and water quality, and updating the poor public health, said Arun Barman, commissioner of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation.

"The urban decay has been arrested," Barman declared. "The world is changing, so Calcutta is also changing. You cannot live in a slum, can you?"

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Diamond moved to new display

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Hope Diamond, the world's most famous gemstone, was moved to a new display case at the Smithsonian Institution on Sunday.

"Isn't it great? Isn't it great?" thused curator Jeffrey Post, who in charge of the Smithsonian Institution's world-famous gem collection. "I think it's the first time it's been displayed to look as good as it can look."

"They're going to really go nuts here," added Robert Sullivan, an expert in public reaction when the Smithsonian opens its new display of gems and minerals on Sept. 22. Post and Sullivan removed the diamond from its wall safe on Sunday morning, carefully placing it in a black security case, took it to a back room for cleaning, then placed it in the new display.

Displayed for decades in a safe with one side open, the white Hope Diamond, about the size of a walnut, will be housed in a glass cylinder, "almost a shirt size," says Sullivan, the museum's associate director for public programs. Its setting is surrounded by white diamonds and suspended from a platinum chain bearing additional diamonds.

It rotates beneath special lighting designed to show off the diamond's facets and to peer deep into the heart of the carat diamond Hope itself. The display is called the Harry Winston Gallery, named after the New York jeweler who donated it to the Smithsonian.

Asked the value of the stone, Sullivan said the institution has received estimates made but declined to make them public. Essentially, he said, it is priceless.

This gallery brings visitors into a renovated hall of gems and minerals that touches on everything from mining to plate tectonics to the moon and closes with stardust — a vial of diamond powder formed by a dying star and brought to Earth aboard a meteorite.

But it's the lure of the Hope Diamond that draws thousands of visitors a year to the institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. The diamond originated in India, where it was acquired by French gem merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. He sold the stone then weighing 112 carats. France's King Louis XIV, who had recruited to 67 carats.

Cut to its current size, the diamond was sold to King George II of London banker Henry Philip Hope. After 71 years in the Hope family, the diamond was bought by Evelyn Walsh McLean of Virginia in 1911 from Paris jeweler Pierre Cartier.

Winston bought the gem from her estate and, in 1958, presented it to the Smithsonian, mailing it to the museum.

The \$13 million renovation of the gem hall was financed entirely by private donations. Safe manufacturer Diebold contributed the new display case, with 3-inch glass and a mechanism that will cause the gem to drop out of sight at any threat.

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