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1 Indian American Weekly : Since 2006

15 YEARS

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The INDIAN PANORAMA

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Pegasus and farmers issues lead to pandemonium in Indian Parliament: Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha adjourned

Parliamentary panel likely to question officials on Pegasus phone tapping allegations

Agenda of July 28 meeting is 'Citizens' data security and privacy'

India's Parliament building

NEW DELHI (TIP): Parliament remained disrupted on Pegasus snooping row and farmers' issues for the third day on Thursday, July 22, with the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha adjourned twice first till noon and then till 2 pm.

Opposition MPs stormed the Well, flashing placards in front of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who repeatedly asked the members to return to the seats saying the government was willing to discuss anything as per rules.

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"BEST DAY EVER AS JEFF BEZOS ENDS HIS RIDE INTO SPACE ON OWN ROCKET

Billionaire businessman Jeff Bezos and pioneering female aviator Wally Funk emerge from their capsule after their flight aboard Blue Origins New Shepard rocket on the world's first unpiloted suborbital flight near Van Horn, Texas, US, July 20, 2021 - Photo / Reuters

DALLAS (TIP): Jeff Bezos, the world's richest man, went to space and back Tuesday, July 20 morning on an 11-minute, supersonic joy ride aboard the rocket and capsule system developed by his space company, Blue Origin.

Riding alongside the multibillionaire were Bezos' brother, Mark Bezos; Wally Funk, an 82-year-old pilot and one of the "Mercury 13" women who trained to go

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U.S. condemns 'extrajudicial surveillance' of journalists, activists, regime critics

WASHINGTON (TIP): Joe Biden had said that China and Russia were "protecting" and "even accommodating" cyber hackers and their hacking.

The Biden administration has condemned the harassment and 'extrajudicial surveillance' of journalists and others in reaction to reports published by a consortium of news websites that Israeli company NSO Group's spyware, Pegasus, was used for illegal hacking and surveillance of individuals, including in India.

"The United States condemns the harassment or extrajudicial surveillance of journalists, human rights activists, or other perceived regime critics," a White House spokesperson said via email to The Hindu in response to a question on what U.S. President Joe Biden's position on the issue was.

Only on Monday, July 19, U.S. President Joe Biden had said that China and Russia were "protecting" and "even accommodating" cyber hackers and their hacking.

The news reports on Pegasus say that in addition to actually or potentially targeting journalists, leaders of the opposition in India, and others, a database of phone numbers that allegedly belonged to the NSO Group contained the numbers of two U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) officials in New Delhi and employees of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has condemned "the harassment or extrajudicial surveillance of journalists, human rights activists, or other perceived regime critics". File Photo

Tuesday's statement from the White House spokesperson stopped short of naming Israel - where NSO Group is based.

"Just as states have the duty to protect human rights, businesses have a responsibility to respect human rights, including by ensuring that their products or services are not being used by end-users to abuse fundamental freedoms," the spokesperson said. *(Source: The Hindu)*

INDIA'S US ENVOY SANDHU VISITS DALIP SINGH SAUND POST OFFICE IN CALIFORNIA

This is probably the first time that an Indian Ambassador has visited the post office named after Saund, who was elected to the House of Representatives thrice from 1956 to 1962

India's US envoy Sandhu visits Dalip Singh Saund Post Office in California

File photo

WASHINGTON (TIP): India's Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu visited the Dalip Singh Saund Post Office, named after the first Indian-American lawmaker, during his recent visit to California.

This is probably the first time that an Indian Ambassador has visited the post office named after Saund, who was elected to the House of Representatives thrice from 1956 to 1962. The post office was named after him after the then President George Bush signed a bill in

CONTD ON PAGE 40

Mr. Balasubramaniam ElangoChief Executive (US Operations) of Bank of Baroda has been promoted as Chief Group Compliance Officer at the Corporate office in Mumbai.

Bank of Baroda Chief Executive US Operations Mr. Elango heads on promotion to corporate office in Mumbai

I.S. SALUJA

NEW YORK (TIP): Mr. Balasubramaniam Elango, the Chief Executive (US Operations) of Bank of Baroda left here on Thursday, July 22 for Mumbai where he will take up his new assignment as Chief Group Compliance Officer of the Bank of Baroda at the Corporate office.

In a brief conversation with The Indian Panorama, he spoke about the challenges

contd on page 40

Andy Singh

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-: GUEST COMMENT :-

Dealing with denial: On playing down the COVID-19 tragedy

India must not play down the COVID-19 tragedy, as that would hurt public confidence

A touchy topic for the Centre and States has been the counting of the dead from COVID-19. In 2020, as the pandemic ravaged Europe and the U.S., Health Ministry officials would incessantly argue that India had better managed the pandemic because its deaths per million of population were comparatively lower. While factually true, it was always apparent that the argument was specious given the size, demographic difference and India's per capita access to quality health care. But the ferocious second wave, in April and May, characterized by the very visible scenario of hospitals being overrun, and the sick gasping for a very basic necessity of medical oxygen, revealed a spike in excess deaths, compared to the normal death rate in previous years. Even though independent databases, such as the CRS and State records, show large spikes in deaths, with no other explicable cause other than COVID-19, the Centre continues to be in denial of the mortal scale of the pandemic. Tuesday's statement by Bharati Pravin Pawar, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, in the Rajya Sabha, that there were no "specific reports" of deaths from States due to lack of oxygen, led Congress leader K.C. Venugopal, to say the party will move a privilege motion against her.

Indeed, it is the absolute lack of empathy or acknowledgement of the lived experience of many who have watched their closest suffer and die for want of medical oxygen that makes the Minister's statement appalling. It is technically true that while no death certificate or medical record would note a COVID-19 patient's demise as due to "lack of oxygen", and therefore not causative, the very fact that the Centre moved in April-May to repurpose all its industrial oxygen capacity into producing and transporting medical grade oxygen is itself evidence that the inability to access it must be considered as a probable cause of death. In the early days of the pandemic, a COVID-positive test was necessary to count as a COVID-19 death until the ICMR said it was not always required. It is bewildering why India - with the third highest number of COVID-19 deaths globally, whose oxygen crisis was international news, and mortality figures considered an under-count - sees value in denying oxygen-shortage casualties. Counter-productively, it diminishes public faith in the health-care system. India's leadership sought to convey the impression that the country had conquered the pandemic and - chastened by the second wave - is now advising abundant caution, with the public messaging focused on the possibility of a third wave, and how nearly a third of the population continues to be vulnerable as per the ICMR's fourth serology survey. But diminishing the tragedy, especially in Parliament and in its official records, only further erodes the Government's credibility.

(The Hindu)

Spyware for snooping

Digital age calls for privacy, safety

The expose of the use of the Pegasus spyware, manufactured by an Israeli firm - which the company claims is sold only to 'vetted' governments to check terrorism and crime - to conduct surveillance on journalists, politicians and businessmen, leaves many questions unanswered. An international media consortium had on Sunday reported that more than 300 verified mobile phone numbers, including those of two serving ministers, over 40 journalists, three Opposition leaders and one sitting judge, besides business persons and activists in India, could have been targeted for hacking through the spyware. The Israeli company, on its part, has said it does not operate the system that it sells to governments, nor does it have access to data. It has also refused to disclose the identity of its clients. The Indian Government has also denied the surveillance charge, saying that it has no basis, raising queries over the whole affair.

With smartphones increasingly being used to conduct a range of functions, the revelation has raised question marks about the importance of digital privacy, safety and security. Despite its restricted use, the ease with which the spyware can be installed in the phone is a matter of concern. In 2019, WhatsApp had informed its users about the spyware, and had even filed a case against the Israeli firm, alleging abuse of its platform.

Incidents of snooping have been alleged even earlier, like in the case of the alleged bugging of the office of then Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and when the Congress-backed Chandra Shekhar government had collapsed at the Centre. That the report should have come on the eve of the beginning of the Monsoon session of Parliament may well enliven the proceedings and it is for the Opposition to demand transparency, accountability and safeguards to ensure that the privacy of citizens is protected. Demands have already been raised for PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah to clarify the issue because of an 'atmosphere of fear among people'. In the digital age, the enormity of the task of protecting privacy and safety of citizens has also dawned in no uncertain terms.

(Tribune, India)

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254 Indian millionaires used 'golden visa' route to UK in 12 years: Report

CHINA TOPPED THE LIST AT 4,106, FOLLOWED BY RUSSIA (2,526), HONG KONG (692), THE UNITED STATES (685), PAKISTAN (283) AND KAZAKHSTAN (278) AHEAD OF INDIA

NEW YORK (TIP): A total of 254 millionaires from India have used the so-called "golden visa" to settle down in the UK through a large investment into the country since the route opened in 2008, according to a new report released by a UK-based anti-corruption charity on July 12.

Spotlight on Corruption said that Indians ranked as the seventh nationality of super-rich to have availed of the Tier 1 (Investor) Visa, adding up to 254 between 2008 and 2020. China topped the list at 4,106, followed by Russia (2,526), Hong Kong (692), the United States (685), Pakistan (283) and Kazakhstan (278) ahead of India.

Saudi Arabia at 223, Turkey at 221 and Egypt at 206 complete the list of top 10 countries to have been issued the visa allowing applicants residency rights in the UK, with around half the total now under review.

"Golden visas allow wealthy individuals to buy the right to live in the UK if they invest in UK-registered companies. Individuals that invest 2 million pounds get an immediate right to live in the UK for three years, followed by a two-year extension," notes the report entitled 'Red Carpet for Dirty Money'.

"Those that invest 10 million pounds can be fast-tracked to get indefinite leave to remain within two years, or within three years if they invest 5 million pounds. From indefinite leave to remain visa holders are on a steady path, after one year, to much prized UK citizenship," it adds.

Diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in relation to the Punjab National Bank (PNB) swindle and now fighting against being extradited to India in the High Court in London, is believed to have been living in the UK on an Investor Visa applied for in 2015.

At the time, the route was relatively easier for super-

For representation only

rich individuals to acquire residency rights in the UK, based on a minimum of 2-million-pound investment.

It is dubbed the "blind faith" period but since then the UK Home Office tightened the norms for the category and announced a review around three years ago of these visas issued between 2015 and 2018.

Spotlight on Corruption claims that all 6,312 golden visas issued during the "blind faith" period are under review by the Home Office for "potential national security risks", which amounts to half of all such visas issued overall.

"The UK's golden visa regime continues to pose a significant corruption, money laundering and national security risk to the UK," said Susan Hawley, Executive Director of Spotlight on Corruption.

"It is alarming and deeply unfair that the government is becoming draconian in other parts of its immigration policy but has yet to close major loopholes that allow dirty money to come to the UK. The government must commission an independent review of whether the regime provides any real benefit to the UK," she said.

The new report by the charity, which has a remit to fight corruption within the UK and wherever the UK has influence, has called on the government to urgently publish the findings of its review of the visas issued under the category in the 2008-2015 period.

It includes detailed statistics on what action has been taken on specific cases, including referrals to law enforcement, revocation of visas, and denials of citizenship applications.

Its report warns that the golden visa regime continues to pose a significant "national security, corruption, and money laundering risk" to the UK despite recent reforms.

"Glaring loopholes remain, including that applicant using 'gifted' funds to apply for a golden visa still face no due diligence, and that the Home Office remains over-reliant on financial institutions for due diligence on wealth invested," it warns.

The UK Home Office said the route has been reformed in the last few years to crackdown on black money and that it will report on its pre-reform findings in due course.

"We reformed the Tier 1 visa route in 2015 and in 2019 to crack down on dirty money and we have not ruled out making further changes, if necessary," the Home Office said in a statement.

"These changes include requiring banks to do extra due diligence checks prior to opening accounts and requiring applicants to provide evidence of the source of their funds. As part of our work to prevent this route from corruption we are reviewing all Tier 1 investor visas granted before these reforms were made, and will report on our findings in due course," the statement said. (Source : PTI)

INDIAN-AMERICAN DOCTORS TO PAY USD 37.5 MILLION TO SETTLE ALLEGATIONS OF KICKBACKS IN US

For representation only

WASHINGTON (TIP): Two Indian-American doctors and one of the largest hospital systems in the US have agreed to pay nearly USD 37.5 million to settle allegations of kickbacks for patient referrals, the Department of Justice said. The settlement resolves allegations that Prime Healthcare Services system overpaid for California interventional cardiologist Dr Siva Arunasalam's physician practice and surgery center because the company wanted him to refer patients to its Desert Valley Hospital in Victorville, California, it said. The purchase price, which was substantially negotiated by Prime Healthcare Services founder and CEO Dr Prem Reddy, exceeded the fair market value and was not commercially reasonable, it said. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Indian-origin first female photo journalist featured at the Met Museum

Homai Vyarawalla (1913-2012) commonly known by her pseudonym 'Dalda 13', and India's first woman press photographer is among 120 trailblazing photographers from over 20 countries featured at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

NEW YORK (TIP): Indian-origin Homai Vyarawalla (1913-2012) commonly known by her pseudonym 'Dalda 13', and India's first woman press photographer among 120 trailblazing photographers from over 20 countries to be featured at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

The ongoing exhibition titled "The New Woman Behind the Camera" runs till October 2021.

Vyarawalla began work in the late 1930s and retired in the early 1970s. In 2011, she was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award of the Republic of India. Some of her photographs on display include one of the Victoria Terminus, Mumbai; ashes of the Mahatma Gandhi being carried and Students at the Sir JJ School of Arts. There is also a photograph of Homai Vyarawalla photographing Ganesh Chaturthi at Chowpatty Beach, Mumbai. In 2010, the Alkazi Collection of Photography acquired the poignant photographic archives of Homai Vyarawalla.

'The New Woman Behind the Camera' features 185 photographs, photo books, and illustrated magazines by diverse photographers and highlights the work of the diverse "new" women who made significant advances in modern photography from the 1920s to the 1950s.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

INDIAN AMERICAN FAMILY KILLED IN MIAMI CONDO COLLAPSE

Vishal Patel, 42, his wife Bhavna, 38, a dual British and U.S. citizen who was just over four months pregnant, and their one-year-old daughter Aishani were reported dead in the horrific Champlain Towers South collapse in Surfside

ATLANTA, GA (TIP): An Indian American family has died in the horrific Champlain Towers South collapse in Surfside, a few miles north of Miami Beach, according to local reports. The 13-story beachfront condominium collapsed on June 24, killing Vishal Patel, 42, his wife Bhavna, 38, a dual British and U.S. citizen who was just over four months pregnant, and their one-year-old daughter Aishani. *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Indian-Origin Vaidehi Dongre from Michigan crowned Miss India USA

WASHINGTON (TIP): Twenty-five-year-old Indian-origin Vaidehi Dongre from Michigan was crowned Miss India USA 2021 while Arshi Lalani from Georgia was declared the first runner-up at the beauty pageant held over the weekend.

Dongre, 25, graduated from the University of Michigan, majoring in international studies. She works as a business development manager with a major corporation.

"I want to leave a positive lasting impact on my community and focus on women's financial independence and literacy," Vaidehi said.

She also won the 'Miss Talented' award for her flawless performance of Indian classical dance Kathak.

Lalani, 20, dazzled everyone with her performance and confidence and was declared the first runner-up. She suffers from brain tumor.

North Carolina's Mira Kasari was declared the second runner-up.

Diana Hayden, Miss World 1997, was the chief guest and chief judge for the pageant.

As many as 61 contestants from 30 states participated in three different pageants - Miss India USA, Mrs. India USA and Miss Teen India USA. Winners of all three categories get complimentary tickets to travel to Mumbai to take part in worldwide pageants.

Vaidehi Dongre from Michigan was crowned Miss India USA 2021

Started by New York-based eminent IndianAmericans Dharmatma and Neelam Saran under the banner of Worldwide Pageants around 40 years ago, Miss India USA is the longest-running Indian pageant outside India.

INDIAN MARINER WINS USD 1 MILLION IN THE UAE LUCKY DRAW

DUBAI (TIP): An Indian mariner has won USD 1

The latest Dubai Duty Free Millennium Millionaire and Finest Surprise draw held in Dubai on Wednesday, July 14 - Image Credit: Supplied via Gulf News

million (Rs 7.45 crore) in a lucky draw contest in the UAE, according to a media report on Thursday, July 15.

Ganesh Shinde, 36, based in Thane, Maharashtra, bought the jackpot ticket on June 16 from the official Dubai Duty Free Millennium Millionaire and Finest Surprise draw website before his arrival here, the Gulf News reported.

Shinde works as a mariner for a Brazilian company and every time he travels between Dubai and Rio de Janeiro there is a transit wait at Dubai.

Upon his arrival, Shinde found out that he had won the jackpot.

"It is unbelievable. I am still in shock. This is such a great opportunity. I'm very happy and thankful to Dubai Duty Free. I love Dubai city. I hope to visit soon," he told the daily.

Shinde said he has been regularly purchasing the lottery ticket for the last two years.

"I want a new car, a new apartment, save money for my child's education. So, the list is long. The prize money will serve these purposes," he told the newspaper.

The Millennium Millionaire lucky draw started in 1999 and Shinde is the 181st Indian national to win above USD 1 million at the contest. Indian nationals account for the greatest number of ticket sales at the Dubai Duty Free Millennium Millionaire lucky draw, the daily reported. (Source: PTI)

Indian American Manisha Bharti appointed first CEO of Pratham USA

MINNESOTA (TIP): Pratham, one of India's largest NGOs providing education to children in Mumbai slums, has appointed Indian American Manisha Bharti as the first Chief Executive Officer of Pratham USA and Global Executive.

Manisha Bharti is the first Chief Executive Officer of Pratham USA and Global Executive.

Bharti, currently Chief of Strategy and Programs at GHR Foundation, one of Minnesota's largest philanthropic organizations, starts in her job effective September 2021, Pratham announced Thursday.

Pratham's work is especially relevant at this time, according to Bharti. "There is such a need for the kind of grassroots, high-quality education Pratham provides with its community-based and digital platforms that are increasingly global in scope." "I'm excited and humbled by this opportunity to help shepherd and co-author Pratham's next chapter," Bharti said. "I look forward to working with the global team to deepen Pratham's impact in India and share its learnings to improve education around the world."

Bharti, who oversees a grant portfolio within health, education and international development at GHR Foundation, "brings more than 25 years of professional experience in global development," Pratham said. Previously she has held senior leadership positions at FHI 360 and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

In recent years, Pratham, which means "first" in Sanskrit, has undergone tremendous growth, witnessing increased acclaim and demand for its expertise in India and internationally, according to a Pratham press release. "The position of Chief Executive Officer and Global Executive has been established to unify Pratham's business development, strategy and communications," says Deepak Raj, Chairman of Pratham USA. "Manisha's appointment marks a significant commitment by the organization to strengthen our US chapters while enhancing our brand globally and improving alignment across regions."

"Manisha is ideally suited for this role," explains Madhav Chavan, Co-Founder and President of Pratham. "Throughout her career, she has driven change, scaled organizations and displayed a talent for bringing people together-invaluable assets for helping shape Pratham's future."

Pratham CEO Dr. Rukmini Banerji echoes the enthusiasm: "We are delighted to have someone of Manisha's caliber joining us at this pivotal moment for our organization. "Our India and US teams have always worked very closely with one another, but this was particularly true during COVID. Together, we can go from strength to strength while at the same time supporting the growth of our international work.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

INDIAN-ORIGIN WOMAN BEHIND BEZOS' SPACE FLIGHT

Sanjal Gavande was not on Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' 10-minute space flight Tuesday, July 20 but the 30-year-old engineer from Kalyan in India's Maharashtra state was on the team that built his spaceship.

TEXAS (TIP): Indian-origin Sanjal Gavande was not on Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' 10-minute space flight Tuesday, July 20 but the 30-year-old engineer from Kalyan in India's Maharashtra state was on the team that built his spaceship.

The world's richest person, Bezos, 57, blasted into space on Tuesday in the New Shepard rocket ship that traveled to an altitude of roughly 66 miles above the Earth before landing safely in West Texas 10 minutes later.

He was joined by three other blue-suited crew members on the flight: his younger brother Mark Bezos, 53; American female aviation pioneer Wally Funk, 82; and Dutch incoming college student Oliver Daemen, 18.

Bezos' takeoff on Tuesday came on the 52nd anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, which saw US astronaut Neil Armstrong become the first person to step foot on the lunar surface.

Gavande, who joined Bezos' Blue Origin space company as a systems engineer in April, was part of the team, which built the New Shepard, according to media reports.

Shortly after the capsule that carried the crew touched back down on the desert landscape of Van Horn, Texas, a smiling Bezos emerged in a cowboy hat and proceeded to spray an open bottle of champagne with a small crowd of family and friends.

Bezos is the second billionaire tech titan to blast off in his own spacecraft this month, following 71-year-old Virgin Galactic founder Richard Branson's historic trip to the edge of space aboard the SpaceShipTwo.

A mechanical engineering graduate from Mumbai University, Gavande pursued her masters from the Michigan Technology University in 2011.

After getting a pilot's license in 2016, she applied for a space-engineering job at NASA but was rejected due to citizenship-related matters.

"She always wanted to build a spaceship and that is the reason she chose aerospace as a subject while pursuing her master's degree at Michigan Technological University," her father Ashok Gavande, who retired from the Kalyan-Dombivli municipal corporation, told India Today.

Her mother Surekha, who worked with MTNL, said, "People told us that she is a girl, so why has she opted for mechanical engineering? *(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)*

Indian American Night Organized

Performers

LONG ISLAND, NY (TIP): Nassau County Executive Laura Curran along with Indian American Forum under the leadership of Founding Member Dr. Bobby K. Kalotee and Chairwoman Indu Jaiswal brought the community together, on July 11, to celebrate "Indian American Night" at the Eisenhower Park.

Chaired by Beena Kothari & Co-chaired and Emceed by Flora Parekh, the event honored distinguished community leaders who made a significant stride through these unprecedented times.

Several distinguished community leaders, students and achievers were honored by Special Citations - namely Mukesh Modi, Beena Kothari, Dr. Jag Kalra, Deepa Goyal, Priya Suri, Ankur Sahani, Anika Tolat and Hardev Singh. Nassau County executive Hon. Laura Curran shared valuable county resources and information as we move along post difficult times.

Fascinating dancers, melodious singers and Bollywood performers coordinated by Jyoti Gupta and Indu Gajwani rocked the event. Graceful young Bollywood dancers, choreographed by Manik Malhotra, Jyotika Patel, Shilpa Mithaiwala, young table player and melodious singers namely Kiran Arora, Mitchel Johnson, Kulbhooshan Sharma portrayed true Indian American Culture - Home away from home.

Several community leaders and IAF Board Members graced the event - to name a few Mohinder Taneja, Jasbir (Jay) Singh, Vijay Goswami, Dr. Bhavani Srinivasan, Rizwan Qureshi and many more. The event was generously covered by several print and TV media. Additional information can be found at www.indianamericanforum.org.

(Based on a press release by Indu Jaiswal)

Suhag Mehta, Rizwan Qureshi, Farrah Mozawalla, Deepa Goyal, Indu Jaiswal, Priya Suri, Mohinder Singh Taneja, Senator Todd Kaminsky, Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, Mukesh Modi, Dr Jag Kalra, Bobby Kumar Kalotee, Beena Kothari, Deepak Bansal, Anika Tolat, Neeru Bhamri, Roopam Maini, Jasbir Jay Singh

Honorees with Nassau County Executive Laura Curran, Senator Kaminsky and Community Leaders

'In death, Fr. Stan Swamy's voice is even stronger' - Father Noby Ayyaneth

NEW YORK (TIP): "Living Stan was a nobleman, but the departed Stan is unstoppable and his voice on behalf of the poor and the downtrodden is even stronger and will resonate it throughout history," said Father Noby Ayyaneth of the Malankara Catholic Diocese of North America condoling the death of Father Stan Swamy at a remembrance meeting organized under the banner of Indo-US Democracy Foundation in Floral Park, New York. Jesus Christ was a master humanitarian, and Fr. Stan was following in his master's footsteps. For him, suffering was not a tragedy in the face of injustice and as he could not be a silent spectator".

Mr. George Abraham, Executive Director of the India-US Democracy Foundation, welcomed the gathering and stated 'it is a dark day for democracy in India and Father Stan Swamy's detention, treatment in prison and death is a blot on the nation's consciousness and a travesty of justice. He expressed his disappointment that in today's India, the presumption of innocence is becoming a thing of the past. India is about to celebrate its 75th Independence Day, and our founding fathers built democratic institutions that stood the test of time and protected democracy, freedom, individual liberty, and equal justice under law. However, these institutions are increasingly under attack and are being diminished. Today, anyone who dares to criticize the authorities is in danger of being termed anti-national.

Professor Indrajit Saluja, Publisher of Indian Panorama Newspaper, said Father Stan Swamy was a frail and weak man physically but strong morally and spiritually to carry on with his work on behalf of the weaker sections of society. As Indian Americans, we must demand our politicos to speak out when authorities target the poor and downtrodden in India. UAPA is a draconian law that the Supreme Court should have reviewed, and it is a shame that an innocent man had to pay with his life this way.

Amir Rashid, Rev. Wilson Jose, Rev. P.M. Thomas, Rev. Fr. John Thomas, Father Noby Ayyaneth, George Abraham

Mohinder Singh Gilzian, Father Noby Ayyaneth, Dr. Surinder Malhotra, George Abraham

Pastor Wilson Jose, Pastor of the Grace International Church in Mineola, said while we have gathered here to celebrate Father Stan's life, we would like to express our indignation as Pravasis, the way the political leaders and the judiciary treated him in India. Father Stan represented Christ's teachings to its core and did his best to uplift the neglected ones by a caste system that is in place over centuries. Jesus said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, and Fr. Stan's life exemplified those principles. During the freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi was jailed many times by the British authorities. However, they respected his ideals and made sure no harm happened to him. Sadly today, the Government of India lacks even that basic level of humanity in the treatment of its own citizens!

Father John Thomas of Orthodox Church pondered what it would be like if any one of us would be in Fr. Stan's shoes. Will we get intimidated or pull back? Father Stan's life is a testament to all of us and should inspire us to stand up and fight for what is right.

CONTD ON PAGE 7

Indian Army Veterans organize Webinar on Moral Development

BY H.S. PANASER

NEW YORK (TIP): A webinar on Moral development was organized by Army veterans in India. Aim was to create an awareness amongst the people and contribute to practical application. It is time to implement and channelize our energy into forming good habits. There is a need to develop Moral Infrastructure.

We have all heard of Physical and Mental Infrastructures. 'Moral Infrastructure' is a new term but had been existing in some form and has gradually eroded. This needs to be built up again keeping in tune with the modern times. Since most of it is intangible, the intellectuals have to come together to apply themselves to evolve a Holistic, 'Inside Out' approach from 'Womb to Tomb'. I attended the webinar which had four eminent speakers. Lt Gen SRR. Aiyengar, Col (Dr) VRK Prasad, Shri Bharath Madhavan and Maj Gen K Eswaran.

The topics covered were as under:

Morals, Ethics, Values and Moral Intelligence, in which Gen Aiyengar stressed on Moral Intelligence' and its relevance in the overall moral development. Moral Intelligence is the central intelligence for all humans. It is so because it directs all other forms of intelligence to do something worthwhile.

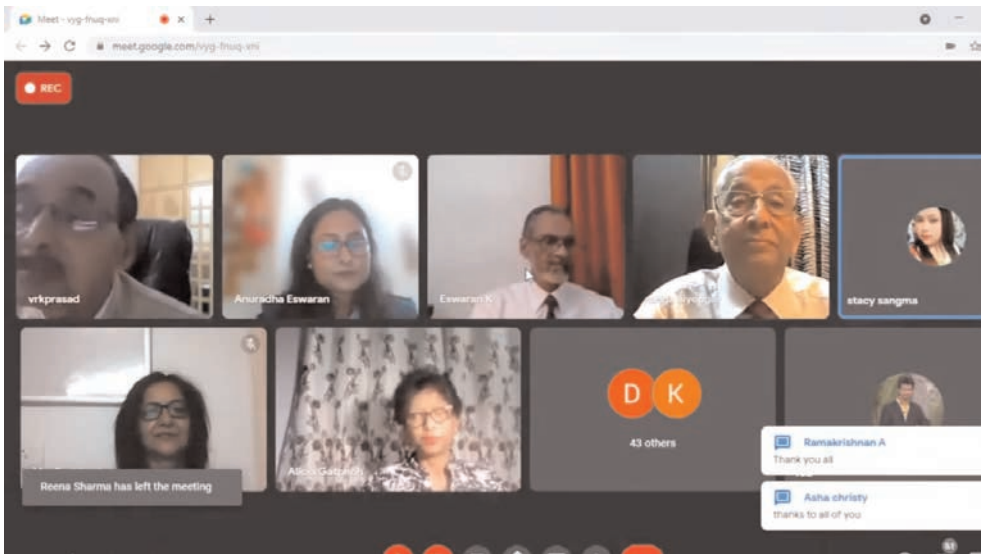
Speaking on 'Value based education (VBE) and its Impact on Moral development and challenges in practical application', Col Prasad stated that 'No coin will have any value if any side is missing or blank'. Our education system should be as much value based as it is knowledge based as with the right values

Maj Gen K Eswaran

a student acquires both knowledge and wisdom as one moves on, in life. Even as per our scriptures a student gets only one fourth of the total learning from his teachers, while the rest, he picks up on his own where the teacher becomes only a facilitator.

Mr Bharat spoke on 'The Role of the Triad- 'Parent Teacher and Women' in the holistic development of Moral infrastructure of the Nation'. He said - Maata, Pitaa, Guru, Deyvam", is a saying that is deeply ingrained in every Indian's mind. Mother comes first, then the father, then the teacher and only then comes God. This shows the level of importance that our ancient seers have kept for the hierarchy of influencers in our lives. The role of the mother is the most essential. Apart from carrying the child in her womb, she plays the most important role in imparting the right values and skills for her child. It is said, "Home is the first school", our parents are our first teachers, and we learn values, culture, habits, relationships, sharing and caring and many other things that build our personality.

Lastly, Gen Eswaran gave very practical and down to earth suggestions



Participants

on how to build up Moral Infrastructure in the country. He covered the entire life of a person from Womb to Tomb including various stages of birth, school, college, career and retirement. He also spoke about how the three contributors to the nation building that is Citizen, organizations and the government together can make a difference. He also urged people to have a dream to die for and work towards it. He suggested ways to go about by changing your attitude and forgetting your past. He suggested that Indian armed Forces are great motivators for a diverse country like India and appealed to all the citizens that 'Till the time we have the Armed forces and a soldier sacrificing his life, we should not do anything that is NOT in the interest of the nation'. That is the least we can do to become worthy of this sacrifice'.

He requested all to align their personal interest with that of the society, organization and the Nation for overall good.

There was a tremendous response from the audience since it is very rare that people speak openly about integrity, honesty and Moral values. It is a small step indeed in the right direction. The Moderator, Miss Anuradha carried the show on her shoulders by handling the speakers and the audience. Her intelligent quotes and experience from the past smoothly dovetailed into the subject stole everyone's heart.

The event was sponsored by 'Help and Serve Public Charitable Trust.' Gen K Eswaran is the Founder and Trustee of the same and convenor of this meeting. I have known him since the school days. He has always been a strong proponent of moral values, ethics and character building even while serving in the Army. He has continued his crusade even after retirement. The webinar is on YouTube @ https://youtu.be/gpzqTdryZbo

CONTD FROM PAGE 6

'In death, Fr. Stan Swamy's voice is even stronger' - Father Noby Ayyaneth

Father P.M. Thomas, Vicar-in-charge of Marthoma Church in Queens Village, said Father Stan's passing had created a big void, and each of us has a role to play in continuing his work. He asked not to be discouraged but to continue the fight until the truth is revealed.

Mr. Amir Rashid, Director at NYPD who hails from Bihar, described the hardships the marginalized people suffer at the powerful hands in States like Jharkhand. Father Stan Swamy was the voice for the voiceless, and as long as this same power structure exists, these injustices will continue to be tolerated.

Pastor Babu Thomas of IPC Hebron in Queens Village reiterated the old saying that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Father Stan Swamy was not a terrorist. The government knew that. His only crime was he loved the poor and served them. Unless we stand up and fight for our freedom and rights, our world will be a diminished place to live.

Dr. Surinder Malhotra, former President of the Indian Overseas Congress described the pathetic situation in India as far as caste and religion is concerned. Unlike the United States, even for a job application, they want to know your religion. Even in

Prof. Indrajit Saluja, Varghese Abraham, Leela Maret

our Diaspora here, they tend to ask whether he is a Hindu or a Christian, north Indian or south Indian, and such intolerance is so evident and has become part of our mindset. He condoled the death of a man who dedicated his entire life to doing good but ended up dying in custody.

Mr. Mohinder Singh Gilzian, President of the Indian Overseas Congress, USA, said it is outrageous that a man who is working on behalf of the poor dies in Government custody. The people who are responsible for foisting false charges to imprison him should be held accountable. The UAPA act is being misused and used against people for political reasons.

Dr. Anna George, President of the Indian Nurses' Association in New York, called Father Stan Swamy's imprisonment and death cruel and unusual punishment. She asked for raising our collective voices to stop this from happening again.

Mr. Koshy Thomas, who ran for the NYC Council from District 23, expressed his sorrow, and asked authorities to protect activists such as Father Stan while respecting the human rights of every citizen in India regardless of their religion or caste.

Mr. John Joseph, the Vice-President of the Indian overseas Congress, urged not to be silent on these ongoing atrocities by the authorities. Is India a real democracy? He asked the participants to be more vigilant in guarding against these Human Rights abuses.

Mr. Shaji Karackal, National news coordinator, Harvest TV said 'forgive us father, I am guilty and many of us are for not seeing the truth on time to come to your defense". Father Stan Swamy will be remembered as a nobleman who stood up for the poor and marginalized.

Mr. George Chacko also spoke. Mr. Varhgese Abraham thanked everyone for their attendance and paid tribute to the memory of this great soul, Father Stan Swamy. Mr. Shaji Ennasseril (solidactionstudio.com) provided the logistics.

(Based on a press release)

AS I SEE IT

RECLAIMING DEMOCRACY VIA VOTERS' WHIP

BY YOGENDRA YADAV

"AT THIS STAGE IN HISTORY, WHEN WE ARE EXPERIENCING "DEMOCRACY CAPTURE" - A CAPTURE OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH DEMOCRATIC MEANS - THESE EXAMPLES HOLD OUT HOPE FOR THE COUNTRY. THERE IS A PARLIAMENTARY SESSION GOING ON BUT THE PM IS UNWILLING TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE AND ANSWER QUESTIONS ON MILLIONS OF DEATHS DUE TO THE SECOND COVID WAVE. THE PEGASUS DISCLOSURES HAVE OPENED OUR EYES, IF THAT WAS NEEDED, TO THE MOCKERY OF CONSTITUTIONALLY GUARANTEED LIBERTIES. IN THIS CONTEXT, ANDOLANS AND ANDOLANJIVIS HOLD OUT HOPE FOR OUR DEMOCRACY."

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha's decision to issue a 'voters' whip' is one more democratic innovation in these dark times when formal democratic institutions and practices are taking a downturn. Democracy is being reclaimed on the streets just when the constitutional democratic apparatus is receding. As they say, creativity thrives in the dark.

The idea behind the voters' whip is simple, though powerful. Right from the inception of parliamentary democracy in our country, every party has appointed a whip tasked with disciplining the elected representatives. This role has a legal sanction after the insertion of anti-defection provisions in the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. Now every party can and does issue a whip to its MPs and MLAs, instructing them to be present on certain days and vote in specified ways. The basic idea is that the voters speak to the MPs and MLAs through the party; hence, they should not be allowed to violate its commands. But what about direct command from the voters? Why can't the voters bypass the parties and instruct their representatives on how to conduct themselves in Parliament?

People's Power: A mass movement like the farmers' agitation commands exceptional moral authority and can issue a voters' whip. Photo / PTI

That is what the voters 'whip does. On behalf of the farmers, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha has issued a whip to all the MPs for this Monsoon session that directs them to be present in Parliament for all days, to support the above mentioned demands of farmers' movement on the floor of the House, not stage a walk-out and "not allow any other business to be transacted in the House till the Union Government accedes to the farmers' demands". This voters' whip "overrides the whip issued by your party" and those who defy it face the prospect of farmers' boycott.

It is a conceptual break, but a work in progress on the practicalities. The concept needs to be fleshed out in terms of procedures for issuing the whip (who can issue it? How do we know the voters back it?), mechanisms for monitoring (what exactly constitutes a violation?) and penalty for defiance (who implements it? Exactly how?). A mass movement like the present farmers' agitation commands exceptional moral authority and can issue such a whip. But the protocols of its use in normal times are yet to be worked out.

This is but one more instance of innovation in a movement that has been forced to innovate all the time. Take the very form of protest, the morchas outside Delhi's borders. These are not traditional marches or sit-ins or squatting. Occupying miles of highway to set up colonies defies classification. Similarly, turning toll plazas into sites of regular protest, organizing massive Kisan Mahapanchayats, coalition of farm unions with khap panchayats, building alliance with trade unions, the use of community langar for supporting agitations, extending the idea of langar to daily-use items or even oxygen cylinders - all these are innovations in democratic practices.

Last week, there was another such innovation, not connected to the farmers' movement. Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur witnessed a public hearing on the condition of migrant workers. But this was not another jansunwai, where the victims present their case to a panel of experts and judges. In this experiment, the jury comprised 17 migrant workers themselves.

They deliberated for three days, heard from co-workers and the experts, to arrive at their verdict. This reversal of gaze takes the idea of public hearing forward and deepens its democratic character.

One of the most startling innovations in recent time was, of course, Shaheen Bagh. It sprung up just when everyone thought it was impossible to raise minority voice under this government, just when the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act seemed like a fait accompli, just when all legitimate forms of protest were being criminalized. An all-women day and night neighborhood gathering was a breathtaking idea, executed to perfection with nationalist symbolism. It combined defiance with pedagogy, anti-politics with deep politics, questioning of political authority with questioning of gender roles.

These might appear like isolated examples, but they are not. Just start looking around for newer ways of expressing democratic aspirations and you would find something every day. A few months ago, unemployed youths in Uttar Pradesh played a prank on the Yogi government, an incident that served to highlight the widespread unemployment among the educated youth. Last week, some citizens started a #ThankyouModiji campaign, taking a photograph before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's banner outside petrol pumps, to highlight the rising prices of petrol and diesel. You can keep adding to this list.

RIGHT FROM THE INCEPTION OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN OUR COUNTRY, EVERY PARTY HAS APPOINTED A WHIP TASKED WITH DISCIPLINING THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. BUT WHAT ABOUT DIRECT COMMAND FROM THE VOTERS? WHY CAN'T THE VOTERS BYPASS THE PARTIES AND INSTRUCT THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ON HOW TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN PARLIAMENT?

At this stage in history, when we are experiencing "democracy capture" - a capture of democracy through democratic means - these examples hold out hope for the country. There is a parliamentary session going on but the PM is unwilling to make a statement on the floor of the House and answer questions on millions of deaths due to the second Covid wave. The Pegasus disclosures have opened our eyes, if that was needed, to the mockery of constitutionally guaranteed liberties. In this context, andolans and andolanjivis hold out hope for our democracy.

A historian and theorist of democracy, John Keane, has described these as instances of "monitory democracy" - innovations that add instruments of monitoring the health of democracy and thus deepen its quality. He lists India as one of the prime examples of such democratic innovations. We must also recognize that in post-colonial democracies, such innovations do not merely supplement the existing and functional democratic institutions. They also fill a deeper gap. Many constitutionally mandated democratic institutions only exist on paper in our democracy. Newer practices like the voters' whip promise to fill the void left by the non-functioning of such institutions.

(The author is the first and current National president of Swaraj India)

Pegasus is India's Watergate moment

BY PRANESH PRAKASH

'IN 2013, INDIA'S CURRENT HOME MINISTER WAS EMBROILED IN A CONTROVERSY DUBBED "SNOOPGATE", WITH PHONE RECORDINGS ALLEGED TO BE OF HIM SPEAKING TO THE HEAD OF AN ANTI-TERRORISM UNIT TO CONDUCT COVERT SURVEILLANCE ON A YOUNG ARCHITECT AND HER FAMILY MEMBERS WITHOUT ANY LEGAL BASIS. THE GUJARAT GOVERNMENT ADMITTED THE SURVEILLANCE, INCLUDING PHONE TAPPING, BUT CLAIMED IT WAS DONE ON THE BASIS OF A REQUEST MADE TO THE CHIEF MINISTER BY THE WOMAN'S FATHER. YET, NO ORDER SIGNED BY THE STATE'S HOME SECRETARY - A LEGAL NECESSITY FOR A PHONE TAP - WAS EVER PRODUCED."

Intelligence gathering needs to be professionalized, parliamentary oversight introduced, and liberties and law protected

"If this government ever became a tyranny, if a dictator ever took charge in this country, the technological capacity that the intelligence community has given the government could enable it to impose total tyranny, and there would be no way to fight back because the most careful effort to combine together in resistance to the government, no matter how privately it was done, is within the reach of the government to know. Such is the capability of this technology." Those words of Sen. Frank Church, who led one of two committees on intelligence and surveillance reform established in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, are just as relevant in India today given the revelations of extensive surveillance - it is unclear by whom, but signs point to the Indian government - by the use of spyware on people's phones. While there is much to be said about the international regulation of the unaccountable sale of spyware by shadowy entities such as the NSO Group, it is equally, if not more important to ensure that surveillance in India is made accountable.

Go easy on the salt

My former colleague, Sunil Abraham, often likens surveillance to salt. A small amount of surveillance is necessary for the health of the body politic, just as salt is for the body; in excess, both are dangerous. While one cannot enjoy the liberties provided under the Constitution without national security, we must equally remember that national security is not meaningful if it comes at the cost of the very liberties such security is supposed to allow us to enjoy. Excessive and unaccountable surveillance imperils privacy, freedom of thought, of speech, and has a chilling effect on people's behavior, while shattering the bedrock of the rule of law upon which a constitutional liberal democracy is built.

The government claims all its surveillance is authorized and justified. But then, the question arises: where are the prosecutions for terrorism, organized

crime, espionage, etc., based on evidence from such surveillance? Who is ensuring that the surveillance is necessary and proportionate? Indeed, on the contrary, there are numerous examples of surveillance powers being misused for personal and political gain, and to harass opponents.

Earlier examples

In 2012 in Himachal Pradesh, the new government raided police agencies and recovered over a hundred thousand phone conversations of over a thousand people, mainly political members, and many senior police officials, including the Director General of Police (DGP), who is legally responsible for conducting phone taps in the State.

In 2013, India's current Home Minister was embroiled in a controversy dubbed "Snoopgate", with phone recordings alleged to be of him speaking to the head of an anti-terrorism unit to conduct covert surveillance on a young architect and her family members without any legal basis. The Gujarat government admitted the surveillance, including phone tapping, but claimed it was done on the basis of a request made to the Chief Minister by the woman's father. Yet, no order signed by the State's Home Secretary - a legal necessity for a phone tap - was ever produced, and the Gujarat High Court shut down an inquiry into "Snoopgate" upon the request of the architect and her father, on the shocking basis that it "did not involve public interest".

In 2009, the United Progressive Alliance government swore in an affidavit in the Supreme Court that the CBDT had placed Niira Radia, a well-connected PR professional, under surveillance due to fears of her being a foreign spy. Yet, while they kept her under surveillance for 300 days, they did not prosecute her for espionage.

Non-state actors such as the Essar group, have also been shown to engage in illegal surveillance. K.K. Paul, then the Governor of Meghalaya, noted complaints by telecom operators that private individuals were misusing police contacts to tap phone calls of "opponents in trade or estranged spouses".

There are dozens of such examples of unlawful surveillance which seem to be for political and personal gain and have nothing to do with national security or organized crime. Yet, there are few examples of people being held legally accountable for unlawful surveillance.

The laws

Currently, the laws authorizing interception and monitoring of communications are Section 92 of the CrPC (for call records, etc), Rule 419A of the Telegraph Rules, and the rules under Sections 69 and 69B of the IT Act. Indeed, it is unclear when the Telegraph Act applies and when the IT Act applies. A limited number of agencies are provided powers to intercept and monitor.

In 2014, the Ministry of Home Affairs told Parliament that nine central agencies and the DGPs of all States and Delhi were empowered to conduct interception under the Indian Telegraph Act. In 2018, nine central agencies and one State agency were authorized to conduct intercepts under Section 69 of the IT Act. Yet, the Intelligence Organisations Act, which restricts the civil liberties of intelligence agency employees, only lists four agencies, while the RTI Act lists 22 agencies as "intelligence and security organisations established by the central government" that are exempt from the RTI Act. Thus, it is unclear which entities count as intelligence and security agencies.

Further, a surveillance alphabet soup exists, with programmes such as CMS, TCIS, NETRA, CCTNS, and so on, none of which has been authorized by any statute, and thus fall short of the 2017 K.S. Puttaswamy judgment, which made it clear that any invasion of privacy could only be justified if it satisfied three tests: first, the restriction must be by law; second, it must be necessary (only if other means are not available) and proportionate (only as much as needed); and third, it must promote a legitimate state interest (e.g., national security).

In 2010, then Vice-President Hamid Ansari called for a legislative basis for India's agencies, and the creation of a standing committee of Parliament on intelligence to ensure that they remain accountable and respectful of civil liberties. In 2011, the Cabinet Secretary in a note on surveillance held that the Central Board of Direct Taxes having interception powers was a continuing violation of a 1975 Supreme Court judgment on the Telegraph Act. That same year, parliamentarian Manish Tewari introduced a private member's Bill to bring intelligence agencies under a legislative framework. That Bill soon lapsed. In 2013, the Ministry of Defence-funded think-tank, the Institute for Defence and Strategic Analysis, published a report, "A Case for Intelligence Reforms in India", a core recommendation of which was: "the intelligence agencies in India must be provided a legal framework for their existence and functioning; their functioning must be under Parliamentary oversight and scrutiny".

In 2018, the Srikrishna Committee on data protection noted that post the K.S. Puttaswamy judgment, most of India's intelligence agencies are "potentially unconstitutional", since they are not constituted under a statute passed by Parliament - the National Investigation Agency being an exception. In its 2019 election manifesto, the Indian National Congress - in what to my knowledge was a first for a national political party - called for parliamentary oversight of intelligence agencies.

Post-Watergate reforms

The legacy of the Church Committee can be seen in the fact that the Snowden revelations in 2013 did not uncover any spying on Opposition politicians, journalists, judges, and human rights defenders for partisan political ends. What was shocking about the Snowden revelations was the extent of NSA's surveillance, the overreach of the powers provided under the PATRIOT Act, as well as the lack of sufficient checks and balances provided by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court. The Snowden revelations led to meaningful reform of that court, and controversial domestic surveillance provisions of the PATRIOT Act expired in 2020.

We need such reforms in India, which are aimed at professionalizing intelligence gathering, bringing intelligence agencies under parliamentary oversight, making them non-partisan, and ensuring that civil liberties and rule of law are protected. This is India's Watergate moment, and the Supreme Court and Parliament should seize it.

(The author was a co-founder of the Centre for Internet and Society, and is an affiliated fellow at Yale Law School's Information Society Project)

Afghans continue to be at the receiving end

BY VAPPALA BALACHANDRAN

"RIEDEL HAS REMINDED THE US THAT IT HAD MADE 'MANY MISTAKES' IN AFGHANISTAN BY NOT PAYING ATTENTION AFTER THE SOVIETS LEFT AND ALLOWING IT TO DESCEND INTO A 'FAILED' STATE, PERMITTING THE TALIBAN AND AL-QAEDA TO ENTER THAT VACUUM. RIEDEL BLAMED FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE W BUSH FOR TAKING HIS 'EYE OFF THE BALL' IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE 2001 US INVASION AND LETTING OSAMA BIN LADEN ESCAPE INTO PAKISTAN."

Power vacuum in Afghanistan after US troop withdrawal will spawn terror

On July 17, Bruce Riedel, formerly of the CIA and now at Brookings, warned that the power vacuum in Afghanistan after the US troop withdrawal will adversely affect India by spawning terrorism. Similarly, The New York Times (July 15) reported Chinese fears of insecurity in the region after the killing of nine Chinese workers in a 'Belt & Road' hydroelectric project in Dasu, Pakistan's Northwest, due to a suspected explosion.

Riedel had issued a similar warning on April 27, 2021, by reminding President Joe Biden of what President Barack Obama had said in his memoir A Promised Land: "The Riedel report made one thing clear: Unless Pakistan stopped sheltering the Taliban, our efforts at long-term stability in Afghanistan were bound to fail."

What was this Riedel report? In February 2009, Obama chose Riedel to chair a White House Review to synthesize suggestions from heavyweights like Richard Holbrooke, special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Gen David H Petraeus, Central Command Chief, and Admiral Michael G Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, before the next NATO summit.

In a joint press conference at the White House on March 27, 2009, Riedel and Holbrooke outlined Obama's strategy for NATO presence in Afghanistan: "To disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda, and to ensure that their safe havens in Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot threaten the United States anymore."

They added that the US exit strategy would depend on that.

Biden's White House address on April 14, 2021, also claimed that they had achieved the "disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda" strategy. However, Riedel did not agree. He said that Joe Biden, who inherited "a terrible deal from Trump's feckless negotiators" had "failed to engage with Prime Minister Imran Khan", which was a mistake. This is because Pakistani generals "will be more hubristic and dangerous than ever", as Pakistan is the winner "again" in Afghanistan, by outlasting two superpowers.

Riedel reminded America that Washington DC had made 'many mistakes' in Afghanistan by not paying any attention after the Soviets left, allowing it to descend into a 'failed' state, permitting the Taliban and al-Qaeda to enter that vacuum. Riedel blamed former President George W Bush for taking his "eye off the ball" in Afghanistan after the 2001 US invasion and letting Osama bin Laden escape into Pakistan.

In my opinion, a bigger mistake was made in 1992. This was after the failed coup d'état in the Soviet Union in August 1991 and eventual disintegration. In September that year, three Baltic states seceded and declared their independence. A limited 'Belovezha' accord signed on December 8, 1991, was modified by the December 21 Alma Ata Protocol in Kazakhstan, creating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) by Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Western powers, including the United States, recognized these independent countries.

On March 9, 1992, President Mohammad Najibullah made a direct appeal to the United States through The New York Times to help him in maintaining stability in Afghanistan. This was after President Boris Yeltsin stopped all direct assistance to Afghanistan, which grounded the Afghan air force and encouraged defections, which affected the Afghan army too.

Senior journalist Edward A Gargan reproduced Najibullah's text of appeal to the US in The New York Times. Najibullah's tone was premonitory: "If fundamentalism comes to Afghanistan, war will continue for many more years… Afghanistan will turn into a center of world smuggling for narcotic drugs. Afghanistan will be turned into a center for terrorism." However, none in Washington DC listened.

Najibullah also echoed the then Secretary of State James Baker's statement that Islamic fundamentalism had posed a significant threat to regional stability: "You may think that the Central Asian republics are significant for the United States of America… That's right. But I must say that the strategic and political significance of Afghanistan is much more than these republics. If Afghanistan is lost and is turned into a center of fundamentalism, you will lose the Central Asian republics."

During this period, even King Zahir Shah's US-based representatives had appealed to the State Department and the CIA that the retention of Najibullah in Afghanistan was very necessary as he was the only Afghan leader who would be able to hold the country together, obstruct the jihadis from coming into power and prevent Afghanistan's splintering. They even conveyed that Najibullah should be accepted by the US, just as it had recognized the CIS leaders, who were mostly authoritarian.

Unfortunately, the rivalry between the State Department and the CIA prevented this from happening.

Steve Coll, in his book The Ghost Wars, vividly records the clashes between the State Department and the CIA over Najibullah. Initially, the State Department's special envoy to Afghanistan Edmund McWilliams had differed with CIA's Station Chief Milton Bearden over Najibullah's fate. The CIA wanted him to go, as desired by Pakistan's ISI. Milton Bearden started resenting "interference" by the State Department over their turf.

In Washington DC, this rift between the CIA and the State Department was carried higher by the then CIA Deputy Director Thomas Twetten and Peter Tomsen, State Department's new special envoy to the Afghan Resistance. Robert Kimmitt, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, told The New York Times (January 3, 1991) that Secretary of State Jim Baker had wanted to "coax the rebels and the Najibullah regime into democratic elections", but that "they (meaning CIA) are just bucking policy."

However, during that period, Texas Congressman Charlie Wilson, member, US House of Representatives' Appropriations Sub-Committee for Defense, was exercising disproportionate influence over Afghan operations. It resulted in other voices being ignored.

Wilson regretted this later. An article in The World, a public radio and podcast programme, on February 11, 2010, said that Wilson, to the end of his life, regretted that "more wasn't done to stabilize the country" and "the moderate, pro-Royalist factions in the resistance were ruthlessly suppressed by more extreme Islamic militants on our side."

These 'regrets' of 'mistakes' are not going to help the hapless Afghans now who continue to be the victims of external interference.

(Vappala Balachandran is an author and columnist)

'You have only your ex to blame': Maryam Sharif and Jemima Goldsmith Twitter spat post Imran Khan's remark

LAHORE (TIP): Pakistani Muslim League (Nawaz) vice-president Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's former wife Jemima Goldsmith were engaged in a Twitter battle.

The controversy started when Imran Khan took a shot at former prime minister Nawaz Sharif attending his grandson Junaid's polo match in the UK while he was there in 2019 for medical treatment.

Responding to Imran Khan's remarks about her son, Maryam Sharif in a rally in PoK said that Khan's children were being "raised in the lap of Jews".

"My kids are "being raised in the lap of the Jews," announced Maryam Sharif today." She went on to add, "I left Pakistan in 2004 after a decade of anti-semitic attacks by the media and politicians (weekly death threats and protests outside my house). But still, it continues," she tweeted.

In response, Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that she has no interest in her and that Jemima should blame her ex — a reference to Imran Khan. "I have absolutely no interest in you, your sons, or your personal lives because I have better things to do and say but if your ex drags in families of others out of spite, others will have nastier things to say. You have only your ex to blame." (TNS)

FORMER PAKISTANI DIPLOMAT'S DAUGHTER MURDERED IN ISLAMABAD

ISLAMABAD (TIP): A former Pakistani diplomat's daughter has been murdered here, according to a media report on Wednesday, just days after a major diplomatic row broke out between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the alleged abduction of the daughter of Afghanistan's Ambassador in Islamabad. Noor Mukadam, 27, daughter of Shaukat Mukadam, was found dead in the Capital's upscale Sector F-7/4 area on Tuesday, Dawn newspaper reported. Mukadam has in the past served as Pakistan's ambassador to South Korea and Kazakhstan. Noor was killed after being shot at, the daily quoted the police as saying. A friend of Noor has been arrested in connection to the murder, police said.

"A man named Zahir Jaffer, who was allegedly involved in the murder, was arrested on the spot and taken to the police station," Samaa TV quoted the Islamabad police as saying. The killing comes as a storm brews over the safety of diplomatic missions and its personnel in Pakistan.

On July 16, Silsila Alikhil, the 26-year-old daughter of Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan Najibullah Alikhil, was briefly abducted from Islamabad and tortured, the Afghanistan Foreign office said in a statement last week. The incident triggered a major diplomatic row between the two neighbouring nations, which are coping with the resurgence of the Taliban as the US and NATO reach the final phase of their troop pull-out operation. PTI

Taliban now control about half of Afghan district centre

KABUL (TIP): The Taliban militant group now controls a total of 212, or roughly half of Afghanistan's 419 district centres, a top US General said.

"Strategic momentum appears to be sort of with the Taliban," Xinhua news agency quoted General Mark Milley, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, as saying at a press conference at the Pentagon on Wednesday. "There's a possibility of a complete Taliban takeover, or the possibility of any number of other scenarios," Milley said.

"I don't think the end game is yet written. A negative outcome, a Taliban automatic takeover, is not a foregone conclusion." While the militants are yet to capture any of the country's 34 provincial capitals, they are pressuring about half of them, said Milley.

Afghan security forces are consolidating their positions to protect those major urban centres including Kabul, he said. While "strategic momentum appears to be with the Taliban" right now, a lot could happen over the rest of the summer, he added.

"We're going to find out, the levels of violence, does it go up, does it stay the same, there's the possibility of negotiated outcome still out there, there's the possibility of a Taliban takeover (and) any other number of scenarios." The Afghan provinces have been the scene of heavy battles between Taliban and security forces since the start of withdrawal of the US-led forces from the war-torn country on May 1.

US President Joe Biden has set a formal end to the US military mission in Afghanistan for August 31, days ahead of his original September 11 deadline. US Central Command said last week over 95 per cent of the withdrawal hads been completed. More than 2,400 US troops were killed in Afghanistan over the past two decades, with 20,000 wounded, according to the Pentagon.

Estimates show that over 66,000 Afghan troops have been killed, and over 2.7 million people were displaced. IANS

RAIN-RELATED INCIDENTS KILLS 14 PEOPLE, INJURES 26 OTHERS IN PAKISTAN

PESHAWAR (TIP): At least 14 people were killed, and 26 others injured in rain-related incidents in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the last 24 hours, officials said on Thursday.

The Provincial Disasters Management Authority (PDMA) said that incessant monsoon rain stuck various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and inundated low-lying areas in the province's Dera Ismail Khan, Hazara and Malakand divisions and resulted in the complete damage to four houses and partial damage to 21 others.

"Houses were damaged due to the continuous monsoon rain that struck Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, resulting in the death of 14 people and injuries to 26 others in the last one day," a senior official from the PDMA said.

The respective district administrations in the province have geared up relief and rescue activities in areas affected by the monsoon rains and issued necessary travel advisory for the tourists, the official said. — PTI

2 AIRPLANES COLLIDE AT DUBAI'S MAIN AIRPORT; NO INJURIES

DUBAI (TIP): Two passenger jets from low-cost carrier FlyDubai and Bahrain-based Gulf Air collided with each other on the taxiway at Dubai International Airport early Thursday morning, though authorities reported no injuries in the incident.

FlyDubai said one of its Boeing 737-800s heading to Kyrgyzstan found itself affected by "a minor incident" and forced to return to the stand. It said passengers took a later flight, which departed six hours later.

"FlyDubai will work with the authorities to investigate the incident," the airline said, adding that the collision damaged a wingtip on one of the aircraft.

Gulf Air said one its aircraft "was impacted on the tail by an aircraft of another airline." Gulf Air did not identify the aircraft involved, but said it was "working to reconnect all the passengers to their final destinations."

Gulf Air flies passengers from Dubai International Airport onto its hub at Bahrain International Airport in Manama. Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest airport for international travel before the coronavirus pandemic, said the collision forced them to shut down one of its two runways for two hours. It said operations were not affected by the closure. — AP

Trump inaugural committee head accused of being UAE agent

Tom Barrack, 74, of Santa Monica, California, was among three men charged in federal court in Brooklyn, New York

NEW YORK (TIP): The chair of former President Donald Trump's 2017 inaugural committee was arrested on Tuesday on charges alleging that he secretly conspired to influence US policy to benefit the United Arab Emirates, even while he was seeking a position as an American diplomat.

Tom Barrack, 74, of Santa Monica, California, was among three men charged in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, with acting as unregistered foreign agents as they tried to influence US policy on the UAE's behalf while Trump was running in 2016 and later while he was president.

The indictment goes to the heart of the US' long-time close relationship with the UAE and directly ties its de facto ruler, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to Barrack's charges.

Besides conspiracy, Barrack was charged with obstruction of justice and making multiple false statements during a June 2019 interview with federal agents. Also charged in a seven-count indictment were Matthew Grimes, 27, of Aspen, Colorado, who is a former executive at Barrack's company, and Rashid al Malik, 43, a businessman from the United Arab Emirates, who, prosecutors said, acted as a conduit to that nation's rulers.

One of Trump's close personal friends for decades, Barrack is the latest in a long line of the former president's associates to face criminal charges, including his former campaign chair, his former deputy campaign chair, his former chief strategist, his former national security adviser, his former personal lawyer and his company's long-time chief financial officer.

Barrack and Grimes were arrested in Southern California while al Malik was at large, believed to be living somewhere in the Middle East, authorities said. In court papers, prosecutors said al Malik was living in Los Angeles for years before fleeing the US three days after an April 2018 interview by law enforcement. The UAE, which hosts thousands of US troops and aircraft on the Arabian Peninsula, did not respond to requests for comment on Wednesday on the indictment.

At an initial hearing in Los Angeles federal court, Barrack's lawyer, Ronak D Desai, agreed that his client could remain detained until a hearing next Monday after prosecutors submitted written arguments saying he should be denied bail as a risk to flee.

US Magistrate Judge Patricia Donahue called Grimes a "serious risk of flight" and also ordered him detained pending a hearing on Monday.

Attorney Michael Freedman, representing Grimes, said his client had no criminal history, no longer worked for Barrack's company and didn't have the access investigators alleged he once had.

"He is a fairly low-level individual in all of this," Freedman said.

Neither man entered a plea.

Barrack raised USD 107 million for Trump's inaugural celebration, which was scrutinized both for its lavish spending and for attracting numerous foreign officials and businesspeople looking to lobby the new administration.

While the indictment made no allegations of wrongdoing by the inaugural committee, or by Trump - who was referenced only as "the Candidate," the "President-Elect" and "the President" - it said Barrack boasted that he had been a 30-year partner of Trump and could help the UAE gain US influence.

"The defendants repeatedly capitalized on Barrack's friendships and access to a candidate who was eventually elected President, high-ranking campaign and government officials, and the American media to advance the policy goals of a foreign government without disclosing their true allegiances," Acting Assistant Attorney General Mark Lesko said.

Barrack has denied wrongdoing.

"Barrack has made him voluntarily available to investigators from the outset. He is not guilty and will be pleading not guilty," a spokesperson said.

Emirati officials were not identified by name either, though details in the indictment link back to Sheikh Mohammed. The crown prince also found himself entangled in special counsel Robert Mueller's report on Russian interference in America's 2016 election.

Prosecutors said Barrack also provided UAE government officials with sensitive information about developments within the Trump administration - including how senior US officials felt about a years-long boycott of Qatar conducted by the UAE and other Middle Eastern countries.

(Agencies)

WEBSITES OF AIRLINES, BANKS, TECH COMPANIES BACK ONLINE AFTER BRIEF GLOBAL OUTAGE

Zomato also reported impact due to the outage

- Several airlines, banks and technology websites were coming back online on Thursday afternoon after a brief outage, the third such widespread incident noted in just a span of two months, raising alarms across social media.
- Websites of Delta Air Lines, Costco Wholesale Corp , American Express and Home Depot were down, displaying domain name system (DNS) service errors.
- Popular restaurant aggregator Zomato also reported impact due to the outage. The company tweeted. "Our app is down, due to a widespread Akamai outage. Our teams are working to ensure all orders placed are delivered asap."

NEW YORK (TIP): Cloud services provider Akamai Technologies had given an alert on its "Edge DNS" service incident, noting a "partial outage" on its website.

"We have implemented a fix for this issue, and based on current observations, the service is resuming normal operations," it said later in a tweet.

Oracle Corp said it was monitoring the global issue related to a cloud-based DNS solution provider impacting access to many internet resources, including its own cloud services.

DNS is a service that translates readable domain names to machine readable IP addresses, connecting it to a server and delivering the requested page on the user's phone or laptop.

In June, multiple outages hit social media, government and news websites across the globe, with some reports pointing to a glitch at U.S.-based cloud computing service providers.

About 3,500 users reported issues with Airbnb's website, while nearly 1,500 Home Depot users reported problems, according to outage tracking website Downdetector. (Agencies)

IRS READIES NEARLY 4 MILLION REFUNDS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION OVERPAYMENTS

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service announced, July 13, it will issue another round of refunds this week to nearly 4 million taxpayers who overpaid their taxes on unemployment compensation received last year.

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which became law in March, excluded up to $10,200 in 2020 unemployment compensation from taxable income calculations. The exclusion applied to individuals and married couples whose modified adjusted gross income was less than $150,000.

Refunds by direct deposit will begin July 14 and refunds by paper check will begin July 16. The IRS previously issued refunds related to unemployment compensation exclusion in May and June, and it will continue to issue refunds throughout the summer.

To ease the burden on taxpayers, the IRS has been reviewing the Forms 1040 and 1040SR that were filed prior to the law's enactment to identify those people who are due an adjustment. For taxpayers who overpaid, the IRS will either refund the overpayment, apply it to other outstanding taxes or other federal or state debts owed.

For this round, the IRS identified approximately 4.6 million taxpayers who may be due an adjustment. Of that number, approximately 4 million taxpayers are expected to receive a refund. The refund average is $1,265, which means some will receive more and some will receive less.

Most taxpayers need not take any action and there is no need to call the IRS. However, if, as a result of the excluded unemployment compensation, taxpayers are now eligible for deductions or credits not claimed on the original return, they should file a Form 1040-X, Amended U.S. Individual Income Tax Return.

Taxpayers should file an amended return if they:

did not submit a Schedule 8812 with the original return to claim the Additional Child Tax Credit and are now eligible for the credit after the unemployment compensation exclusion.

did not submit a Schedule EIC with the original return to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (with qualifying dependents) and are now eligible for the credit after the unemployment compensation exclusion.

are now eligible for any other credits and/or deductions not mentioned below. Make sure to include any required forms or schedules. ***(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)***

Indians to benefit from Canada's family reunification program

30,000 ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED AS AGAINST ANNUAL INTAKE OF 10,000 UNDER PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS PROGRAM

TORONTO (TIP): A record number of 40,000 immigrant families will be allowed to sponsor their parents and grandparents to bring them to Canada in 2021.

This means 30,000 additional applications will be accepted as against the annual intake of 10,000 under the Parents and Grandparents Programme (PGP), which is aimed at family reunification.

Since Indo-Canadians are one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, they will be the major beneficiaries of the programme.

Applications can be submitted online over a two-week period, starting September 20.

Using the random selection process, those whose applications are accepted would be allowed to bring their parents and grandparents to Canada.

Since the sponsors have to show a certain minimum income requirement, the Canadian government has allowed them to include state benefits received during the Covid lockdown towards their income. This will ensure that applicants are not penalized for lost income during the pandemic.

Unveiling the programme, Canadian Immigration Minister Marco E.L. Mendicino said, "The importance of family has never been clearer than during the pandemic. That is why we are delivering on our commitment to help more families reunite in Canada.

"By strengthening the Parents and Grandparents Programme, inviting a

record number of sponsors to apply, and by adjusting our requirements to adapt to the current times, we are once again proving our commitment to helping Canadian families stay together, and thrive together."

(Source: IANS)

IRS: Families receiving monthly Child Tax Credit payments can now update their direct deposit information

Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

WASHINGTON (TIP): The Internal Revenue Service, on June 30, upgraded a key online tool to enable families to quickly and easily update their bank account information so they can receive their monthly Child Tax Credit payment.

The bank account update feature was added to the Child Tax Credit Update Portal, available only on IRS.gov. Any updates made by Aug. 2 will apply to the Aug. 13 payment and all subsequent monthly payments for the rest of 2021.

Families will receive their July 15 payment by direct deposit in the bank account currently on file with the IRS. Those who are not enrolled for direct deposit will receive a check. The IRS encourages people without current bank account information to use the tool to update their information so they can get the payments sooner.

The IRS also urges people to be on the lookout for scams related to the Child Tax Credit. People who need to update their bank account information should go directly to the IRS.gov site and not click on links received by email, text or phone.

How to update direct deposit information

First, families should use the Child Tax Credit Update Portal to confirm their eligibility for the payments. If eligible, the tool will also indicate whether they are enrolled to receive their payments by direct deposit.

If so, it will list the full bank routing number and the last four digits of their account number. This is the account that will receive their July 15 payment, and if they don't change the account, all future payments will go there as well.

Next, if they choose, they can change the bank account receiving the payment starting with the Aug. 13 payment. They can do that by updating the routing number and account number and indicating whether it is a savings or checking account. Note that only one account number is permitted for each recipient-that is, the entire payment must be direct deposited in only one account.

How to switch from paper check to direct deposit

If the Update Portal shows that a family is eligible to receive payments but not enrolled to receive direct deposits, they will receive a check each month. If they want to switch to receiving their payments by direct deposit, they can use the tool to add their bank account information. They do that by entering their bank routing number and account number and indicating whether it is a savings or checking account.

The IRS urges any family receiving checks to consider switching to direct deposit. With direct deposit, families can access their money more quickly. Direct deposit removes the time, worry and expense of cashing a check. In addition, direct deposit eliminates the chance of a lost, stolen or undelivered check.

Families can stop payments anytime

Even after payments begin, families can stop all future monthly payments if they choose. They do that by using the unenroll feature in the Child Tax Credit Update Portal. Eligible families who make this choice will still receive the rest of their Child Tax Credit as a lump sum when they file their 2021 federal income tax return next year.

To stop all payments starting in August and the rest of 2021, they must unenroll by Aug. 2, 2021.

For more information about the unenrollment process, including a schedule of deadlines for each monthly payment, see Topic J of the Child Tax Credit FAQs on IRS.gov.

Who should unenroll?

Instead of receiving these advance payments, some families may prefer to wait until the end of the year and receive the entire credit as a refund when they file their 2021 return. The Child Tax Credit Update Portal enables these families to quickly and easily do that.

The unenroll feature can also be helpful to any family that no longer qualifies for the Child Tax Credit or believes they will not qualify when they file their 2021 return. This could happen if, for example:

Their income in 2021 is too high to qualify them for the credit.

Someone else (an ex-spouse or another family member, for example) qualifies to claim their child or children as dependents in 2021.

Their main home was outside of the United States for more than half of 2021.

What is the Child Tax Credit Update Portal?

The Child Tax Credit Update Portal is a secure, password-protected tool, available to any eligible family with internet access and a smart phone or computer. It is designed to enable them to manage their Child Tax Credit accounts.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

US EASES TRAVEL RECOMMENDATIONS ON INDIA AS COVID CASES FALL

The US has lowered its travel advisory for India from the highest Level 4, meaning no travel, to Level 3, which urges citizens to reconsider it

Image for representation only

WASHINGTON (TIP): The US has lowered its travel advisory for India from the highest Level 4, meaning no travel, to Level 3, which urges citizens to reconsider it, amidst a drop in the number of Covid deaths and infections in the country.

India recorded 30,093 new coronavirus infections, the lowest in 125 days, taking the total tally of Covid cases to 3,11,74,322, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

The death toll climbed to 4,14,482 with 374 daily fatalities, the lowest in 111 days, while the active cases have declined to 4,06,130, the lowest in 117 days.

When last month's advisory was issued, India was struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 3,00,000 daily new coronavirus cases being reported.

Hospitals in many parts of the country were reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

The US also eased travel recommendations on Pakistan from Level 4 to Level 3.

The improvement of the travel advisories for India and Pakistan by the State Department on Monday comes in an acknowledgment of the improving Covid pandemic situation in the region.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Centre must give a categorical response to Pegasus row: Justice B N Srikrishna

NEW DELHI (TIP): Retired Supreme Court judge Justice B N Srikrishna, who authored the first draft of the data protection bill in 2018, says the Narendra Modi government should probe the alleged phone hacking of ministers, politicians, activists and journalists, and also explicitly state if any of its agencies uses Israeli military-grade spyware Pegasus.

Justice Srikrishna, who was appointed by this government to identify and address issues in data protection in India in 2017, described the response of the government, which has thus far denied its involvement in any illegal surveillance as "unsatisfactory".

"Even the French government has ordered an inquiry so we need to do that too," said Justice Srikrishna. "I am not at all satisfied with the government's response. They need to give a categorical answer about who's behind the hacking."

As unearthed by a collaborative investigation involving 17 media organisations, and reported by The Wire, which is one of the 17, the phone numbers of Union ministers Ashwini Vaishnaw and Prahlad Patel, opposition leaders Rahul Gandhi and Abhishek Banerjee, activists, and 38 journalists, including three from HT and one from its sister publication Mint, were potential targets of spyware.

While NSO Group, the Israeli firm that makes Pegasus, has maintained that only governments are its clients, India's IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has called the investigation an "attempt to malign Indian democracy and its well-established institutions".

Home minister Amit Shah has questioned the timing of the revelations that came out just a day before the start of the monsoon session of Parliament. "Aap chronology samajhiye! (Understand the chronology) This is a report by the disrupters for the obstructers. Disrupters are global organisations which do not like India to progress. Obstructers are political players in India who do not want India to progress," he had said.

"It has nothing to do with timing. That is irrelevant," said Justice Srikrishna. "An important question is being asked in Parliament and they (government) should answer it. That is how democracy is strengthened. They should give an open answer so that such issues are frankly dealt with."

Opposition parties, especially the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Congress have refused to let Parliament function until the government allows a discussion on the matter. TMC MPs staged a dharna on Tuesday asking Shah for a clarification after one of the reports revealed how TMC national general secretary and MP Abhishek Banerjee's phone was on the list too along with that of their election advisor Prashant Kishor.

A consortium of 17 media organisations, including The Guardian, The Washington Post and India's The Wire, had said a phone hacking software known as Pegasus was used to target potentially thousands of people around the world. The investigation was based on a data leak of around 50,000 numbers obtained by Amnesty International and Paris-based Forbidden Stories, a non-profit. To be sure, as the methodology of the investigation explains, the presence of a number does not indicate the individual's phone was hacked — just that it was of interest. Amnesty International subsequently forensically investigated 67 of these phones, and found 23 hacked and 14 showing signs of attempted penetration. *Source: HT*

Pegasus row: Storm in House, Opp says democracy in crisis

NEW DELHI (TIP): The row over an alleged surveillance operation using the Pegasus spyware rocked Parliament as the Opposition and some parties friendly to the ruling coalition, seeking answers from the government, disrupted proceedings in Lok Sabha and did not allow the treasury benches to transact any business for the second consecutive day — signalling that the first week of the Monsoon Session could be a washout.

The Congress-led Opposition did, however, allow a discussion in Rajya Sabha on the Covid-19 pandemic situation — it led the debate — after the government agreed to its demand for a debate on the floor of the House ahead of a briefing outside Parliament on the Covid preparedness levels.

There were stormy scenes in Lok Sabha where members of the Congress, Trinamool Congress and DMK raised slogans, showed placards over the alleged snooping controversy – there was an uproar over this in Rajya Sabha as well.

They demanded a probe by a Supreme Court judge into claims that the Pegasus spyware had been used to snoop on journalists, politicians, ministers, judges and others.

While YSRCP members raised issues like the Polavaram project and special status for Andhra Pradesh, members of the SAD and the AAP demanded that the government repeal the farm laws at the centre of an ongoing protest.

A second list of possible targets of alleged surveillance using the Pegasus spyware, which was published Monday by digital news platform The Wire as part of a global collaborative investigation, included mobile phones of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, political strategist Prashant Kishor, among others.

The stage for an offensive was set before the House proceedings began Tuesday with some Opposition MPs staging a protest against the alleged snooping outside Parliament House and Congress members giving multiple adjournment motion notices on the issue in Lok Sabha and notices for discussion in Rajya Sabha.

While Congress leader KC Venugopal gave a notice under Rule 267 in Rajya Sabha to suspend business and discuss the alleged use of the Pegasus spyware, party MPs Gaurav Gogoi and Hibi Eden gave adjournment notices in Lok Sabha.

Eden, in his notice, said democracy is in crisis: "There are eyes and ears snooping on us everywhere. Even those holding high offices of the government, several senior Opposition leaders, constitutional authorities, reporters and activists are being spied on and their personal conversations being watched, monitored and transferred to unknown locations and people."

TMC MPs display placards as they stage a protest over the issue of surveillance during the Monsoon Session of Parliament. Source: PTI

Indian Youth Congress (IYC) activists during a protest over Pegasus project issue near Parliament House during the monsoon session, in New Delhi. Source: PTI

"This poses a grave problem to the unity and integrity of India and is a high concern for national security. This grave crisis of snooping into our citizens' private life goes against the basic ethos of our Constitution whereby the fundamental right to privacy is being violated. I request the Government to constitute an inquiry into the allegations of Pegasus spying into citizens of our country."

When the Lok Sabha met, Opposition MPs — from the Congress, DMK, TMC, NCP, SP, BSP and YSRCP — stormed the well of the House, holding placards and raising different issues. Congress MPs were holding placards with slogans demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister and Home Minister over the alleged surveillance, and they were joined by the DMK, TMC and NCP members.

TMC's Saugata Roy tried to speak on the alleged use of the spyware to snoop on his party leader and colleague Abhishek Banerjee.

Speaker Om Birla tried to take up Question Hour, but the protesting MPs shouted slogans against the government. In four minutes, Birla adjourned the proceedings until 2 pm. The House witnessed similar scenes when it met again and it was adjourned for the day at 3 pm.

Shashi Tharoor: No need for JPC into Pegasus, IT panel will do its duty

Ruling out a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into alleged surveillance using the Pegasus spyware, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, who heads the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology, said Wednesday that the committee will "do its duty" and that the subject is "already on the mandate of my committee".

The House committee has called representatives of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of Home Affairs and Department of Telecommunications on July 28 to discuss citizens' data security and privacy.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Tharoor said there was no need to set up a JPC to look into the disclosures since the standing committee and the JPC have identical rules.

Source: The Indian Express

Non-native spouses of J&K women can now get domicile certificate

JAMMU (TIP): The Jammu and Kashmir administration has added a clause to the J&K Grant of Domicile Certificate (Procedure) Rules, 2020, allowing the spouse of a native woman married outside the Union Territory to apply for a domicile certificate.

As per the new clause, the concerned tehsildar has been authorized to issue domicile certificate to the spouse of a woman upon showing the domicile certificate of his wife as well as a valid proof of marriage. The Deputy Commissioner is the appellate authority in case of any grievance.

The order has also modified the application of domicile condition to all levels of jobs in the Jammu and Kashmir government, as the newly added clause has been brought under the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralisation and Recruitment) Act as well. A notification issued by General Administration Department on orders of Lt Governor Manoj Sinha read that "in exercise of the powers conferred by the proviso to Article 309 of the Constitution of India, read with section 15 of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Decentralization and Recruitment) Act 2010, the government hereby directs that", the new clause shall be added "in the table appended to sub rule (1) of rule 5 of the Jammu and Kashmir Grant of Domicile (Procedure) Rules, 2020, after S.No./Clause 6".

Even after the August 5, 2019 abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, the spouse of a native woman married outside Jammu and Kashmir was not issued a domicile certificate as the gazette notification issued by the Central government on August 4, 2020 provided for the issuance of a domicile certificate only to those who have resided in the Union Territory for 15 years, or have studied for seven years and appeared in Class 10 or 12 exam in the UT.

Centre, states in war of words over O2 deaths

NEW DELHI (TIP): The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and several Opposition parties were locked in a war of words over how many people in India died due to lack of oxygen supplies while battling Covid-19, a day after the Union government told Parliament that no state reported such fatalities.

The submission to Parliament brought back focus on a crisis that in part defined the devastation of the second wave, but with little accountability being fixed since. A database of media reports from the time has identified at least 619 deaths that likely occurred because of lack of oxygen, while many more may have taken place outside of inundated hospitals. Still, with most states unwilling, even on Wednesday, to accept that there were deaths on account of oxygen supplies, the Union government's submission, while insensitive, could well be technically correct.

The BJP accused the states of playing politics, and pointed to submissions by some of them to reaffirm that the central government was merely reporting data that states sent to it.

"The Centre says that health is a state subject. It says that it just collects the data, it doesn't generate it. None of them said that a death occurred in their state and Union territory due to shortage of oxygen, there is no data for that. Did the Centre generate this data? No," said Sambit Patra, BJP spokesperson.

Patra in particular pointed to the Congress, the Shiv Sena and the Aam Aadmi Party to accuse the rivals of "playing politics".

"Rahul Gandhi is part of a coalition in Maharashtra and Sanjay Raut said he is shocked. The Maharashtra high court was given an affidavit by the state government where it stated that no death took place due to oxygen shortage," he said. "On April 23 and 24, Arvind Kejriwal said 21 people died in Jaipur Golden Hospital due to oxygen shortage. He did a press conference and politicised it. This matter went to the high court. The Delhi government formed a committee and a report was submitted — it said patients got oxygen and no there was no mention of a shortage," he said.

Patra's comments appeared to be targeted at a tweet by Gandhi on Tuesday afternoon, in which the Congress leader said: "The shortage wasn't only of oxygen; it was also of empathy and facts. The shortage was there then, and it's there now."

On Wednesday, July 21, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut, whose party shares power with the NCP and Congress in Maharashtra, said people whose relatives died due to oxygen shortage should "take the Union government to court".

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain, too, attacked the Centre, saying it was "completely false" to say no one died for want of oxygen. "If no deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage, why did hospitals move high court one after another every day? Hospitals had been saying that oxygen shortage led to deaths. The media, too, flagged this issue daily," Jain told reporters.

The AAP leader said the Delhi government set up a committee to collect data on such deaths and give ?5 lakh compensation to the families of the deceased, "but the Centre got the panel disbanded through the lieutenant governor".

A day earlier, his cabinet colleague and deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia accused the Centre of a cover-up following its submission in Parliament. Neither Jain nor Sisodia put a number to deaths in Delhi on account of lack of oxygen.

As the controversy raged, officials in eight states – Goa, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh – told HT that there were no deaths due to oxygen shortage in their hospitals.

Experts said the controversy was "unnecessary and unfortunate". "The answers to parliamentary questions are compiled by respective ministries depending on inputs from various states and institutions, which means none of the states actually accepted that there were deaths due to oxygen shortage. The minister, however, could have just said that this is the official record and unofficially, there have been reports of deaths but there was no data," said Dr MC Misra, former director of All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

Source: HT

Punjab rift widens as new Cong chief Sidhu parades MLAs in show of strength

AMRITSAR (TIP) : Newly appointed Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu met several lawmakers, ministers and leaders on Wednesday, July 21, in a significant show of strength by the cricketer-turned-politician who is locked in a bitter conflict with chief minister Amarinder Singh over control of the party.

The leaders, including four cabinet ministers, Sidhu's predecessor Sunil Jakhar, and other senior functionaries, gathered at Sidhu's residence in Amritsar, before travelling to the Golden Temple and other shrines. Visuals showed large crowds with no masks or distancing at the Sikh holy shrine, with Sidhu surrounded by other leaders.

They paid obeisance at the Golden Temple and Akal Takht amid a heavy rush of devotees. The leaders also offered prayers at two prominent local Hindu shrines, Durgiana Temple and Ram Tirath Temple.

Sidhu's camp claimed that at least 62 of the Congress's 80 MLAs attended the visit but state intelligence agencies put the number closer to 42. The state goes to the polls in early 2022.

Sidhu avoided the media but minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa said, "We have not counted how many MLAs have turned up today, nor was it a show of strength. All have come to pay obeisance at Sri Darbar Sahib which is not a place of holding such show."

The development came a day after Singh's aides said the chief minister won't meet Sidhu until the latter apologised for his public attacks during the past month. On Wednesday, Sidhu's associates made it clear that the former minister wasn't going to budge.

"After all he is president of the Pradesh Congress now. Apology for what? People are with Sidhu," said Ghanaur MLA Madan Lal Jalalpur.

Three former Aam Aadmi Party legislators who joined the Congress in Singh's presence last month, and four newly appointed working presidents -- Sukhwinder Singh Danny, Kuljit Singh Nagra, Pawan Goel and Sangat Singh Gilzian – also attended the event.

Sidhu was named the state unit chief on Sunday as part of a revamp plan that involved appointing four working presidents from different communities, overriding strong objections by Singh. An upset Singh has not publicly commented on the appointment nor met Sidhu since, indicating that the acrimonious factionalism that roiled the party since May remains unresolved.

India reports 41,383 new Covid-19 cases, 507 more deaths

NEW DELHI (TIP): India on Thursday, July 21, recorded 41,383 new cases and 507 more deaths due to the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), taking the caseload and death toll to 31,257,720 and 418,987 respectively, according to the Union health ministry's update at 8am. As many as 38,652 people recovered in the 24-hour time span, taking the cumulative count of recoveries to 30,429,339, the data showed. The active cases stand at 409,394, an increase from 407,170 cases on Wednesday.

Thursday's case count is 632 less than that of Wednesday's when 42,015 people were detected Covid-19 positive. Meanwhile, the toll on Thursday is 3,491 less than that of Wednesday's when 3,998 deaths were recorded as Maharashtra reconciled its death count with 3,509 previously unreported fatalities.

A total of 450,911,712 samples have been tested for the Covid-19 disease till now, of which 1718,439 were tested in the last 24 hours, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) said on Thursday.

More than 415 million vaccine doses have been administered across the country of which 328,716,212 have received the first dose and the remaining 86,756,243 have received both doses.

More than 415 million vaccine doses have been administered across the country of which 328,716,212 have received the first dose and the remaining 86,756,243 have received both doses.

The Centre and opposition leaders have engaged in a squabble after the former claimed that no deaths due to lack of oxygen were reported by states and Union Territories during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Leaders of opposition parties such as the Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) former ally Shiv Sena have strongly criticised the above statement of a Union minister in the Rajya Sabha.

However, several states including Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have claimed that no Covid-19 deaths were reported due to the shortage of the life saving gas.

Countering the allegations made by opposition parties, BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said on?Wednesday that health is a state subject, adding no state or UT sent any data regarding deaths specifically due to a shortage of oxygen. "None of them said that a death occurred in their state and Union territory due to shortage of oxygen, there is no data for that. Did the Centre generate this data? No," Patra added. *Source: HT*

Third-wave likely to hit India by August-end

NEW DELHI (TIP): Top medical experts around the world, including top scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), have reiterated that the onset of the third wave of COVID-19 has begun.

According to these experts, the COVID-19 third wave is likely to hit India by the end of August. However, they say that it may not be as intense as the second wave.

The ICMR, in a study called, 'Plausibility of the third wave of COVID-19 in India: A mathematical modelling-based analysis,' has elaborated reasons that could possibly lead to the third wave in the country.

As per the ICMR study, the third wave in India could be triggered by multiple factors, with the first being, drop in the acquired immunity from the first and the second wave. Another reason for the new wave could possibly be an emergence of a variant that bypasses the immunity acquired from the previous variants.

Additionally, higher transmissibility from a new variant could be a major driving factor that would lead the country into a third wave of the pandemic.

Apart from this, reasons including lower caution by states and premature easing of restrictions could lead to a surge in the number of new cases in the country.

Meanwhile, the top doctor's body in the country, the Indian Medical Association (IMA), has also emphasized that the third wave is "inevitable and imminent."

The IMA has also warned individuals and institutions which are not adhering to the Centre's appropriate COVID-19 protocols. They have reiterated that "both the government and public are complacent and engaged in mass gatherings."

The WHO chief, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, had recently, warned the world that the third wave was in its "early stage," driven by the Delta variant of the virus.

Two-thirds of Indians have Covid antibodies, 40 crore still at risk: ICMR

NEW DELHI (TIP): Up to two-thirds of the Indian population above the age of six have already been infected with the coronavirus, the latest nationwide serological survey conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has found. That still leaves about 40 crore people who are susceptible to the virus.

The serosurvey, the fourth such exercise, was conducted in June and July, after the second wave had began to subside. A total of 28,975 people were tested for the presence of antibodies specific to SARS-CoV2 virus, and 67.6% were found to have them. For the first time, minors in the age group of 6 to 17 years were also included in the serosurvey, with antibodies interestingly discovered in nearly half of them.

The results of the latest serosurvey mark a huge jump in the prevalence of infection among the population from the previous such exercises, carried out in the same districts. In the third serosurvey, carried out in December 2020-January this year, less than 25% of the surveyed population was found to have the antibodies. In the first survey, carried out between May and June last year, only about 0.7% people were found with antibodies. A subsequent exercise in August and September had found antibodies in 7.1% people.

The fact that two-thirds of the

population has already been infected — with the sero-prevalence found to be the same in rural and urban areas — reduces the possibility of a fresh round of infections as severe as the second wave was. More so, because at least 32 crore people have received at least one dose of the vaccine. There would be a considerable overlap between those who have been infected, and those who have got the vaccine, but the two figures together mean that over 70% of the population over the age of six can be expected to have developed some sort of immunity against the disease.

The findings of the fourth sero-survey, are significant. Apart from dissipating some worries regarding the ferocity of a third wave, it will also help the government go ahead with its gradual opening up.

Unless the virus mutates in a manner that enables it to escape this immunity, and begins to re-infect people in a big way, the chances of a repeat of a second wave are slim.

But that does not rule out small, localised surges in districts or states. Even at the national level, a vulnerable population of 40 crore leaves a fair possibility for surges like the first wave, or smaller. As ICMR Director General Dr Balram Bhargava also warned, the epidemic was far from over.

"Two-thirds of the general population that is above the age of six years had SARS-CoV-2 infection. More importantly, a third of the population did not have any antibodies... 40 crore population of this country is still vulnerable," Bhargava said, addressing a press conference."The implications of this large serosurvey clearly show that there is a ray of hope. But there is no room for complacency. We must maintain Covid-appropriate behaviour," he said.

Asked if the government was going to plan opening of schools in a staggered way, as is being suggested by many experts, Bhargava said primary schools can be opened first, then secondary schools. "The antibody exposure in children is very similar to adults," he noted.

Among minors, the sero-prevalence was 57.2% in the age group 6-9 years and 61.6% among 10-17-year-olds.

HISTORY THIS WEEK

July 23 to July 29, 2021

"Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." - George Santayana

July 23

July 23, 1952 - Egyptian army officers launched a revolution changing Egypt from a monarchy to a republic.

July 24

A picture of destruction in Operation Gomorrah

JULY 24, 1943 - During World War II in Europe, the Royal Air Force conducted Operation Gomorrah, raiding Hamburg, while tossing bales of aluminum foil strips overboard to cause German radar screens to see a blizzard of false echoes. As a result, only twelve of 791 Allied bombers involved were shot down.

JULY 24, 1945 - At the conclusion of the Potsdam Conference in Germany, Winston Churchill, Harry Truman and China's representatives issued a demand for unconditional Japanese surrender. The Japanese, unaware the demand was backed up by an Atomic bomb, rejected the Potsdam Declaration on July 26.

BIRTHDAY - "The Liberator" Simon Bolivar (1783-1830) was born in Caracas, Venezuela. He is known as the George Washington of South America for his efforts to liberate six nations: Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia from the rule of Spain.

Alexander Dumas

BIRTHDAY - French playwright and novelist Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870) was born in Villers-Cotterets, France. His works included The Count of Monte Cristo and The Three Musketeers.

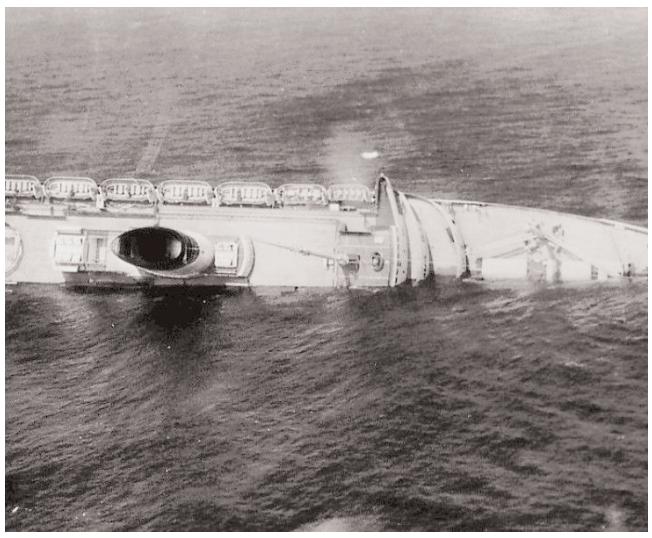
BIRTHDAY - American pilot Amelia Earhart (1898-1937) was born in Atchison, Kansas. She became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic and to fly solo from Hawaii to California. She perished during a flight from New Guinea to Howland Island over the Pacific Ocean on July 3, 1937.

July 25

JULY 25, 1898 - During the Spanish-American War, the U.S. invaded Puerto Rico, which was then a Spanish colony. In 1917, Puerto Ricans became American citizens and Puerto Rico became an unincorporated territory of the U.S. Partial self-government was granted in 1947 allowing citizens to elect their own governor. In 1951, Puerto Ricans wrote their own constitution and elected a non-voting commissioner to represent them in Washington.

JULY 25, 1909 - The world's first international overseas airplane flight was achieved by Louis Bleriot in a small monoplane. After asking, "Where is England?" he took off from France and landed in England near Dover, where he was greeted by British police.

JULY 25, 1943 - Mussolini was deposed just two weeks after the Allied attack on Sicily. The Fascist Grand Council met for the first time since December of 1939 then took a confidence vote resulting in Mussolini being ousted from office and placed under arrest. King Victor Emmanuel of Italy then ordered Marshal Pietro Badoglio to form a new government.



Andrea Doria shipwrecked and sinking

Photo / courtesy Smithsonian Magazine

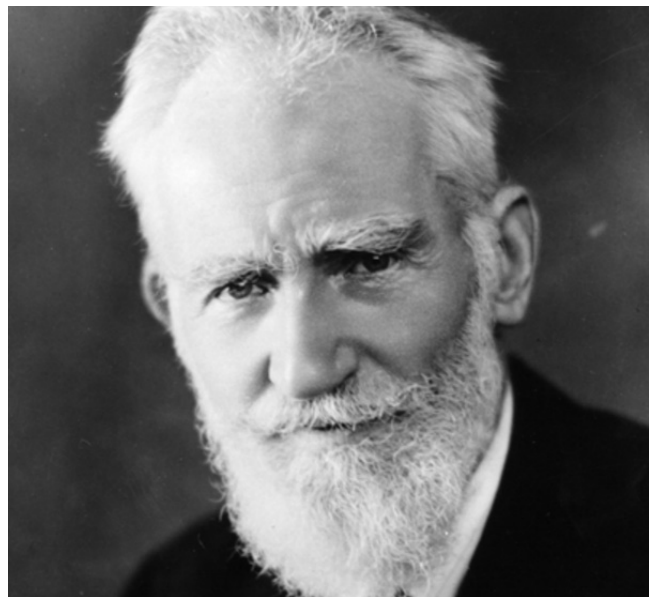
JULY 25, 1956 - The Italian luxury liner Andrea Doria sank after colliding with the Swedish liner Stockholm on its way to New York. Nearby ships came to the rescue, saving 1,634 people, including the captain and the crew, before the ship went down.

July 26

JULY 26, 1944 - The U.S. Army began desegregating its training camp facilities. Black platoons were then assigned to white companies in a first step toward battlefield integration. However, the official order integrating the armed forces didn't come until July 26, 1948, signed by President Harry Truman.

JULY 26, 1945 - The U.S. Cruiser Indianapolis arrived at Tinian Island in the Marianas with an unassembled Atomic bomb, met by scientists ready to complete the assembly.

JULY 26, 1953 - The beginning of Fidel Castro's revolutionary "26th of July Movement." In 1959, Castro led the rebellion that drove out dictator Fulgencio Batista. Although he once declared that Cuba would never again be ruled by a dictator, Castro's government became a Communist dictatorship.



George Bernard Shaw

BIRTHDAY - Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was born in Dublin, Ireland.

July 27

JULY 27, 1953 - The Korean War ended with the signing of an armistice by U.S. and North Korean delegates at Panmunjom, Korea. The war had lasted just over three years.

July 28

JULY 28, 1932 - The Bonus March eviction in Washington, D.C., occurred as U.S. Army troops under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, Major Dwight D. Eisenhower and Major George S. Patton, attacked and burned the encampments of unemployed World War I veterans. About 15,000 veterans had marched on Washington, demanding payment of a war bonus they had been promised. After two months' encampment in Washington's Anacostia Flats, forced eviction of the bonus marchers by the U.S. Army was ordered by President Herbert Hoover.

JULY 28, 1943 - During World War II, a firestorm killed 42,000 civilians in Hamburg, Germany. The firestorm occurred after 2,326 tons of bombs and incendiaries were dropped by the Allies.

Jacqueline Kennedy

BIRTHDAY - Jackie Kennedy (1929-1994) was born in Southampton, New York (as Jacqueline Lee Bouvier). She was married to John Fitzgerald Kennedy and after his death later married Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis.

July 29

BIRTHDAY - Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) was born in Dovia, Italy. He ruled Italy from 1922-1943, first as prime minister and then as "Il Duce," the absolute dictator.

NYAFF @ 20 RETURNS

BY MABEL PAIS

New York Asian Film Festival (NYAFF) Returns for 20th Year

".....one of the city's most valuable events." - The New York Times.

"After our special focus on women in front of and behind the camera at the 2020 NYAFF, we're honored to continue championing female-forward films this year." - Claire Marty, NYAFF Associate Director

"We're especially excited about all the stars aligning so we can host the outdoor screening of the Hong Kong uber-classic, "Dragon Inn AKA New Dragon Gate Inn." This marks the 10th anniversary of the film's restoration by NYAFF, and the 29th anniversary of the film, which stars two of Asia's greatest actresses of all time, Maggie Cheung and Brigitte Lin, as well as Donnie Yen in supervillain mode. What better way is there to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the festival?"- Samuel Jamier, Exec. Dir.- NYAFF & President - New York Asian Film Foundation

The Dragon Inn, HongKong uber classic

The New York Asian Film Festival's (NYAFF) 20th Edition is co-presented by The New York Asian Film Foundation and Film at Lincoln Center (FLC). This is a hybrid event with NYAFF's largest film lineup to date. The Festival will screen over 60 films, both virtually and in person, to audiences in New York and across the country. It takes place August 6-22, 2021: In person, August 6-8 at FLC's Walter Reade Theater (165 West 65th Street), August 7-22 in FLC Virtual Cinema, and August 9-22 at SVA Theatre (333 West 23rd Street).

NYAFF's 2021 lineup covers Premieres, Restorations, Nationwide Virtual Screenings and Return to Theaters. It includes two world premieres, six international premieres, 29 North American premieres, eight U.S. premieres, and nine New York premieres, showcasing the most exciting action, comedy, drama, thriller, romance, horror, and art-house films from East Asia.

Following an unprecedented year in which COVID-19 and increased violence against the Asian community in the United States presented enormous challenges, NYAFF is more committed than ever to increasing exposure of Asian representation on screen, and to providing opportunities for audiences of all communities to experience the diversity and brilliance of Asian cinema.

Following a fully virtual 19th edition, NYAFF is delighted to present almost half of this year's 60+ titles in person. To celebrate, as well as to mark its 20th year, the Festival will be co-hosting, with the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in New York and Film at Lincoln Center, a free outdoor screening in Damrosch Park of Raymond Lee's wuxia classic "Dragon Inn" AKA "New Dragon Gate Inn" on August 11. The all-star remake of King Hu's iconic "Dragon Inn" is one of the wildest and most epic films ever produced by Tsui Hark.

The Festival has established exciting new sections for its 20th edition. Films are grouped thematically, in the following sections: Beyond Borders, Crowd Pleasers, Frontlines, Genre Masters, Next/Now, Standouts, and Vanguards (see descriptions below).

LINEUP (60+ films) - more titles to be announced in the coming days. The program is subject to change.

SPECIAL 20TH ANNIVERSARY CLASSIC SCREENING IN DAMROSCH PARK

Dragon Inn AKA New Dragon Gate Inn | dir. Raymond Lee, Hong Hong 1992 | In-person Only

CROWD PLEASERS : Films with broad appeal and titles accessible to all tastes

- All U Need is Love | dir. Vincent Kok, Hong Kong 2021 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- Breakout Brothers | dir. Mak Ho Pong, Hong Kong 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- The Con-Heartist | dir. Mez Tharatorn, Thailand 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- From Today, It's My Turn!! | dir. Yuichi Fukuda, Japan 2020 | U.S. Premiere. Virtual Only
- Hold Me Back | dir. Akiko Ohku, Japan 2020 | U.S. Premiere. Virtual Only
- jigoku-no-hanazono: Office Royale | dir. Kazuaki Seki, Japan 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person Only
- My Missing Valentine | dir. Chen Yu-hsun, Taiwan 2020 | New York Premiere. Virtual Only
- One Second Champion | dir. Chiu Sin-Hang, Hong Kong 2020 | New York Premiere. Virtual Only
- Tonkatsu DJ Agetaro | dir. Ken Ninomiya, Japan 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- Zero to Hero | dir. Wan Chi-Man, Hong Kong 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person Only

GENRE MASTERS

Innovative new work that tweaks and twists genre conventions

- The Fable: The Killer Who Doesn't Kill | dir. Kan Eguchi, Japan 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person Only
- Last of The Wolves | dir. Kazuya Shiraishi, Japan 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person Only
- Limbo | dir. Soi Cheang, Hong Kong, 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person Only
- Midnight | dir. Kwon Oh-seung, South Korea 2021 | International Premiere. Virtual Only

Sweetie, You Won't Believe It | dir. Yernar Nurgaliyev, Kazakhstan 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only

NEXT/NOW

Highlighting emerging voices and promising works by up-and-coming directors

- Here And There | dir. JP Habac, Philippines 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person & Virtual
- Keep Rolling | dir. Man Lim Chung, Hong Kong 2020 | New York Premiere. Virtual Only
- Money Has Four Legs | dir.Maung Sun, Myanmar 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- The Old Town Girls | dir. Shen Yu, China 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- Shadows | dir. Glenn Chan, Hong Kong 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only

Time | dir. Ricky Ko, Hong Kong 2021 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only.

BEYOND BORDERS

Films that tell stories about characters confronting different cultures

- The Asian Angel | dir. Yuya Ishii, Japan 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person Only
- Fighter | dir. Jéro Yun, South Korea 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- Nasi Lemak 1.0 | dir. Namewee, Malaysia 2021 | International Premiere. TBD
- A Song for You | dir. Dukar Tserang, China 2020 | North American Premiere. In-person Only

The Silent Forest, NYAFF Poster Photo/ filmlinc.org/nyaff.org

FRONTLINES

Films grounded in the lives of those in marginalized communities, with narratives that examine pressing issues

- Babi | dir. Namewee, Malaysia 2020 | North American Premiere. TBD
- A Balance | dir. Yujiro Harumoto, Japan 2020 | North American Premiere. In-person Only
- I Don't Fire Myself | dir. Lee Tae-Gyeom, South Korea 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- Ninja Girl | dir. Yu Irie, Japan 2021 | World Premiere. In-person Only
- The Silent Forest | dir. Ko Chen-nien, Taiwan 2020 | New York Premiere. Virtual Only
- Three Sisters | dir. Lee Seung-won, South Korea 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- Tough Out | dir. Xu Hui-jing, China 2020 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only
- The Way We Keep Dancing | dir. Adam Wong, Hong Kong 2020 | New York Premiere. Virtual Only

STANDOUTS

Exceptional films, regardless of their premiere status

- Blue | dir. Keisuke Yoshida, Japan 2021 | U.S. Premiere. Virtual Only
- The Book of Fish | dir. Lee Joon-ik, South Korea 2021 | International Premiere. In-person Only
- Samjin Company English Class | dir. Lee Jong-pil, South Korea 2020 | New York Premiere. In-person & Virtual
- Under the Open Sky | dir. Miwa Nishikawa, Japan 2020 | New York Premiere. In-person Only

VANGUARDS

Original films that break away from formalistic and/or narrative conventions

- As We Like It | dir. Muni Wei, Chen Hung-i, Taiwan 2021 | East Coast Premiere. Virtual Only
- Barbarian Invasion | dir. Tan Chui Mui, Malaysia 2021 | North American Premiere. In-person Only
- Junk Head | dir. Takahide Hori, Japan 2021 | U.S. Premiere. In-person Only
- Over the Town | dir. Rikiya Imaizumi, Japan 2021 | U.S. Premiere. Virtual Only

Zokki | dir. Naoto Takenaka, Takayuki Yamada, Takumi Saitoh, Japan 2021 | North American Premiere. Virtual Only

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PBS FILMS AND MORE.... IN JULY

BY MABEL PAIS

THE NEUTRAL GROUND - DIR: CJ Hunt l USA l 2021 l 1h 23m l NR

NOMINEE - 2021 Critics Choice Real TV Awards
BEST ONGOING DOCUMENTARY SERIES

The Neutral Ground - Photo / pbs.org/pov

The 34th Season of acclaimed PBS Television Series 'POV' debuted on July 5. The series began with writer and comedian CJ Hunt's directorial debut in "THE NEUTRAL GROUND" which is now streaming on pbs.org/pov until August 2, 2021.

"The Neutral Ground" documents the fight over monuments in New Orleans and America's troubled romance with the Lost Cause. In 2015, director CJ Hunt began filming the New Orleans City Council's vote to remove four Confederate monuments. But when that removal is halted by death threats, Hunt sets out to understand why a losing army from 1865 still holds so much power in America.

LANDFALL - DIR: Cecilia Aldarondo l USA l 2021 l 1h 23m l NR

Official Selection: Tribeca Film Festival

WINNER: Viewfinders Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary

(DOC NYC Film Festival)

Through shard-like glimpses of everyday life in post-Hurricane Maria Puerto Rico, "LANDFALL" is a cautionary tale for our times. Set against the backdrop of the protests that toppled the governor in 2019, the film offers a prismatic portrait of collective trauma and resistance as Puerto Ricans navigate dismantled social services and newcomers eager to profit. "Landfall" is now streaming on pbs.org/pov until August 9, 2021.

STATELESS - DIR: Michèle Stephenson l USA l 2021 l 1h 23m l NR

SPECIAL JURY PRIZE: Hot Docs Film Festival
Official Selection: Tribeca Film Festival

In "STATELESS," veteran filmmaker Michèle Stephenson's new documentary follows families of those affected by the 2013 legislation stripping citizenship of Haitians of Dominican descent uncovering the complex history and present-day politics of Haiti and the Dominican Republic through the grassroots electoral campaign of a young attorney named Rosa Iris. Now streaming on pbs.org/pov until October 18, 2021.

MAYOR - DIR: David Osit l USA l 2021 l 1h 30m l NR

WINNER: Grand Jury Award, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival

Musa Hadid is the Christian mayor of Ramallah, the de facto capital of the Palestinian Authority. As he tries to keep his city running while paving sidewalks, planning holidays and building a new fountain, his job is made increasingly difficult by the Israeli occupation of his home. "MAYOR" asks with humor and outrage: how do you run a city if you don't have a country? Airing on July 26. To learn more, visit pbs.org/pov

'ALL THE STREETS ARE SILENT'

DIR: Jeremy Elkin l USA l 2021 l 1h 29m l Release Date (Limited): July 23, 2021

In the late 80s and early 90s, the streets of downtown Manhattan were the site of a collision between two vibrant subcultures: skateboarding and hip hop. Narrated by Zoo York co-founder Eli Gesner with an original score by legendary hip-hop producer Large Professor ("Nas," "A Tribe Called Quest"), "ALL THE STREETS ARE SILENT" brings to life the magic of the time period and the convergence that created a style and visual language that would have an outsized and enduring cultural effect. From the DJ booths and dance floors of the Mars nightclub to the founding of brands like Supreme, this convergence would lay the foundation for modern street style. "All the Streets Are Silent" is a love letter to New York-examining race, society, fashion, and street culture.

To learn more, visit greenwichentertainment.com/film/all-the-streets-are-silent

"BROKEN DIAMONDS"

DIR: Peter Sattler l USA l 2021 l 1h 30m l PG-13

Broken Diamonds - Photo / filmrise.com

Release Date: On Demand & in Theaters, July 23, 2021

Scott Weaver (Ben Platt, "Dear Evan Hansen") drives in his car practicing French to an audiotape. He celebrates his going away party at work. He discusses his plans of moving to Paris to be a writer. His stepmother Cookie calls, informing him that his dad has passed away in his sleep, and Scott needs to pick up his sister and come see the body before the crematorium van arrives. Scott takes his sister Cindy (Lola Kirke, "Mistress America") to their dad's house. During the drive Cindy changes her mind and wants to go home, but there's no turning back. Cindy refuses to see the body and asks Cookie if she killed her father. On the car ride home, Scott tells Cindy that he's leaving town and Cindy complains about her neighbors. When Scott takes Cindy home, we discover she lives in a halfway house for the Mentally Ill and he must temporarily take her in. To learn more, visit filmrise.com/film/broken-diamonds

(Mabel Pais writes on Social Issues, The Arts and Entertainment, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness.)

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NYAFF 2021 IN-PERSON VENUES/VIRTUAL PLATFORM

In-person venues:

Film at Lincoln Center (FLC), August 6 - 8, 2021

Walter Reade Theater, 165 West 65th Street

SVA Theatre: August 9 - 22, 2021

333 West 23rd Street

Virtual platform:

Film at Lincoln Center (FLC) Virtual Cinema, August 7 - 22, 2021

NYAFF TICKET PRICING AND INFORMATION:

Tickets for the 20th New York Asian Film Festival go on sale Friday, July 23 at noon.

For additional information, updates and ticket prices for virtual and in-person access, individual tickets and All-Access Passes, visit Film at Lincoln Center at filmlinc.org, New York Asian Film Festival at nyaff.org, and on social media @filmlinc and @nyaff.

NEW YORK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL (NYAFF)

Now in its 20th year, the New York Asian Film Festival (NYAFF) is North America's leading festival of popular Asian cinema, which The Village Voice has called "the best film festival in New York," and The New York Times has called "one of the city's most valuable events." Launched in 2002, the festival selects only the best, strangest, and most entertaining movies to screen for New York audiences, ranging from mainstream blockbusters and art-house eccentricities to genre and cult classics. It was the first North American film festival to champion the works of Johnnie To, Bong Joon-ho, Park Chan-wook, Takashi Miike, and other auteurs of contemporary Asian cinema. Since 2010, it has been produced in collaboration with Film at Lincoln Center.

For more information, visit
nyaff.org
instagram.com/newyorkasianfilmfestival
facebook.com/NYAFF
twitter.com/NYAFF
www.#nyaff2021

THE NEW YORK ASIAN FILM FOUNDATION

The New York Asian Film Foundation Inc. is America's premier organization dedicated to the exhibition and appreciation of Asian film culture in all its forms, with year-round festivals and programs, and a view to building bridges between Asia and America.

The New York Asian Film Foundation's flagship event is the annual New York Asian Film Festival (NYAFF), which has been presented in collaboration with Film at Lincoln Center (filmlinc.org) since 2010. Now entering its 20th year, NYAFF is North America's leading festival of Asian cinema. The Festival is supported by several Asian organizations in New York. To learn more, visit nyaff.org

(Mabel Pais writes on The Arts and Entertainment, Social Issues, Spirituality, and Health & Wellness.)

Kriti Sanon reveals she had to put on 15 kgs in 2 months for Mimi

Kriti Sanon, who is gearing up for the release of her next outing Mimi, for which she had to put on weight for her role of a surrogate mother, recently revealed how she could not shoot for any other project for some months due to this.

Talking about setting aside a chunk of some months for the shoot of Mimi, Kriti said, "I had to put on 15 kgs in 2 months for Mimi which I could start losing only once I had completed the film."

She added, "It made more sense to not take up any other project during the shoot and even till a few months after since I needed to lose the weight before starting any other project. I did let go of a lot of award show performances too in that period because dancing makes me lose weight very fast."

Disha Patani sets internet on fire with her photo in bikini

Disha Patani is known for setting the internet on fire once in a while with her bikini photos. The actor works out regularly and has quite a toned body, and a hot one too. Disha has once again raised the temperature on her Instagram with a brand new bikini photo.

In the picture, Disha can be seen thigh-deep in sparkling blue water with palm trees in the background. The actress is donning a white bikini and looks beautiful and sultry in her right profile. With the perfect combination of white, blue and green, Disha's latest picture gives serious vacation goals. She has shared the post with a sun and otter emoji.

Mesmerised with the 'Radhe' actor's photo, her fans dropped heart and fire emojis in the comment section. "Hottisha is back," wrote one user while another commented, "You beauty."

This is not the first time Disha is flaunting her sexy curves. From printed bikinis, monokinis to cut-out swimsuits, Disha has managed to set off trends and inspire fashion and fitness enthusiasts who are also beach bums.

Last week, Disha shared a photo of herself in a leopard print bikini which had fans going weak in the knees.

A few days ago, Disha was spotted with her rumoured beau Tiger Shroff as he practised football with other Bollywood celebs like Ranbir Kapoor, Ibrahim Ali Khan and Arjun Kapoor. Even in sportswear, the actor looked ravishing.

Disha Patani nails a perfect backflip

Disha Patani is known for setting the internet on fire with her posts. The actress seems to have done it once again by flaunting her flexibility. She shared a clip, wherein she can be seen nailing a backflip effortlessly. Not only fans, but she also blew away celebrities with her fitness level.

This is not the first time that Disha Patani has stunned everyone with a backflip. The actress is becoming a pro at it and her latest Instagram post is proof. Taking to her official Instagram handle, the actress shared a video, in which she is seen standing on a stack of mattresses. She then carried out a smooth backflip and finished it off by posing with a victory sign.

Sussanne Khan and Karan Tacker praised the actress in the comments section. While Sussanne wrote, "Wowwww (sic)," Karan dropped clapping hands emojis.

Salman goes into beast mode for 'Tiger 3'

Superstar Salman Khan's latest Instagram post is proof of the fact that he is preparing hard for his role in his most anticipated film 'Tiger 3'.

Hopping onto Instagram, Salman posted a video of his workout session at a gym. In the clip, one can see Salman's reflection in a gym's windowpane where he is seen working on his biceps.

"I think this guy is training for Tiger 3," Salman captioned the video.

Salman's post has left his fans super impressed. "Oh my god... can't wait to see your transformation," a user commented. "Amazing," another one wrote. "Bhai jaan aapki koi takkar nahi kar sakta," commented yet another Instagram user.

Several others dropped heart and fire emojis in the comments section of the post.

Earlier, Emraan Hashmi, who will be seen essaying the role of the antagonist in 'Tiger 3', too took to Instagram to show off his washboard abs. In the photo, Emraan is seen standing in his gym dressed in his joggers, a headband and a mask, flaunting his ripped body.

For the unversed, the first movie in the 'Tiger' franchise was 'Ek Tha Tiger' (2012), directed by Kabir Khan. The second instalment 'Tiger Zinda Hai' (2017) was helmed by Ali Abbas Zafar. The third will be helmed by Maneesh Sharma.

As per media reports, after a gap of three months, Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif will resume the shooting of 'Tiger 3' in Mumbai from July 23. The international schedule of the film is reportedly slated for August.

Raj Kundra, arrested in porn case

Businessman Raj Kundra, the husband of actor Shilpa Shetty, was arrested by the Mumbai Police on Monday night in a case related to the production and streaming of porn films. He has been remanded to police custody till July 23.

During an earlier appearance of Kapil Sharma's show with his wife Shilpa Shetty and sister-in-law Shamita Shetty, Raj Kundra was asked about his source of income. Kapil said that Raj is seen playing football with Bollywood stars, going on exotic vacations and taking Shilpa shopping. "Bina kuch kiye paise kaise kamate ho aap (How do you earn money without doing anything)," Kapil asked, as Raj, Shilpa and Shamita burst out laughing.

Raj was booked under IPC Sections 420 (cheating), 34 (common intention), 292 and 293 (related to obscene and indecent advertisements and displays), and relevant sections of the IT Act and the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, an official told PTI.

Judy Greer to play the lead in 'LA Bound' film

Actor Judy Greer, famous for starring in the Oscar-winning film The Descendants, 27 Dresses and shows like The Big Bang Theory, is set to play the lead in feature LA Bound, written and directed by Chris McGowan.

In LA Bound, a small-town high school soccer star ruins his college scholarship and moves to Los Angeles to pursue acting to pay homage to his late sister's passion for the arts.

Greer will play Carol Berry opposite Brec Bassinger. David Brown is attached to produce the film. Greer will next be seen in Universal/Blumhouse's much-awaited David Gordon Green directed sequel Halloween Kill, which is slated to be released on October 15.

The actor is currently shooting for the Disney Plus feature Hollywood Stargirl, directed by Julia Hart and also starring Uma Thurman and Grace VanderWaal.

Britney Spears says she's not even close to sharing her truth about conservatorship fight

Britney Spears recently gave her testimony in court and since then support for the singer amid the conservatorship battle has increased. Spears took on social media to address things that have been bothering her for years.

Spears has also called out the people who have claimed to be close to her and shared supportive messages for Britney on social media for remaining silent for so many years. However, the singer has now shared a post on Instagram to speak out her truth.

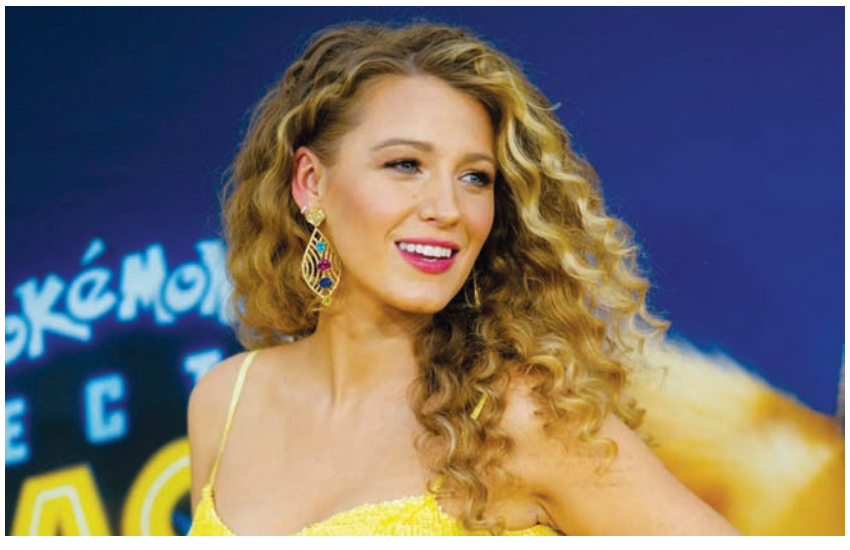
Britney Spears said that she has just started to share her story. The caption to the post read, "So I said "life goes on" in one of my recent posts but it's always easier said than done !!!!! In that moment that's what felt was the easiest to say but I think we all know that I will never be able to let go and fully move on until I've said all I needed to say … and I'm not even close !!!!"

She also said, "I was told to stay quiet about things for so long and I finally feel like I'm just getting here," while continuing to tell why she wants to tell her truth.

Britney Spears has been under the court-appointed conservatorship of her father Jamie Spears since 2008, and after 13 long years, she is ready to talk about it and fight against it. The singer also recently won the right to hire a lawyer of her own. Attorney Matthew Rosengart will now handle the case of Spears.

Spears has also addressed the legal drama over social before. She said on an Instagram post on Saturday, As I said … hope is all I have right now … you're lucky I post anything at all … if you don't like what you see, unfollow me !!! People try to kill hope because hope is one of the most vulnerable and fragile things there is !!!! I'm gonna go read a mother f—ing fairy tale now !!!!"

Blake slams tabloid for sharing 'deceitful' pics of her daughters



Actor Blake Lively has called out an Australian tabloid after they posted a photo of her children on Instagram. Blake and her husband actor Ryan Reynolds have three daughters--James, Inez, and Betty.

The tabloid shared the picture collage highlighting the faces of Blake Lively's children. The collage showed James and Inez in a stroller as Blake held Betty in her arms, as per Just Jared. It added that another photo showed her 'smiling brightly and waving at the cameras'.

The Gossip Girl actor took to the comments section of the post and shared the 'real story' behind the photos. Blake Lively said, "You edit together these images together to look like I'm happily waving. But that is deceitful. The real story is: My children were being stalked by a men all day. Jumping out. And then hiding. A stranger on the street got into words with them because it was so upsetting for her to see. When I tried to calmly approach the photographer you hired to take these pictures in order to speak to him, he would run away. And jump out again at the next block."

Khloe Kardashian & Tristan Thompson reunite for first time since split

Could on-again, off-again co-parents Khloe Kardashian, 37, and Tristan Thompson, 30, be back together? The exes were captured by paparazzi having a reunion while picking up their daughter True, 3, from her dance class in LA on July 20th. In the pics, WHICH YOU CAN SEE HERE, Tristan is seen carrying his daughter, while KoKo stood alongside them, carrying a sippy cup. The Revenge Body star sported a pair of black leggings and a black T-shirt, paired with neon green sneakers and a Prada fanny pack. She looked at ease and wore a black mask amid rising COVID-19 cases.

Video footage from the outing showed Tristan and Khloe getting into the car together, after the Celtics star put True in her carseat. This public reunion comes about a month after reports claimed Khloe and Tristan split following more allegations of infidelity, which Tristan denied. Recall, after Khloe revealed she and Tristan were very much together during the Keeping Up With The Kardashians reunion, sources claimed that more cheating allegations came out against Tristan, which caused the split. The Good American mogul felt "embarrassed, devastated and heartbroken," a source told HL at the time of the split.

"Khloe was being honest about the status of their relationship at the time of the reunion taping. She had nothing to hide and was being completely candid about where things stood between her and Tristan," the insider said. "Khloe and Tristan are getting along fine and just focused on co-parenting True, plain and simple. That's all Khloe cares about and she's not interested in any bad blood or drama between them."

More recently, a People Magazine insider claimed that Khloe is still "very loyal" to Tristan, but is also "single and seems okay with it." "She continues to co-parent with Tristan and they spend time together as a family. Even though he has disappointed Khloé so many times, she is still very loyal to Tristan," the report detailed. "He will always be special to her. It's very possible that they will get back together eventually."

Source: Hollywoodlife

CHILDREN'S TALES OF SHEEP AND WOLVES INCITE SEDITION, HK POLICE SAY

HONK KONG (TIP): Hong Kong police arrested five people on July 22 on sedition charges, saying that children's books they had published featuring wolves and sheep as characters were aimed at inciting hatred towards the city's government amongst youngsters.

The arrests were the latest involving suspected critics of Hong Kong's government that have raised fears about the shrinking space for dissent since Beijing imposed a national security law in June 2020 to put an end to pro-democracy protests in the semi-autonomous city.

Police said one book, "Defenders of the Sheep Village", was connected to the protests. In the story, wolves want to occupy the village and eat the sheep, who in turn use their horns to fight back.

Those arrested were members of a speech therapists' union that produced books for children. Police said the five were two men and three women aged between 25 and 28. They did not identify them by name.

The five were arrested on suspicion of conspiring to publish seditious material under a colonial-era law that had been rarely used before the anti-government protests began in the former British colony.

Senior police superintendent Steve Li told a media briefing that police were concerned by the books because of the information inside for children which "turns their mind and develop a moral standard to be against society".

They highlighted two other books produced by the union in addition to "Defenders of the Sheep Village".

The second told the story of 12 sheep taken by wolves to the beasts' village where they would be cooked, potentially alluding to the 12 Hong Kong people captured by China in August last year at sea as they tried to flee the city by boat. Li said the story was not factual and incited hatred against authorities. The third book tells the story of wolves sneaking through a hole into the sheep village and shows the wolves as dirty and the sheep as clean. This aimed to create hatred against the government, Li said.

First convictions under the sedition law can carry a maximum penalty of two years in prison, police said. The General Union of Hong Kong Speech Therapists could not be reached for comment. Authorities have denied any erosion of rights and freedoms in Hong Kong - which returned to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" formula aimed at preserving its freedoms and role as a financial hub - but say China's national security is a red line. Security officials have said law enforcement action is based on evidence and has nothing to do with an individual's political stance, background or profession. Reuters

Israel eyes spyware export curbs; Macron, Merkel troubled by abuse reports

JERUSALEM (TIP): An Israeli parliamentary panel may seek changes to defence export policy over reports that software sold by Israel's NSO Group was used to spy on journalists, officials and rights activists in several countries, a senior lawmaker said on July 22.

Among suspected targets of NSO's Pegasus software is French President Emmanuel Macron, who convened his Cabinet on Thursday over calls for investigations. Amid mounting EU concern, German Chancellor Angela Merkel told reporters in Berlin that spyware should be denied countries where there is no judicial oversight.

"We certainly have to look anew at this whole subject of licenses granted by DECA," Ram Ben-Barak, head of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, told Israel's Army Radio, referring to the government-run Defence Export Controls Agency.

Israel has appointed an inter-ministerial team to assess reports based on an investigation by 17 media organisations that said Pegasus had been used in attempted or successful hacks of smartphones using malware that enables the extraction of messages, records calls and secretly activates microphones.

NSO has rejected the reporting by the media partners as "full of wrong assumptions and uncorroborated theories". Reuters has not independently verified the reporting.

NSO says it does not know the specific identities of people against whom clients use Pegasus. If it receives a complaint of Pegasus having been misused by a client, NSO can retroactively acquire the target lists and, should the complaint prove true, unilaterally shut down that client's software, the company says.

Other world leaders among those whose phone numbers the news organisations said were on a list of possible targets include Pakistani Prime Minister Imram Khan and Morocco's King Mohammed VI.

The Israeli government team "will conduct its checks, and we will be sure to look into the findings and see if we need to fix things here", said Ben-Barak. A former deputy chief of Mossad, he said proper use of Pegasus had "helped a great many people".

TARGETING TERRORISTS, CRIMINALS

DECA is within Israel's Defence Ministry and oversees NSO exports. Both the ministry and the firm have said that Pegasus is meant to be used to track terrorists or criminals only, and that all foreign clients are vetted governments.

But the alleged misuse has stirred questions within Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's cross-partisan coalition, one of whose members, the liberal party Meretz, queried Defence Minister Benny Gantz about NSO exports in a meeting on Thursday.

Gantz "emphasised the importance of upholding human rights within the framework of weapons sales," a joint statement said.

After Army Radio also aired an interview on Thursday with Szabolcs Panyi, a Hungarian journalist who said Pegasus had been found on his cellphone, NSO chief Shalev Hulio vowed to investigate.

"If he was indeed a target, I can assure you already that we will cut off the systems of whoever took action against him, because it's intolerable for someone to do something like this," Hulio told the station.

In keeping with NSO and Defence Ministry refusal to identify client countries, Hulio stopped short of confirming that Hungary had Pegasus. Budapest has not commented on the matter other than to say Hungary's intelligence-gathering is conducted lawfully.

He said NSO has worked with 45 countries and rejected around 90 others as potential clients. The company has shut down five Pegasus systems for abuse, Hulio said, adding that the software cannot be used against Israeli or US mobile phones. Reuters

Gaza City blast kills 1, injures 10, shakes crowded area

GAZA CITY (TIP): An explosion tore through a house in a popular market in the Gaza Strip on July 22, killing one person and wounding 10, the Palestinian territory's interior ministry said.

It was not immediately clear what caused the explosion.

The blast in the Al-Zawiya area collapsed large parts of the house and damaged dozens of buildings and shops nearby, according to the statement.

Explosives engineering teams were investigating; civil defence teams and the police were able to control the ensuing fire.

The blast shook the neighbourhood on the third day of Eid al-Adha, a Muslim holiday.

The Israeli army signalled it wasn't involved, calling the explosion an "internal" matter in Gaza.

Gaza City is already struggling with heavy damage sustained from an 11-day war in May between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers.

At least 254 people were killed in Gaza during the conflict, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry.

Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

The World Bank earlier this month said rebuilding Gaza would cost USD 485 million, including up to USD 380 million to repair the physical damage alone. AP

China floods: Death toll goes up to 33 in heaviest rainfall in 1,000 years

BEIJING (TIP): The death toll in central China's unprecedented flash floods triggered after the heaviest rainfall in 1,000 years has reached 33 with eight people missing, officials said on July 22.

The torrential rain has affected about three million people in Henan province and a total of 376,000 local residents have been relocated to safe places, the provincial emergency management department said. Rainwater has damaged more than 215,200 hectares of crops, causing a direct economic loss of about 1.22 billion yuan (about USD 188.6 million), state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The massive floods, described by meteorologists as a once-in-a-lifetime event, has resulted in apocalyptic scenes in Henan and its provincial capital Zhengzhou, a metropolis of 12.6 million, with its public avenues and subway tunnels getting submerged with surging waters.

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) blasted a damaged dam to divert the surging waters of a flooded river after the province received the heaviest rainfall in 1,000 years.

Twelve people were killed and five others injured when subway stations were hit by the floods. The victims died when their subway train was hit with rapidly rising floodwaters on Tuesday night. Two people were killed when a wall collapsed.

Videos posted on the Chinese social media showed petrified passengers trapped in subway trains clinging on to handlebars desperately waiting for help as floodwaters raised up to their necks.

Official media released videos of rescue workers helping people stuck in subway tunnels to safety. Videos showed people trying to wade through floods in the downtown of the city while scores of cars and other vehicles washed away. Some videos also showed people falling into the massive cave-ins of the roads.

Rainwater poured into the subway tunnel of the city's Line Five, trapping an unknown number of passengers aboard a subway train. Terming the flood situation as grim, President Xi Jinping ordered the deployment of the PLA and said authorities at all levels must give top priority to ensuring people's safety and property as massive floods ravaged the province and Zhengzhou city.

Xinhua quoted President Xi as saying that the rainfall has made the flood control situation very severe, causing massive waterlogging in Zhengzhou and other cities, water levels in some rivers exceeding the alarm levels, and damages to dams of some reservoirs.

He said that sections of railways have also been shut down, and some flights have been cancelled.Henan is home to many cultural sites and a major base for industry and agriculture. Reports said Shaolin Temple, known for its Buddhist monks' mastery of martial arts, was also severely hit by the floods.

Heavy waterlogging has led to the virtual paralysis of the city's road traffic.Over 80 bus lines have been suspended, more than 100 temporarily detoured and the subway service has also been temporarily suspended.

Police officers, firefighters and workers from the local sub-district have arrived at the site for the rescue operation, the report said.

The water level inside the subway carriage is receding, and the passengers are temporarily safe, it said. More than 160 train services were stopped at Zhengzhoudong Railway Station. The airport in Zhengzhou cancelled 260 flights into and out of the city, and local railway authorities also halted or delayed some trains. Affected by the rainstorms, several residential communities in the city are without tap water and electricity.

Both Henan provincial and Zhengzhou municipal meteorological bureaus have raised the emergency response for meteorological disasters to level I. Hospitals also ran out of electricity, the Post reported. The Zhengzhou flood control headquarters issued a text message on Wednesday, warning residents there was a grave safety hazard in the Guojiazui reservoir and calling on them to evacuate the southwestern part of the city immediately. PTI

'Pingdemic' grips Britain as fears of food shortages grow

LONDON (TIP): Britain's supermarkets, wholesalers and hauliers were struggling on July 22 to ensure stable food and fuel supplies after an official health app told hundreds of thousands of workers to isolate after contact with someone with Covid-19.

Coronavirus cases in Britain have been broadly rising for a month, with more than 44,000 recorded on Wednesday.

British newspapers carried front-page pictures of empty shelves in supermarkets. Reuters reporters said food items were widely available in London shops, although there were some shortages of bottled water, soft drinks, and some salad and meat products.

"We're very concerned about the situation," Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng told Sky when asked about reports of empty supermarket shelves in some areas. "We're monitoring the situation."

He said he did not recognise Sky's characterisation of "bare" supermarket shelves.

Britain's second-largest supermarket group Sainsbury's said customers would generally be able to find the products they want, though perhaps not every brand.

"We are working hard to ensure customers can find what they need," said a Sainsbury's spokesperson.

"While we might not always have the exact product a customer is looking for in every store, large quantities of products are being delivered to stores daily and our colleagues are focused on getting them onto the shelves as quickly as they can."

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's bet that he could reopen England's economy because so many people have been vaccinated has been tarnished by the "pingdemic" in which people have been told by the contact-tracing app to isolate for 10 days.

The drastic reduction in staffing that has resulted has sown chaos through sectors as diverse as food supplies, haulage, supermarkets, hospitality, manufacturing and media. To avoid disruption, many have simply deleted the app from their phones.

British ministers say the app plays an important role in countering the spread of the virus and has allowed some workers in critical roles to carry on working.

The country has the world's seventh-highest Covid-19 death toll and record new infections are forecast following the July 19 lifting of restrictions in England, characterised by Johnson as "freedom day".

But a rapid vaccination programme that has seen 87% of adults receive one vaccine dose and more than 68% two doses appears to have weakened the link between infections and deaths, with daily fatalities remaining relatively low.

ON THE EDGE : Many businesses said the situation was becoming grave.

Britain's food supply chains are "right on the edge of failing" as absence related to Covid-19 has aggravated a critical shortage of labour, a meat industry body said on Wednesday.

Supermarket group Iceland said it has closed a number of stores due to staff shortages.— Reuters

RUSSIA FINES FACEBOOK, TELEGRAM FOR FAILING TO DELETE CONTENT

MOSCOW (TIP): A Russian court fined US social media giant Facebook 6 million roubles ($81,350) and messaging app Telegram 11 million roubles on July 22 for failing to delete illegal content, the latest salvo in a standoff between Russia and Big Tech.

Moscow has taken steps in recent months to regulate and curb the power of social media and technology giants, imposing small fines for content violations, while seeking to force foreign firms to open offices in Russia and store Russians' personal data on its territory.

Moscow's Tagansky District Court said it had issued Facebook with fines totalling 6 million roubles for two different administrative offences related to stipulations that website owners delete banned information or face penalties.

Telegram was fined a total of 11 million roubles for three different offences, the court said.

Facebook and Telegram did not immediately respond to requests for comment. (Reuters)

Global Covid-19 caseload tops 191.9 mn

WASHINGTON (TIP): The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 191.9 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 4.12 million and vaccinations soared to over 3.71 billion, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Thursday, July 22, morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload, death toll and the total number of vaccine doses administered stood at 191,923,269, 4,125,810 and 3,713,022,529, respectively.

The US continues to be the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 34,223,853 and 609,846, respectively, according to the CSSE.

In terms of infections, India follows in the second place with 31,216,337 cases.

The other worst countries with over 3 million cases are Brazil (19,473,954), France (5,973,880), Russia (5,955,089), Turkey (5,554,317), the UK (5,586,497), Argentina (4,798,851), Colombia (4,679,994), Italy (4,297,337), Spain (4,219,723), Germany (3,756,497) and Iran (3,603,527), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Brazil comes second with 545,604 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 100,000 are India (418,480), Mexico (236,810), Peru (195,243), Russia (148,229), the UK (129,182), Italy (127,905), Colombia (117,482), France (111,737) and Argentina (102,818).

Source: IANS

TRACKING THE VIRUS

GLOBAL		INDIA	
Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
191,923,269	4,125,810	31,257,720	418,987

Over 4mn Children In US Infected With Covid-19

Over 4 million children in the US have tested positive for Covid-19 since the onset of the pandemic, according to a latest report of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Children's Hospital Association.

As of July 15, almost 4.09 million children have been infected with Covid-19. After decreases in weekly reported cases over the past couple of months, the country began to see increases in cases in July, according to the report.

Over 23,500 child cases were reported in the week ending July 15, according to the report. Children represented 14.2 per cent of all Covid-19 cases in the country, the Xinhua news agency reported.

Children accounted for 1.3 per cent to 3.6 per cent of total reported hospitalisations, and 0 to 0.26 per cent of all Covid-19 deaths, said the report.

"At this time, it still appears that severe illness due to Covid-19 is rare among children. However, there is an urgent need to collect more data on longer-term impacts of the pandemic on children, including ways the virus may harm the long-term physical health of infected children, as well as its emotional and mental health effects," the AAP said in the report.

New Covid-19 cases, deaths and spread of variants all on the rise: WHO

GENEVA (TIP): While previous months saw decreasing cases of Covid-19 worldwide, the trend has changed this month and last week saw a 12 per cent increase in the number of cases, while deaths and spread of variants are also on the rise, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported on Wednesday, July 21.

A total of 3.4 million new cases have been confirmed last week, during which approximately an average of 490,000 cases were identified each day, compared with 400,000 cases the week before. It confirmed that the novel coronavirus is spreading faster in the world, the WHO said in its weekly update.

Last week, Indonesia, the United Kingdom and Brazil were the most affected places with respectively 350,273, 296,447 and 287,610 cases, the WHO said.

The Geneva-based organization also reported that if the virus continues to spread at this rate, the global number of Covid-19 cases could reach 200 million in the next three weeks, the Xinhua news agency reported.

Furthermore, new deaths are also increasing, with 57,000 deaths reported

last week as the death toll of the coronavirus has reached well over four million people.

Variants are continuing their progression, as the Alpha variant was seen in 180 countries, territories or areas, and 13 new countries, territories or areas reported cases of the Delta variant.

While the Alpha variant is still detected more often than its counterpart, the Delta variant is believed by the WHO to be 50 per cent more transmissible and might become the dominant form of the virus in the next few months.

Covid-19: Half of Australians in lockdown again

CANBERRA (TIP): Anger is growing in Australia as 13 million people — about half the nation's population, endure fresh lockdowns to deal with the Covid-19 outbreaks. Many people have expressed frustration at being back in the highly policed lockdowns 18 months into the pandemic.

A third state, South Australia, joined Victoria and parts of New South Wales in lockdown on Tuesday. Fewer than 14 per cent of Australians are vaccinated – the worst rating among OECD nations, the BBC reported.

Australia's two biggest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, are among places facing uncertainty over when to re-open.

Re-openings in the UK and the US have increased pressure on the federal government.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has been heavily criticised over the slow vaccination rate, but has resisted calls to apologise.

"No country has got their pandemic response 100 per cent. I think Australians understand that," he told reporters on Wednesday, July 21.

He again cited Australia's success in keeping overall infections well below many nations. It has recorded 915 deaths.

Morrison noted that the UK had seen

over 90 deaths in a single day on Tuesday.

But Labor frontbencher Jim Chalmers said: "This is a prime minister who hides while people hurt."

Until recently, Australia had been largely praised for its strategy of border closures, quarantine programmes and snap lockdowns.

But the highly contagious Delta variant has challenged these defences in the past month.

The outbreak in Sydney – Australia's largest city – has infected more than 1,500 people.

Officials reported 110 new cases on Wednesday, despite the city's fourth week of lockdown.

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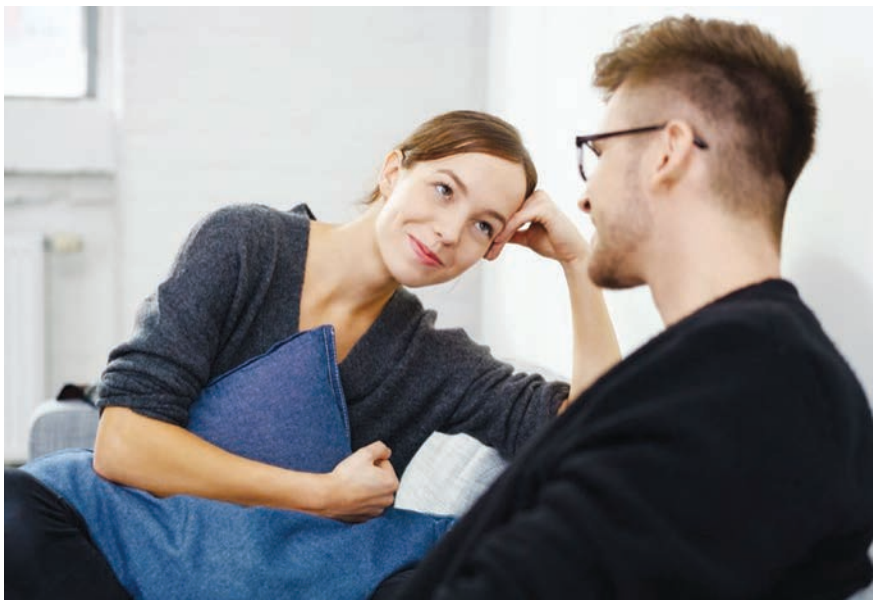
Things every woman loves to hear

There are endless ways you can compliment women. You can tell them their outfit is killer, that their eyes shine like the light from the sun, or that you love the way they're able to argue with you for an hour straight about why poha is the best breakfast. And yet, so many people (men) seem to get it wrong.

Actions speak louder than words, but that doesn't mean that what you say doesn't hold significance in your relationship. There are certain things women appreciate, and they don't always involve gifts and flowers. When it comes to making a woman feel loved, think simple, thoughtful, and sweet.



You smell really good

Whether it's your floral perfume, lavender essential oils, or the bold scent of fearlessness, it's nice to know that other people have noticed how good you smell.

You look so healthy

Instead of telling someone they look so "skinny," or "little," maybe you should just let them know they look healthy. Because ultimately, compliments should make a person feel good about themselves.

You are a genius

Even if it's something like suggesting a two-for-one pizza deal, someone's ingenuity must be recognised.

Your hair looks amazing

Many women will agree that it takes time and effort to look effortlessly good, so compliment away!

What's your skin regimen?

Asking what women do in terms of face and make-up is one of the biggest compliments.

Can you share your recipe

This is an indirect way of saying, "I can't live without this thing you made" and that you're a good cook. Let it be known you appreciate a woman's culinary efforts, because we're telling you, it's not easy making a tasty salad.

I love your house

If you like what a woman's done with her place, totally let her know, because chances are she wants someone to appreciate her interior designing skills.

You're good at what you do

We should take pride in what we do for a living. Doesn't matter if it's teaching, cooking, singing, marketing, engineering, or writing. Everyone wants to be amazing.

FOOD CORNER

Rasmalai

Ingredients

Milk - 1 litre, Paneer - 100 g, Sugar - 3/4 cup, Saffron Strands - 4, Almonds - 1 tsp, sliced, Pistachios - 1 tsp, sliced, Cardamom Powder - 1/4 tsp, Maida - 2 tsp

Method

- Crumble the paneer and mix with maida to a smooth dough.
- Make small balls and lightly flatten them.
- Heat 1 cup of water in a pan.
- Add 1/4 cup of sugar and bring to a boil until sugar has fully dissolved.
- Remove from flame.
- While it is still hot, add the paneer balls and cover with a lid.
- Keep aside for few hours.
- Boil the milk in a heavy pan until reduced in half.
- Add 1/2 cup of sugar and stir well until fully dissolved.
- Remove from flame.
- Add cardamom powder, saffron strands and mix well.
- Remove the balls from the sugar syrup and squeeze gently.
- Add to the hot milk.
- Garnish with almonds and pistachios.
- Keep it in the fridge for 2 to 3 hours.
- Serve chilled.

How to deal with a partner who can't stop cheating?

Finding out that your partner has been unfaithful can hit you like a ton of bricks. Your marriage may be thrown into a state of crisis that may destroy it. It is natural to want to know why your partner cheated, but there is rarely a simple answer to why someone becomes unfaithful. It could be a symptom of other problems in your marriage, it could relate to something in your partner's past, or it could be totally unrelated to you or to your marriage. No matter the cause, you'll have a lot of complicated feelings to sort through, and a lot to think about as you decide how to move forward. These tips can help you cope with the aftermath of betrayal:

Count yourself out

This is less about you and more about your partner. So, quit blaming yourself. Realise that it is a flaw in your significant other that got them to stray from the relationship, so spare yourself thoughts like, 'I am not good enough' or 'I should have been better.' Remember this, if you weren't good enough, they should have dumped you instead of keeping you as a backup while enjoying with someone else.

Confront the person

Yes, we know this sounds more difficult than it seems, but it is important no matter how hard it may be. You cannot let this go without hearing the words, 'Yes I cheated.' Address the person with your doubts (or proof) and let them know that you are aware of their 'fun' time. Make sure you have a face to face conversation about the same.

Get a confession

While confrontation may lead to this step, you've got to be assertive that you ask them clearly whatever is on your mind, so you know the real deal. For instance, if you have a partner who is cheating on you by being just physical with someone, ask them why they did the same. Nonetheless, if your partner were both emotionally and physically available to someone else, that could be a red alert that your relationship has slipped out of your hand for good, and restoring it could take more effort and time.

Check if they are repentant

Going off on a guilt trip post cheating is normal... people do that all the time. But how genuinely sorry is your partner, that is for you to decipher. Is your partner taking it easy, behaving like 'well, cheating is just another thing in a relationship!' If so, he or she is a serial cheater who just doesn't feel sorry about doing you wrong. But if you're with someone who admits they're sorry, and makes efforts to mend their life and your relationship, maybe another chance (depending on how many you've already given them) would not be a bad thing.

Can you forgive

After hearing your partner out, ask yourself this question... Can you forgive them for what they did wrong? While we know this whole space resembles a religious doctrine, we must admit that forgiving your partner is step one of moving on to a healthier space in your relationship. Unless you do the same, there is just no sense in being together. Face it--- it is important to be okay with what went wrong before getting back on track.

AI can monitor snoring levels and identify sleep disorders

Researchers from the UK's prestigious University of Sheffield have developed artificial intelligence (AI) which they say can effectively monitor a person's snoring levels and identify sleep disorders.

The AI, developed by Professor Guy Brown and Dr Ning Ma from the University's Speech and Hearing Research Group, can monitor a person's snoring levels and identify sleep disorders such as sleep apnoea, the university said in a press release.

The technology is being commercialised through a new app - SoundSleep - available on iOS devices and soon to be available on Android, it said.

Currently, the app uses the Sheffield AI to enable people to monitor the sounds they make while sleeping through their smartphone.

The app records and tracks snoring levels and provides nightly reports to help people discover the causes, factors and solutions.

However, the Sheffield team have now developed the AI to be able to diagnose sleep apnoea caused by sleep disorders, the release said.

Sleep disorders affect people across the globe, with approximately 2.5 million people in the UK suffering from sleep disorder conditions, including obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA).

Sleep apnoea causes a person's breathing to stop and start while they sleep and they may also make gasping, snorting or choking noises, wake up a lot and/or snore loudly.

Without treatment, the condition can lead to high blood pressure, a higher chance of having a stroke, depression, mood swings, difficulty concentrating at school or work and an increased risk of having a serious accident due to tiredness.

Sleep disorders such as sleep apnoea are usually diagnosed in specialist sleep clinics, but these can be expensive and also disruptive for patients as they usually have to wear a range of devices that can feel uncomfortable or invasive.

Many sufferers of sleep disorders are not identified until other medical problems become apparent, meaning that they are less likely to make lifestyle changes that could improve their condition without the need for treatment.

To address these challenges, the University of Sheffield researchers launched a project to enhance the AI they had already developed for SoundSleep so it can identify sleep disorders from the sounds people make while sleeping.

Source: PTI

No sign of Pfizer, Moderna Covid vaccines in breast milk: Study

Researchers have found no evidence for the presence of Pfizer or Moderna Covid-19 vaccines in human breast milk in a small study, suggesting that the mRNA preventives are safe during lactation.

The study, published in the journal JAMA Pediatrics, offers the first direct data of vaccine safety during breastfeeding and could allay concerns among those who have declined vaccination or discontinued breastfeeding due to concern that vaccination might alter human milk.

The researchers at University of California, San Francisco (USCF) in the US analysed the breast milk of seven women after they received the Pfizer and Moderna mRNA vaccines, and found no trace of the preventives.

Previous research has demonstrated that vaccines with mRNA inhibit transmission of the virus that causes Covid-19.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that breastfeeding people be vaccinated, the researchers noted.

According to the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, there is little risk of vaccine nanoparticles or mRNA entering breast tissue or being transferred to milk, which theoretically could affect infant immunity, they added.

"The results strengthen current recommendations that the mRNA vaccines are safe in lactation, and that lactating individuals who receive the Covid vaccine should not stop breastfeeding," said study corresponding author Stephanie L Gaw, an assistant professor at UCSF.

"We didn't detect the vaccine associated mRNA in any of the milk samples tested," said study lead author Yarden Golan, a postdoctoral fellow at UCSF.

The study, conducted from December 2020 to February 2021, provides an experimental evidence regarding the safety of the use of mRNA-based vaccines during lactation.

Source: PTI

Scientists develop novel 3D robotic motion phantom that can reproduce human lung motion

A group of Indian scientists have developed a novel and cheap 3D robotic motion phantom that can reproduce human lung motion during breathing which can be used to check if the radiation is being correctly focussed on a moving target, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) said.

The phantom is placed inside a CT scanner on the bed in the human's place, and it emulates human lung motion as it is irradiated during therapy.

Ashish Dutta, Professor at IIT Kanpur, along with K J Maria Das, Professor at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS), Lucknow, developed the programmable robotic motion, the platform for quality assurance of respiratory motion management techniques in radiation therapy.

Breathing motion is a hurdle for delivering focused radiation dose to the cancer tumour attached to upper abdomen and thoracic regions. The motion exposes an area larger than the tumour to radiation during treatment, thus affecting tissues surrounding the targeted tumour.

A focused radiation for a patient could be customised by simulating the lung movement of the particular patient and then orienting the radiation's delivery so that it can be effective with minimal dosage. Before this is done on a human, its effectiveness needs to be checked on a robotic phantom.

Recent technological developments have resulted in state-of-the-art motion management techniques like-gating and tracking. Though there is incremental development in radiation therapy delivery of respiratory moving targets, the quality assurance (QA) tools have not been developed in parallel.

For quantitative determination of the absorbed dose in an organ in the patient for a specific type of treatment procedure accuracy of respiratory motion management techniques, additional respiratory motion phantoms are required.

During irradiation, consistently high-quality images of advanced 4D radiation therapy treatments are obtained with minimum exposure of the patients and workers. Before the targeted radiation is delivered to a human subject, its effectiveness in focusing only on the tumour is checked with this phantom.

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Microsoft Exchange email hack was caused by China, says US

The Biden administration has blamed China for a hack of Microsoft Exchange email server software that compromised tens of thousands of computers around the world earlier this year.

The administration and allied nations also disclosed a broad range of other cyberthreats from Beijing, including ransomware attacks from government-affiliated hackers that have targeted companies with demands for millions of dollars.

China's Ministry of State Security has been using criminal contract hackers, who have engaged in cyber extortion schemes and theft for their own profit, according to a senior administration official. That official briefed reporters about the investigation on the condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department on Monday announced charges against four Chinese nationals who prosecutors said were working with the Ministry of State Security in a hacking campaign that targeted dozens of computer systems, including companies, universities and government entities.

The announcements highlighted the ongoing cyberthreat posed by Chinese government hackers even as the administration has been consumed with trying to curb ransomware attacks from Russia-based syndicates that have targeted critical infrastructure, including a massive fuel pipeline.

Even though the finger-pointing was not accompanied by any sanctions of Beijing, a senior administration official who disclosed the actions to reporters said that the U.S. has confronted senior Chinese officials and that the White House regards the multination public shaming as sending an importance message. *Source: AP*

Pegasus: How to find out if your phone was infected with spyware

Pegasus spyware is once again at the center of a major controversy after a two-year hiatus. Global reports have shown that NSO Group's software was used to spy on about 50,000 people including political leaders, businessmen, journalists, and activists from across the world. The malware exploits zero-day vulnerability in the device's operating system to spy on individuals.

Researchers at Amnesty International have developed a toolkit that can help users identify whether their phone was infected by the spyware.

Mobile Verification Toolkit works on both iOS and Android OS. It simplifies the process of acquiring and analyzing data from Android devices, and analyses records from iOS backups and filesystem dumps to identify potential traces of compromise.

Researchers noted that there are more forensic traces accessible to investigators on Apple iOS devices than on Android devices. As a result, most recent cases of confirmed Pegasus infections have involved iPhones.

Amnesty has made the open-source toolkit available on GitHub. Since the toolkit works on the command line, it requires some knowledge on how to navigate the terminal and may not be user friendly.

To install the toolkit, users need to install a python package available in documentation on the MVT (Mobile Verification Toolkit) website. It also includes instructions for both iOS and Android on how to go about with the process. Before running MVT, users have to take a backup of their iOS device.

Amnesty pointed that the purpose of MVT is to facilitate the 'consensual forensic analysis' of devices of those who might be targets of sophisticated mobile spyware attacks.

"We do not want MVT to enable privacy violations of non-consenting individuals," Amnesty said. "Therefore, the goal of this license is to prohibit the use of MVT (and any other software licensed the same) for the purpose of adversarial forensics."

Researchers at Amnesty International have developed a toolkit that can help users identify whether their phone was infected by the spyware

How did they do it?

There's nothing particularly complicated about how the Pegasus spyware infects the phones of victims. The initial hack involves a crafted SMS or iMessage that provides a link to a website. If clicked, this link delivers malicious software that compromises the device.

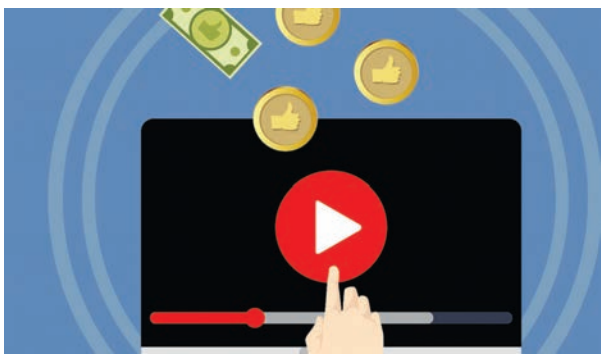
The aim is to seize full control of the mobile device's operating system, either by rooting (on Android devices) or jailbreaking (on Apple iOS devices).

Usually, rooting on an Android device is done by the user to install applications and games from non-supported app stores, or re-enable a functionality that was disabled by the manufacturer.

Similarly, a jailbreak can be deployed on Apple devices to allow the installation of apps not available on the Apple App Store, or to unlock the phone for use on alternative cellular networks. Many jailbreak approaches require the phone to be connected to a computer each time it's turned on (referred to as a "tethered jailbreak").

Rooting and jailbreaking both remove the security controls embedded in Android or iOS operating systems. They are typically a combination of configuration changes and a "hack" of core elements of the operating system to run modified code. In the case of spyware, once a device is unlocked, the perpetrator can deploy further software to secure remote access to the device's data and functions. This user is likely to remain completely unaware. Most media reports on Pegasus relate to the compromise of Apple devices. The spyware infects Android devices too, but isn't as effective as it relies on a rooting technique that isn't 100% reliable. When the initial infection attempt fails, the spyware supposedly prompts the user to grant relevant permissions so it can be deployed effectively. *(Agencies)*

YouTube adds money-making feature to attract creators



YouTube has launched a new way for video creators to earn money from fans through a feature called Super Thanks, as the Alphabet Inc streaming service looks to attract more content makers.

The feature, a fourth way for YouTubers to earn money from their viewers, comes as competing platforms like short-form video app TikTok and Facebook Inc's Instagram are investing heavily to court creators filming viral videos.

Fans can purchase Super Thanks at four price points, from $2 to $50, as a way to express gratitude and support their favourite YouTube channels, the company said in a statement.

After purchase on a video page, a highlighted comment will appear in the comment section, allowing the creator to respond to the fan's gift with a comment.

The feature is available to thousands of creators in 68 countries and will expand to all eligible creators in YouTube's partner program.

Fans have been able to pay for exclusive content through channel memberships. Viewers on a live-streamed YouTube video can also pay for Super Chats to pin their comments to the top of the comment section.

Source: Reuters

Billionaire Jeff Bezos blasts into space on own rocket

VAN HORN (TIP): Jeff Bezos blasted into space on Tuesday, July 20, on his rocket company's first flight with people on board, becoming the second billionaire in just over a week to ride his own spacecraft.

The Amazon founder was accompanied by a hand-picked group: his brother, an 18-year-old from the Netherlands and an 82-year-old aviation pioneer from Texas — the youngest and oldest to ever fly in space.

"Best day ever!" Bezos said when the capsule touched down on the desert floor at the end of the 10-minute flight.

Named after America's first astronaut, Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket soared from remote West Texas on the 52nd anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, a date chosen by Bezos for its historical significance. He held fast to it, even as Virgin Galactic's Richard Branson pushed up his own flight from New Mexico in the race for space tourist dollars and beat him to space by nine days. Unlike Branson's piloted rocket plane, Bezos' capsule was completely automated and required no official staff on board for the up-and-down flight.

Billionaire businessman Jeff Bezos and pioneering female aviator Wally Funk emerge from their capsule after their flight aboard Blue Origins New Shepard rocket on the worlds first unpiloted suborbital flight near Van Horn, Texas, US, July 20, 2021. Reuters

Blue Origin reached an altitude of about 66 miles (106 kilometers), more than 10 miles (16 kilometers) higher than Branson's July 11 ride. The 60-foot (18-meter) booster accelerated to Mach 3 or three times the speed of sound to get the capsule high enough, before separating and landing upright. *Source: AP*

ADB slashes India's FY22 growth forecast to 10%

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has downgraded India's economic growth forecast for the current financial year to 10% on Tuesday, from 11% projected earlier this year, mainly on account of the adverse impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

India's GDP growth recovered to 1.6% in the last quarter of fiscal year ended March 2021, narrowing contraction in the whole fiscal year from 8% estimated in April to a revised 7.3%, the multilateral funding agency said in the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) Supplement.

"Early indicators show economic activity resuming quickly after containment measures eased. The growth projection for FY2021 (ending March 2022), downgraded from 11% in ADO 2021 to 10%, reflects large base effects," it said. Indian consumer price inflation rose to 6.3% year-on-year in May as both food and fuel inflation outpaced expectations. "This Supplement raises the inflation forecast for India in FY2021 (fiscal ending March 2022) by 0.3 percentage points to 5.5%," the ADB said.

Swiggy raises $1.25 bn from SoftBank, Prosus

Food ordering and delivery platform Swiggy has announced closure of $1.25 billion (approximately Rs 9,345 crore) funding led by SoftBank Vision Fund 2 and Prosus. As per sources, the closure of this round pegs the valuation of the company at $5.5 billion (around Rs 41,125 crore).

It marks the first investment in the Indian food delivery category by SoftBank Vision Fund 2, with participation from the company's long-term investor, Prosus, and other existing investors Accel Partners and Wellington Management, Swiggy said. Besides, new investors Qatar Investment Authority, Falcon Edge Capital, Amansa Capital, Goldman Sachs, Think Investments and Carmignac participated in the round, it stated.

Crypto king to 'overtake global finance' by 2050

2021 will probably go down in history as the year when Bitcoin started to enter the mainstream financial world with an increasing number of global financial institutions, large technology enterprises, and even a nation adopting the crypto king. While Bitcoin will sooner or later come out of the current price correction phase, the majority in a survey of 42 crypto experts globally recently said hyperbitcoinisation – the moment when Bitcoin overtakes global finance – will happen by 2050.

The survey, which also included heads of Indian crypto exchanges ZebPay and Unocoin – Avinash Shekhar and Sathvik Vishwanath respectively, was published this month by the UK-based personal finance platform Finder. The study noted that 29 per cent said hyberbitcoinisation will happen as soon as 2035 while an additional 20 per cent believed it to happen by 2040. However, 44 per cent of panelists didn't expect it to ever occur. Bitcoin has managed to gain increased backing or attracted the interest of companies and financial entities across the globe such as JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, PayPal, Visa, Tesla, Apple, MicroStrategy, and more. Recently, the Central American nation El Salvador became the first country globally to adopt Bitcoin as a legal tender. Others such as Bulgaria and Ukraine also owned Bitcoins, according to BitcoinTreasuries.org.

Even as there could be a medium-term price depreciation, the price of Bitcoin is predicted to increase up to $318,417 by December 2025, according to the panel. "Halving events and inflation along the way to 2025 and 2030 will likely trigger the larger upside moves," said Justin Chuh, Senior Trader, Wave Financial in the report. "Prices are likely to be continuously driven by supply and demand, less availability for a wider group of users."

However, panelists expected that by December 2030, the price will go up to $4,287,591 but "the average is skewed by outliers – when we look at the median price prediction, the 2030 price forecast comes down to $470,000." This is still over 14X from the current price of near $32,000. Nonetheless, 2021 is expected to end at $66,284, according to 61 per cent of panelists. This would be just $2,000 more than the all-time high of $64,234 as of April 14, 2021, as per data from CoinMarketCap.com.

Adani firms under Sebi's lens: Fin Min

The capital markets regulator and the anti-smuggling investigator, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), are probing some Adani Group companies, the finance ministry told lawmakers in Parliament.

Adani Group said it had made full disclosure to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on request for information and that the DRI matter was sub judice.

In a written reply to questions raised by lawmakers, the finance ministry said that Sebi was investigating some Adani Group companies "with regard to compliance with Sebi Regulations." It also said that the DRI was investigating "certain entities belonging to the Adani Group of companies under laws administered by it." The ministry also said that there was no ongoing investigation by the Enforcement Directorate and that as far as the investigation under Income Tax Act was concerned, disclosure of information regarding a specific taxpayer was prohibited.

IMF urges countries to shift from economic rescue to reforms

The International Monetary Fund's No. 2 official on Tuesday, July 20, called on countries to pivot from saving their economies from collapse to reviving growth-oriented policy reforms to boost their recovery prospects and make them more sustainable.

IMF First Deputy Managing Director Geoffrey Okamoto said in a blog posting on the IMF website that the Covid-19 pandemic delayed and reversed some pro-growth reforms and restoring these can help make up for output lost during the pandemic.

Reforms that allow for faster restructurings and resolution of unviable businesses and labor policies to help retrain workers and line them up with job openings can help shift workers and capital to more promising, dynamic parts of the economy, Okamoto said.

Improved competition policy frameworks such as those being debated in Europe and the United States can reduce the concentration of market power among a few firms and create more dynamic competition and innovation. "Using this moment for some of these difficult reforms means that the monetary and fiscal stimulus still flowing will serve as a springboard to a brighter and more sustainable future rather than a crutch to a weaker version of the pre-Covid-19 economy," Okamoto said. "Seizing the opportunity could deliver years of solid post-Covid-19 growth and progress in living standards."

The call for a renewed focus on reforms comes as the IMF is shifting from non-conditional emergency Covid-19 pandemic financing toward the negotiation of more traditional IMF loan programs, which require recipient countries to meet policy reform benchmarks.

Source: Reuters

At $608.99 billion, India's forex 5th highest in world

NEW DELHI (TIP): At $608.99 billion as on June 25, India has emerged as the fifth largest foreign exchange reserves holder in the world after China, Japan, Switzerland and Russia, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

India's foreign exchange reserves position is comfortable in terms of import cover of more than 18 months and provides cushion against unforeseen external shocks.

The government and RBI are closely monitoring the emerging external position calibrating policies or regulations to support robust macroeconomic growth, assured the minister.

The RBI, he said, takes regular steps for diversification of forex reserves by scaling up operations in forex swap and repo markets, acquisition of gold and exploring new markets/products, while adhering to safety and liquidity standards. *Source: TNS*

Shree Ganeshaya Namah

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Chirag Bejan Daruwalla with his father late Bejan Daruwalla

TIP brings you Weekly and Birthday Horoscope by Astro Friend Chirag - Blessed Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE
26th July to 1st August 2021

Aries

Ganesha says you will get involved in activities you never thought you would participate in this week. The first three days will bring you opportunities you were waiting for but in the last two days you will feel uneasy and derailed from your schedule. Avoid gambling on Wednesday this week. This week you should be very selective avoid people you invest your emotions in as their possessive nature may harm your later. There will be dull moment due to transition of moon.

Taurus

You will get the fruit of your hard work you will do the entire week in the end of the week. You will give your best at work and it will give you a very handsome number of rewards in form of appraisals or promotions. Your spouse and you will make some big decisions about your kids and you must listen to your kid's opinions also. Your health will not be a major concern this week but the elderly people in your home will demand some attention. You are also likely to overspend on health products. Rather than doing over expenditure on health, develop good eating habits and follow workout regime.

Gemini

Even though you will receive a lot of love, support and even help from your loved ones, you will have to put in your blood, sweat and tears into your business this week. Take five minutes off to meditate daily which will help you focus on your work and get it done faster. Your relationship with your partner will get extremely strong this week, you will realize that this is the person you would want to spend the rest of your life with.

Cancer

This week is quite easy and relaxing for you. Although not every aspect of your life will work out as you would have liked it to be, you'll come through struggles stronger and smarter. You will need to update yourself in terms of your skill set as people junior to you are trying to take over your position. You're likely to feel slightly anxious and worried about how things will work out financially for you this week, as you have already made investments based on estimation of an income that's yet to come. Mid-week you'll realize that things worked out even better than you expected financially.

Leo

Will feel dissatisfaction and unhappiness in every moment, you will feel detached from your responsibilities, which will affect your productivity; your grip on your projects will become slow, which might create some loss in the business or at work. You might be a victim of conspiracy at work which only worsens your situation.

You need to be careful in terms of hidden enemies and opponents. You are advised to be careful in the way you speak; otherwise, you might face losses in near future. You should avoid making investments in risky assets. Practicing meditation and yoga will help you to come out from this messy situation this week.

Virgo

This week is all about getting uncomfortable and stepping your foot into untouched waters for you. A lot of travelling, most likely to be solo trips is in your cards this week. Though it may initially seem like a bad thing, stepping beyond the usual boundaries of your life, it could be a real adventure and you'll realize in the end how far you've come. This week is all about being street smart for you.

Libra

Avoid intense discussions and lethargy in important work. When it comes to managing your funds, it is mandatory that you do detailed financial paperwork this week so that you understand your shortcomings and plan your future accordingly. Your loved ones will need your extra time as your family might be emotionally suffering a little bit. You need to wear the pants in your family this week and take the lead everywhere is it taking on the financial burden or solving fights.

Scorpio

A normal start to the week is likely for you. You will make use of the first two days of the week to improve your knowledge.

You will crave for something new in your life. You will procure new items. Results will mirror the hard work that you have put in the past few days but all in all this week might be quite boring for you if you keep it like that.

Sagittarius

You will gain a lot of profit in your business this week which will set a positive tone for the entire week. You won't need to do things that you hate in terms of work anymore. You will have the time, space and affordability to follow your passion. Financial abundance is in your cards this week, which will keep you satisfied and happy throughout the week. You need to be more analytical about making investments now as managing the funds that you receive this week and in the future as it will make a significant difference in your life. This is the perfect week for you to make investments as your luck will favor you into making the correct and logical decisions.

Capricorn

This week will be important for your business. Your focus towards your goal as well as your patience will be challenged and you will keep busy at work. With the help of patience, you will be able to achieve your goals on time. The best way is to be extremely loving and forgiving and not by dredging up old grudges but by leading with love! You will be required to be responsible for a lot of things this week as well. This week completely depends upon your actions; you can make it or break it when it comes to your business as well as your relationships this week.

Aquarius

The best way is to be extremely loving and forgiving and not by dredging up old grudges but by leading with love! You will be required to be responsible for a lot of things this week as well. This week completely depends upon your actions; you can make it or break it when it comes to your business as well as your relationships this week.

Pisces

Things will start going in a positive way this week. You will get the reward of your hard work you did. You will give your best at work and it will give you a very handsome number of rewards in form of appraisals or promotions. On the other hand, you will end up taking decisions in haste which you will regret later. Your spouse and you will make some big decisions about your kids and you must listen to your kid's opinions also. Your health will not be a major concern this week but the elderly people in your home will demand some attention from a good doctor.

CONTD ON PAGE 31

BIRTHDAY HOROSCOPE 26TH JULY TO 1ST AUGUST 2021

By Astro Friend Chirag - Blessed Son of Astrologer Bejan Daruwalla

CONTD FROM PAGE 30

July 26

Positive energies are amazing for you today. Today will be a beautiful and enchanting day for you in terms of work and love life, positive highlight throughout the day for you will be your great health. Which will stay in an excellent state throughout the day, providing you with abundant energy.

July 27

You might be engaging in a work event that will take up most of your day today. Luck is only on your side if you follow your intuitions today, your business will make amazing profits today. Hence you need to have courage, be bold, and have control over your work schedule. Your love life today is a bit of a challenge. You will have to work really hard to keep your cool today and not worsen the situation that is already headed towards a downward spiral.

July 28

You will gain a lot of clarity and insight into your life today. Use today to express your gratitude towards your partner by planning a nice surprise for them and things might move forward today itself because it will be favorable for them as well. You will have a good day with your partner today if you put in the effort.

July 29

If you focus all your energies on the goal which you have set for yourself, you are bound to get success. During this time, you will do well in your professional life as financial abundance is in your sign's favor today when comes to your business. Hard work and commitment will enable you to earn good money from additional business sources.

July 30

Your partner will support you in everything; do not take that person for granted because they are the best for you. Be open to the affection being shown to you. You are about to discover new ways to express your love towards the person you love. Today is a great day for your relationship to flourish into the next big thing. You and your loved one's sense of humor are immaculately similar. You're amazed by your partner's personality and their kind and loving nature, you will realize that you have found the one and that makes your day today.

July 31

Quite a positive and cheerful day for you today. You will spend the day feeling content and grateful. Things where you were stuck at before will start clearing up. Your mental health is doing well, and you will be in a good mood throughout the day. You will get a lot of time to relax and rejuvenate today Use this time to improve your health and spend more time with your family which you've been wanting-to since a long time. It necessarily does not mean you need to socialize a lot. Just focus on having fun and enjoying yourself.

August 1

Your work life will be the most positive part of your day. A very productive day is on its way for you today. You will have a lot of work to do, which you will thoroughly enjoy. As you have been working hard since the past few days you will see exponential growth today. Being the down to earth person that you are, you will continue to work hard despite it being your birthday. You will like it this way as your work has always been a celebration to you.

II SHREE GANESHAY NAMAHII

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Shravan Maas: Auspicious month of Hindus

A very auspicious month according to the ancient scriptures, Shravan Maas falls somewhere during July to August. Shravana Nakshatra is the birthstar of Vishnu and falls on the full moon day during this time. So, this month is called "Shravan Maas."

According to the Hindu calendar, the month of Sawan will start from July 25, 2021, and will end on August 22, 2021. There will be a total of four Mondays in this month. This entire month is considered to be the best month to seek the blessings of Lord Shiva. It is believed that during this month all the wishes of the devotee, who worships Lord Shiva with devotion, are fulfilled. The month of Sawan is dedicated to Lord Shiva. That is why Shiva devotees bring kanwar and anoint Shiva with Ganga water filled in that kanwar.

Sawan Monday fast

In Hinduism, every Monday that falls in the month of Shravan has a special significance. During the month of Sawan, the devotees keep the fast on Mondays to fulfil their prayers. It is believed that worshipping Lord Shiva by fasting throughout the day on Monday fulfils all the wishes of Shiva devotees. There will be 4 Mondays in this month which are as follows.

- First Shravan Monday Fast- 26 July, 2021, Monday
- Second Shravan Monday Fast- 2 August, 2021, Monday
- Third Shravan Monday Fast- 9 August, 2021, Monday
- Fourth Shravan Monday Fast-16 August, 2021, Monday

People who observe fast on Sawan Monday, usually take a bath early in the morning and undergo fasting by remembering Lord Shiva. Devotees then place idols of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati at their prayer house and worship them. After that, offer them Bel leaves, flowers, Datura, then light lamps and incense sticks in front of the idols. Chant Om Namah Shivaya Mantra. Offer sixteen makeup items to Mother Parvati. It is believed that Ketaki flowers and Tulsi leaves should not be offered to Lord Shiva. At the end of the prayer recite Shiva Chalisa and the offer aarti.

During the entire month of Shravan Maas, visiting the Shiva Temple in the evening and offering flowers and abhishekam gives a long and prosperous life.

The whole Savan month is considered as highly auspicious, since every day of the month Savan holds a special significance. The whole month is blessed with the blessings of Lord Shiva and some other lords such as Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna. We observe some really auspicious occasions in the month of Savan such as Raksha Bandhan, Hariyali Teej, and Nag Panchami.

As we are talking about the month of Savan and its main deity Lord Shiva, how can we forget to talk about Savan Somvars. We know that the whole month of Savan is having a special significance for worshiping Lord Shiva. The auspicious results of worshiping Lord Shiva increases upto many times in the holy month of Savan.

Monday or Somvar being the special day of Lord Shiva, the auspiciousness of Somvars in the month of Savan increases upto many folds. Special fast and Pujas are performed by the devotees to please Lord Shiva in the month of Savan.

What Is Sawan Somvar?

Savan Somvars hold a great significance because they are the special days of Lord Shiva in the special holy month. Highly auspicious results can be obtained by worshiping Lord Shiva on Savan Somvars every year.

The starting of fasts of Solah (sixteen) Somvars is also considered as highly auspicious in the month of Savan. Reciting Solah Somvar Vrat Katha is considered highly auspicious for women. Savan Somvar Vrat is mainly categorized into three categories, these are:

Savan Somvar

Fast of monday only in the month of Savan

Solah Somvar

Beginning the fast of Solah (sixteen) Somvars, in the month of Savan

Somya Pradosh

Fast observed till the evening during Pradosham

Lord Shiva and Maa Parvati are the two main deities worshiped during the month of Savan. Devotees offer their favorite offerings to please the deities and to receive their blessings. These offerings include Bel Patra, Datura, rose or marigold flowers and much more.

Auspicious Results Of Sawan Somvar Vrat

- All the difficulties and tensions of life will disappear.
- Lord Shiva blesses unmarried girls with desired husband.
- Lord Shiva blesses married ladies with long life and well being of husband and sons.
- Lord Shiva fulfills all the desires and wishes of his devotees.
- Lord Shiva blesses his devotees with wealth and prosperity.

Lord Shiva is so kind toward his devotees that anyone can easily please him by showing love and gratitude, thus he is also known as Bholenath. Let's now talk about another very important day of Savan that is Sawan Shivaratri

Sawan Shivaratri

Sawan Shivratri is also a major part of the month Savan. Its celebrations are observed by devotees with full faith and devotion, as it falls in the special month of Savan. It is the second most important Shivaratri after Maha Shivratri . It is also believed that if Sawan Shivaratri falls on the day of monday, its significance increases up to many times. Because then, the three auspicious events related to Lord Shiva fall on the same day that are the month Savan, Sawan Somvar and Shivaratri.

Legend Of Savan

The legend of Savan is related to Lord Shiva. During the period of Samudra Manthan, lots of things came out which were equally distributed among the gods and demons. Some undesirable items also came out from the Manthan, which were not accepted by any of the god or demon, such as Halahal (poison). This poison or Vish/Halahal could have some really adverse effects on the living beings. The whole world could have finished or adversely affected by Halahal.

For saving the world from these ill effects of Halahal, Lord Shiva consumed the whole Halahal and stored it in his throat. Due to this reason, the color of his neck turned blue and he was attributed with the name Neelkantha. This whole event took place in the month of Savan, which increased the significance of worshiping Lord Shiva in the month of Savan.

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"If Hindus don't maintain Hinduism, who shall save it?"

"If India's own children don't cling to their faith, who shall guard it?"

"Indians alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one."

Indian-origin fraudster posing as car salesman jailed for 9 years in UK

DEFRAUDED OVER 200 UNSUSPECTING CAR BUYERS OUT OF MORE THAN 1 MILLION POUNDS

LONDON (TIP): An Indian-origin fraudster posing as a car salesman has been jailed for nine years by a UK court for defrauding over 200 unsuspecting car buyers out of more than 1 million pounds.

Ravinder Singh Randhawa, 30, was imprisoned for 22 offences of fraud and one offence of money laundering at Exeter Crown Court in south-west England last Friday, July 16.

According to the UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Randhawa was the leader of the fake car selling operation, posing as a legitimate salesman to persuade his victims to pay large sums of money for second-hand vehicles.

"Randhawa is a prolific and serial offender, preying on trusting members of the public simply wishing to buy second-hand cars. His crimes were sophisticated," said Sarah Melo, Specialist Prosecutor for the CPS Specialist Fraud Division.

"He often used identities obtained from previous victims, hijacked the identity of garages and genuine vehicles for sale, so that his victims did not suspect his scam," Melo said.

Photo for representation only

Hundreds of people have suffered at the hands of Randhawa and lost money which they could ill-afford. His crimes have had a profound impact on so many of their lives, she said. "Many described the severe effect on their mental and physical health, their family relationships and overall financial stability. For many of his victims this happened at a time when their lives were badly affected by the pandemic," she said.

Randhawa often sold the same vehicle more than once and the victims received nothing as he pocketed their money. Some victims drove for miles to collect their new car only to discover that the garage from which they had purchased the vehicle did not exist.

Those assisting Randhawa to launder his ill-gotten gains, Atif Shariff, 30, and Jason Gilbert, 55, were sentenced to 20 months and 27 months' imprisonment respectively for their part in the scam operation.

Melo said the CPS worked with Devonshire and Cornwall Police worked together to bring the offenders to justice.

"Randhawa showed no remorse for his actions. He would often laugh at his victims and goad them with abusive messages once they discovered they were victims of his fraud," she said.

"He boasted to one victim who'd threatened to call the police that, he'd 'been doing it for years and the police wouldn't do anything about it'. He was wrong," she added. The CPS said it is now working to recover as much of the stolen money as possible from Randhawa and his accomplices in order to strip them of their criminal benefit and return the money to their rightful owners. (PTI)

Indian national jailed for breaching Covid restrictions in Singapore

Photo for representation only

SINGAPORE (TIP): A 26-year-old Indian national was sentenced to nine months' jail on Monday, July 12 for trying to leave Singapore during the height of the Covid pandemic when he had been asked to wait in a hospital for the results of his swab test.

Balachandran Parthiban's test came positive for Covid after he was picked up by the police at Changi Airport and escorted back to Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

He had taken public transport there, tried unsuccessfully to buy a ticket to India, and loitered at Terminal 1 of the Changi Airport for about four hours, reported TODAY newspaper.

The foreign worker later breached an isolation order and went to the airport again in another bid to fly back home. After he pleaded guilty in May to one charge each of exposing others to the risk of Covid and leaving an isolation area without permission, his pro bono lawyer Cory Wong asked for him to be remanded in the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) for psychiatric evaluation.

Following a nearly four-week stay in IMH, Balachandran was diagnosed with "adjustment disorder with mixed disturbance of emotions and conduct" around the time of his offences in May last year.

Dr Stephen Phang found that the "minor" mental disorder did not cause him to abdicate his capacity to assume mental responsibility for his actions.

He still retained the mental capacity to differentiate right from wrong and was not of unsound mind, the psychiatrist added.

Nevertheless, his subsequent psychiatric history showed that he later developed full-blown "schizophreniform psychosis, which was likely to have been reactive to, and precipitated by the ongoing stress of being held under conditions of security, together with his ongoing concerns about his family situation back in India", Dr Phang's medical report stated.

When in IMH, Balachandran reported hearing voices instructing him to commit suicide which made it difficult for him to control his actions.

He is now on a reduced dosage of antipsychotic medication as he is clinically well, the psychiatrist added.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Norman Yew sought 10 months' jail for Balachandran, while Wong asked for six-and-a-half months' jail.

In sentencing, District Judge Ronald Gwee took into consideration two other charges of exposing others to the risk of infection and of using insulting words towards a health officer.

For each charge of breaking Covid laws, Balachandran could have been jailed for up to six months or fined up to SGD10,000, or both.

The court earlier heard that Balachandran was a resident of the Jurong Penjuru dormitory for foreign workers, which had been gazetted as an isolation area on April 18 last year to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

On the morning of May 23, he reported sick at his dormitory and complained of fever and sore throat. He was then taken to SGH by ambulance to undergo a Covid swab test at around 12.45 pm.

About an hour later, he was transferred to the hospital's "fever screening area" at SGH's multi-storey car park and repeatedly told to wait for his swab test results. However, he left the car park at around 5.35 pm without giving notice because he wanted to buy a flight ticket back to India at Changi Airport. He walked 2.1-km before taking a public bus and taxi.

(Read full story at www.theindianpanorama.news)

Indian origin trucker arrested in Canada for smuggling cocaine

THE VALUE OF THIS SEIZURE IS ESTIMATED AT USD 14 MILLION

Photo for representation only

TORONTO (TIP): A 24-year-old Indian origin trucker was arrested in Canada for allegedly smuggling about 112.5 kg of cocaine estimated at USD 14 million (Rs 1,04,46,17,000) into the country from the US.

The seizure occurred last month when a commercial truck driven by Pardeep Singh, a Quebec resident, entered Canada at the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie in Ontario and was pulled aside for a secondary examination, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) said Thursday, July 8.

Border agents searched the vehicle and discovered 112.5 kg of suspected cocaine inside five duffel bags, the agency said in a statement.

The value of this seizure is estimated at USD 14 million.

The RCMP have charged Singh with the importation of a controlled substance.

In a statement, CBSA District Director Kim Upper hailed the seizure as an example of the "integral role" her agency plays in keeping illegal drugs off the streets.

"Our officers have interrupted the smuggling attempt of a massive amount of narcotics and have put a full stop to the ripple effect these narcotics would have in neighborhoods across our country," Upper said.

While the border is closed to non-essential travel because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it remains open for commercial traffic so that essential goods can continue to flow.

Restrictions on non-essential travel are expected to remain in place until at least July 21. (Source: PTI)

Chikmagalur: The Coffee Land of Karnataka

A scenic place in the Western Ghat of the versatile state Karnataka – Chikmagalur. The coffee land of Karnataka is a gorgeous hill station is a place that must feature on every tourists and travellers bucket list, thanks to the lush greenery all around, magnanimous views of the adjacent peaks and add to it the aroma of the coffee beans all over the town.

Chikmagalur in the local language means the town of the younger daughter. The name originates from a historically significant event. This small town was once gifted to a village chief as dowry when another village chief gave his younger daughter's hand in marriage. Thus, the name Chikmagalur.

One of the best getaways for a tranquil retreat, Chikmagalur is a place that is definitely a must at least once in a lifetime. Lush green mountains, mystical temples, cascading waterfalls, exotic trekking trails and picturesque coffee plantations make this place enchanting.

Here are a list places in Chikmagalur that you will absolutely love visiting while vacationing.

Mullayangiri

Mullayangiri is the highest peak of Karnataka, located on the Chandra Drona ranges, the Mullayangiri is also the highest peak between the Nilgiris and Himalayas. The quaint ambience, verdant grasslands, rugged rocks jetting out and nature's raw beauty will make you behold with the view. Just below the peak, you can spot a cave and if you are not feeling enough of the adventure this trekking trail has to offer, you can also explore this cave.

Kemmanagudi

Kemmanagudi, another towering mountain in Chikmagalur is another place that is not be missed out on when you are in Chikmagalur. The forests, gardens, waterfalls and springs in Kemmanagudi is simply mesmerising. Once a summer retreat to the royals of Mysore Wadiyar dynasty. With Mullayangiri and Bababudangiri in close proximity along with the twin Kallathi and Kalahasthi waterfalls is just beautiful. Kemmanagudi is also a haven for trekkers.

Kudremukh

Kudremukh is the most popular tourist destination in Chikmagalur, with pristine waterfalls, lush green landscape greenery everywhere, this place is an absolute haven for those who are in desperate need of peace away from the hustle-bustle of the city with alluring beauty of nature in abundance at Kudremukh. The Surimale Waterfall and the Kadambi Waterfall near Kudremukh are also a must visit place that mustn't be missed out.

Coffee Museum

If you are missing out on a place that is related to coffee is a crime in Chikmagalur. The Coffee Museum in Chikmagalur is run by Coffee Board of India, this museum offers a glimpse of the insight into the history of Coffee plantations in India. You can also witness a thematic representation of how coffee is prepared in the museum.

Z Point

It would be an offence if Z point is missed out from this list. The Z Point is one of the must visit place in Chikmagalur, offering scintillating views of Chikmagalur from the peak of the Z Point. You can also opt for mountain biking if you want to add some adventure to the trek and ride on the rocky terrains leading up to the Z Point.

Tokyo 2020: USA sends its biggest ever contingent

BY PRABHJOT SINGH

THE 613 ATHLETES NAMED TO THE U.S. ROSTER MARK THE LARGEST DELEGATION BY A NON-HOST NATION, AND THE SECOND-LARGEST DELEGATION FOR TEAM USA, FOLLOWING THE 648 ATHLETES AT THE ATLANTA GAMES IN 1996.

"Team USA is ready. Our roster includes 613 remarkable athletes, one of our biggest teams ever", said USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland

While the Corona agony continues unabated in the Olympic city of Tokyo, hundreds of players and sports officials continue to descend on the Japanese capital to participate in what may go down in the Olympic annals as "games of the brave". Interestingly, there are no calls for "boycott" or "stay away" from the games, even while there are apprehensions of a third wave sweeping the world in coming weeks.

The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee has sent a 613-member 2020 U.S. Olympic Team that will compete at the upcoming Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. Following the year-long postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Opening Ceremony is all set to take place Friday, July 23, with competition beginning July 21 and concluding Sunday, Aug. 8.

Canada is sending a 350 plus squad while Indian Olympic contingent of 126 will be the biggest ever to leave the shores of the country. Other countries, like China, Germany, Great Britain, France, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand, too, are sending full strength squads to Tokyo.

"Team USA is ready. Our roster includes 613 remarkable athletes, one of our biggest teams ever, all who qualified to participate in these Games," said USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland. "In these extraordinary times -- these athletes have shown perseverance, dedication and focus and have inspired us all. We are thrilled to support them as they live their dreams of competing on the biggest stage in sport."

Needless to reiterate that the US is also a world leader in sports. Since 1896, the US has been miles ahead of other nations in winning medals in the games since 1896. Before the start of events in Tokyo 2020, the USA has in its tally (1022) more gold medals than the next three nations combined with Germany at 296, Great Britain 256 and Italy 242. France has 239.

Swimmer Michael Phelps has 23 gold medals to his credit. His individual tally is higher than the total gold medals tally of 66 nations, including Argentina, Ecuador, Uruguay, India, etc., etc.

India has, since 1928, won 9 gold medals, including eight in hockey.

The US organizedthe summer Olympic games for the first time in 1932 in Los Angeles. The games returned to Los Angeles 52 years later in 1984. Those were the games where for the first time, players of Indian origin won one gold medal and one bronze medal while Indian contingent returned home empty handed. The gold medal went to cyclist Alexi Singh Grewal in the 184 km road race and the bronze was taken by Kulbir Singh Bhara as a member of the Great Britain hockey team that finished third.

When the games returned to the USA in 1996 at Atlanta, India had the consolation of winning a bronze medal in Tennis as Leander Paes lost the semi-finals to the ultimate winner Andre Agassi.

Other than Alexi Singh Grewal, another player of Indian origin, Rajeev Ram, was the winner of a silver medal in the 2016 Rio Olympic games. Honors came to him in the mixed doubles after the US paid had beaten India's top combination of Sania Mirza and Rohan Bopanna in the semi-finals.

That is about India-US sports connections. And in Tokyo, two Table tennis players of Indian origin - Kanak Jha and Nikhil Kumar - will don US colors in Tokyo 2020.

The 2020 U.S. Olympic Team features 193 returning Olympians - including one seven-time Olympian, six five-time Olympians, 15 four-time Olympians, 39 three-time Olympians and 130 two-time Olympians. The slate of veterans features 104 Olympic medalists, including 56 Olympic champions, 33 athletes who have won multiple Olympic medals and an additional 22 who won multiple Olympic gold medals.

Allyrson Felix

Allison Schmidt

Katie Ledecky

Simone Biles

Sue Bird

CONTD ON PAGE 37

CONTD FROM PAGE 36

The multiple medalists are led by eight U.S. women with four or more medals, including track athlete Allyson Felix with nine, swimmer Allison Schmitt with eight, swimmer Katie Ledecky with six and gymnast Simone Biles with five. Four athletes have won four medals each, including basketball players Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi, fencer Mariel Zagunis and swimmer Simone Manuel.

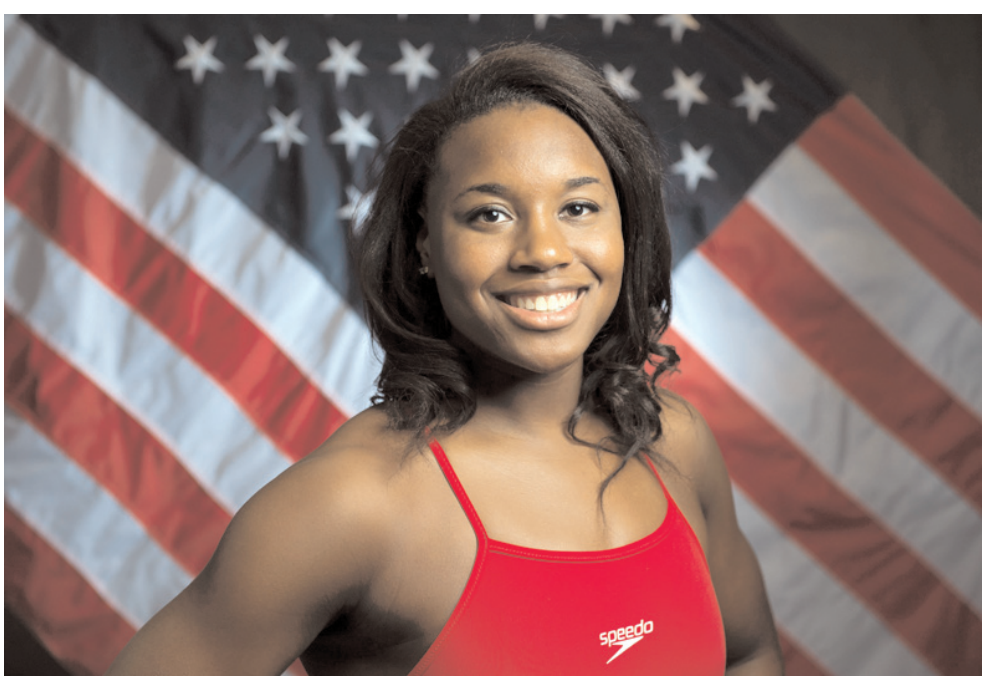
"The journey to be a part of the 2020 U.S. Olympic Team was like no other," said Rick Adams, USOPC chief of sport performance. "This team is special; these Games are special. The commitment from Team USA athletes and the National Governing Bodies never wavered, and for that we are grateful."

The 2020 Olympic Games will welcome new events added for the first time. Baseball and softball return to the Olympics for the first time since 2008, while four new sports make their Olympic debut, including surfing, karate, skateboarding and sport climbing.

In alignment with previous games, the roster of 613 athletes does not reflect athletes currently registered for the Games as alternates. In effort to provide added flexibility to nations competing in the Tokyo 2020 field hockey, team handball, rugby, soccer and water polo competitions, the IOC and respective International Federations announced new policies for athletes registered as alternates in their sport.

Diana Taurasi

Mariel Zagunis



Simone Manuel

For the Tokyo Games, accredited alternate athletes in these sports are immediately eligible to be called into game day rosters and, in that case, will become Olympians. The USOPC, in compiling the roster of the 2020 U.S. Olympic Team, followed these guidelines and will update the roster accordingly. Existing athlete replacement protocols remain in place for the remaining sports on the Olympic program.

The US contingent includes 329 women and 284 men, marking the third straight Olympic Games with more women on the U.S. roster. The Rio 2016 team included 294 women and 264 men, while London 2012 had 268 women and 262 men.

Canada has 225 women athletes in its contingent of 371.India has 52 women athletes in its Olympic squad of 126.

There are at least six sets of siblings on the US team, including Jessica and Nelly Korda (golf), Henry Leverett and Jack Leverett III (shooting), Phillip and Ryan Chew (badminton), Kristen and Samantha Mewis (soccer), Erik and Kawika Shoji (volleyball), and Aria and Makenzie Fischer (water polo), while Canada has two.

The 613 athletes named to the U.S. roster mark the largest delegation by a non-host nation, and the second-largest delegation for Team USA, following the 648 athletes at the Atlanta Games in 1996.

Four athletes on the roster have competed at the Olympics previously for other nations. Phillip Dutton will be making his seventh Olympic appearance, his fourth on Team USA, as he competed for Australia in 1996, 2000 and 2004. Amro El-Geziry competed in pentathlon for Egypt in 2008, 2012 and 2016; Ildar Hafizov wrestled for Uzbekistan in 2008; and Sally Kipyego ran track for Kenya in 2012.

Dutton leads all returning Olympians and will make his seventh appearance at the Olympic Games. The six five-time Olympians include equestrian Steffen Peters, basketball players Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi, track athletes Abdi Abdirahman and Allyson Felix, and fencer Mariel Zagunis.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Prabhjot Paul Singh, better known as Prabhjot Singh, is a veteran all round journalist with over 40 years of experience of working with print and electronic media, including 37 years with The Tribune - the oldest and largest circulated English daily of North India. He had also worked as Executive Editor, PTC News, the world's largest Punjabi TV network, for more than 8 years.

He did his M.Sc. in Journalism from PAU, Ludhiana, MA (Eng) and BSc (Medical) from Panjab University, Chandigarh, and Bachelor of Journalism from Punjabi University, Patiala.

The man with solid ethical core, integrity, strong communication skills with knowledge of English, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, German, French as well as courageous attitude and analytic mind had won KK Birla Foundation Fellowship on Media and Terrorism and also KC Kulish (Rajasthan) award for Excellence in International Journalism.

In fact, he had been a pioneer in introducing the concept of sports page in Jalandhar (vernacular) newspapers in February 1975, months before he was offered a job as a Sports Reporter by The Tribune group of newspapers.

In 2012, Vienna based International Press Institute (IPI) recognized his commitment to promote free exchange of accurate, balanced news among nations and for Excellence in Journalism, for publishing an investigative series into the loot of the public transport system in Punjab-by-Punjab politicians, he was awarded IPI-India award.

The Sunday magazine section of The Tribune from Chandigarh dated 25 November 1984, carried an article titled "Profile of an assassin", which is his most recognized work.

Though he has many feathers in his cap yet efforts to make IXC(Chandigarh airport)active will be remembered always as a blessing for Punjabi diaspora. His tireless pen had made Chandigarh airport as Chandigarh International Airport. He had raised issues related to IXC at various platforms.

His love for sports can be witnessed from his travels to six summer Olympic games, one winter Olympic games, seven World Cups in Hockey, FIFA World Cup in 2006, besides three World Cups in Cricket, and two editions of Pan Am Games (Toronto and Lima). He has also covered Asian Games (New Delhi and Jakarta) and Commonwealth games in Melbourne and New Delhi. Also, he has been to many other important international events and did spectacular stories of human interest.

England beat Pakistan by 3 wickets; clinch Twenty20 series 2-1

MANCHESTER (TIP): Leg-spinner Adil Rashid posted career-best figures to help England secure a tense three-wicket win over Pakistan in the third Twenty20 and clinch their series 2-1 here.

Rashid took four wickets for 35 and Pakistan finished on 154-6 after winning the toss and opting to bat first on Tuesday, July 20.

Jason Roy (64 off 36) opened well before the visitors chipped away with wickets, leaving it No. 8 Chris Jordan to sprint through for the winning runs with just two deliveries and three wickets remaining. England reached 155-7.

For the second consecutive match, England shut down the visitors with spin, as Rashid and Moeen Ali (1-19) had their way at Old Trafford cricket ground. Rashid had never taken four wickets in a T20 International before.

Dawid Malan (31 off 33) struggled before returning captain Eoin Morgan (21 off 12) gained control, picking his moments against Hasan Ali (1-28) and twice sending the ball into the stands for six.

In the dramatic penultimate over, Malan was bowled by Mohammad Hafeez (3-28) before Liam Livingstone left impressions while facing just two deliveries — smashing one for six and caught off his next, leaving six required off the final over.

Morgan was held in the deep with four needed before two hard-run twos from Jordan's bat settled it.

Batting first, Pakistan made 40 off their first five overs with Mohammad Rizwan (76 of 57) with early sixes off Saqib Mahmood and Jordan. But the usually reliable captain Babar Azam (11 off 13) struggled.

Pakistan had slumped to 69 for three in the ninth. *Source: AP*

Deepak Chahar scripts India's series-sealing win over Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (TIP): Chasing 276, India were down and out at 193 for seven before Deepak Chahar and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (19 not out off 28) forged an unbeaten 84-run stand to seal a memorable win for the visitors who extended their record of not losing an ODI on Sri Lankasoil since 2012.

A struggling Sri Lankan outfit badly needed a morale-boosting win but has only itself to blame for not finishing the job from a commanding position.

Chahar, whose highest score before this game was 12, showed remarkable resolve and composure under pressure to take his team over the line with five balls to spare. He fittingly hit the winning boundary. It was India's ninth consecutive bilateral series win over Sri Lanka.

The third ODI will be played on Friday. It was expected to be another comfortable chase for India after Sri Lanka put an improved batting effort to post 275 for nine.

However, questionable shot selection from the majority of the Indian batsmen gave their struggling opponents hope.

Barring Chahar and Suryakumar Yadav (53), the Indian batsmen faltered. Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga troubled the Indians with his variations and ended up being the stand out bowler for his team.

India felt the heat early on in the chase with Prithvi Shaw and Ishan Kishan, who both blew away the opposition in the opener on Sunday, getting out to bad shots.

Shaw failed to pick a wrong one off Hasaranga and got bowled while going for a cut. The opener once again showed sublime form during his short stay in the middle with three delightful boundaries before throwing it away.

Kishan, with his feet nowhere close to the bat, tried to whack it through the off-side off pacer Kasun Rajitha only to play it on to the stumps, leaving India at 39 for two in four overs.

Skipper Shikhar Dhawan (29 off 38) was not at his fluent best for the second game in a row and was trapped in front by Hasaranga.

Manish Pandey (37) was unfortunate to be run out off a deflection from the bowler's hand and Hardik Pandya hitting it straight to mid wicket with hard hands left India reeling at 116 for five.

India's Deepak Chahar celebrates his half century with Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

Suryakumar and Krunal stitched a 44-run stand before Chahar produced a stunner from nowhere for a remarkable win.

Earlier, leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal led India's decent effort with the ball. Pretty much like the series opener, most of the Sri Lankan batsmen got starts but failed to capitalise after the hosts opted to bat.

Avishka Fernando (50 off 71) and Charith Asalanka (65 off 68) struck fine half-centuries but the home team wasn't disciplined enough to post an imposing total.

Chamika Karunaratne (44 not out off 33) came up with another timely cameo to take the team past 270. Chahal (3/50) was the pick of the bowlers while pacers Deepak Chahar (2/53) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (3/54) too got wickets primarily due to profligacy of the home team batsmen.

Openers Fernando (50 off 71) and Minod Bhanuka (36 off 42) took Sri Lanka to 59 for loss in the first 10 overs.

The momentum shifted India's way drastically after Chahal removed Minod and Bhanuka Rajapaksa off successive balls in the 14th over.

Sri Lanka, who are among the worst performing teams in the middle overs, struggled again in the crucial stage of the game.

They took 97 balls to take find their next boundary after the eight over. From 77 for no loss in the 14th over, Sri Lanka slipped to 134 for four in the 28th over.

Asalanka and skipper Dasun Shanaka tried to resurrect the innings but their 38-run stand ended with the captain falling to a flatter one from Chahal.

Chahar took his second wicket with a perfect knuckle ball that crashed through Wanindu Hasaranga's defences. Asalanka played some bold strokes alongside Karunaratne to give the innings some impetus towards the end.

Asalanka got to his maiden fifty with a lofted boundary over extra cover off Kuldeep Yadav before sweeping the left-arm wrist spinner for another four in the same over.

Bhuvneshar kept things tight but bowled at a slower pace than his usual.

Source: PTI

Dhawan moves up two places to 16th, Kohli remains second in ICC ODI rankings

DUBAI (TIP): India opener Shikhar Dhawan jumped two places to 16th after his unbeaten half-century in the first match against Sri Lanka while Virat Kohli remained at second spot in the latest ICC ODI rankings issued on Wednesday, June 21.

Dhawan's unbeaten 86 in the first game of the ongoing three-ODI series in Colombo helped him accumulate 712 rating points and gain two slots, while Kohli has 848 points.

Another senior India batsman Rohit Sharma is at third position with 817 points in the list headed by Pakistan's Babar Azam (873).

The rankings took into account the three-match series between Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, the third Ireland versus South Africa match and the first two ODIs between Sri Lanka and India.

Among the bowlers, India's Yuzvendra Chahal (up four places to 20th), Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga (up 22 places to 36th), South Africa's Tabraiz Shamsi (up eight places to 39th), Ireland's Simi Singh (up six places to 51st) and Zimbabwe's Blessing Muzarabani (up 23 places to 70th) were among the others to make headway.

In the ICC T20 rankings, Pakistan opener Mohammad Rizwan and England middle-order batsman Liam Livingstone made huge progress after finishing as the leading run scorers for their teams in the three-match series won 2-1 by England.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Rizwan has attained a career-best seventh position after aggregating 176 runs in the series including an unbeaten 76 in the final match in Manchester, performances that helped him gain four places.

Umesh leads bowling attack as Indians bowl out County XI for 220

DURHAM (TIP): Young opener Haseeb Hameed celebrated his Test recall with a gritty hundred even as Umesh Yadav bowled a few incisive spells and was largely responsible in India bowling Select County XI out for 220 on the second day of the warm-up first-class game.

Coming back into the England squad after nearly five years, right-handed opener Hameed lived up to his reputation of being called "Baby Boycs" for his dogged defensive game like former great Geoffrey Boycott with a knock of 112 off 246 balls. His innings had 13 boundaries.

For India, Umesh was the stand-out bowler as he bowled in short spells and worked up a fair bit of pace with figures of 3/22 in 15 overs.

Mohammed Siraj (2/32 in 13 overs) certainly bowled the best delivery of the day, hurrying compatriot Washington Sundar (2), representing the county side.

Umesh still might not make it to the playing XI in Nottingham but his performance will certainly keep the team management interested.

Jasprit Bumrah (1/29 in 15 overs) didn't give away loose deliveries but save the wicket of Rob Yates, where the left-hander went for a non-existent cut-shot to a delivery reared up, he hardly troubled Hameed, who defended him comfortably most times.

It was Umesh, who first castled right-handed opener Jake Libby with an angled delivery that saw two of the three stumps knocked back.

Siraj got a nasty short ball that suddenly climbed on Washington and flew off his gloves for an easy catch in the slip cordon.

Umesh's second victim was rival

captain Will Rhodes, who lost his off-stump when the fast bowler came round the wicket and the delivery straightened after pitching beating the left-hander.

With County XI reeling at 56 for 4, Lyndon James (27) gave good support to Hameed in their 75-run stand for the fifth wicket. Hameed waited for bad deliveries and was ready to tap and run those singles and doubles.

Umesh's third wicket was a short ball and James mistimed a pull-shot which was taken by Shardul.

Hameed looked the best against Ravindra Jadeja (15-3-55-1), who was punished for a few runs. He reached closer to hundred with a lofted shot to the wide of long-on of Jadeja's bowling.

A tapped single towards short mid-wicket off Shardul brought his hundred off 228 balls. His innings ended with an edge to KL Rahul off Shardul who had 1/31 in 14 overs.

Hamilton subjected to racist abuse after British GP victory

LONDON (TIP): Lewis Hamilton was subjected to racist abuse online after winning the British Grand Prix, with social media firm Facebook saying today it had removed a number of comments on Instagram.

The seven-time world champion celebrated a record eighth British Grand Prix victory on Sunday at Silverstone after fighting back from a 10-second penalty for a first-lap collision that ended up with title rival Max Verstappen in hospital.

The 36-year-old Mercedes driver was targeted online hours after the victory, with racist messages including monkey emojis sent as replies to a post by his Mercedes team on Instagram.

"The racist abuse directed at Hamilton during and after the British Grand Prix is unacceptable and we've removed a number of comments from Instagram," a spokesperson for Facebook, which owns Instagram, said in a statement. "In addition to our work to remove comments and accounts that repeatedly break our rules, there are safety features available, including comment filters and message controls, which can mean no one has to see this type of abuse. No single

thing will fix this challenge overnight but we're committed to the work to keep our community safe from abuse."

In a joint statement, Mercedes, Formula One and motor sports governing body the FIA condemned the abuse of Hamilton and sought punishment for those guilty.

"These people have no place in our sport and we urge that those responsible should be held accountable for their actions," the statement read.

"Formula One, the FIA, the drivers and teams are working to build a more diverse and inclusive sport and such unacceptable instances of online abuse must be highlighted and eliminated."

Source: Reuters

Osaka to play at US Open, 'Big Three' lead men's field

Naomi Osaka will defend her title at the US Open, organisers said on Wednesday, after she withdrew from this year's French Open and Wimbledon on mental health grounds.

Japan's Osaka stunned the tennis world when she quit the claycourt major in Paris in May following her first-round match after being fined and threatened with disqualification when she refused to attend mandatory post-match press conferences.

The world number two, who said she had social anxiety, also skipped Wimbledon but is scheduled to play at the Tokyo Olympics and then in Montreal next month.

Osaka will be part of a women's field at the US Open that will also include world number one Ash Barty, who lifted her second major title at Wimbledon earlier this month.

A total of 15 major winners, including Simona Halep and Garbine Muguruza, are scheduled to feature in the women's field at Flushing Meadows.

In the men's section, former champions Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal -- currently tied for the men's record of 20 Grand Slam singles titles -- will resume their quest for more silverware in New York.

World number one Djokovic, fresh from his third major triumph of 2020 at Wimbledon, is aiming to become the first man since Australia's Rod Laver in 1969 to complete a calendar-year sweep.

Another former champion, Andy Murray, who is currently ranked 104, failed to make the main draw but remains the first player on the alternate list.

Australia thump Windies by 133 runs in opening ODI

Australia's stand-in captain Alex Carey scored a half-century and pace bowler Mitchell Starc took five wickets as they beat West Indies by 133 runs in a rain-hit opening match of their one-day international series in Barbados on Tuesday, July 20.

Chasing a Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) adjusted 257 runs for victory after Australia scored 252-9 in 49 overs after three rain delays, the hosts suffered a collapse to fold for 123 with only returning skipper Kieron Pollard (56) offering resistance.

Starc did most of the damage for the visitors, who came into the contest at Bridgetown after being hammered 4-1 in their T20 series, with a superb 5-48 which included the wicket of Pollard who came back into the side after a hamstring problem.

contd from page 1

Pegasus and farmers issues lead to pandemonium in Indian Parliament: Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha adjourned

"This is not right; this is a wrong practice. This Parliament is yours. The onus of retaining its glory is on you. If you don't do that democracy will not be strengthened. I am ready to get discussion done on the issue that's agitating you," said the Speaker, but to no avail.

Congress, TMC and Left parties were seen storming the Well agitating on issues of farmers and against the alleged snooping of Indian individuals using a foreign spyware.

In Rajya Sabha too, the opposition MPs forced two adjournments and the House was adjourned within a minute of assembling at 11 am.

Later, when the RS reassembled, the Opposition MPs continued to raise slogans against the alleged snooping controversy.

In the ruckus, the deputy chairman sought laying of the parliamentary committee reports that could not be laid at the scheduled hour in the morning due to opposition protests.

Soon after, he adjourned the proceedings for the day.

When the Lok Sabha reassembled at noon after the first adjournment the government said it was ready for any discussion.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi said, "Rajya Sabha has already discussed Covid. Despite our assurances the opposition here is disrupting the question hour which is a right of the members. Disrupting the proceedings when government is ready for discussion is not right. Tell us on what issue you want a discussion. We will discuss."

Presiding officer LS Bhartruhari Mahtab urged MPs to go to their seats and allow the House to function but had to again adjourn the proceedings till 2 pm amid pandemonium.

Later, the Lok Sabha was adjourned till Friday amid continued protests by Opposition members against the "three black farm laws".

The Left is seeking a JPC in the snooping row while the Congress and TMC have demanded a Supreme Court-led investigation.

The government has denied the charges as sensational calling the reports by an international media consortium a "global conspiracy".

Speaking in Lok Sabha, Union IT and Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnav had dismissed the reports as "baseless" and said that the allegations levelled just ahead of the Monsoon session of Parliament were aimed at maligning Indian democracy.

A parliamentary panel on IT headed by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor is likely to question top government officials, including from Home Ministry, next week on allegations related to phone tapping of many using Pegasus spyware, sources said on Wednesday.

An international media consortium has claimed that several Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi, two union ministers, Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee and some 40 journalists were among those whose phone numbers were listed as potential targets for hacking through the Israeli spyware which is usually supplied to government agencies.

The Indian government and Israeli surveillance company NSO Group, which sells Pegasus spyware worldwide, have refuted the reports.

The 32-member Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information and Technology headed by Tharoor is scheduled to meet on July 28. The agenda of the meeting is 'Citizens' data security and privacy', according to the notification issued by Lok Sabha Secretariat.

The panel, which has maximum members from the ruling BJP, has summoned officials from the Ministry of Electronics, Information and Technology and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Sources in the panel said the Pegasus phone tapping issue will definitely be raised in the meeting and details will be sought from the government officials.

"Best day ever as Jeff Bezos endshis ride into space on own rocket

to space in the 20th century but never got to fly; and an 18-year old recent high school graduate named Oliver Daemen who was Blue Origin's first paying customer and whose father, an investor, purchased his ticket.

Funk and Daemen became the oldest and youngest people, respectively, ever to travel to space. And this flight marked the first-ever crewed mission for Blue Origin's New Shepard suborbital space tourism rocket, which the company plans to use to take wealthy thrill seekers on high-flying joy rides in the months and years to come.

"Best day ever!" Bezos said when the capsule touched down on the desert floor at the end of the 10-minute flight.

Named after America's first astronaut, Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket soared from remote West Texas on the 52nd anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, a date chosen by Bezos for its historical significance. He held fast to it, even as Virgin Galactic's Richard Branson pushed up his own flight from New Mexico in the race for space tourist dollars and beat him to space by nine days.

Unlike Branson's piloted rocket plane, Bezos' capsule was completely automated and required no official staff on board for the up-and-down flight.

Blue Origin reached an altitude of about 66 miles (106 kilometers), more than 10 miles (16 kilometers) higher than Branson's July 11 ride. The 60-foot (18-meter) booster accelerated to Mach 3 or three times the speed of sound to get the capsule high enough, before separating and landing upright.

The passengers had several minutes of weightlessness to float around the spacious white capsule. The window-filled capsule landed under parachutes, with Bezos and his guests briefly experiencing nearly six times the force of gravity, or 6 G's, on the way back.

Led by Bezos, they climbed out of the capsule after touchdown with wide grins, embracing parents, partners and children, then popped open bottles of sparkling wine, spraying one another.

Sharing Bezos' dream-come-true adventure was Wally Funk, from the Dallas area, one of 13 female pilots who went through the same tests as NASA's all-male astronaut corps in the early 1960s but never made it into space.

"I got goose bumps," said Angel Herrera after the capsule landed. "The hair on the back of my neck stood up, just witnessing history." Herrera, who lives in El Paso, was one of a few dozen people who watched the launch from inside Van Horn High School, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) away.

Blue Origin - founded by Bezos in 2000 in Kent, Washington, near Amazon's Seattle headquarters - hasn't revealed its price for a ride to space. Two more passenger flights are planned by year's end, said Blue Origin CEO Bob Smith.

The recycled rocket and capsule that carried up Tuesday's passengers were used on the last two space demos, according to company officials.

Blue Origin is working on a massive rocket, New Glenn, to put payloads and people into orbit from Cape Canaveral, Florida. The company also wants to put astronauts back on the moon with its proposed lunar lander Blue Moon; it's challenging NASA's sole contract award to SpaceX. (AP) (Agencies)

India's US envoy Sandhu visits Dalip Singh Saund Post Office in California

this regard into law on July 21, 2005. During his visit to California last week, Sandhu interacted with the Indian- American community leaders.

He also held meetings with top US lawmakers from the region, including Scott Peters, who serves on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Committee on Small Business; Darrell Issa, who is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs - Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on Terrorism, Non-proliferation, and Trade; and Mike Levin, member of the Hispanic and Progressive Caucus and House Committee on Natural Resources Committee on Veterans Affairs Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

Sandhu visited Los Angeles and San Diego. He had engagements with the community, members of the US Congress and at the University of California.

He interacted with the Indian community leaders on board the historic Star of India ship in the Maritime Museum of San Diego. Built in 1863, Star of India is the world's oldest active sailing ship.

In his remarks, the ambassador said the US had come out in an overwhelming manner to offer support to India during the Covid crisis. He also praised the role of the Indian diaspora during this grim time.

"Every bit that you do has been key to saving a life in India, making an actual difference to someone's life. Community has always been a strong pillar, (as has been) seen it in the past, too, to maintain the strong connection with India," he said. (Source: PTI)

Bank of Baroda Chief Executive US Operations Mr. Elango heads on promotion to corporate office in Mumbai

for the banking industry which requires to meet high standards of compliances at many levels. He said, he is aware of the great responsibility he will have as Chief Group Compliance Officer of the bank.

Mr. Elango spoke highly of the Indian American community with which he has been in contact for three and a half year. In particular, he appreciated the community for their generous help to Indians in the difficult period of the pandemic. He said the generosity of the Indian American community he witnessed impressed him a lot. When asked, what message he would like to give to the Indian American community, he smiled and said, "keep up the good work".

Born in 1966, Mr. Elango holds a bachelor's degree in Science and MBA degree in Finance. He is an Associate Member of the Institute of Cost & Management Accountants of India (ACMA) and a certified Associate of Indian Institute of Banking & Finance (CAIIB). He also completed ICSI (Inter) of Institute of Company Secretaries of India.

Mr. Elango joined Bank of Baroda as a Manager in 2000. In a career spanning over 17 years with Bank of Baroda, he acquired rich experience of diverse Banking operations with a thorough knowledge of International Operations.

Mr. Elango has held a wide range of responsibilities in Domestic as well as international operations of the Bank in various capacities. He also headed credit & Development department of Bank of Baroda (Uganda) Ltd, Kampala (A subsidiary of Bank of Baroda) for more than four years.

He spent a good three and a half year here in New York managing the banks US Operations.

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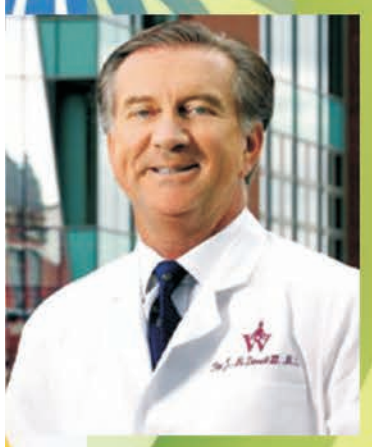
Message from Peter J. McDonnell, M.D. Director Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, USA on the occasion of laying the foundation stone on December 10, 2020



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