

INDIA NEWS

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GREATER SPRINGFIELD MEDICAL & OFFICE SUITES

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Chinese transgressions must end, say people living at LAC

Leh (IANS): As the situation unfolds, the dominant sentiment among the people living near the LAC in Ladakh is that China must not get away with its transgressions.

Durbuk Namgiyal, former congress councillor from Village Durbuk, 121 kms from the Galwan valley, one of the last inhabited villages near the LAC, says the loss of jawans at the Galwan valley is irreparable.

He says there has to be an end to Chinese transgressions taking place year after year. He says some of the pastures at the LAC on the Indian side have now been taken over by the Chinese.

"It is really sad that we lost our jawans, it is a big loss for the country," he says. "China is very aggressive from last many years, they always grab our land, the porters are telling me that pasture for our horses have been taken by the Chinese, who are pitching tents there."

He said one of the biggest fallout of the tensions at the LAC is that the communication and telephone lines have been snapped.



Durbuk Namgiyal

He said the people of Ladakh are ready to take on the Chinese if they are given a go ahead.

"70 to 80 porters in my village are working in the Galwan valley—more than 1000 labour working in BRO," he said. "China is encroaching our land, this is a big issue, one fine day they can come to my village as well, they can come to Shyok."

He said Ladakh scout are the best mountain warriors and they are always ready to serve our country.

"Whenever government decides, we are ready," he said.

He said clear example of Chinese transgression is its claim upto

finger 8 on the pangong lake which has always been an Indian territory.

"Up to finger 8 it is our land, there is no dispute about that, but now the Chinese are occupying upto finger 4," he said, "Locals don't go to that area, but they can see the Chinese lights there and tents pitched up by the Chinese."

He said people of border areas need facilities and better infrastructure.

"We are dependent on solar lights on our side, but on the other side, the area is well lit up," he said.

By Zaffar Iqbal

Guterres 'concerned' about deaths along LAC in Ladakh

United Nations (IANS): UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres is concerned about the clashes between Indian and Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh and asked the two nations to exercise restraint, a spokesperson said on June 16.

Guterres's Associate Spokesperson Eri Kaneko said: "We are concerned about reports of violence and deaths along the Line of Actual Control between India and China."

She added: "We urge both sides to exercise maximum restraint. We take positive note of reports that the two countries are engaged in deescalating the situation."

The clashes on Monday, during which no firearms were reportedly used, was probably the worst confrontation since the 1962 war between the neighbours.

Colonel B. Santosh Babu of the 16 Bihar Regiment and two other Indian Army personnel were killed in the clash along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh on Monday night. However, the Indian Army later disclosed that 20 personnel



UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

had been killed.

Unlike India, China has not officially said if there it had suffered casualties.

But Hu Xijin, editor of the Global Times, tweeted that there were Chinese casualties but the government did not want to publish the numbers because they do not "want people of the two countries to compare the casualties number so to avoid stoking public mood. This is goodwill from Beijing."

By Arul Louis

India-Aus ties have always been close: Modi on summit

New Delhi (IANS): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 4 expressed his exuberance in joining the India-Australia Virtual Summit and said that people-to-people relations of both the countries are strong and the future looks bright.

After both India and Australia accepted the US offer to be part of the expanded G7 meet on China, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Scott Morrison held a virtual summit to strengthen their bilateral strategic relationship. The summit began at 11 a.m.

PM Modi tweeted, "Glad to be joining the first India-Australia Virtual Summit with you, PM Scott Morrison. India-Australia ties have always been close. As vibrant democracies, from Commonwealth to Cricket to even Cuisine, our people-to-people relations are strong and the future is bright!"

The Prime Minister replied to a tweet of his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison in which the latter said that he is "looking forward to catching up" with Narendra Modi for the

first ever Australia-India virtual summit.

Officials in New Delhi argue that as two democratic nations, India and Australia have developed an understanding of each other's perspectives on regional and global issues.

"We have a shared approach to a free open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific. This has led to convergence of mutual interest in many areas. The relations are strong not only at the bilateral level, but also at the

plurilateral level," an official said.

Australia supports India's membership of the NSG and an expanded UNSC. It has also backed India's demand that Pakistan must take meaningful action against terror groups operating from its soil. Besides, it co-sponsored a UNSC resolution to declare Azhar Masood a global terrorist. Australia holds the view that recent developments with regard to J&K are India's internal matter.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

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"India News will bring Australia-India news to us in the most efficient and timely manner"

I am delighted to know of the launch of the India News fortnightly, which I am confident will make an invaluable contribution to not only strengthening Australia-India bilateral relationship but also bolstering mutual country awareness. In the post-cricketing career, I have remained deeply engaged with India to build sports, business, trade, cultural and community relationships, and a publication of this kind will help spread greater awareness about these engagements.

The India News team is a highly accomplished group of professionals possessing many years of experience in diverse sectors, and will bring Australia-India related news to us in the most efficient and timely manner. There was a huge void in this journalistic space in Australia, something that community newspapers were unable to fill completely, and therefore, India News will



Mr Matthew Hayden AM

be a welcome source of news, information and analysis for all the key stakeholders in Australia and India.

I wish the team good luck.

Matthew Hayden AM
Goodwill Ambassador for India, Institute for Australia India Engagement
Managing Director, The Hayden Way Pty Ltd

Congratulatory Messages

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3 Moonah Place, Yarralumla
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AUSTRALIA

30 June 2020



MESSAGE

I am happy to know that the India News is launching the India News newspaper and YouTube channel on 1 July.

There is a rapidly growing Indian community in Australia and several ethnic publications and Indian language programmes on radio act as a window for the wider Australian community. I am certain this new endeavour of India News will further contribute to promoting the interests of the Indian Diaspora and also strengthening of ties between India and Australia.

I wish India News success in its endeavour to bring out a digital Newspaper and launch of a YouTube channel.


(A. Gitesh Sarma)

"The launch for India News is timely and innovative"

The launch for India News is timely and innovative.

I applaud the goal of creating a national Indian newspaper which brings together high quality news, views, analyses, expert column and more, which can set it apart from the community magazines.

I note that the India News team comprises of highly accomplished editors, professionals and technicians which will ensure a high quality publication.

India News has the opportunity to promote India-focused

journalism in Australia and influence the shaping of public policy, decision-making and strategic thinking in both countries.

The Australia India Business Council looks forward to working with India News group and explore opportunities to take the Australia-India trade and investment relationship to a more sophisticated and productive level.

Mr Jim Varghese, AM
National Chair, AIBC



Mr Jim Varghese AM

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Top Front Banner	\$300	\$3000
Half Page (253mm x 177mm)	\$250	\$2500

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After face-off with India, China now cornered by Japan

New Delhi/Tokyo (IANS): A week after Chinese troops initiated a violent attack on Indian soldiers over the disputed Line of Actual Control in Ladakh, Japan began the legal process of complete integration of an island chain that Beijing has for long set its eyes on. The Ishigaki city council in Okinawa prefecture approved a bill that strengthened Japan's control over the uninhabited island group called Senkakus, 1,931 km southwest of Tokyo. Though the Senkakus, which China calls the Diaoyus, have been administered by Japan since 1972, their legal status remained somewhat disputed until now. Before the bill was passed by the city council, Beijing had warned Tokyo against any change in the status quo of the island chain. In a statement issued by China's Foreign Ministry, the islands are its "inherent territories". Beijing urged Japan to "abide by the spirit of the four-principle consensus,

avoid creating new incidents on the Diaoyu Islands issue, and take practical actions to maintain the stability of the East China Sea situation". However, the city council in Japan said that the bill was necessary to "improve the efficiency of administrative procedures". Since April, Chinese ships had been spotted by the Japanese coast guard, in the waters close to the Senakakus. The number of Chinese ships have only increased in the last few weeks with four of them sailing in the area even on the day when the bill was passed by the city council. Japan's cabinet secretary last week reiterated that the Senkakus are under Tokyo's control and "unquestionably" their territory historically and under international law. "It is extremely serious that these activities continue. "We will respond to the Chinese side firmly and calmly," he had warned.

India, Australia sign maritime cooperation in Indo-Pacific region

New Delhi (IANS): India and Australia on June 4 entered into a comprehensive strategic partnership by signing a wide-ranging joint declaration based on a shared vision for maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. The momentous decision was taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Scott Morrison during a virtual summit on June 4. Prime Minister Modi called it a new model of India-Australia partnership and a new model of conducting business, with which both the countries "aspire to achieve yet new heights in collaboration". Morrison said that mutual trust, shared values and common interests between the two countries provide a strong foundation for working together even more closely. His Foreign Minister Marise Payne said that the decisions taken on Thursday marked a major step forward in Australia and India's security and defence relationships. The two sides signed a framework arrangement on cyber and cyber-enabled critical technology cooperation and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the field of mining and processing of critical and strategic minerals. Canberra and New Delhi signed an arrangement for mutual logistics support and implementing arrangements for

cooperation in defence, science and technology in the MoU on defence cooperation. Other MoUs on cooperation in the field of public administration and governance reforms, cooperation in vocational education and training and water resources management were also signed. Sameer Patil, a fellow at the Mumbai-based policy institute, Gateway House, told IANS that this cyber diplomacy aligns well with Australia's cyber cooperation programme, under which Canberra helps Indo-Pacific countries in capacity building on cybercrime prevention and prosecution. Patil also said that the militaries of both the countries require developing defence technologies, such as technologies related to sensors, propulsion and nano-materials. "They can work jointly on their development by combining the experience of government defence research laboratories and the efficiency of the private sector. This will also benefit the domestic defence industrial base in both countries," he said. India, Patil said, also needs to learn from Australian examples, like the Australian Marine Complex's Common User Facility at Henderson, near Perth, which offers integrated fabrication and assembly facility infrastructure for its shipbuilding industry -- not just defence, but also for oil and gas and ocean mining.

Disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy: Manmohan to Modi

New Delhi (IANS): Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on June 22 launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying "disinformation" on the Chinese transgression will be a "betrayal" to the sacrifice made by the Indian soldiers at the LAC and it was neither a "substitute for diplomacy" nor "decisive leadership". Manmohan Singh was criticising Modi's statement at the all-party meeting on Friday and later clarification by the Prime Minister's Office on the June 15 night's violent face-off between the Indian and Chinese sides at Galwan Valley on the Line of Actual Control that led to the death of 20 Indian soldiers, including a commanding officer. The PM statement was used by the Chinese to get away from their misdeeds at the Galwan Valley. "The Prime Minister cannot allow them to use his words as a vindication of their position and must ensure that all organs of the Government work together to tackle this crisis and prevent it from escalating further," said the former Prime Minister. Manmohan Singh in a statement said: "We remind the Government that disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy or decisive leadership." "The truth cannot be suppressed

by having pliant allies spout comforting but false statements," added Manmohan Singh. Singh said Prime Minister should be "mindful" of the implications of his words. He said in Indian democracy that responsibility rests with the office of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister must always be mindful of the implications of his words and declarations on our Nation's security as also strategic and territorial interests. The former Prime Minister said China is brazenly and illegally seeking to claim parts of Indian territory such as the Galwan Valley and the Pangong Tso by committing multiple incursions between April 2020 till date. "The Nation, lost twenty brave soldiers in the Galwan Valley, Ladakh on June 15th-16th, 2020. They laid down their lives in the ultimate act of sacrifice, valour and duty to our country. Our bravehearts defended the motherland till their last breath and for that we owe them, and their families, our eternal gratitude," said the statement "However, their sacrifice cannot be allowed to be in vain. At this moment, we stand at historic crossroads. Our Government's decisions and actions will have serious bearings on how the future generations perceive us. Those who lead us bear the weight



Former prime minister Manmohan Singh (File Photo IANS)

of a solemn duty. "We cannot and will not be cowed down by threats and intimidation nor permit a compromise with our territorial integrity," said Manmohan Singh. "This is a moment where we must stand together as a nation and be united in our response to this brazen threat and the Prime Minister and the Government have to rise to the occasion, to ensure justice for Col. B. Santosh Babu and our jawans who have made the ultimate sacrifice and resolutely defended our territorial integrity." "To do any less would be a historic betrayal of the people's faith," said the statement from Manmohan Singh.

India bans 59 Chinese apps over national security concerns

New Delhi (IANS): The Indian government on June 29 banned nearly 59 Chinese apps including TikTok, WeChat and UC Browser and Xiaomi's Mi Community over national security concerns as India-China bilateral relations remain strained after the death of 20 Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley clash with Chinese PLA troops in eastern Ladakh. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has issued a list of 59 Chinese apps that are now banned in the country. "These measures have been undertaken since there is credible information that these apps are engaged in activities which are prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order," said a MeitY statement. The ministry received complaints from various sources including several reports about misuse of some mobile apps available on Android and iOS platforms for stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data in an unauthorised manner to servers which have locations outside India. "The compilation of these data, its mining and profiling by elements hostile to national security and defence of India, which ultimately impinges upon

the sovereignty and integrity of India, is a matter of very deep and immediate concern which requires emergency measures," the statement read. The MeitY said the move will safeguard the interests of crores of Indian mobile users. "There have been raging concerns on aspects relating to data security and safeguarding the privacy of 130 crore Indians. It has been noted recently that such concerns also pose a threat to sovereignty and security of our country," said the government. Other Chinese apps in the banned list are Club Factory, SHAREit, Likee, Mi Video Call (Xiaomi), Weibo, Baidu, Bigo Live and more. Earlier this month, Indian intelligence agencies red flagged

these Chinese apps over safety and privacy issues of users. The government needs to either block access to these apps or advise people to stop their use, according to the intel inputs, said the agencies. The report comes amid growing chorus from Indian activists to boycott Chinese products due to the border tensions between the two countries in Ladakh. The recommendations of the intelligence agencies have backing of the National Security Council Secretariat which determined that certain China-linked applications could be detrimental to the country's security, said the report citing an unnamed government official.

LIST OF BANNED CHINESE APPS			
1. TikTok	17. Club Factory	32. WeSync	Cheetah Mobile
2. Shareit	18. Newsdog	33. ES File Explorer	46. Wonder Camera
3. Kwai	19. Beutry Plus	34. Viva Video - QU Video Inc	47. Photo Wonder
4. UC Browser	20. WeChat	35. Meitu	48. QQ Player
5. Baidu map	21. UC News	36. Vigo Video	49. We Meet
6. Shein	22. QQ Mail	37. New Video Status	50. Sweet Selfie
7. Clash of Kings	23. Weibo	38. DU Recorder	51. Baidu Translate
8. DU battery saver	24. Xender	39. Vault- Hide	52. Vmate
9. Helo	25. QQ Music	40. Cache Cleaner DU App studio	53. QQ International
10. Likee	26. QQ Newsfeed	41. DU Cleaner	54. QQ Security Center
11. YouCam makeup	27. Bigo Live	42. DU Browser	55. QQ Launcher
12. Mi Community	28. SelfieCity	43. Hago Play With New Friends	56. U Video
13. CM Browsers	29. Mail Master	44. Cam Scanner	57. V fly Status Video
14. Virus Cleaner	30. Parallel Space	45. Clean Master -	58. Mobile Legends
15. APUS Browser	31. Mi Video Call - Xiaomi		59. DU Privacy
16. ROMWE			IANS GRAPHICS

FICQ marks International Yoga Day with event in Brisbane

International Yoga Day couldn't have arrived at a better time. With the easing of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions in Queensland, more than twenty yoga enthusiasts turned up for a morning session at Roma Street Parklands. The event was organised by the Federation of Indian Communities of Queensland (FICQ) on the morning of June 21.

The yoga session, conducted by yoga instructors from the Art of Living Foundation, consisted of twenty asanas (postures).

The event was attended by participants from different professional backgrounds, with some already practicing advanced levels. Tejaswini Patil, an IT consultant, practices yoga daily and found respite from bad posture developed when working on a 10-12 hour schedule. "In the beginning, everything seems difficult. With practice, it becomes easier. I practice Vinayasa Yoga. It is a flow yoga, where each flow leads to a different SuryaNamaskaram. Every asana is modified to have a combination of traditional yoga as well as Hatha Yoga and Iyengar Yoga," she shared.

Alexa Gradovich is another participant who believes that yoga plays an important role in her life. Being a yoga instructor herself, she was satisfied with her morning session. "As a yogi, I do celebrate international yoga day every year and was looking for events that promote it. I do it every day to bring my senses into balance and bring beauty into the world," said Alexa.

The serene and picturesque location of Roma Street Parklands provided the perfect spot for a yoga session.

"We just love the fact that you are using our beautiful park right here at Roma Street Parklands. How lovely that we are in Brisbane, right here in Roma Street Parklands, enjoying what is going to be a fantastic morning. We know that Brisbane city council loves its multicultural communities. We know that we are going to continue supporting our communities. We know that lot of the communities have worked really hard in the last few months. We just love that everyone is reaching out and being there for each other. I think Yoga is just one of those epitomises those side of feelings,"

said Vicki Howard, councillor for Brisbane central ward.

Mrs Archana Singh, Honorary Consul of India, concluded, "Yoga has been recognised by the whole world. This single movement is going to be key to world's future for the alleviation of human suffering and also, to achieve positivity and well-being. It empowers each one of us to do our bit in achieving not only perfection for ourselves, but also for peace and harmony for the world around us."

She also shared a quote she recently read, "Yoga is a dance of every cell of your body to the music of your soul." Liberal-National Senator Paul Scarr conveyed his appreciation for work done by groups such as FICQ during the pandemic. "You have helped a lot of people and it is greatly appreciated. This country could not respond in the way it has without groups such as FICQ doing such community work," said Senator Scarr.

The Institute for Australia India Engagement (IAIE) supported the event, with the CEO Dr Ashutosh Misra taking part in the session.



Hon Consul of India, Mrs Archana Singh



Senator Paul Scarr speaking at the event



IAIE and Fight4Balance organise yoga session in Brisbane

The Institute for Australia India Engagement (IAIE) and Fight4Balance organised the International Yoga Day session with the support of Indian High Commission in Brisbane.

The session was conducted by Indian trainers Neha, Bhawna and Akshay, who are associated with the Art of Living.

IAIE CEO Dr Ashutosh Misra said that yoga in the current time has become more important for people to deal with the stress and tension caused by Covid 19 and ensure a healthy mind and body.

Mr Stephen Illidge, CEO of Fight4Balance that helps children with special need build mental and psychological resilience, said Australians love India and yoga

very much and both institutes can play an important role in creating greater awareness about yoga and bilateral friendship.

Indian High Commissioner Mr Gitesh Sarma had sent his message on behalf of the Government of India for all the participants which was delivered by Dr Ram Mohan, Chairman of India News and IndBiz.



ITBP personnel practices yoga asanas - postures - at 18,800 feet on the occasion of 6th International Yoga Day in sub-zero temperature in Ladkah on June 21, 2020 (Photo IANS-ITBP)

ITBP practices Yoga at 18,800 feet on India-China border

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel, deployed at India-China border, performed Yoga at the height of 18,800 feet at snow covered Himalayan peaks on Indian-China border in Ladakh on June 21 on the occasion of 6th International Yoga Day.

The Himveers practiced Yoga on different heights at Himalayas.

From 18,800 feet in Sikkim Himalayas to Khardung La in Ladakh at the height of 18,000 feet and Vasundhara near Badrinath in Uttarakhand at the height of 14,000 feet, the ITBP personnel performed Yoga on the occasion.

The specialised mountain force, ITBP, is deployed on border guarding duties from Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in

Arunachal Pradesh covering 3,488 km of Indo-China Border and manning Border Outposts on altitudes ranging from 9,000 to 18,800 feet in the Western, Middle and Eastern sectors of the India-China border.

It was a sign of commitment of the ITBP personnel that they showed on the International Yoga Day in the backdrop of India-China face-off that killed 20 Indian soldiers in Galwan Valley in Ladakh on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on June 15.

The International Day of Yoga has been celebrated annually on June 21 since 2015, following its inception in the United Nations General Assembly in 2014. Yoga is a physical, mental and spiritual practice which originated in India.

International Day of Yoga Commemorated across Australia with Gusto

The 6th edition of the International Day of Yoga was celebrated with immense zeal across major cities in Australia as prominent community groups and members collaborated to organize and participate in yoga events and online yoga sessions, writes Deepika Banerji

Despite the incessant onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic, the determination to commemorate the 6th International Day of Yoga could not be dampened in Australia. In fact, it served to harmonize all the community members even further with an even more widespread awareness about the crucial role that Yoga can play in boosting the immunity to keep the burgeoning pandemic at bay.

Melbourne observes International Day of Yoga at Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne

Partnering with Consulate General of India, Melbourne, The Art of Living and Heartfulness Institute, University of Melbourne hosted a virtual yoga event at Wilson Hall to celebrate the essence of the 6th International Day of Yoga thus, succeeding in delivering the message that even in these trying times when social distancing is the new normal, technology can play an instrumental role in spreading peace, harmony and a healthy lifestyle.

At the outset, Professor Michael Wesley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor International at the University of Melbourne, through a video message highlighted the specialty of this year's International Yoga Day because of the Covid-19

restrictions and how it is all the more important for everyone to show solidarity with the global community by coming together virtually with their family members. His sentiments were echoed by Indian Consul General Raj Kumar who also through a video message remarked that although the initial plans of having hundreds of participants at the venue had to be changed, now thousands of families across the globe could join on the virtual platform.

Following the lighting of the lamp ceremony by Dr Muthupandian Ashok Kumar, Assistant Vice-Chancellor International at the university; Dr Angela Haas, Director, The Art of Living and Avinash Chandra representing the Heartfulness Institute, the Yoga session was commenced by the Art of Living team consisting of Yoga instructors, Anupam and Stephanie. The session incorporated a sequence of breathing techniques, stretches and postures to help the body and mind to relax.

The session then moved forward with a meditation session conducted by Akshay and Jessica of Heartfulness Institute, an institute catering to all those seeking a practical approach to meditation, relaxation and self-development. What sets the meditation technique used by the institute apart is that it is "transmission based". With a calm voice guiding in the backdrop, the virtual participants were encouraged to close their eyes, imagine and be in communion with an inner light illuminating their hearts while neither entertaining nor warding off their distracting thoughts. The event

concluded with some messages from the University students thanking the participants.

FICQ and Indian High Commission, Canberra, come together at Roma Street Parkland for a Yoga session

The Federation of Indian Communities in Queensland (FICQ) in association with the Indian High Commission in Canberra marked the occasion by organizing a relaxing and holistic Yoga session between 9.00 am and 11.00 am at Roma Street Parklands in Brisbane. They were supported in this noble endeavour by The Art of Living, Institute for Australia India Engagement (IAIE) and indbiz. The tranquil ambience of the venue made it the perfect setting for the event which was opened by FICQ President Shyam Das, who after paying respect to the traditional owners of the land and to the past, present and emerging elders, welcomed all the participants who were eagerly setting out their mats for the session.

Acknowledging the presence of significant members of the community, namely, Hon Consul of India Mrs Archana Singh from the Indian High Commission, Queensland Senator Paul Scarr, local councillor Vicki Howard, Surendra Prasad, OAM, ex-president and advisor, FICQ; Dr. Ram Mohan, immediate past president, FICQ; Pinky Singh, Liberal candidate for McConnell and Palani Thevar, Labour candidate for Maiwar, Shyam Das hailed the International Day of Yoga as a gift from India.

His speech was followed by an equally eloquent one from Archana Singh who commented

about Yoga being "the key to alleviation of human suffering, positivity and well-being". She also quoted from a text she had read previously that "Yoga is the dance of every cell of your body to the music of your soul." She also went on to deliver a message from the Indian High Commissioner from Canberra, A.Gitesh Sarma who extolled the benefits on adopting Yoga to maintain a healthy regimen and boost immunity during the long periods of lockdown.

Brisbane city Councillor Vicki Howard commented on the multicultural communities of Brisbane joining hands to work hard in order to overcome the recent hardships and that yoga epitomizes the way these communities are reaching out to each other. Liberal-National Senator Paul Scarr also praised the efforts made by groups such as FICQ to combat the ill-effects of the pandemic.

The session commenced with The Art of Living yoga instructor, Rima explaining how yoga postures and movements impact immunity by improving digestion and that yoga is all about harmonizing mind, body and breath. The participants were split into two groups so that the norms of social distancing could be maintained. Yoga instructors, Akshay and Neha demonstrated the various yoga postures beginning with the Sukshma Yoga that is subtle yoga which is a set of body and facial movements for skin and facial muscle relaxation. They then proceeded to the Suryanamskar- a cascading package of yoga asanas (postures) which when done with varying speeds ranging from slow and

medium to fast serve the purpose of warm-up, strength-building and cardio-vascular exercises, respectively. The event ended with a meditation session of approximately 10 minutes in which the participants were asked to concentrate on their inner thoughts and breathing.

Hindu Council of Australia conduct online yoga sessions at multiple locations

The Hindu Council of Australia which has been celebrating International Day of Yoga since 2015 organised yoga sessions in major cities including Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide and Gold coast. Popular yoga enthusiasts conducted these sessions demonstrating sunrise yoga, morning routine yoga, pranayama and many more famous yoga sequences. Prominent politicians from both Australia and India as well as Prakash Mehta, president of the Hindu Council of Australia delivered messages lending their support to the spirit of Yoga Day celebrations.

Indian High Commission and Consulate branches across Australia mark the day with yoga events and online sessions

The various bodies representing the Indian government in Australia participated in the yoga sessions organized at the official premises of the Consulate General of India, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney and the Indian High Commission Chancery in Canberra. Under the guidance of the Art of Living yoga experts who demonstrated the postures and the breathing techniques, the participants enjoyed a holistic experience.



FICQ team and yoga participants congregate at Roma Street Parklands in Brisbane on the occasion



Yoga-cum-meditation session was organised by High Commission Of India, Canberra, under the guidance of yoga expert, Mrs. Rajni Ghai Malhotra in the Chancery on June 21



Participants perform yoga as part of a virtual yoga event at Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne to celebrate the 6th International Day of Yoga

"Yoga is a powerful tool for the entire humanity" -- H E Gitesh Sarma

Indian High Commissioner H.E. Anumula Gitesh Sarma in conversation with Dr Ashutosh Misra, Editor-in-Chief, India News and CEO, Institute for Australia India Engagement on the significance of the International Day of Yoga

1. How popular has the International Day of Yoga become ever since it was approved by the UN General Assembly in 2014?

Yoga has been practised in India over thousands of years. Considering its universal appeal and benefit, Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi in 2014, took the initiative to celebrate International Day of Yoga. With the unanimous support of all the UN members, 21 June was adopted as the International Day of Yoga. Since then, entire world celebrates this day with enthusiasm and zeal. Thousands of people gather every year in different corners of the world and do yoga and meditation. This year, we will be celebrating the 6th IDY. Yoga has become a way of life

for millions across the world. Of course, practice of Yoga should not be limited to one day.

2. Do you think because of Covid-19 pandemic the importance of yoga has increased manifold globally?

Yes indeed. COVID-19 is one of the greatest challenges being faced by mankind. This pandemic has caused lots of mental health issues besides physical health problems like depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety etc. for which no proper medication and treatment exists. Yoga not only takes care of physical health but also helps achieve a balance between body, mind and soul. In these difficult times, Yoga is a powerful tool for the entire humanity.

3. Do you think yoga is one of the key prongs of India's soft power appeal?

We are proud that India is the home of Yoga. But it also belongs to the entire world. Over thousands of years, Indians have had the benefits of this ancient

tradition. We are happy that the people all over the world are embracing Yoga now. It is in harmony with the Indian culture of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'; where we seek happiness for everyone.

4. What more can the Indian diaspora, community leaders and institutions do to expand the impact and outreach of yoga in Australia?

Indian diaspora and institutions play a crucial role in spreading the essence of Indian culture across the world. They are the ambassadors of Indian culture and traditions in true sense. Indian diaspora and organisations abroad can help in creating the greater awareness on Yoga and the essence beneath. They can help in spreading the message of health, wellness, peace and harmony. They can help in creating a healthier and more harmonious world. In this current pandemic situation, there is renewed focus on healthy living. There is a need to respond to this interest by bringing out the



Indian High Commissioner H.E. Anumula Gitesh Sarma

benefits of Yoga.

5. Under the Sports and Wellness Initiative of the Institute for Australia India Engagement, what initiatives would you like us to undertake?

People in Australia are particularly health conscious as evident from their love for sports and physical activity. Institute

for Australia India Engagement (IAIE) may like to take Yoga beyond the traditional audience and expand the outreach to cover every school children and into more remote areas. It can organise programmes on Yoga sessions regularly in addition to celebrating IDY. There may be a need to use digital ways too.

India Global Week 2020: Registrations now open

Newland Global Group is the Australia In-Country partner for India Global Week 2020. Registrations are now open for the biggest international event ever on India's globalisation – where India meets the world,

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participants across +75 sessions and +250 speakers through a world-class virtual conferencing and networking platform. The event will explore the business, strategic and cultural opportunities between India and

the world as we look to a better future following the disruption caused by Covid-19.

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Sikh Youth Australia's unique video collaboration spreads hope and solidarity

In its first-ever shabad music video collaboration, "Mere Naal Hai", Sikh Youth Australia has brought together 21 families from across the globe

As people across the world are gripped with fear and a sense of isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, social distancing has become the new normal. In such a scenario staying connected and keeping spirits alive has become all the more important. Keeping this in mind, the volunteers at Sikh Youth Australia (SYA), a non-profit organisation based in Sydney, launched a first of its kind "Shabad Video Mosaic Collaboration" on June 4 by bringing together 21 families and numerous musicians and composers from various parts of the world who are all members of Sikh Youth Australia.

The main idea behind this initiative was to spread a message of hope and solidarity in these difficult times as the whole world is struggling to liberate itself from the terrible grasp of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Virtual Recording of Spiritual Songs

It was decided that a 5-minute composition, "Mere Naalhai" which means "He (Beloved True Guru) is with me" would be recorded virtually. Among the noteworthy collaborators were Melbourne-based renowned singer and composer Dya Singh, who composed the musical score, Hardeep Girm who produced the final video, and Jamel K. Singh, who organized and integrated all the pieces of the recording.

UK-based Veer Manpreet Singh of "Tu hi, tu hi" fame also contributed to the soulful number while families from neighbouring country New Zealand also joined in earnest. The result was an inspirational and spiritual rendition which epitomizes the possibility of being united through the virtual medium despite the physical and geographical barriers as well as the current compulsion of staying physically distant.

A Platform to Participate in Sikh Community Affairs



As many as 21 families and numerous musicians and composers from various parts of the world, including UK-based Veer Manpreet Singh of "Tu hi, Tu hi" fame

Sikh Youth Australia, a non-profit organization, founded in 1999, is dedicated to providing a platform for young Sikhs in Australia to take active participation in Sikh community affairs and Sikh traditions in order to become upstanding and responsible Sikh Australian citizens. It has been doing a laudable job in empowering the

Sikh youth through its various leadership camps so that they become proficient in their chosen career path. Moreover, its monthly "Austral Youth Kirtan" programmes at the Austral Sikh Temple help the youth to maintain a tenacious link with spirituality by performing kirtan (devotional and communal

singing) and doing seva (selfless service) for the community.

This recent unique and beautiful initiative by SYA is indeed an effective way to stay optimistic and hopeful as the whole world steers its way towards recovery and eventual normalcy.

Sikh Volunteers Australia's new community kitchen gets enthusiastic support from Australian community

Following the inauguration of Sikh Volunteers Australia's (SVA) new community kitchen in Devon Meadows, Victoria, prominent community members and groups have been paying visits to the bigger kitchen to show their appreciation and support for the Sikh group's noble endeavour

Ever since the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic caused many people to face financial problems, especially the foreign students' community, Sikh Volunteers Australia has been at the forefront providing free meals to those in dire straits due to the crisis. Working tirelessly and selflessly, the volunteers managed to cook 63000 meals in 97 days and distributed these across 15 suburbs in Melbourne's South East.

Inaugurating New Community Kitchen to Feed the Needy

With the growing demand for more meals it was felt that the non-profit organization's kitchen was not equipped enough to handle the preparation of the meals efficiently and the need to have a more spacious and modern kitchen was realized. Fortunately, the Australian community has been magnanimous in providing ample donations for their new

kitchen project and consequently, Sikh Volunteers Australia were successful in inaugurating their new community kitchen in Devon Meadows, Victoria on May 31.

Although very few were able to attend the inauguration event, it was not because of any lack of enthusiasm but rather the strict social distancing norms in place at that time. However, there has been a regular influx of prominent community members and groups to the newly opened community kitchen which has already become operational with volunteers cooking vegetarian meals and even pasta.

More Support for the Noble Initiative

On June 4, a representative from Whozcookn, an online food community with a wide network of members across diverse communities, and Lisa Elliott of Wellsprings for Women Inc visited SVA's new kitchen to take a tour of their new cooking facility. The visitors also expressed their gratitude for the selfless and invaluable work done by SVA in lending a huge helping hand to the Australian community during the current crisis. Whozcookn also expressed that they look forward to collaborating with

SVA and help them as much as possible in the near future.

This was followed by a visit on 12 June from SVA's community partner Steve Phillips, manager at Community Support Frankston, an organization working since 1968 to provide information, advice and skills with the motive of promoting self-sufficiency among the local residents of Frankston. The very next day representatives from Berwick Little Athletics were hosted by the volunteers at SVA.

Furthermore, team members of Doveton Show, low-cost, family-friendly alternative to the Melbourne Show, run by volunteers and supported by local businesses and the City of Casey Council, and former Councillor of River Gum Ward - City of Casey, Damien Rosario also visited the community kitchen on June 21.

SVA can look forward to even more donations as with effect from 11 June 2020, they have been granted the Deductible Gift Recipient and Charity Status. So, now any donation made to them will be tax deductible. This goes to show how much the local administration values the organization's contribution to the Australian society.



Lisa Elliott (second left) of Wellsprings for Women Inc. & a representative from Whozcookn (middle) took a tour of Sikh Volunteers Australia's new cooking facility



Representatives from Berwick Little Athletics visiting the community kitchen of Sikh Volunteers Australia



Sikh Volunteers Australia's new community kitchen in Devon Meadows, Victoria

Following Modi-Morrison virtual summit, Australian-Indian camaraderie reaches a new high

The June 4 virtual meet between Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi has laid the foundation for promising diplomatic, Defence and strategic ties which would be mutually beneficial, writes Deepika Banerji

India and Australia have both enjoyed a long standing shared economic, political and diplomatic vision. The signing of nine strategically crucial pacts, which included maritime cooperation, cyber technology and vigilance, mining and processing of critical and strategic minerals, cooperation in defence, science and technology, public administration and governance reforms, vocational education and training and water resources management, signalled the successful culmination of the much-awaited virtual summit between the two leaders.

Reinforcement of Military Ties

As India and Australia cemented their "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" which entailed the signing of the nine agreements, one of the most significant among these, the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) has widened the portals for greater coordination between the navies of both the nations. Both Australia and India are in favour of an open, unrestricted, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region which would streamline navigation, ensure autonomy in over-flight as well as peaceful and non-subversive use of the oceanic region by following the international laws of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The MLSA pact will not only provide both the countries a greater access to the Indo-Pacific region but also allow them to use each other's military bases, thus paving the way for frequent joint military exercises in the near future.

Joint Investment in Cyber Technology, Quantum Computing and AI

Another pact which contributed to the huge uptick in the Indian and Australian strategic relations was the one on cyber affairs and critical technology with both countries slated to invest nearly \$13 million in cyber technology and other allied fields for the next four years. Both the countries have committed themselves to fortifying cyber security in the backdrop of growing concerns over vulnerability in secure internet connections and also to foster digital trade. Moreover, Australian cyber security firms can now look forward to making inroads into Indian businesses desirous of ramping up their cyber security fortresses by supplying innovative services that

can bolster their cyber security capabilities.

Australia's Unequivocal Support for India's Inclusion in NSG and UNSC

In the joint statement released following the virtual summit, Australia also showed strong support for India's bid to gain a permanent seat in the reformed United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and membership to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Both India and Australia are committed to using nuclear energy for peaceful civil purposes. Australia's trust in India's unblemished non-proliferation record can undoubtedly be considered as a precursor for the former's backing the latter's inclusion in the currently 48-nation strong NSG. Ingeminating its previously stated support for India's candidacy to a permanent seat in the UNSC, Australia has strengthened its cordial ties with India even further.

Renewed Hope for Enhancing Mutual Trade and Investment

As India is all set to expand its manufacturing sector, Defence and space capabilities, and work towards fulfilling its goal of optimum electric mobility by the year 2030, there is bound to be a stupendous rise in the demand for critical minerals. Australia is in possession of 21 critical minerals identified by India. A Memorandum of Understanding has been inked between India and Australia to supply critical minerals and the latter hopes that the Lithium exports would be worth \$3 billion by the financial year 2024-25. Australia, being among the top three nations to produce cobalt and zircon, Australian Resources Minister Keith Pitt has affirmed that they are in a position to be the most significant supplier of these minerals to India.

Moreover, as China hiked its tariff by 80% on Australian barley exports, India has opened its door for Australia thus providing much needed relief to the Australian exporters, primarily from Western Australia and South Australia who would soon be exporting barley to India.

Not only this, with the burgeoning synergy between Australia and India, both Modi and Morrison have shown optimism with regard to resuming talks on the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement which was launched in 2011, with the most recent negotiations being in September 2015. Although during the June 4 virtual summit this yet again did not come to fruition, there is still room for substantial growth in the bilateral trade ties especially since the figures for the two-way trade in commodities and services has risen from approximately \$13 billion (AUD)



The virtual summit between Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on June 4 culminated with the signing of nine strategically crucial pacts between Australia and India



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison during the India-Australia virtual bilateral summit, in New Delhi on June 4

in 2007 to a little more than \$30 billion (AUD) in 2018.

Indian Students to Benefit from Australia's Vocational Education System

Australia has been a much sought after destination for Indian students aspiring to study abroad. The Memorandum of Understanding on vocational education and training between India and Australia will play a pivotal role in achieving Indian government's target of equipping 400,000 Indians with requisite practical skills by 2022 so that they can participate in all productive areas of development. Indian training institutions stand to gain immensely through collaborations with the state-of-the-art Australian Vocational Education System which will give them access to optimum quality training workshops, formulating skill development strategies and accreditation from premier Australian educational institutions.

Pledge to Combat the Covid-19 Crisis Together

Having been proactive in combating the Corona virus pandemic, both leaders reiterated the need to continue joint efforts to overcome the health-related crisis. The 13th round of the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund will focus on collaborative research funds contributing to the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, researchers from Griffith University, Australia, have already collaborated since April 2020 with Indian Immunologists Limited, a renowned vaccine-manufacturing company in Hyderabad to develop a vaccine for Covid-19.

Upgrading the 2+2 Dialogue from the Secretarial to the Ministerial Level

The inaugural two-plus-two meeting between Indian and Australian Foreign and Defence Secretaries took place in 2017 when Australian Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Frances Adamson and Secretary of the Department of Defence Greg Moriarty were hosted by Indian

Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar and Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra in New Delhi. The June 4 virtual summit concluded with both sides deciding to upgrade it to the ministerial level so that the Australian and Indian Defence and Foreign Ministers can conduct direct 2+2 talks in the future.

Finally, ScoMosa-friendship Sums it All Up

The personal bonhomie between the two statesmen was exhibited when Prime Minister Morrison remarked about missing Indian Prime Minister Modi's congenial hugs and his desire to make Gujarati khichdi. On May 31, Morrison had tried his hand at making samosas, a popular Indian snack, and posted a picture on his official twitter account calling them as "ScoMosas" with a comment about sharing the vegetarian snacks with Indian Prime Minister Modi. Modi had also reciprocated by commenting "Connected by the Indian Ocean, united by the Indian samosa".

Enlightening Triveni dialogue on the positive outcomes of Modi-Morrison summit

The Institute for Australia India Engagement (IAIE), Australia India Business Council (AIBC) and Centre for Australia India Studies (CAIS), O.P.Jindal Global University conducted its inaugural discussion on June 5 in the aftermath of the Modi-Morrison virtual summit as a part of its Triveni dialogue series

On June 5, a panel consisting of Australian and Indian diplomats, academic and business experts, conducted a zoominar discussion to do an in-depth analysis of the June 4 virtual summit between Prime Minister Morrison and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, as the first among the Triveni dialogue series on emerging strategic issues, a joint initiative by IAIE, AIBC and CIAS. The word "triveni" being a Hindi word meaning "the juncture where three rivers meet" symbolizes the collaboration of the three partners.

Among the panelists were Dr. Ashutosh Misra, CEO, IAIE; Ambassador Anil Wadhwa, former Indian Diplomat; Melissa Conley Tyler, Director, Asialink Diplomacy, University of Melbourne; Jim Varghese, AM, National Chair, AIBC; Professor Purnendra Jain, University of Adelaide; and Shaun Star, Director, CIAS, O.P.Jindal Global University. The other attendees were from India, Australia, US, UK, Singapore, Japan and Canada.

Strengthening India-Australia ties

Welcoming the panelists, Dr. Misra commented on the steadily strengthening bilateral relations between India and Australia in the fields of technology, education, sports; the support that both countries have shown for each other and the New Colombo Plan under which young ambassadors from Australia are going to India to study and undertake internships. Ambassador Wadhwa who has formerly served as a prominent diplomat representing India in different nations provided a comprehensive outline of the contents of the joint declaration by India and Australia highlighting the significance of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two nations. He lauded the materializing of the much awaited Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) that Australia signed with India giving both nations the mutual benefit of access to each other's military bases needed to maintain stability in the Indo-Pacific region. He further stated that India stands to gain a lot from the Memorandum of Understanding on vocational education, cyber security, public administration and mining and processing of critical minerals as Australia has a lot to offer in all these fields. He concluded by saying that Australia must capitalize on India being a potential market for their growing manufacturing sector and resources, technology, services



and research and innovation are the drivers which would serve to accelerate convergence between the two countries.

Tyler, who has led many delegations bringing together academics and government officials and was the erstwhile National Executive Director of the Australia India Institute of International Affairs, remarked that the genuine personal camaraderie exhibited by the two statesmen undeniably symbolized the trust and friendship that their respective nations have forged. She also showed her confidence in the significance of the evolving relationship between Australia and India in its own right rather than viewing it from the prism of the current troubled scenario between China and Australia with the latter looking for a substitute in the wake of China's tariff impositions.

Australia can help India raise health care expenditure

Jim Varghese, possessing a wealth of experience in leading various government agencies in Victoria and Queensland as well as helming multi-faceted businesses and being honoured with the Order Of Australia in 2009 for services to public sector reform, expressed his optimism regarding Australia playing a key role in helping India raise its expenditure on health care from 1% of GDP to at least 2% in the near future. Emphasizing the significance of both countries joining hands to resuscitate their respective economies, the need of the hour is to focus on recovery of the education and tourism sector which have been the hardest hit.

Professor Purnendra Jain, an academic expert on India-Australia as well as Australia-Japan relationships who has recently been awarded the Japanese Emperor's Order of the Rising Sun, opined that India and Australia have considerably

filled the gap in their mutual understanding over the past few years with both countries attaining a central position in each other's diplomatic maps. However, he raised a vital question as to what the actual roadmap would look like for the implementation of the promises made between the two sides and felt that the involvement of local governments in both countries would be instrumental in this regard.

All the panelists also answered the queries made by the various attendees.

Shaun Star delivered the vote of thanks and also highlighted growing educational linkages between JGU and Australian institutions and the impact of NCP fellows and Australia India Youth Dialogue initiative.

By Ananya Sharma



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India urges Russia to expedite defence contracts

New Delhi/IANS Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his team were in Russia's capital Moscow to attend World War II Victory Day celebrations as well as speed up various defence contracts, including the S-400 missile defence system as ties with China deteriorate.

After reaching Russia, Singh on June 23 laid a wreath at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Indian Embassy. He was on a three-day visit to Russia.

Earlier in the day on June 23, Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar met with Russian Deputy Defence Minister Col General A V Fomin in Moscow to work on the modalities to speed up various defence contracts. "The partners agreed to strengthen multifaceted ties between the two countries," the Indian mission stated.

Also India and China's foreign

ministers met face-to-face for the first time since the barbaric attack was carried out in Galwan valley in eastern Ladakh region across Line of Actual Control between the two countries' troops in which 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number of Chinese troops were killed.

Both the countries have agreed to deescalate the situation along their boundary, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a regular news briefing recently in Beijing.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov hosted the virtual trilateral meeting with China's Wang Yi and India's S Jaishankar. After the meeting he said, "I don't think that India and China need any help."

On defence contracts, India and Russia have inked deals worth \$16 billion. Moscow has stated that they are committed to the timely

implementation of contracts, including the supply of S-400 air defence systems and production of Kalashnikov rifles and Kamov helicopters.

Singh will seek the advanced delivery of the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missile defence system and the purchase of Russian-made Su-30Mki jet fighters and MiG-29.

India and Russia signed the S-400 deal worth more than \$5 billion in 2018 and is currently due in December 2021.

The two countries signed 14 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) during Defexpo 2020 in Lucknow in February this year that covered development and production of land, air and naval systems and hi-tech civilian products.

A separate MoU was signed by Russian Helicopters and



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh laid a wreath at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Indian Embassy in Russia

Indo-Russian Helicopters Ltd for localisation of components to be used in Kamov Ka-226 helicopters. India has plans to buy 200 Ka-226 helicopters.

The Indian Air Force signed a Rs 1,500 crore deal with Russia for buying R-27 air-to-air missiles.

Rahul Gandhi slams Indian PM for 'backing China and not India'



Indian National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi/IANS: Indian National Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in his second tweet on June 23 attacked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and alleged that India is negotiating to get its own land back while accusing the Prime Minister of publicly supporting China's claims.

Rahul Gandhi tweeted "China took our land. India is negotiating to get it back. China says it's not Indian land. PM has publicly supported China's claim. Why is PM backing China and not India and our army?"

BJP then attacked Rahul Gandhi for criticising the government.

In the CWC meet Rahul Gandhi said, "China has brazenly occupied our territory. PM has destroyed our position and

betrayed our army by accepting their position that they occupied no Indian land. The Chinese can't be permitted to get away with this unacceptable usurpation of our land."

Rahul said everything needs to be done to ensure that sacrifice of the Indian martyrs is not in vain.

"One reason why China has acted is a complete and total failure of our foreign policy. The established institutional

structure of diplomacy has been demolished by the PM. Our relations with our once friendly neighbours lie in tatters. Our time tested relationship with our traditional allies has been interrupted," added Rahul.

He suggested that "India should build a good relationship with the US and other countries and must also maintain good relations with its old friends."

Almost 70 % Indians ready to dump Chinese TVs, mobile phones and electronic goods

New Delhi/IANS: In the backdrop of the India-China dispute, 68.2 per cent Indians said that as a mark of protest, they will stop buying Chinese products, including mobile phones, TVs and electronic goods, according to the latest IANS CVoter Snap Poll.

According to the survey, 68.2 per cent people said they will boycott Chinese products, while 31.8 per cent said nothing of this sort is going to happen, and it will be business as usual where people will continue to buy Chinese products.

In the age-group category, the survey found that people across all ages agreed that they will boycott Chinese products -- 75 per cent in the middle age group (45-60), 66 per cent in the 25-45 years age group, 79 per cent elderly (60 and above), and 60.9 per cent freshers (below 25).

The anti-China sentiment is also apparent in all the categories of the education group -- 70 per cent in the lower education group, 65 per cent in the middle education group and 64.6 per cent in the higher education group.

In the income group category, the anti-China sentiment is more prevalent and consistent across various sections -- 68 per cent in the lower, middle and higher income groups.

In the social group category, the survey found that 93.9 per cent of Christians were willing to boycott Chinese products, followed by 80.7 per cent of Scheduled Tribes, 73.8 per cent of Other Backward Classes, 70 per cent Scheduled Castes and 74.9 per cent upper caste Hindus. The anti-China sentiment is very high in majority of the categories, except Muslims (35.1 per cent) and Sikhs (44 per cent).

The query was also put to people who casted votes in the last general elections, with 58.2 per cent Opposition voters supporting the boycott Chinese products call. As many as 72.8 per cent of NDA voters too said that they were willing to boycott Chinese products.

In the gender category -- 74 per cent males agreed to boycott Chinese products while 61.7 per cent expressed similar sentiments.

73.6% Indians show faith in Government's stance on National security

New Delhi/IANS: In the backdrop of the India-China dispute in Ladakh, 73.6 per cent Indians said that they trust the Indian government more than the Opposition parties on issues of national security, as per the latest IANS CVoter Snap Poll.

According to the survey, people across various age groups have put their trust in the Indian government on matters of national security instead of the Opposition parties.

In the age group profile, 83.7 percent of people over 60 years said that they trust the government more on national security issues, followed by 76.5 per cent people in the middle age group (45-60), 72.1 per cent in the 25-45 years age group, and 68.8 per cent of freshers or people below the age of 25 years.

The government also enjoys maximum support across the education group -- 75.5 per cent in the lower education group, 74.2 per cent in the middle education group and 64.4 per cent in the higher education group.

In the social group category, except the Muslims and Sikhs (27.4 per cent and 49.7 per cent, respectively), most people trusted the Indian government more than the Opposition parties on national securities issues.

In the income group category, 75.4 per cent people in the lower income group trust the Indian government instead of the Opposition parties, followed by 72.6 per cent in the middle income group and 70 per cent in the higher income group.

Only 16.7 per cent respondents

said they trust the Opposition more than the Indian government on issues of national security, while 9.6 per cent said they neither trust the Opposition, nor the government on this issue.

When the same query was put to the Opposition voters in the last general elections, 56.3 per cent said they trust the Indian government over the Opposition; 81.7 per cent of the NDA voters also put their trust in the Indian government.

In the gender category, both male (76.3 per cent) and female (70.6 per cent) have expressed their satisfaction with the Indian government on matters pertaining to national security, especially the ongoing dispute with China.

Seven Australians of Indian Origin among recipients of Queen's Birthday Honours 2020

Seven honorees from the Indian community in Australia have been conferred with the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) and the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) awards for their dedication and contribution to community, medical science and arts

Dr Arumugam Alagappa Arumugam gets Member of the Order of Australia (AM)

After completing his studies in Psychiatry from the Madras Medical College in Tamil Nadu and pursuing further specialization in Bangalore, Dr Arumugam relocated to Australia in the early 1970s landing his first job in the small town of Traralgon. Forever keen to help individuals suffering from mental ailments, Dr Arumugam has worked to help people with long-term mental disabilities to lead a normal life amid the community. Throughout his illustrious career he has served in various top posts, one of the most prominent being the Director of Clinical Services at Heatherton Hospital and Associated Community Services. He has also participated enthusiastically in sharing the wealth of knowledge related to Psychiatry to aspiring students at Melbourne University and Monash University as well as contributing innovative mental illness treatment methodologies. Dr Arumugam is indeed a deserving candidate to be bestowed with the prestigious Member of the Order of Australia (AM) award.

Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for Professor Ranjeny Thomas

Professor Thomas graduated from the University of Western Australia receiving her MBBS in 1984. Thereafter, she underwent her training as a rheumatologist in Perth and went on to begin her research fellowship in 1990 at the University of Texas. It was here that she was able to identify human circulating dendritic cell precursors. Her research has provided valuable insight into autoimmune disease with specific focus on restoring tolerance. She has also been successful in developing and testing the first rheumatoid arthritis vaccine. Not only this, she has also contributed to the development of disease biomarkers and innovative immunotherapies by

comprehending the pathogenesis of spondyloarthropathy and autoimmune diabetes. Currently working in the capacity of Professor of Rheumatology at University of Queensland Diamantina Institute, Translational Research Institute, consultant Rheumatologist at Princess Alexandra Hospital and fellow of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences, Professor Thomas has indeed proven her mettle as a talented and resourceful member of the medical profession and is undoubtedly worthy of the honour.

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) conferred on Lakshman Prasad Alluri

Lakshman Prasad Alluri has been a devout volunteer working for the Indian community in Australia ever since he set foot on the continent in 1993. He has been closely associated with several non-profit organizations such as Sri Vishnu Shiva Mandir of which he was the President in 1993 and now the Vice-President. Not only this, the credit for the founding of the Canberra Telugu Association and the Kannada Association of Canberra also goes to him. Moreover, as the President of the Canberra India Council, he has been working in earnest to foster the understanding of Indian and Australian cultures and values. Having served in the ACT Government Multicultural Advisory Board and various other ACT Government Community Committees, Alluri has continued to keep up the good work amid the Covid-19 crisis by coordinating and bringing together a network of community groups to provide groceries and other essentials to those in need. Alluri's selfless work for the community makes him an ideal recipient of the honour.

Dr Mulavana Santhadevi Parvathy---- recipient of Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Hailing from Cochin, Dr Parvathy completed her MBBS from Kerala University in 1980 and has been taking special interest since the late 1980s in women's health, preventative medicine, medical education and assessment and mentoring of International Medical graduates. As a general practitioner, she has been a part of Hunter New England Local Health District since 1985 and

for the past 20 years, she has been a senior lecturer of General Practice at the University of Newcastle. Having been appointed the Director of the Hospital Skills Program seven years prior, she has been efficiently mentoring and providing continual support to doctors. Dr Parvathy's contribution to medicine and medical education could not have been better acknowledged than being chosen for the conferment of this great honour.

Shobha Sekhar bags Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Founder of the Kalakruthi School of Indian Classical Music which marked its 25th anniversary last year, Sekhar is a renowned musician and performer whose life has been filled with music since 1994. Her music school which imparts training in vocal Carnatic and Veena has been instrumental in polishing the latent skills and launching the career of many talented young musicians. With numerous concerts and performance organization to her credit, the Melbourne-based artist also teaches music at the University of Melbourne currently and has also been helming the Arts wing of the Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria since 2017. Her creative expertise which has enriched Indian music and dance has been duly recognized as she has been chosen for the Queen's Birthday Honours this year.

Dr Rama Rao gets Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Despite having a doctoral degree in polymer chemistry from the University of Madras, Dr Rama Rao who came to Australia in early 1983, is also a professional classical musician. In 1984, following her enrolment for a post doctorate program at the Monash University, she opened the Krishna Ravali School of Carnatic Music which has grown in popularity over the years. She pioneered the provision of live music during Bharatanatyam performances in Australia and while her music career progressed she also worked at Dulux paints. Utilizing her passion for music, she has also organized music concerts to raise funds for humanitarian purposes. Dr Rama Rao without any doubt is entitled to this exemplary honour.

Sivaganga Sahathevan honoured with Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Originally from Sri Lanka, Sahathevan came to India in the

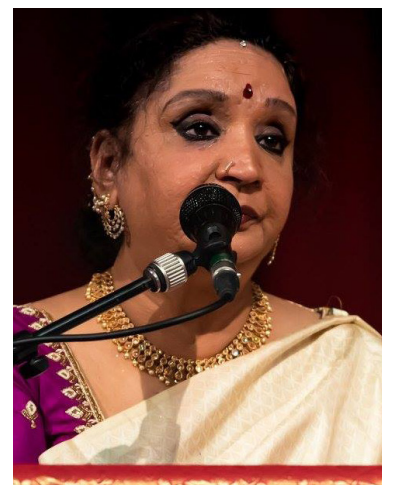
Sahathevan has been supported by several organizations such



Sivaganga Sahathevan (left)



Dr Rama Rao



Shobha Sekhar (Courtesy Facebook)

wake of the ensuing civil war in Sri Lanka. She has been at the forefront promoting awareness about Indian music ever since she first got involved in 1998 with the organization of a Carnatic music performance at the Darebin Music Feast, one of Melbourne's most musically and culturally diverse festivals. Following this debut, she has been an active participant at the Feast and in 2001, the money generated through her group's independent performance at the Feast was donated to Starlight Children's Foundation that has since then become permanently associated with Sahathevan's group. Sixteen years later, the Carnatic music group commenced raising funds for the Girls from Oz, a non-profit charitable organization which helps native girls from Australia's outback to pursue education in music. In her long and illustrious journey towards carving a niche in music and helping the Indian Community in Victoria through her passion,



Professor Ranjeny Thomas (Courtesy University of Queensland)

as Bharatalaya Dance Academy, Multicultural Arts Victoria and the Australian Girls Choir to name a few. Sahathevan who is keen to continue serving her community by engaging the elders as well as guiding children who wish to portray their distinct culture through musical performances surely is a valuable addition to the list of OAM honorees.

By Ananya Sharma

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Path-breakers: Dr Ameer Hamza and Dr Tanya Unni, Amtan Group

Ameer and Tanya were always destined for success, even before their move to Australia over a decade ago. From early life growing up in India and even before they knew each other, they were both driven by hard work, good ethics, and a commitment to help people. This saw them travel the world and hone their craft as medical professionals and gain specialist medical practitioner qualifications.

Dr Ameer Hamza and Dr Tanya Unni met in medical school in India with their common drive to help the communities they lived and worked in, whilst delivering complete health care solutions. They went on to be married and live and work in London where they continued to further their medical expertise.

In 2010 their entrepreneurial spirit saw Dr Ameer Hamza and Dr Tanya Unni move to the Queensland, the sunshine state, following a friend's holiday recommendation. They had no real plans to settle down; however, they quickly fell in love with the Gold Coast and its supportive culture towards an entrepreneurial spirit.

Dr Ameer Hamza commented, "As we started exploring, we realised this place had immense potential and there were a lot of things we could do and a lot of ways we could contribute to the Gold Coast community. We found this proposition immensely rewarding in being able to give this health care support to the community."

The power couple are also

dedicated parents to their two children, raising them on the Gold Coast and enjoying down time with trips to the beach.

Leap of Faith, Dedication and Business Growth

Within the first three months of unpacking their bags, Ameer and Tanya took over their first medical centre in Main Beach. Dr Tanya Unni explained that "setting up the business on the Gold Coast was much easier than they expected, especially compared to England. People are encouraging and welcome new businesses."

In the years since, entrepreneur Dr Unni and her husband Dr Ameer Hamza have built one of the largest medical groups in South East Queensland, Amtan Medical, part of the Amtan Group. They currently have eight medical centres located in the northern part of the coast.

The diverse Amtan Group portfolio, includes a range of business units that supply specialist services and products dedicated to fostering complete health solutions:

1. Amtan Medical Centres – a chain of whole health care medical centres dedicated to family health care. Leaders in new technology, providing the latest in medical solutions and treatment plans for patients.
2. Skin Lab & Beauty – a chain of specialist skin laser and cosmetic beauty clinics backed by a dedication to qualified and trained medical specialists.
3. Australian Skin Life –

manufacturers and developers of a unique range of skin and beauty care cosmetics and products, including the 'Dr. Tanya' brand – based on natural and ancient ingredients. And unique skincare products such as NuSonic Exfoliating Device, NuBrush Hair Device and NuDerm Moisturising Mist.

4. Amtan Workplace Doctors – a specialist service for workplace medical requirements, including workplace medical checks.

5. 1300-4-AMTAN – a dedicated virtual health care service enabling virtual in-home consults and a healthcare helpline that is serviced by qualified GPs. It also serves as a triaging service to ensure patients access same day appointments across any of the 8 Amtan Medical Centre locations.

Business Success and Achievements

Dr Ameer Hamza and Dr Tanya Unni have proven to be a power duo, with their individual and combined achievements. They have been recognised as leaders in the medical profession and have also had their business achievements recognised on the broader and highly competitive business stage, as successful Australian entrepreneurs, receiving accolades and national business awards.

- 2020 TVSN Best in Beauty – New Product Category – The dedication to developing a truly remarkable solution to hair and scalp care saw the Dr Tanya NuBrush & Holy Basil Serum recognised as a finalist in the National Beauty Awards for TVSN.

- 2019 Business News Australia Awards – Dr Tanya Unni won the Australian Young Entrepreneur Health & Medicine Award at the Business News Australia Awards

- 2019 Business News Australia Awards – Dr Tanya Unni won the Gold Coast Young Entrepreneur Health & Medicine Award at the Business News Australia Awards

- 2019 Australian Business Awards – Top 100 – Ranked 16th – in 2019 Dr Tanya Unni was ranked for the second consecutive year in Australia's Top 100 list, 'Ranked 16th in Australia's Top 100 Young Entrepreneurs'

- 2018 Australian Business Awards – Top 100 – Ranked 18th – in 2018 Dr Ameer Hamza and Dr Tanya Unni were 'Ranked 18th in Australia's Top 100 Young Entrepreneurs' – Business News Australia. Notably they were also the only Indians to be included in the list.

- Australia India Business Council (AIBC) – Dr Tanya Unni is currently National Chair of AIBC, member of Queensland Management Committee.

- Indo-American Press Club, Houston, USA – Dr Tanya Unni was honoured to receive the Global Entrepreneur Award by the Indo-American Press Club, Houston, USA.

All Star Family Health Care – Amtan Medical

For over 10 years, Dr Ameer Hamza and Dr Tanya Unni have been invested in fostering the growth of dedicated health care services to the communities of the Gold Coast, whilst further



Dr Ameer Hamza



Dr Tanya Unni

expanding specialist services. Amtan with its eight centres (and growing) is now recognised as one of the largest privately owned medical chains on the Gold Coast.

Urgent action needed to safeguard futures of 600 million South Asian children threatened by COVID-19: UNICEF

Cash transfers and other measures can prevent families slipping into poverty

Geneva/Kathmandu/New York – The COVID-19 pandemic is unravelling decades of health, education and other advances for children across South Asia, and governments must take urgent action to prevent millions of families from slipping back into poverty, UNICEF said in a new report released on June 23.

With the pandemic expanding

rapidly across a region that contains a quarter of the world's population, Lives Upended describes the disastrous immediate and longer-term consequences that the virus and the measures to curb it have had on 600 million children and the services they depend on.

"The side-effects of the pandemic across South Asia, including the lockdown and other measures,

have been damaging for children in numerous ways," said Jean Gough, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia. "But the longer-term impact of the economic crisis on children will be on a different scale entirely. Without urgent action now, COVID-19 could destroy the hopes and futures of an entire generation."

According to the report, immunization, nutrition and

other vital health services have been severely disrupted, potentially threatening the lives of up to 459,000 children and mothers over the next six months. Food insecurity is growing; a UNICEF survey in Sri Lanka showed that 30 per cent of families have reduced their food consumption. In Bangladesh, some of the poorest families are unable to afford three meals a day.

With schools closed, more than 430 million children have had to rely on remote learning which have only partially filled the gap; many households – especially in rural areas – have no electricity, let alone internet access. There are concerns that some disadvantaged students may join the nearly 32 million children who were already out of school before COVID-19 struck.

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Australian government to introduce major changes in university fees

Canberra (IANS): The Australian government on June 19 announced a major overhaul of university fees.

Under the changes announced by Education Minister Dan Tehan, the cost of studying humanities will more than double while fees for "job relevant" courses will be slashed, reports Xinhua news agency.

It comes as demand for university places in 2021 soars with students less likely to take gap years in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are facing the biggest employment challenge since the Great Depression," Tehan told the National Press Club.

"And the biggest impact will be felt by young Australians. They are relying on us to give them the opportunity to succeed in the jobs of the future."

"Students will have a choice," the minister said.

"Their degree will be cheaper if they choose to study in areas



Aus Uni Fee overhaul

where there is expected growth in job opportunities."

From 2021 course fees for maths and agriculture degrees will fall 62 per cent to A\$3,700 (\$2,531) per year, while those studying teaching, nursing, English, clinical psychology and foreign languages will also pay the same amount, 46 per cent less than they do currently.

Humanities degrees will cost A\$14,500 per year, a 113 per cent increase.

Law and commerce degrees students will face fee hikes of 28 per cent to A\$14,500 per year.

"Universities must teach Australians the skills needed to succeed in the jobs of the future," Tehan said.

"We will also incentivize students to make more job-relevant choices that lead to more job-ready graduates, by reducing the student contribution in areas of expected employment growth and demand."

Tehan said that no student already enrolled at universities would pay increased fees while those enrolled in courses that are having fees slashed will benefit from the reductions.

COVID-19: Australian economy on recovery path amid second wave threats

Canberra (IANS): Australia's economy is on track for a gradual recovery from COVID-19, but faces the threat of a second wave of infections, according to the central bank on June 16.

At a meeting held earlier last month, Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) officials pointed to the chance of a second wave of infections as a potential global stumbling block, reported Xinhua news agency.

"Should widespread contagion resume, with a return of lockdowns, confidence would suffer and cash flow would be strained," it said recently.

RBA officials were broadly optimistic about the country's success in containing the virus so far, leading to an earlier opening up of businesses than initially

expected, and the possibility that a downturn would be shallower than expected.

Federal government stimulus measures were credited as instrumental in protecting the economy from collapse, with some households actually better off in terms of income under the pandemic.

"Households that were already receiving welfare payments had additional payments, and the JobKeeper program and increased JobSeeker payments had supported incomes for others."

"In some instances, households had received more income than usual," the RBA said.

However figures show that along with a contraction in spending in late March and April, many



Australians had lost their jobs or seen a drop in the number of hours worked, which fell by 9 per cent overall in April.

RBA officials said that while this figure was less than it could have been, it was still substantial and may have an effect on spending during the second half of the year.

Australian government urged to create plan to save koala population



Canberra (IANS): Australian ecologists have called on the federal government to urgently produce a threatened species recovery plan for the koala populations.

Kara Youngentob, an ecologist from the Australian National University (ANU), said that a recovery plan for the marsupials should "absolutely be a priority," with habitat loss from forestry operations exacerbated by the "2019-20 Black Summer" bushfire crisis, reported Xinhua news agency.

Recovery plans serve "to maximise the long-term survival" of Australian wildlife and come with a three-year deadline to implement and fund.

Former Environment Minister Greg Hunt in 2015 authorized a recovery plan for koalas which is now two years overdue.

Youngentob told Nine Entertainment newspapers that only one species of tree was growing back to dominate areas affected by logging and bushfires, creating "food deserts" for koalas.

"Their populations are like little lights and they will continue to blink out across their habitat range until it's totally dark," she said.

"The current protections in place aren't enough to ensure populations don't continue to decline. There have been localised extinctions and they may continue."

James Trezise, a policy analyst from the Australian Conservation Foundation, said that koalas were "smashed by last summer's bushfires".

An estimated 25,000 koalas perished in the bushfires on Kangaroo Island off the coast of South Australia (SA), approximately half of the island's population.

A further 10,000 died in New South Wales, one third of the state's population.

"This is an iconic species that people hold dear and it's invaluable to Australia's culture and also to the tourism industry," Trezise said.

Australia and India agree on cyber and critical technology partnership

The Morrison government has entered into a landmark, cooperative arrangement with India on cyber affairs and critical technology.

As part of the Australia-India Leaders' Virtual Summit held on June 4, Marise Payne, Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs and his Indian counterpart, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, signed the Australia-

India Framework Arrangement on Cyber and Cyber Enabled Critical Technologies Cooperation.

The arrangement will enhance bilateral cooperation on cyber and critical technology issues, which are at the core of new Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Australia and India. Under the arrangement, Australia and

India will work together to promote and preserve an open, free, safe and secure Internet, enhance digital trade, harness critical technology opportunities and address cyber security challenges.

Critical technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and robotics present significant opportunities for people, businesses and the

broader economy, but also must be guided by international standards to ensure they do not present risks to security or prosperity.

That is why the arrangement will be complemented by a new, four-year \$12.7 million Australia-India Cyber and Critical Technology Partnership. This partnership will create a research and development

fund for Indian and Australian businesses and researchers, and support other countries to improve their cyber resilience.

Together, these measures will help shape a global technology environment that meets the shared vision of the two countries for an open, free, rules-based Indo-Pacific region.

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Taxpayers gearing up for post-COVID19 returns

The tax filing season is upon us. With ease in restrictions from COVID-19 lockdown, individuals and businesses are keen to lodge tax returns as early as possible and get some financial momentum in the coming months. Almost every registered tax agent is getting ready for the busy season ahead. Mr. Jatin Savalia, tax accountant at McFillins & Partners Accountants, breaks down on what to expect this year.

1. What are the necessary dos and don'ts for a first-time taxpayer and for new entrants into the Australian workforce?

To begin with, one must be aware of their current situation. For example, if an individual has worked for the first time and is under 18 years old, that person would be taxed differently as compared to an adult working full-time. Their income can be classified as "excepted income" or they can be classified as "excepted person".

In another situation, if someone has arrived in Australia who is not an Australian Citizen or a Permanent Resident, stayed within the country for less than 183 days, and worked within the country, they will be treated as non-residents for tax purposes, and may not be liable to pay any "Medicare Levy Charges". Apart from these, there are a number of rules regarding what can be claimed and cannot be claimed as deduction for work.

2. What should be an ideal time frame for filing tax returns after 30 June?

Australian Taxation Office has specified time frames for lodging tax returns. Individuals lodging it themselves need to have their tax return submitted by 31 October, 2020. If they are lodging through a registered tax agent, they can generally get an extension of this deadline to 15th May next year. In order to get the extension,

individuals need to be on the relevant tax agent's client listing, registered with the ATO, before the due date.

Technically, one can file a tax return from the 1st of July. However, there are a number of factors that need to be considered before an individual should go ahead. Information such as income from all sources like interest received from bank account and term deposits, foreign income received (to be reported by Australian Citizen and Permanent Residents), passive sources of income like income generated from rental property, and hobby businesses – are not always readily available and takes some more time to be updated. In this case, lodging a tax return through a registered tax agent is in your interest.

3. Could you please advise important dates to keep in mind for every tax season?

Generally, the lodgements dates are the same each year for Individuals. Individual tax returns need to be lodged by 15th May, 2021, provided they are lodged through a registered tax agent.

The lodgement and payment date for small companies is 28th February, 2021. If you have any prior-year returns outstanding, the due date for those returns will be 31st October, 2020. Similar to individual returns, companies also get an extension up to 15th May if returns are done by a registered tax agent. Similar extension to lodge tax return can be accessed by the client for Trusts, Partnerships, and SMSF's, provided they are on the client list of a registered tax agent.

If there are any outstanding prior year returns, the lodgement deadline for the current year reverts to 31st October, 2020. Apart from these, an individual could potentially get an extension if they are in any unforeseen situations through the help of a tax agent.

4. To what extent do you think tax return formalities have changed in the context of Covid-19 when a vast majority have been asked to work from home?

We expect here will be a shift away from traditional meetings in our office to prepare and review and sign off on tax returns with our clients. Instead, online video meetings using platforms such as Zoom will be more popular for meetings, with people more likely to sign off on their tax returns electronically now than ever before.

5. What are the new deadlines and relaxations to remember this year that have been announced by the ATO in the context of Covid-19 restrictions, changed working conditions, business losses, etc?

Instant Asset Write-off: The Instant Asset Write-Off for small businesses has increased. Small businesses will now be able to write off eligible assets that cost less than \$150,000 and were acquired after 12th March, 2020. The new write off threshold will remain in place until 31st December, 2020.

Cash-Flow Boost for Business: Temporary cash flow boosts have been provided to support small and medium businesses and not-for-profit organisations to help them during the economic downturn associated with COVID-19. Eligible businesses and not-for-profit (NFP) organisations who employ staff will receive between \$20,000 to \$100,000 in cash flow boost amounts – by lodging their activity statements between the months (or quarters depending on the BAS cycle) of March and September 2020.

Cash flow boost payments will be exempt for income tax purposes. However, businesses receiving JobKeeper payments will need to keep in mind that these payments are taxable and form part of their

income for tax purposes.

6. In the context of Covid-19 what new expenses and deductions can be claimed by taxpayers?

The major change for Individual tax returns relates to claiming home office expenses. The ATO has declared a higher rate for home office deduction from 1st March, 2020 to 30th June, 2020. Home office expenses were previously claimed at 52 cents per hour and this was deemed to cover costs like depreciation of furniture, electricity, water bills, body corporate fees, etc. As per the guidelines, the home office expenses can now be claimed through cents per hour method, at the higher rate of 80c per hour from 1st March, 2020, provided they can prove that they were required to work from home. However, this will be a "catch all" claim which covers electricity, phone, internet and equipment usage related to the home office.

Individual still can't claim expenses for travelling to and from work in the COVID-19 if they are required to work from home as it still constitutes to be regular travel.

7. Would you recommend lodging tax return online and how easy or complex is it for first-timers?

Lodging online can be simple in the right circumstances, especially if their affairs are relatively simple. However, it can often be risky if the person lodging doesn't have a thorough understanding of what income they need to report, what deductions they can claim, and rules written into Australia's Tax legislation. First-timers may find it more prudent to lodge via a tax agent in the first year, so they can get an understanding of these items and can always look at lodging online in future years, if they feel comfortable doing so.

8. What accounting software



Mr. Jatin Savalia, tax accountant at McFillins Partners Accountants

and training procedures is followed at McFillin and Partners Accountants?

McFillin and Partners Accountants is a Brisbane-based practice consisting of experienced CPAs and staff in all fields including taxation accounting, general accounting, management accounting, bookkeeping, financial planning and superannuation. McFillin and Partners are a Platinum Partner with XERO accounting software and are XERO certified accountants. All of our accounting staff are either certified accountants or en-route to be certified accountants.

Between the three partners alone, there is over 50 years of public practice accounting experience. At McFillin and Partners, constant training session are conducted to deliver the best possible outcome for our clients. These constant training session are conducted every month, where a set of staff (one junior and one senior accountant) are required to do a detailed research and presentation of different topic like Fringe Benefit Tax, Capital Gains Tax, and more. These training session help keep us up to date with the most current updated for tax and compliance.

In conversation with Mr Nishit Chandan, special correspondent.

Apparel exporter body seeks early CEPA pact with Australia

The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking an early conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Australia.

According to the industry body, the agreement will more than triple India's apparel exports to Australia in three years time.

The AEPC had approached Prime Minister Modi on June 1 as he was scheduled to hold a virtual bilateral summit on June 4 with his Australian counterpart Scott Morrison.

"An early conclusion of the India-Australia CEPA would surely impact Indian apparel exports positively. As per our estimates, India can increase additional exports of \$500 million in the next three years, if the CEPA with Australia is concluded," AEPC had said in its letter.

AEPC Chairman A. Sakthivel, in the letter, said the Indian apparel exporters are desirous of engaging with Australia in a big way.

"It is our sincere prayer and request to have an early CEPA with Australia and to include apparels as a focus product to

enter the Australian market in a large way," he said.

AEPC said that Australia is the 18th largest importer of apparel with \$6.6 billion imports in 2019.

"Australia presently has preferential agreements with our major competitors like China and Vietnam. Australia also gives GSP benefits to Bangladesh and Cambodia, resulting in a 5 per cent duty advantage for these countries vis-a-vis India," Sakthivel said, adding that the bilateral discussions should also include India-Australia CEPA.



AEPC Chairman A. Sakthivel

WHO hopes 2 billion Covid-19 vaccine doses by next year

Dr Soumya Swaminathan, who is the chief scientist at the World Health Organisation (WHO) said last month that nearly 2 billion doses of the Covid-19 vaccine would be ready by the end of next year.

Addressing the media from Geneva, she said that "at the moment, we do not have a proven vaccine but if we are lucky, there will be one or two successful candidates before the end of this year" and 2 billion doses by the end of next year.

Scientists still predict a safe and effective vaccine against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, could take at least 12-18 months to develop.

Last month, global pharmaceutical major Pfizer said

that it believes that a vaccine to prevent Covid-19 could be ready by the end of October.

There are currently over 100 vaccines in various stages of trials.

AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine candidate developed by researchers from Oxford University will likely provide protection against the disease for one year, the British drug maker's CEO told Belgian radio station Bel RTL this week.

Oxford University last month announced the start of a Phase II/III UK trial of the vaccine, named AZD1222 (formerly known as ChAdOx1 nCoV-19), in about 10,000 adult volunteers. Other late-stage trials are due to begin in a number of countries.



Soumya Swaminathan, Deputy Director-General of the World Health Organisation. (Photo: FAO-IANS)

UN recognition for Kerala in fight against Covid-19

Kerala on June 23 was among those honoured for tackling the Covid-19 pandemic when the United Nations celebrated the Public Service Day.

The function, held on a virtual platform, saw the participation of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and other top UN dignitaries who applauded all the leaders which included state Health Minister K.K. Shailaja for effectively tackling Covid-19.

Speaking on the occasion, Shailaja noted that the experiences of tackling Nipah virus and the two floods - 2018 and 2019 - where the health sector played a crucial role, all helped in tackling Covid-19 timely.

"Right from the time when Covid cases got reported in Wuhan, Kerala got into the track of the WHO and followed every

standard operating protocols and international norms and hence, we have been able to keep the

contact spread rate to below 12.5 per cent and the mortality rate to 0.6 per cent," she said.



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

Covid-19 linked to altered mental state, other brain issues

Researchers have found that some hospitalised Covid-19 patients show signs of confusion, changes in behaviour and other brain complications, including stroke, psychosis and dementia-like syndrome.

The research, based on a study of 153 patients treated in the UK hospitals during the acute phase of the Covid-19, describes a range of neurological and psychiatric complications that may be linked to the disease.

Out of the 153 patients, full clinical details were available for 125 patients, said the study published in the journal The Lancet Psychiatry.

The most common brain complication observed was stroke, which was reported in 77 of 125 patients.

Of these, 57 patients had a stroke caused by a blood clot in the

brain, known as an ischaemic stroke, nine patients had a stroke caused by a brain haemorrhage, and one patient had a stroke caused by inflammation in the blood vessels of the brain.

Age data was available for 74 of the patients who experienced a stroke and the majority were over 60 years of age.

"This data represents an important snapshot of the brain-related complications of Covid-19 in hospitalised patients. It is critically important that we continue to collect this information to really understand this virus fully," said co-author of the study, Professor Sarah Pett, from University College London.

"We also need to understand brain-complications in people in the community who have COVID-19 but were not sick enough to be hospitalised. Our study provides the foundations

for larger, hospital and community-based studies."

A total of 39 patients showed signs of confusion or changes in behaviour reflecting an altered mental state, said the study.

Of these, nine patients had unspecified brain dysfunction, known as encephalopathy, and seven patients had inflammation of the brain, medically termed encephalitis.

About 23 patients with an altered mental state were diagnosed with psychiatric conditions, of which the vast majority were determined as new diagnoses by the notifying psychiatrist.

Although most psychiatric diagnoses were determined as new by the notifying psychiatrist or neuropsychiatrist, the researchers said they cannot exclude the possibility that these were undiagnosed before the

Statin therapy linked to lower death rate in corona patients

The use of cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins is associated with a lower death rate and a lesser incidence of mechanical ventilation in hospitalised COVID-19 patients, according to a study.

The findings, published in the journal Cell Metabolism, also showed that mortality risk and other negative outcomes were not increased by combination therapy consisting of statins and blood pressure-lowering drugs called angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs).

"These results support the safety and potential benefits of statin therapy in hospitalised patients with COVID-19 and provide a rationale for prospective studies to determine whether statins confer protection against COVID-19-associated mortality," said senior study author Hongliang Li of the Wuhan University in China.

Currently, there is no vaccine or specific antiviral drug approved to prevent or treat severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection, which causes COVID-19.

Because a vaccine or drugs for COVID-19 will likely not be available for months or even years, repurposing clinically approved therapies might be a more attractive option.

Statin may serve such a purpose because these drugs slow the progression of lung injury in animals, improve immune cell responses, and strongly reduce inflammation, which is likely responsible for severe COVID-19 complications such as organ damage.

Although statins generally have an excellent safety profile in humans, animal studies have shown that they increase the expression of angiotensin-converting enzyme II (ACE2) -- the receptor that SARS-CoV-2 binds to and uses to enter host cells.

On the other hand, animal studies have also shown that ACE2 protects organs such as the lungs against virus-induced injury.

As a result, it has not been clear how clinical outcomes in patients with COVID-19 are affected by the use of statins, either alone or in combination with ACE inhibitors and ARBs, which are commonly prescribed with statins and also increase ACE2 expression in animals.

To address this gap in knowledge, Li and his collaborators carried out a retrospective study of 13,981 corona patients admitted to 21 hospitals in Hubei Province, China.

Among these patients, 1,219 used statins, primarily atorvastatin at an average dose of 20 mg per day.

Among patients with hypertension, 319 used statins combined with ACE inhibitors or ARBs, and 603 used statins combined with other antihypertensive drugs.

Over a 28-day follow-up period, statin use was associated with a lower death rate and a lower incidence of mechanical ventilation.

Statin use was associated with 5.5 per cent mortality rate, compared to 6.8 per cent without statin use, representing a 19 per cent decrease, said the study.



patient developed Covid-19.

The 23 patients with psychiatric diagnoses included 10 patients with a new-onset psychosis and six patients with a dementia-like syndrome.

Seven patients had signs of a mood disorder, including depression and anxiety.

Age information was available

for 37 of the 39 patients with an altered mental state and of those, around half were aged under 60 years of age.

Detailed long-term studies are needed in order to confirm if there is any link between Covid-19 infection and the onset of psychiatric or neuropsychiatric complications in younger patients, said the researchers.

World This Fortnight

Contributed by National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore, India

WEEK ENDING 20 JUNE
Two years of Trump-Kim summit: Singapore, Hanoi and the road to nowhere

What happened?

On the second anniversary of the Singapore Summit, the meeting between Trump-Kim Jong-un, North Korea's Foreign Minister Ri Son Gwon said, "never again will we provide the US chief executive with another package to be used for achievements without receiving any returns."

The North Korean leadership regretted the meeting held with the US President and used the second anniversary of the meeting to pledge a possible remilitarisation of the DMZ. North Korea has accused the Trump administration of extracting political mileage out of the leaders' meet.

Furthermore, the North Korean leadership, led by Kim Jong-Un's sister Kim Yo Jong, has warned the US that it should keep away from inter-Korean affairs if it wants the "easy holding of the upcoming Presidential election". North Korea's relations with the US remains in a deadlock, even as an election-oriented Trump administration that is having a confrontation with China remains distracted elsewhere.

What is the background?

First, hopes from Singapore to stalemate in Hanoi. After years of strategic jostling and exchange of barbs, the US-North Korea relations appeared on the cusp of change in the 2018 Singapore Summit, through the Trump-Kim Jong Un meet. The meeting had raised much hope with both countries' promising to "join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula" and the DPRK committing to working towards "complete denuclearisation". A second summit in Hanoi between Kim Jong Un and Trump ended in a stalemate after the two coun-

tries were unable to reach any agreement.

Second, a simultaneously steady decline in the inter-Korean relationship. For days leading up to the second anniversary of the Trump-Kim Singapore summit, relations between the DPRK and the ROK are on a downward spiral with North Korea announcing on 9 June that it "will completely cut off and shut down the liaison line between the authorities of the North and the South, which has been maintained through the North-South joint liaison office." This culminated in hostile action by North Korea when it destroyed an inter-Korean liaison office. The building was located in the North Korean border town of Kaesong. The latest escalation between the two Koreas has been on the issue of anti-regime pamphlets being sent from across the border by defectors from North Korea who have taken refuge in South Korea.

What does it mean?

First, the future course of the US-North Korea relations is back to square one. After a dire warning from North Korea wherein it vowed to never again let the US use another package for [political] achievements without receiving any returns, any possible negotiation with Pyongyang stands constricted for the US. The pressure is likely to increase on South Korea in the coming days as North Korea interprets the diplomacy as "nothing is more hypocritical than an empty promise." The future of the US-DPRK dialogue is back to square one. With constricting space for the US for any possible negotiation, the pressure on South Korea is likely to increase in the coming days. It has been a long strategy for the DPRK regimes to threaten or attack the ROK to gain concessions from the US. The possibility for any concessions from the US to North Korea vis-a-vis sanctions or international trade remains remote despite pressure on South

Korea. Trump administration remains engaged internally in an increasingly divisive politics as the US nears an election in November.

Second, the negotiating tactics of Trump are completely different from his predecessors. Even though the ROK is a non-NATO ally, Trump administration has not shied away from demanding concessions from South Korea for stationing its troops in Seoul. Trump administration has lessened external balancing with most of its allies, including South Korea. Such an outlook is likely to strengthen in an election year, a year that has ravaged the American economy due to increasing job losses due to the pandemic and has seen worst domestic unrest in over 50 years. South Korea should not count on the uncertain policy of Trump administration. This, among other things, does not portend better days for inter-Korea relations.

US-Germany relations tense, as Trump signals withdrawal of troops

What happened?

The US President Donald Trump on 15 June confirmed media reports on his orders to reduce the US troops in Germany. Earlier to this confirmation, the outgoing US ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, told the Bild newspaper in an interview on 10 June that Washington's plan is because "Americans taxpayers are against paying too much for other countries' security."

The US military is set to remove 9,500 troops while leaving only 25,000 troops in Germany. Currently, there are 34,674 US military personnel stationed in Germany, including 20,774 from the Army and 12,980 from the Air Force, according to a Pentagon deployment report. The US military infrastructure in Stuttgart, Germany, serves as key hub for securing several missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

What is the background?

First, Trump faults Germany for less defence spending in NATO. The immediate trigger for the order is the failure of Germany to increase its defence spending by 2 per cent in the NATO, and this led Trump to call the long-time NATO ally "delinquent." Even though most of the NATO countries have failed to reach the two per cent mark on defence spending agreed in 2014, Trump has singled out Germany for the default. Simultaneously the rationale behind the troop reduction in Germany and a potential redeployment in Poland is likely to aggravate Moscow. But the US troop withdrawal plans are the latest in the series of incidents that have soured the relations between Berlin and Washington.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel delivering a video speech in Berlin, capital of Germany

Second, Germany's overdependence on Russian energy. The withdrawal plan in collective aims to drive home a message that Berlin, on the one hand, aims to politically and strategically stay clear for Russian aggression and on the other hand remains steadily dependent on it for energy. This withdrawal order follows a bill in the US Senate to expand the sanctions on Russia's Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline that connects the energy route through the Black Sea.

Third, strained Trump-Merkel personal diplomacy. The withdrawal decision came just days after Trump's most recent spat with Berlin, this one involving Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision not to attend an in-person meeting of the Group of 7 in the US this month and her continued resistance to inviting Russian President Vladimir Putin to join the Group.

What does it mean?

First, for Germany the withdrawal will serve as a scope to introspect on ways to mitigate its local economies dependent on the US military base and for the US, the orders mark a culmination of one Trump's presidential promises in 2016. The reduction in US troop numbers in Germany is not new as the numbers have been steadily falling since 2006. In 2018, the number of US troops stationed in Germany more than halved, from 72,400 to the current figure of around 34,000. Hence the withdrawal of troops is not so much a new trend as against the institutionalized and well-publicized order from Trump today. Germany should now prepare for a more long-term possibility: that one day all the US troops may be gone.

Second, along with Germany, Europe and especially the NATO alliance should warm up to the idea of a political absence of the US. Most of the European countries, along with Germany, has viewed its relationship with the US through the NATO alliance deriving strength from an impending Russia threat. But this working relationship might have to be revamped as 'Europe will have to take on more responsibility' and

this would also mean that many NATO countries like Germany would have to rethink its nuclear and arms policy away from the larger protection of NATO. As things stand now, France could emerge as the only choice in stepping up to the task of providing an alternate defence shield to NATO by integrating its relatively strong missile policy into the NATO defence planning.

Last, the withdrawal and the redeployment in Poland lacks strategic depth and doesn't provide any economic rationale of "saving the American taxpayer's money." The Pentagon has been studying the possibility of redeploying the US troops in Europe for some time. The shift to Poland will take years, and a large amount of money, to turn Poland into anywhere close to how Germany had maintained the US bases. Even if the goal is just to cut the costs of overseas deployments, this redeployment is going to be devoid of any financial benefit that Germany has provided, such as the 1 billion dollars per year in cash and in-kind payments.

Other News

India-China standoff at the Galwan Valley

Tensions at the Galwan Valley increased this week, killing twenty army personnel and injuring more, on the Indian side. While the Chinese side also suffered casualties, the authorities refused to acknowledge the numbers. Talks were held at the Maj. Gen level in order to diffuse the tensions on the ground. The diplomatic channels involving the External Affairs ministers of both countries ensured that the issue would be handled in a responsible and appropriate manner. The tiff at the LAC and the killing of soldiers, has given rise to anti-China sentiment at the societal level. It is being expressed through social media, calling for boycotting the products manufactured in China.

Legislative approval for the Constitutional Amendment changing the political map

The Upper House of Nepal passed the Constitutional Amendment Bill changing the political map of the country, in the backdrop of



A woman wearing a face mask holds alcohol gel and a shopping bag as she walks in street amid COVID-19 outbreak in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on June 8, 2020 (Xinhua/Rahel Patrasso/ANS)

border disagreements with India. President Bidhya Devi Bhandari gave her assent to the bill. The new map includes the three disputed areas – Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh, claimed by both India and Nepal.

India elected as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council

The UN Security Council held elections for five seats in the non-permanent category. India was elected to the UNSC, as a non-permanent member, with 184 of 192 valid votes. Ireland, Mexico and Norway were also elected for two years.

John Bolton's book reveals the contours of Trump's foreign policy

Former National Security Advisor John Bolton's book- "The Room Where It Happened", has created a debate surrounding the nature of Trump's foreign policies, his relation with China and Xi Jinping. The book reveals that Trump sought latter's help in winning the forthcoming elections in November. The Justice Department, however, has filed a lawsuit seeking to block the publication of the book.

SIPRI report says India and China are among the top military spenders in 2019

"Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2019", notes that the US, China and India are the top three military spenders in 2019. They are followed by Russia and Saudi Arabia. The "SIPRI Yearbook 2020", an annual publication, indicates that all the countries that possess nuclear weapons continue to modernize them, whereas India and China have increased their nuclear warheads. According to the study, both China and Pakistan continue to have more nuclear warheads than India.

Tensions flare-up in the Korean Peninsula after Liaison office bombing

North Korea demolished the Inter-Korean Liaison office located at the border this week. South Korea condemned the unprecedented incident and the Reunification Minister resigned in the backdrop of the growing tensions. Pyongyang warned the re-establishment of guard posts and redeployment of troops in the inter-Korean zones, effectively nullifying the inter-Korean military agreement of 2018. It also refused to receive any special envoys from South Korea, even after repeated requests from the latter.

NATO to probe French allegations on Turkey's failure to inspect the Mediterranean

NATO issued a statement that it would probe France's accusation that the Turkish Navy failed to respond to an allied call for inspecting the Mediterranean. The issue was raised by France during the meeting between NATO Defence Chiefs. A Turkish vessel was said to be illegally transporting arms to Libya and France was on a

NATO mission investigating the incident.

Contributing Scholars

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WEEK ENDING 13 JUNE 2020

A Global Coalition of Legislators to counter the challenges from China

What happened?

On 12 June an Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) was formed to focus on key areas of policy safeguards against China. The safeguards include: protecting the international law and ensuring that China is held accountable for the human rights violations, promoting trade fairness, strengthening security, and promoting responsible development by protecting emerging economies from investment or lending from China.

Few issues could bring the former leader of Britain's Conservative Party Iain Duncan Smith together with his peer in the Labour party Baroness Helena Kennedy or the US Republican Senator Marco Rubio together with his Democrat Senator Robert Menendez.

It is a diabolical sight to behold when German Green Party Member of the European Parliament Reinhard Butikofer united with its ideologically opposed Slovak Conservative Miriam Lexmann and with many senior politicians from left and right-wing political parties in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Norway and Japan to form a coalition to grapple with the challenges posed by China.

What is the background?

First, an opposition against Xi but engagement with China continues. The issue that has united the global coalition of developed countries is the foreign policy challenges posed by China. However, these challenges are essentially led by Xi Jinping and his Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime. The COVID-19 pandemic had forced policymakers across the globe to confront questions of how the CCP has repressed the truth about the coronavirus when it was first identified, silenced the whistleblowers, and failed to report to the WHO on time. In the post-COVID-19 world order, the possibility of an all-time assertive Chinese leader is fathomable which has been evident in the regime's breaches of its international treaty obligations to Hong Kong, mass atrocities against the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and increasing tensions with Taiwan and in the South China Sea. Under these foreign policy challenges, the economic engagements of the coalition partner countries seem to continue without a pause with most recent being that of the Trump administration not leading its efforts to decouple the US and Chinese economies or target the Huawei company during the

pandemic.

Second, a divided response to China from the EU to Australia.

The coalition has come at a time when the responses by different institutions and leaders have been divided. In spite of Chinese aggression in the Himalayan belt, South China Sea or in its peripheral provinces, a tough stance has been from the US and Australia while the EU and several Scandinavian countries have been soft on China. It is the time of worsening relations between the US and China that has been exacerbated by finger-pointing over the pandemic. Washington has also taken a tough stance on Beijing's actions in Hong Kong, and along with it, Australia was seen calling for an 'independent international' investigation into China's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its origin. Beijing has been curt in imposing tariffs on Australia's agricultural exports and choking the manufacturing units. At the same time, the EU was seen releasing a policy brief labelling China as the cause for disinformation on the pandemic but also assuring the Chinese foreign minister of no harm in the economic ties.

What does it mean?

First, belated as it may be, the coalition is a political statement in a desperate attempt to defend the rules-based international order. China's staunch leadership policy is singled out as a threat that also proves that historically for a system to function and introspect on its own fault lines, an external threat has been essential. In this case, how much will the "Concert of Legislators", a loose network, work? The approaches are bound to vary, and not every member will necessarily be in agreement of a policy to push back on China.

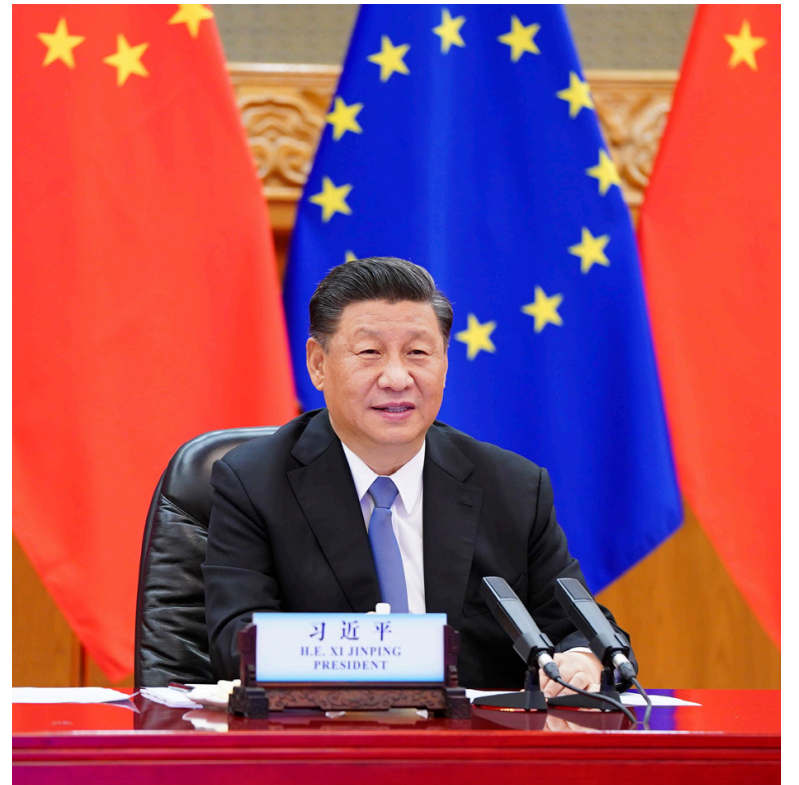
Second, more than the deep-seated frustration with China's assertiveness, the coalition represents how the leaders are disillusioned by their own individual State's soft policy over China politically and economically. The State seems to have accommodated China's forceful pursuing interests in global issues ranging from trade to technology development to environmental regulation.

Last, the missing voice from the developing countries has been glaring where the dominance of China's economy and political clout can be viewed as the maximum. From a racist attitude against African to border transgression with India and the South China Sea, the coalition has representations from only the developed world, making the coalition an elite voice.

North Korea warns the US against meddling in Inter-Korean affairs, and threatens South Korea to take actions against the anti-Kim activists

What happened?

On 12 June, North Korea's Foreign Minister Ri Son Gwon said that it is futile to continue maintaining



Chinese President Xi Jinping



South Korean President Moon Jae-in (C) speaks at an emergency government meeting in Seoul, South Korea, Feb 23, 2020

a relationship between North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and the United States President Donald Trump. On the occasion of the second anniversary of the 2018 Singapore summit between the two leaders, the foreign minister said that the US could no longer bring peace and prosperity to the Korean peninsula.

The reason behind the escalation of tensions between Pyongyang and Washington came after the disappointment expressed by the United States on the closing of hotline communications between North and South Korea.

Last week also witnessed tensions between the two Koreas over the balloons from South Korea carrying anti-regime message leaflets into South Korea. While North Korea is upset about this propaganda, South Korea has announced to take action those activists for sending balloons, mostly those who defected from North Korea.

What is the background?

First, the failure of Trump-Kim personal diplomacy. Over the last two years, there was hype on the meetings between the two lead-

ers along with the failure to take forward the relations between the two countries. While the United States has asked for denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula before easing of sanctions, North Korea insists that sanctions be removed earlier. The 2018 Singapore summit created a hype, but the agreements lacked clarity. Persistent sanctions from the US and differences during the 2019 Hanoi summit frustrated Kim Jong-un to the extent that this was followed by weapon tests and increased pressure on Seoul and Washington by North Korea.

Second, the anti-Kim propaganda from South Korea by North Korean defectors. Activists (including those who have defected from North Korea) in South Korea have been sending leaflets attached to helium balloons across the border, criticizing Kim Jong-un over his nuclear ambitions and abysmal human rights record. On failing to stop this, North Korea expressed its anger by threatening to permanently shut down a liaison office with South Korea as well as nullify the 2018 inter-Korean agreement. South Korea wants to continue the dialogue



Palestinians clash with Israeli soldiers during a protest against Israeli settlements near the West Bank city of Salfit, June 26, 2020 (Ayman Nobani/Xinhua/ANS)

with North Korea and balance its liberal policies within.

Third, the Sino-North Korea bonhomie. In support of North Korea's statement, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said that the US should take concrete measures to address North Korea's legitimate concerns. North Korea-China bonhomie has been evident from the meetings between Kim Jong Un and Xi Jinping over denuclearisation and peace in the Korean peninsula. North Korea has regularly sought advice from China's premier on negotiation strategies before the Trump-Kim Hanoi summit.

What does it mean?

First, North Korea is in a difficult economic situation due to the pandemic and the sanctions imposed on it. It is only interested in mild provocation and has resorted to maintaining pressure on Seoul and Washington. The recent events with North Korea have pushed South Korea's interest in ensuring peace in the region.

Second, while China is expected to continue its economic and political support, North Korea is likely to wait until after the November elections before deciding a path forward with the United States. The United States is unlikely to engage in a confrontation with North Korea due to its domestic situation.

Middle East: In a public appeal UAE cautions Israel against the annexation of West Bank

What happened?

On 10 June, following the Executive Committee of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) emergency meeting, UAE's Foreign Affairs Minister Anwar Mohammed Gargash condemned the expected Israeli move to annex parts of West Bank and reiterated absolute Emirati support for Palestinian rights.

On 12 June, UAE's ambassador to the US Yousef Al Otaiba made a rare public appeal to the Israeli public, through an op-ed article

titled "It's Either Annexation or Normalization" published in a leading Israeli Hebrew newspaper Yediot Ahronot. Otaiba offered better commercial, military and security ties between the two nations provided Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave up unilateral plans to annex West Bank. The ambassador said annexation would upend normalizing ties between the Arab nations and Israel. The article received mixed reactions from Israel. To The National, an Abu Dhabi newspaper, al-Otaiba said that annexation would undermine all bilateral exchanges, cooperation and progress.

What is the background?

First, ameliorating UAE-Israeli ties for the Arab world. Ambassador Otaiba's article was a rejoinder to claims by Netanyahu and his right-wing allies that Arab states would pick Israel over Palestinians as they had much to gain in terms of technology, security and commerce from Israel. Otaiba's move is a first for a Gulf diplomat. It positions the impending formal establishment of Israel-UAE ties in a more appealing manner to the larger Arab population. The move by presenting the establishment of ties and cooperation with Israel as the lesser evil becomes a crowd pleaser amongst Arab states and UAE's domestic population. Also, as Israeli analyst Shimrit Meir said, it is an effective attempt to influence Israeli public opinion regarding annexation.

Second, endorsement of Trump-Jared "Middle east plan" by the Gulf States. The proposed US recognition of Israeli settlements on West Bank and a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside a highly securitized Israel with borders is to facilitate the latter's security needs. However, the head of Palestinian Authority Mahmood Abbas rejected the plan calling it the "slap of the century".

Last, annexation plans face widespread opposition. Along with Arab states and Israeli left, Israeli settler leaders who were

previously its strongest advocates now oppose it fearing it would create a Palestinian state and end prospective of further Israeli expansion.

What does it mean?

First, UAE and Saudi Arabia are attempting to strengthen ties with the US and Israel – a move to counter Iran's influence in the region. A policy of countering Iran is gaining momentum, drifting these states away from their traditional regional policy of devout and staunch support for the Palestinian cause. Recent years have witnessed several indicators of normalizing of UAE-Israel relations – allowing Israel to establish a diplomatic presence in Abu Dhabi under the patronage of the International Renewable Energy Agency; and opening of a kosher catering service in Dubai for its Jewish community. In March 2019, UAE FM Gargash called the Arab move to not have formal diplomatic ties with Israel a "very wrong decision" and said a strategic shift was required for peace.

Second, although Arab states had blunted their criticism towards Israel, UAE along with Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are saying that annexation is unacceptable. The pre-emptive Arab condemnations contrast the dull statements issued by these states during the US' embassy move to Jerusalem and US recognition of Israeli sovereignty over Golan Heights and Syrian territories captured in 1967.

Latin America: Brazil stares at instability, as coronavirus curve peaks and Bolsonaro threatens of a military intervention

What happened?

Brazil has become the new epicentre of the virus after the US. Brazil is now the world's second-highest country in both the number of cases and the death toll from the coronavirus.

As of 13 June, up to 8,30,000 cases were confirmed in Brazil with 25,982 new cases and 41,901



People watch a movie inside their cars at a drive-in cinema amid the COVID-19 outbreak in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on June 17, 2020 (Xinhua/Rahel Patrasso/ANS)

deaths. As the country is moving towards easing quarantine restrictions, Brazil's Health Ministry has reported high death rates throughout this week as the President of the country was instead seen taking part in rallies that supported the military rule.

What is the background?

First, the misinformation on data relating to COVID cases within Brazil. Since the early weeks of April, there have been accusations against Brazil's health department of downplaying the intensity of the outbreak by hiding the data and from 8 June, the country has reported 1,36,000 new infections. The reported numbers could be much higher, owing to insufficient testing. Experts say that the outbreak is weeks away from its peak in Brazil and the hospital systems are already inching towards a collapse.

Second, the President's muscular response towards the threat, and now a strategy to strangle the opposition. President Bolsonaro was seen playing down the pandemic impacts by calling it a "little flu" in his statements on TV wherein he was seen accusing the media of creating hysteria over the pandemic. Now, in an effort to control any voice of opposition from the Congress and the Supreme Court, Bolsonaro set a political statement by being involved in rallies with protesters who were calling for the shutdown of the legislature and the court. Bolsonaro, along with his sons, and his allies, has gone to the extent of threatening to use military intervention against those institutions that might impede his rule.

Third, corruption and lack of systemic transparency. Two powerful and popular officials, from the justice and health department, have resigned from the President's cabinet. Corruption, lack of transparency and attempts by Bolsonaro to influence the federal police to protect political allies have defeated any attempts to control the spread of the pan-

demic in the initial stage. The lack of transparency highlights the failures of the health ministry to not only release the data on time, but it comes at the time when the country is far from flattening the curve.

What does it mean?

With Bolsonaro's focus on strengthening his power, the COVID-19 situation in Brazil is expected to get worse. This, coupled with the failure of institutions and the collapse of the economy might be disastrous for the largest democracy in Latin America. Following the failures and the mistrust, the fear of impeachment has pushed Bolsonaro to encourage the call for military rule, which is unlikely. However, this has led to a divide in the opinions within society.

Other News

Hong Kong marks one year of protests with renewed momentum

Thousands of people in Hong Kong again took to the streets, singing a protest anthem and chanting slogans as they marked the first anniversary of a pivotal moment in the pro-democracy protest movement. On 9 June 2019, protesters in the financial hub staged a massive march in opposition to an unpopular bill that would have allowed extraditions to the Chinese mainland. The protests that thawed with the pandemic received a new lease of life after Beijing moved to tighten its grip in the semi-autonomous region by imposing the National Security Law early this month.

Sri Lanka sets new date for general elections on 5 August

On 10 June, the chairman of Sri Lanka's Elections Commission announced that the general elections that were to be held on 20 June will now be held on 05 August. This is the second time that the parliamentary vote has been delayed amid the pandemic. After President Gotabaya Rajapaksa dissolved the Parliament



U.S. President Donald Trump meets with Kim Jong Un in the inter-Korean border village of Panmunjom on June 30, 2019 (XinhuaNEWSIS-IANS)

on 02 March, the election was scheduled to take place on 26 April. However, as the threat of

Covid-19 grew, the Election Commission postponed the polls by nearly two months, to 20 June.

India-China: Another round of military talks to de-escalate tensions

India and China held another round of military talks between commanders of the Indian and the Chinese Armies on 12 June to help de-escalate the military stand-off in the Ladakh Sector which has been going on for more than a month. The two sides discussed ways to defuse tensions between the troops in the Galwan and Hot Springs areas. The Indian and Chinese military officials have been talking at various levels in the Ladakh sector to defuse tensions after a physical confrontation between Indian Army troops and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) on 5 May at Pangong Tso lake. Since then, there has been a military build-up on both sides that was followed by confrontation soon after along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Intra Afghan negotiations must begin immediately, says Zalmay Khalilzad

The US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad stated that the intra-Afghan negotiations between

the Kabul government and the Taliban must begin immediately. Further, he welcomed the government's move on the release of more than 3,000 Taliban prisoners stating that it is important that this process continues. He also welcomes the Taliban's statement specifying that they will participate in intra-Afghan negotiations within one week of the prisoner release commitment outlined in the agreement. The US-Taliban deal signed in Qatar on 29 February called for the release of up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners to open the way for intra-Afghan negotiations.

The US President decides to withdraw troops from long time NATO ally Germany

The US President Donald Trump authorized a plan to cut 9,500 of the 3,4,500 US troops stationed in Germany on 10 June. The plan will limit the number of US troops deployed in Germany to 25,000. The policy has blindsided Germany, a longtime ally in the NATO and comes after repeated rows with the US over its defence spending in the alliance.

Trudeau calls forceful arrest video of Canada Indigenous leader 'shocking'

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has called the video showing the forceful arrest of an indigenous leader as "shocking." The newly released video sheds light on a similar incident of police brutality that comes after the anti-racist protests in the US sparked by the death of George Floyd in police custody. Chief Allan Adam of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation alleged last week that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) had beaten him in March after being questioned on an expired licence plate raising serious question on police conduct and human dignity.

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Brazil becomes 2nd country to pass 50,000 COVID-19 deaths

Brazil becomes 2nd country to pass 50,000 COVID-19 deaths

Brasilia (IANS) Brazil has become the second country, after the US, to register more than 50,000 COVID-19 deaths, which came amid growing political unrest and just days after the country confirmed more than 1 million coronavirus cases.

As of June 22, Brazil registered 50,591 fatalities, with a total of 1,083,341 coronavirus cases, also the second in the world after the US, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

Brazil has recently been recording about 1,000 deaths a day, although figures at weekends tend to be lower.

Many experts believe the lack of testing nationally – some of them say the level is 20 times less than needed – suggests the overall figures could be considerably

higher.

Regionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on June 22 that, of the 183,000 new cases reported globally in 24 hours, more than 60 per cent were from North and South America.

Mexico, Peru and Chile have been particularly badly hit, aside from the US, and on Sunday Argentina passed 1,000 deaths.

Latin America and the Caribbean now have more than 2 million infections.

Despite the threat of the virus, thousands of supporters and opponents of Brazil's far-right President Jair Bolsonaro took to the streets in rival demonstrations on June 21 in the cities of Brasilia, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Bolsonaro's decision to oppose COVID-19 lockdowns and focus on the economy has been hugely divisive, said the BBC report.



A citizen receives a coronavirus test at a drive-through testing site in Brasilia, Brazil, June 12, 2020

He has openly disagreed with advice from his own health ministry, arguing that the economic impact of lockdowns would be more detrimental than the health impact of the virus itself, and he retains strong backing from his supporters.

COVID-19 well-established at global level: WHO expert

A World Health Organization (WHO) expert in Geneva said that in light of the accelerating increase in new cases -- especially in some populous countries -- the COVID-19 pandemic is now well-established at a global level.

Michael Ryan, Executive Director of WHO Health Emergencies Program, made the remarks at a press conference in Geneva on June 22, responding to a question regarding the highest daily number of confirmed cases globally recorded on June 21 and the possible reason behind it, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The situation is definitely accelerating in a number of countries with larger populations and that is most certainly contributing to this overall increased number," he explained.

Ryan said that some of that increase may be attributed to increased testing, but the WHO does not believe that testing is the

main reason.

"Hospital admissions are also rising in a number of countries, deaths are also rising, and they're not due to increased testing per se," he noted.

He said that as the virus has reached some of the most populous countries and most populated areas in the world, and as the epidemic is now moving towards a peak in a number of large countries at the same time, they contribute to a surge in cases globally.

"Now in Europe ... you're seeing the curves decrease. In Southeast Asia, you're seeing the curves decrease. And then the overall numbers increase, which clearly means the Americas are contributing, South Asia is contributing very much, but also there are countries in the Middle East and there are countries in Africa that are also contributing to that overall increase."

Pyongyang blows up inter-Korean joint liaison office

Seoul, June 16 (IANS) North Korea blew up the inter-Korean joint liaison office in its border town of Kaesong on June 16, sharply escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula after near-daily threats against Seoul over anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets.

The North blew up the liaison office at 2.49 p.m., Yonhap News Agency quoted Seoul's Unification Ministry as saying.

Earlier, military sources said that

smoke was seen and an explosion was heard from the border town.

The explosion came just days after Kim Yo-jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, warned on June 13 that "before long, a tragic scene of the useless North-South joint liaison office completely collapsed would be seen".

The North has been lashing out at the South for failing to stop defectors from sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the

border via balloons. Pyongyang has vowed to deal with South Korea as an "enemy", cut off all cross-border communication lines, and threatened to take other measures, including military action.

Following the explosion, the South Korean military tightened its surveillance and readiness posture for possible accidental clashes near the tense border areas, according to officials.

Earlier in the day on June 16,

the General Staff of the (North) Korean People's Army warned that it is reviewing an action plan to advance into "the zones that had been demilitarized under the north-south agreement, turn the front line into a fortress and further heighten the vigilance" against the South, the Yonhap News Agency said in the report.

"As of now, no unusual, specific military moves by the North Korean military have been detected. We are closely

monitoring them," an officer of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

The liaison office was launched in September 2018 to facilitate inter-Korean exchange and cooperation amid a reconciliatory mood created by summit talks between their leaders.

The office suspended its operation in early January due to concerns over the coronavirus pandemic.

Countries join hands for maritime cooperation to counter Chinese aggression

Amid intense Chinese propaganda and 'wolf warriors' aggressive approach to cover up its culpability in spreading coronavirus pandemic, the world powers are joining hands to counter China which is increasingly trying to divert attention by implementing its expansionist design from land to maritime domain.

The Galwan incident is just one such example of its policy of intimidation and aggressive move in maritime has already come as a warning signal for the neighbours. The fact cannot be ignored that China's aggressive nationalism and military expansionism are a reality, engendered by policies fashioned by hardline Communist Party of China (CPC) leaders.

"These policies have resulted in a perception that Beijing respects no laws except those created by itself; it respects no one's property rights if it can find a way to steal it; it respects no boundary or border if it sees a way to acquire territory or resources for itself through intimidation and bullying," said a top Indian

government officer.

This attitude is illustrated in the maritime sphere by its self-proclaimed expansive 'nine-dash line' to claim the South China Sea (SCS). The manner in which China ignored an international tribunal verdict that rejected its claims to exclusive jurisdiction in South China Sea displays an arrogance that will win few friends.

"One can only feel sympathy for the Chinese people who only want peace and stability, but have been held to ransom by expansionist policies of the Party," the officer said.

These actions by Communist Party of China have prompted leading maritime powers, including France, UK, Australia, US, South Korea and Japan to enhance cooperation towards ensuring freedom of navigation and inclusive rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

More countries are likely to join these efforts to help sustain multilateral cooperation at the regional level required for, in the words of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "a common rules-based order for the region"

that "must equally apply to all individually, as well as to the global commons".

"The irredentist behaviour of the Communist Party of China has been a key consideration in India's recent maritime engagements," said a top Indian intelligence officer.

The Sino-Indian defence relationship has now transitioned from a largely continental-based interaction confined to the disputed land border, to an increasingly maritime-based one. China's recent actions along India's Line of Actual Control is clearly meant to remind India that it has a confrontational neighbour on its northern borders.

This will definitely make India align with major regional and global powers in developing a balancing posture towards China. India has done exceedingly well in these engagements, helped by a visionary 'forward-leaning' maritime posture at the doctrinal level.

The clarion call of Prime Minister Modi to outline Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) contrasts starkly with the

Communist Party of China's habit of predatory trade practices that gobble up land, resources and in a way forces smaller states to become subservient to the CPC's machinations.

Indian Ocean Region countries see India as a benign resident naval power who means no ill-will or intent to deprive their political, economic or military freedoms. Other maritime nations such as Singapore, Australia, Japan, France and the USA seek India's greater participation in ensuring stability and security in the Indo-Pacific.

Recently France has called for creation of a "Paris-New Delhi-Canberra" axis and just last week, India also successfully conducted a 'virtual dialogue' with Australia in which a key deliverable was a 100% Mutual Logistics Support Agreement that will be mutually beneficial.

The reason for India's continued success in developing these maritime alliances is the result of its demonstrated status as a responsible power; by promoting greater transparency about its military modernisation efforts and reaffirming the absence of

territorial ambitions at the cost of smaller neighbours.

India has been recognised as the preferred regional stakeholder in multilateral efforts for upholding international law, especially in relation to freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.

This is a signal to Beijing that its belligerence will not be ignored and that entry to the high table will be denied if the current attitude continues.

Communist Party of China leaders would do well to keep in mind that New Delhi has not only become more willing to articulate India's maritime interests in the light of China's unpredictable behaviour, but is also being driven to increasingly align with extra-regional powers – which is not in China's long-term interests.

China must realise that the world is uniting to defeat its unwarranted aggression and intimidation policy. The so-called glory days of "wolf warriors" are over and cooperative spirit could be the only face-saver for China at the moment.

By Sumit Kumar Singh (IANS)

Trump freezes H-1B visas; revamp plans may hit Indian outplacement firms

US President Donald Trump has suspended till the end of the year the H-1B visas prized by Indian professionals and announced a far-reaching reform plan that could deal a blow to Indian companies that place technology workers in US companies.

The freeze ordered by Trump on June 22 will not affect those already in the US on the H-1B and the other work visa categories being put on pause.

Making the announcement, the White House said that Trump wants to reform the immigration system to a "merit-based" one. Briefing reporters about the reform plan, a senior official said that one of its features would ban companies from bringing in employees on H-1B visas and outplace them to work in other US companies.

Many Indian -- and some US -- companies that act as subcontractors sponsoring workers on H-1B visas and deputing them once they are in the US to work elsewhere could

see their business model hit.

The official said that another reform would change the way the 85,000 annual H-1B visas are given from the current lottery system to one where the wages will determine who gets them.

Those offered the most wages will get priority instead of those hitting "a lucky number" in the lottery, the official said.

Indians are the single largest group of H-1B visa-holders accounting for nearly 74 per cent of the work visas.

The official said that Trump wants the wage structure for H-1B visas to be changed from the current one set during the administration of former President Bill Clinton, and the new minimum will be the 50th percentile of the national income.

That is the median income or the middle of the range and is currently \$63,000, according to the Census Bureau.

The official said that Trump wants the changes made as soon as possible "will do so by regulation

as soon as we possibly can."

When Trump imposed a 60-day pause on permanent immigrant visas or green cards on April 22, the H-1B and other temporary work visas escaped the freeze but are now affected.

The green card restrictions, which do not apply to spouses and children of immigrants, will also now continue until the end of the year.

The White House announcement of the new freeze said that it would also encompass H-2B, H-4, L-1 and J-1 visas.

However, those in the healthcare field and those considered important for national security will be exempt and continue to receive visas, as will farm workers and nannies.

The White House linked the freeze to the high unemployment level in the US because of the COVID-19 blow to the economy saying that the pause is to "ensure we continue putting American workers first during our ongoing coronavirus recovery."



United States President Donald Trump at a White House news conference

The official said the pause would help workers already in the country get access to more than 525,000 jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a justification for Trump's longtime intent to restrict immigration, a demand of a part of his base as well as of some in the Democratic Party who have reservations about the impact of

immigration on wages.

The economic disruption caused by the pandemic has led to a groundswell of opposition among Americans to immigration and foreign workers with various polls showing more than two-thirds supporting restrictions.

By Arul Louis (IANS)

Trump signs Uyghur rights bill into law

US President Donald Trump last month signed into law a bill for the rights of the Uyghurs, providing for sanctions against Chinese officials suspected of abuses against this and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang province.

The Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 "holds accountable perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses such as the systematic use of indoctrination camps, forced labour, and intrusive surveillance to eradicate the ethnic identity and religious beliefs of Uyghurs and other minorities in China", Trump said in a statement on June 17.

The President's signature came after the law, which was proposed by Republican Senator Marco Rubio, received the almost unanimous approval of the US Congress.

The act provides a 180-day deadline for a report to various congressional committees identifying Chinese officials and others responsible for torture, prolonged detention without charge or trial, and infringing cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment on the Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

Among the sanctions contemplated in the law are the veto on entry into the US and the revocation of visas, as well as the blocking of assets in America, and the prohibition of transactions



U.S. President Donald Trump walks to board Marine One to depart from the White House for a rally in Ohio, in Washington D.C. Jan 9

with designated persons.

It also condemns the Chinese Communist Party for the creation of detention centres in Xinjiang and recommends a stronger response to abuses committed not only against Uyghurs but also against Kazakhs and other Muslim minorities in the province.

Trump's signing of the law coincides with the publishing of excerpts from the memoir of former White House National Security Adviser John Bolton, who details that the President encouraged his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, to build these Uyghur detention centers during a dinner last year at a G20 meeting.

"With only interpreters present,

Xi had explained to Trump why he was basically building concentration camps in Xinjiang. According to our interpreter, Trump said that Xi should go ahead with building the camps, which Trump thought was exactly the right thing to do," Bolton wrote in one of the excerpts published by The Wall Street Journal.

The US Department of State estimates that more than 1 million ethnic Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and other Muslim minorities have been detained by the Chinese government in internment camps, where they are reportedly subjected to abuse, torture and forced labour.

UNHRC slams racism in wake of Floyd's death

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has adopted a resolution strongly condemning the continuing racially discrimination and violent practices perpetrated by law enforcement agencies against Africans and people of African descent.

The resolution was adopted on June 19 after an urgent debate on current racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality and violence against peaceful protests, which was held at the request of Burkina Faso on behalf of the African Group, reports Xinhua news agency.

The resolution, in particular, condemned police brutality that led to the deaths of the unarmed black man George Floyd in Minneapolis and other people of African descent.

The resolution, adopted by consensus without a vote in the 47-member UN body, also deplored the recent incidents of excessive use of force and other human rights violations

by law enforcement officers against peaceful demonstrators defending the rights of Africans and people of African descent.

The resolution asked the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on systemic racism, violations of international human rights law, and abuses against Africans and people of African descent by law enforcement agencies.

The report will contribute to accountability and redress for victims, said the resolution, calling on all states and relevant stakeholders to cooperate in the preparation of the report.

The resolution also requested the High Commissioner to examine government responses to anti-racism peaceful protests, including the alleged use of excessive force against protesters, bystanders and journalists.

Many journalists have also reported attacks in the line of duty in the US, with some estimates going as high as "148 arrests or attacks" between May 26 and June 2.

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has evolved through the years

Foreign policy mandarins, scholars and business leaders in Australia and India were gungho at the announcement of the Modi-Morrison inaugural virtual summit on 4 June 2020. And rightly so. Australian High Commissioner Barry O' Farrell said, "Over the last few months and years India and Australia have grown closer together. They are at a historical high". But at this point in history it is also important to recall the highs and lows that the bilateral journey has endured and all those who were at the wheels. Kevin Rudd had to brave the "monkey-gate" cricket controversy, Muhammad Haneef case and Indian students' safety concerns. Julia Gillard, reapproved the supply of uranium sort out misgivings with New Delhi and Tony Abbot in close cooperation with India addressed the students' issue

by cracking down on dubious education providers, tightening visa rules and stamping out corruption in the sector. A garlanded Malcolm Turnbull sitting on the footsteps of the Akshardham temple in New Delhi with PM Modi was a masterful soft touch to bilateral ties. And PM Scott Morrison's culinary skills and Hindi tweets have made further inroads into Indian hearts and minds. Australia has also extended bipartisan political support to India in counter-terrorism in the wake of deadly attacks, something New Delhi values very highly.

Australia's sport leadership has been acknowledged by PM Narendra Modi and former sporting greats like Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee, Adam Gilchrist, Olympic gold medallist Stephanie Rice among others and current players play a pivotal role in building relationships.

Australia is also helping India in widening participation of marginalised children and youth in sports. On the other hand, Indian cricketing greats Sachin Tendulkar and Yuvraj Singh flew down to participate in the Bushfire Appeal charity match which raise around A\$ 7.7 million for firefighting, reconstruction and rehabilitation. IAIE's Goodwill Ambassador to India Matthew Hayden also played in the match.

Not many are aware that an Australian NGO "Doctors for You" had provided upgraded equipment and set up 20 isolation and treatment beds in Patna in Bihar to fight Covid-19.

Quite rightly, Australia and India have also invested in bolstering mutual country knowledge and Peter Varghese report, "An India Economy Strategy to 2035: From Potential to Delivery" and the

complementary Australia Strategy by Ambassador Anil Wadhwa for the Confederation of Indian Industry need to be taken up by the top political leadership and actioned upon by all the relevant stakeholders on both sides.

As New Colombo Plan and other fellowships aim to nurture a new generation of country experts there is a need for reinventing the old 3Cs (curry, cricket and commonwealth) with a nurturing a new 3C paradigm by both sides: Constituencies of Country Champions that will drive engagements.

Australia's demand for an international inquiry into the origins of the spread of Covid-19 has also found favours in New Delhi which backed the demands for the inquiry by WHO. So one can see a strong reciprocity and strong mutual backing emerging in bilateral



Dr Ashutosh Misra, Editor-in-Chief, India News

engagements. In the rapidly altering international order, thanks to the Covid-19 battering, Australian businesses can now look for greater opportunities in India and vice versa. Australia India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership ushers in a path-breaking phase in bilateral engagements something that India News group is now looking forward to harness.

By Dr Ashutosh Misra

Australia and India: Next steps in the comprehensive strategic partnership

The Australia-India relationship is in a sweet spot. The much-postponed virtual Summit between PM Modi and PM Morrison on 4 June confirmed the all-round improvement's quantum leap in their bilateral ties. Essentially, it is geopolitics, supplemented by economics that have galvanized this relationship. The Indian diaspora, now close to 700,000 and the Indian student community which has crossed the 100,000 figure, have ensured that India figures regularly in the political discourse in Australia. Ties have been elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The joint declaration on a shared vision for maritime cooperation in the Indo Pacific has laid out a concrete road map. Seven concrete MOUs agreed upon during the Summit will be the basis for enhanced economic and investment ties in the future. The mechanism of the 2+2 dialogue with the foreign and defence ministers meeting together at least once every two years signals the meeting of minds on threats and security issues facing both countries.

Contrary to earlier expectations, the rise of China has not been peaceful, and Asia is facing the brunt of its aggressive policies, unjustified territorial claims, and policies aimed at cornering resources. India is currently facing multiple incursions from China on the Line of Actual Control on the Indo Chinese border. Australia is facing retaliation and pressure in trade through enhanced tariffs and anti-dumping measures for support of an independent assessment on the origins of the novel coronavirus and is still recovering from a vicious Chinese cyber-attack. China has aggressively moved to establish influence in the Western Pacific and there have been unconfirmed reports of China seeking bases in

places like Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. The quest for natural resources with total disregard for transparency and fair practices in the Chinese policies towards the Pacific Island States has raised alarm not only in Australia, New Zealand and the United States but across the region. Chinese ocean mapping activities and the presence of PLA naval vessels in the Indian ocean has increased noticeably in the last year. Australia and India have reiterated a common approach to a free, open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific which guarantees freedom of navigation and overflights. The desire for unimpeded commerce and a rules-based order is a necessary strategy. The Indo-Australian joint statements support cooperation in multilateral fora, the centrality of Asean, India's Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the peaceful resolution of disputes as opposed to unilateral or coercive actions.

A number of steps need to be taken now by both partners for translating their agreements into reality. In the geo-strategic sphere, besides their bilateral consultations, Australia and India will need to step up the plate to actively participate in meetings and consultations in the framework of the Quad and Quad plus, their ongoing coordination with Japan and Indonesia, and for exchanging views on Australia's Pacific set up and India's Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC). India will need to join the cooperative Blue Dot initiative, and pool in efforts with United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand to come up with credible, transparent and alternate funding for projects in the Indo Pacific with Asean and the Pacific Island States in mind. They will need to work closely

together through the Asean and East Asia Summit institutions, and for strengthening international institutions like the WHO. They will need to strengthen interoperability, share technological advancements in the defence and strategy spheres, and look for ways to complement each other. A Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement has been agreed upon, which will allow use of each other's facilities, and increase interoperability of their defence forces. Australian participation in the Malabar exercises should now become a natural corollary. The defence research organisations of the two countries now need to focus on agreed areas of cooperation like advanced sensors, underwater and hypersonic technologies. Indian shipyards are keen to cooperate with Australian shipbuilding industries. India will gladly work with Australian entities on its Mars and Moon missions. Space situational activities, calibration and validation of satellite data, sharing of meteorology and oceanographic data and establishment of ground stations are already identified areas of collaboration but require concrete tie-ups.

The framework arrangement on cyber and cyber-enabled critical technology cooperation requires follow up. Australia can emerge as a reliable supplier for 21 out of 49 minerals identified by India's critical minerals strategy and for India's e-mobility programme. Diversification and expansion of the existing resources partnership through mining and processing of critical and strategic minerals will also require that the two countries collaborate on new technologies. In the light of India's new mining policy, Australian companies need to scout for opportunities aggressively. India has a target of training 400 million youth by 2022

and the MOU signed during the virtual Summit on cooperation should be utilized by the Australian Vocational Education System for enhancing Australian presence in the areas of training curriculum, aligning Indian accreditation and assessment to global standards, improving trainer quality and conducting joint training workshops. A new collaborative agreement on water resources management, training and education, and for developing sustainable solutions for water and economic development and water recycling requires implementation through the identification of partners across the board in India. Opportunities identified by the leaders in immunology, development of vaccines, circular economy, surface coal gasification, waste to wealth processes can all be translated into action under the framework of a strengthened cooperation under the Australia India Scientific Reserve Fund (AISRF). A start up cooperative fund and a separate fund for enhancing collaboration in humanities between the two countries is the need of the hour. Australia is an ideal partner for India in grains management, rationalization of costs and logistics. Australian pension funds need to keep themselves engaged in India's infrastructure development requirements.

India and Australia need to quickly resume their bilateral talks on the stalled Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). I have been working on a report which is a response to Australia's India Economic Strategy Report 2035 – this now awaits final approvals. Australian businesses will benefit immensely from opportunities and market that India offers for scaling up technologies in med tech, health tech, edu tech, water technologies, shipbuilding and



Ambassador Anil Wadhwa

startups. Collaborations in digital gaming and animation, fin tech, textile designing, sports technologies and equipment, renewable energy and power, food processing, dairy technologies, healthcare, clinical trials and pharmaceuticals; besides the strong areas of mining and resources, technology and services, agriculture and education will immensely strengthen the bilateral economic relationship. Now is the time for Australian businesses to look at diversification, and the advantages and opportunities that the Indian market can offer. Indian business will need to seriously look again at the advantages offered by investments in Australian resources, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals and agriculture. Both sides need to ramp up efforts for a strong, reliable, and mutually beneficial relationship.

By Ambassador Anil Wadhwa

Ambassador Anil Wadhwa is a former Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs of India and currently, a Distinguished Fellow with the Vivekananda International Foundation based in New Delhi. He is leading a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) team which has worked on an Australia Economic Strategy Report.

Road ahead for Australia-India collaboration in higher education

The fate of international cooperation on a host of common challenges faces an uncertain future in the post-pandemic world. For universities, established models of internationalisation have been precipitously undermined but the faith in collaborative knowledge creation and intercultural learning remains intact. Against this background, can Australia and India come together and nurture a thriving partnership in the field of education, to meet not only the needs of the sector but of society at large?

Australian Universities have grown in popularity among Indian students in recent years. Similarly, students from all over Australia have responded enthusiastically and made the most of the opportunity to spend periods of study in India made possible by the New Colombo Plan and bilateral partnerships. However, the relationship remains imbalanced in two ways – first, far more Indian students go to Australia than the reverse and second, areas of cooperation other than student mobility receive little attention.

The fallout of the COVID crisis gives us an opportunity to comprehensively revisit this scenario and dedicate ourselves to addressing its shortcomings.

The situation we find ourselves in is a stark reminder that education and social outcomes are intimately linked and that care is inseparable from learning and work. As a result, nurturing an ethic of social responsibility has risen up the sectoral agenda. When we say that "internationalisation" has become a core pillar of our universities we need to ask whether this transcends administrative, recruitment and reputational priorities and spills over into knowledge creation and dissemination. Now, more than ever, our survival and our prosperity depend on a genuine spirit of sharing as the very groundwork for producing science. Such sharing, it is important to add, must be based on equal respect, rather than the arrogant assumption of "capacity building". Minus equal respect, reciprocity – a term frequently used when we talk higher education partnerships – quickly spirals downward into short-term thinking and ultimately subpar outcomes notwithstanding our best intentions. Rather than superimpose international strategies on core deliverables, a better approach would be to integrate it with all functions of the university, starting from the ground up. This would ensure that international partnerships

have a meaningful impact for teaching and learning, research, professional growth and personal enhancement.

In both countries today, universities have become more sensitive to their local context and are in process of reimagining their social mission. Whether this is motivated by the search for a vaccine at a medical school in Australia or by the need to keep education affordable for disadvantaged students through earn and learn programmes in India, Internationalizing Higher Education for Society (IHES) is the call of the hour. Both countries, fortunately, have another asset in common: the presence of rich local and indigenous knowledge systems. A global agenda that does not rely on exclusion of the local is a groundbreaking platform on which both countries can unite and learn from each other.

To realize this vision, both sides should unburden themselves from the stereotypes that are remnants of past experience and be non-hierarchical in their thinking. A student from Australia who participated in an India Immersion Programme earlier this year insightfully captured the impact of a Eurocentric, hierarchical educational universe, writing in her essay:

"The perpetual self-aggrandizement of the occident and the dissonance that resounds between cultural practices has become that of negativism, where racism has seeded its way into the unconscious way of globalised thought. ... The internal Indian personality places value in ascertaining truth about the world via a diverse selection of scientific and traditional approaches to the inquisitive nature of erudition. In contrast, the externally reformed perception of an uneducated, unclean, poverty-stricken country has proven a tough barrier for India's ability to recover in a post-colonial environment."

It is remarkable that a short two-week span spent in India forced the student to confront the disconnect and divisions that our understanding of globalisation and language of internationalisation has so far failed to remedy. Indian institutions in particular have a responsibility to bring to the table an awareness of their strengths and an ability to communicate their vision of cooperation effectively. International partnerships in higher education have the great potential to be a safeguard, a bulwark even, against othering of all kind. In recognition of this potential, the concern for



Ms Kalyani Unkule

university internationalisation is not scrambling for relevance but holistically reinventing and positioning itself to achieve more ambitious goals. Satori or a spirit of conscious ignorance dictates that we move away from the baggage of past imperfections and together forge a new way forward that is exemplary for the world precisely because it springs forth from the best of who we uniquely are.

By Ms. Kalyani Unkule

(Associate Professor, JGLS and Director, International Affairs and Global Initiatives)

China's geo-political adventurism

China has been surprising rudely its neighbours recently when everyone else is fencing for themselves with Covid-19 disaster that originated from Wuhan in China. In a series of actions that has been unnerving several countries, Beijing has unleashed uncertainty in the regional and global orders through its excessive claims backed by its rising military force and coercive diplomatic postures. China stated that it had controlled the spread of novel Coronavirus, renamed Covid-19, in Wuhan and other places by early April. This is after a disastrous two-month early free-run for the virus from December 2019 up until January 23rd of this year that saw the virus carried by over five million people from Wuhan fanning over to the rest of China and the world with disastrous consequences.

Even though China had undertaken a media blitz to convey its "responsible big nation" status through public diplomacy in the health sector these have not yet been able to convert the rest of the world. A white paper issued by China on Covid-19 on June 7 stated that it had supplied "70.6 billion masks, 340 million protective suits, 115 million pairs of goggles, 96,700 ventilators, 225 million test kits, and 40.29 million infrared thermometers" to several countries. However, many a country has complained about their poor quality or exorbitant

prices.

Most significantly, Covid-19 brought about a more assertive China to the fore. In April, China was able to stall any discussion in the United Nations Security Council on the spread of the virus and ameliorative measures though Russian and South African support. However, in the light of global criticism on the spread of the virus, and as 120 countries questioned China's role in this episode, President Xi Jinping relented for the demand at World Health Assembly on "independent, impartial and comprehensive" investigation into the origins of the virus, but scuttled it with the caveat that such investigation will be initiated after the virus dissipates.

As a consequence, today the world is suffering from nearly 10 million confirmed cases, half-a-million deaths and shattered economies and social fabric. Instead of aiding the world, China had chosen a more aggressive policy towards gaining more territories or enhancing its power and influence across the world.

First, citing its sovereignty claims, China has sent bombers and aircraft carrier across the Taiwan Straits, breaching the 1954 median line, first in 2009, but more frequently recently, threatening to take over Dongsha (Pratas) islands south of Taiwan. As Taiwan presented a unique democratic model of addressing Covid-19 with a total of nearly

400 infections and no draconian restrictions on movements, it appeared to be challenging China in this aspect as well.

Second, despite the first case of Covid-19 case outside China traced to a visitor from Wuhan in January, the region contained the spread of the virus with about 710,000 cases and 20,000 casualties. However, China's pressure to occupy more disputed islands and militarise these has been unnerving the region. China sank Vietnamese fishing vessels recently, besides encroaching on Vietnamese, Filipino and Malaysian economic zones. China is cajoling the region to conclude a Code of Conduct by 2021 that bars the role of other stakeholders.

Third, the two largest economies in Asia – China and Japan – have been at loggerheads over Senkaku Islands and regional influence. China reportedly violated Japan's air and sea space by over 600 times last year and recently sent submarines closer to Japan's coast. While Japan was able to address Covid-19 cases by restricting them to over 18,000 cases and over 900 deaths, the virus from China has sent shock waves to its sagging economy and Olympics.

Fourth, Australia, which led the demands for investigating the Covid-19 origins at the World Health Assembly, has been at the receiving end of Beijing for such acts. With 7,000 Covid-19



Prof Srikanth Kondapalli (Photo rstv.nic.in)

cases and over a hundred deaths, Australia contained the virus with less obtrusive methods. Here again, instead of a cooperative approach, Beijing had threatened by banning beef, barley and other imports and travel restrictions to cripple Australian economy, besides cyber-attacks. Since 2018 introduction of national security laws and counter-espionage efforts, many high-profile cases were filed linking with China.

Fifth, by killing of 20 Indian army personnel on the disputed borders between the two countries, China is threatening to destabilise the South Asian security with its large-scale military mobilisation and coercive methods. It rudely shook New Delhi which is grappling with over 15,000 casualties and half-a-million Covid-19 infections. Indian casualties threatened to derail bilateral relations with foreign minister S. Jaishankar suggesting "serious" consequences. It also

shattered the myth of "peace and tranquillity" and activated militarily the 3,488 km long disputed borders.

China's recent actions thus are tearing apart Asian traditional security landscape. This is aggravated in the backdrop of the 18-month United States-China tariff wars and power contest between these two largest economies. Covid-19, that originated in Wuhan, has for the first time in several decades depleted the world with over \$8.5 trillion in economic value of goods and services this year, tumbling jobs, social and health security of billions and hence such geopolitical adventurism is clearly inappropriate on the part of China.

By Srikanth Kondapalli

(Professor Srikanth Kondapalli, Chinese Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India)

Exploring synergy in Indo-Australian agribusiness trade post COVID-19

By Prof Sapna Narula and Prof Brajesh Singh

India's economic growth is projected to remain one of the fastest and robust for a number of years to come. Australia has significant opportunities to benefit from India's growth and has taken steps to establish multi-facet comprehensive strategic partnerships with India. One of the critical goal of this partnership is the Free Trade Agreement(FTA). Although, issues linked to agribusiness has slowed substantially FTA negotiation, there is natural synergy in Indo-Australia agribusiness trade as there are substantial offerings on both the sides in terms of technologies, products and solutions owing to counter seasonality and unique agro-ecological zones. As both the countries are gearing up for greater economic and social benefits to be reaped from agriculture and food sector, this trade synergy can be harnessed for mutual benefits of both the countries.

India remains an attractive destination in view of market size and dynamics. although the two-way trade between Australia and India has been only \$30 billion in 2019 as compared to \$200 billion with China. It is estimated that India is expected to add 148 million people by 2026 with the total population reaching upto 1.3 bn and a majority of it would constitute middle class and upper middle class. With rising incomes and changing socio-demographic patterns, the food consumption patterns are moving towards diverse, personalized, healthier and safer life-styles. Amidst favorable policy shifts, emerging consumer segments and technology push, there are substantial opportunities for Australia to cater to this market as the total agribusiness imports by India is on the rise.

It is quite evident that Australian capabilities in agriculture,

food processing, agricultural research and education and supply chains could benefit India. Both countries would gain from one another via the innovations and technological expertise, access to foreign investment to make food supply chains robust and from additional corporate investment and access to emerging market segments on both sides. Australia's India Economic Strategy 2035 (IES 2035) launched in 2018 was a step towards exploring the trade synergies between the two countries thereby strengthening overall bilateral relationship. The strategy has set a target for India to become one of Australia's top three export markets, and also as its third-largest destination in Asia for Australian outward investment.

Traditionally, India's protectionist trade regime has focused on export controls and a highly restrictive import regime. Other government policies and trade barriers, including government involvement in aspects of marketing and procurement of agricultural goods, also limit India's trading potential. High Indian agricultural tariffs, Sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) measures restrict import of many products such as poultry, swine, dairy, and most grain and oilseed crops. Other nontariff barriers, including import bans, quality standards, and labeling and packaging rules, further limit India's ability to import agricultural products from other countries.

Although there has been an increase in imports in recent years, post COVID -19 agricultural reforms 2020 ushered by Government of India focus on self-reliant India through 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan'. The ambitious strategy aims to empower its farmers to feed the domestic markets and occupy a larger market share in global

agribusiness landscape. The three significant ordinances aim at deregulating the commodities such as cereals, edible oils, oilseeds, pulses, onions and potatoes. These new reforms give farmers the choice to produce, hold, distribute and supply and will lead to harnessing economies of scale and attract private sector/ foreign direct investment in agriculture thereby strengthening storage and other infrastructure. There are plans to formalize micro-food enterprises and cluster based farming and an additional push for fisheries, animal husbandry, herbal cultivation and bee-keeping. Three separate ordinances to push agriculture marketing and commodities trade reforms provide conducive environment for Indian farmers to leverage benefits of exporting to the other countries thereby multiplying their income opportunities. This is where Australian agribusiness has an opportunity to co-invest and benefit from development of infrastructure in agri-sectors in India.

Amidst covid-19 situation and policy push, India too is looking to leverage from bilateral agribusiness trade. Although self-reliant, the production systems still need interventions in terms of advanced technologies, climate resilient varieties, region-specific production models, quality inputs including the data availability to the farmers. The new marketing reforms are expected to empower farmers strengthening supply chains through private and foreign investment in innovative farm to gate infrastructure. Australia can be a reliable partner in technology and expertise exchange if it can gain better market access to some of its products which do not directly compete with Indian small-holding farmers (e.g. horticulture products - berries, etc).

In spite of the opportunities,

market synergies, and policy push from both the sides, there are barriers in terms of market access, understanding consumer preferences and qualitative restrictions, which might hinder the interests on both the sides. It is hence advisable to strategize in terms of both short term and long term to cater to these markets. Previously, we recommended five-pronged approach engagement strategy for both the governments to move in this direction:

- Develop an effective plan for joint technology development and sharing market access for shared prosperity
- Identify key niches for trade, policy and development goals in Agribusiness including in a) Infrastructure development, b) Intensification of trade in niche markets
- Create a network of key stakeholders for continuous scientific and policy advice
- Use strengths of research and trade partnership in agribusiness to support strategic partnerships in other fields
- Establish an Australia-India Centre of Excellence on Agribusiness to support 1-4 points above (https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1472390/Agribusiness-Round-Table_Report.pdf)

In addition to this, there is a need for additional infra-structural (e.g. transport and storage for frozen products) cooperation to ensure that the trade is beneficial for both the countries. An intensification of bilateral meetings at different stakeholder levels have to be geared up in near future for encouraging bilateral trade. The recent bilateral summits of the two Prime Ministers and the signing of comprehensive strategic partnership should provide the much-needed impetus to realize



Prof Brajesh Singh, Global Centre for Land Based Innovation, Western Sydney University



Prof Sapna Narula, School of Management, Nalanda University

the potential of agribusiness trade to become key promoter rather than a constraint of bilateral strategic relationship.

Professor Sapna Narula, School of Management, Nalanda University, India and Prof Brajesh Singh, Global Centre for Land Based Innovation, Western Sydney University, Australia

Indian-origin astrophysicist and her team probe the origins of fast radio bursts

When it comes to astronomy one of the most interesting topics relates to the fast radio bursts or FRBs as they are fashionably called. FRBs were for the first time detected in 2007. If one wants to know what these FRBs are fundamentally, they are a massive burst of energies

emanating from the space.

Recently Dr Shivani Bhandari, an astrophysicist with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), which is Australia's national science agency, and her team of researchers focused on these mysterious signals from outer space to identify the precise

location of four fast radio bursts.

With the help of a specially designed transient detector on CSIRO's ASKAP radio telescope situated in outback Western Australia, Dr Bhandari and her team have managed to locate the source of four such FRBs.

The findings of her team have been published in The

Astrophysical Journal Letters. In fact, scientists now have reached a step closer to finding solutions to the mystery of FRBs.

Dr Bhandari's team was probing if fast radio bursts favour a certain type of galaxy. Their search found all four bursts emerged from massive galaxies that are forming new stars at a modest rate, quite

similar to our own Milky Way galaxy.

The contribution of Dr Bhandari's team in identifying the sources of fast radio bursts is a huge technical achievement and takes the science of astronomy forward.

ICC keen to promote women's game further after success of T20 WC

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on June 22 revealed record viewing figures for the ICC Womens T20 World Cup 2020, which has become one of the most watched women's sporting events in history as the sport continues to set new benchmarks on and off the field.

The ICC release said that the event had already clocked up 1.1 billion video views via ICC digital channels, which is more than 20 times the video views delivered in the previous edition played in the West Indies in 2018 and 10 times the previous most successful women's cricket event, which was the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup in 2017.

These figures make it the second

most successful ICC event ever after the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019 and that trend continued via broadcast with the final achieving record viewership worldwide.

In Australia, live viewing hours were 13.45m which is 473% higher than the 2018 tournament, driven by their hosting and an increase in coverage on the free-to-air channels. The final played between the hosts and India recorded an average audience of 1.2m viewers, making it the most watched women's cricket match in Australian broadcast history.

India's success in making it to the final boosted audience interest, with total viewership for the knockout stages recorded at 423% higher than 2018. India

live viewing hours were 86.15m which is 152% higher than the 2018 tournament, driven by India's success and the broadcast of select India matches by Star Sports, in five languages (English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada) in India.

ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney: "We are delighted with these outstanding global viewership numbers that demonstrate the power of women's cricket to attract huge audiences across the globe. It reinforces our belief that there is a significant opportunity around the women's game and collectively we must promote it further so more fans can enjoy it, more kids are inspired by it and sponsors and broadcasters want to be a part of it."

Gilchrist, Warner laud Indian students for 'selfless work' amid Covid-19 pandemic

While Gilchrist expressed his gratitude to Sharon Varghese, an Indian nurse for her work as an aged-care worker, Warner thanked Shreyas Sheth, an Indian student studying at the University of Queensland for participating in the University's outreach programme, preparing and delivering food packets to students in need.

When it comes to India and Indians, cricketers are perceived as icons and their actions, both on and off the field are read and watched with a lot of interest and excitement. It therefore becomes noteworthy and a matter of pride when iconic figures of Australian

cricket like former wicket-keeper batsman Adam Gilchrist and current dashing opener David Warner recognize and laud the contributions of Indian students for helping people in the country during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recently, Gilchrist thanked Sharon Varghese, an Indian student who completed her Bachelors in Nursing from the University of Wollongong. Varghese has been working on the frontline with other health care workers attending to the residents of aged-care as the pandemic unfolded throughout the world. Referring to Sharon's contribution, Gilchrist expressed his gratitude in a video message

saying, "She gave up her time to work as an aged-care worker throughout that time. Sharon, I want to say congratulations on the selfless act and for wanting to thank people in Australia because you have enjoyed three and a half years living here. And that's wonderful to hear. Just want to let you know, all of Australia, all of India and more importantly, your family will be so very proud of your efforts."

Similarly, in a short video message, David Warner expressed his gratitude to Shreyas Sheth, an Indian student who is pursuing his Masters in Computer Science at the University of Queensland. In his message Warner said,

Tennis Australia confident about hosting Aus Open 2021 on schedule

Sydney/IANS: Tennis Australia CEO Craig Tiley on June 19 said that the Australian Open Grand Slam is on track to proceed early next year and will include a full schedule of events.

"In terms of our plans for the Australian Open, as we've been saying for the past few weeks, we're optimistic about having an AO in January with all the events and all the players," Tiley said as per the Tennis Australia website.

He expressed the national body's support for wheelchair tennis men's number one, Dylan Alcott, who has slammed the US Open organisers for excluding his category.

The US Open is set to be held as per its original schedule from August 31 to September 13 with restrictions amid the coronavirus pandemic.

While there are no deductions in participation in the singles main-draw events, there will be no qualification tournaments and the men's and women's doubles are restricted to 32 teams each as opposed to the usual 64. Mixed doubles, junior tournaments and wheelchair tennis are omitted.

"Dylan Alcott is a tremendous ambassador for tennis and has done a huge amount for our sport both here and around the world," said Tiley.

"We understand how disappointed he is at not being able to compete at the US Open this year and we look forward to seeing him back on the court soon," he added.

The Tennis Australia CEO, however, empathised with the United States Tennis Association.



Adam Gilchrist

Bucknor recalls handing Tendulkar wrong decisions

Former International Cricket Council (ICC) umpire Steve Bucknor recalled incidents involving former India cricketer Sachin Tendulkar and how he was adjudged erroneously out on two occasions.

Bucknor spoke about the match at Gabba in 2003 when he adjudged Tendulkar out LBW but now agreed that the Jason Gillespie delivery was going over the wickets. He also recounted the incident when he thought Tendulkar had edged an Abdul Razzaq delivery into the hands of the wicket-keeper in 2005 at the iconic Eden Gardens.

"Tendulkar was given out on two different occasions when those were mistakes. I do not think any umpire would want to do a

wrong thing. It lives with him and his future could be jeopardised," Bucknor said on Mason and Guests radio programme in Barbados.

"To err is human. Once in Australia, I gave him out leg before wicket and the ball was going over the top. Another time, in India it was caught behind. The ball deviated after passing the bat but there was no touch. But the match was at Eden Gardens and when you are at the Eden and India is batting, you hear nothing.

"Because 100,000 spectators are making noise. Those were the mistakes and I was unhappy. I am saying a human is going to make mistakes and accepting mistakes are part of life," he added.

Bucknor, who is regarded as one of the finest umpires ever to officiate in the game, also spoke about the importance of technology in the sport. He feels that review systems helps in giving correct decisions more often than not and that is better for the sport overall and not just the officials.

"I am not certain if it affects the confidence of umpires, but I know it has improved umpiring," Bucknor said.

"It has improved umpiring because there was a time when we were saying the batsman was so-called playing down the line, therefore he is not going to be given out leg before, but if the technology is saying the ball is hitting, then you have to give



him out. So, we learn from the technology.

"The umpires who do not enjoy having technology around, I hope that they have a rethink. What it does if you make a mistake it can be corrected on the field," Bucknor said.

"Now thinking about when I was umpiring and I gave a batsman out who was not out, realizing I made a mistake it took a long time to fall asleep that night. Now you can fall asleep quickly because the correct decision is eventually given."

Hibernation was never in the DNA of today's cricketer

The lockdown period of cricket has brought to the fore many discussions on the game. There have been several panel discussions as well as individual interviews with cricketers and cricket experts. The game needs to be kept alive and the only way to do so is to have live performance.

Cricket players old and new are in the news, each one giving their views and anecdotes of life on the field as well as off it. The thought of listening as well as watching highlights of some of the great moments of cricket is wonderful, but one feels that comparing one cricketer or team to another from a different era rests only with the bookworms. The averages and runs scored comparisons can never ever reflect the truth at most times.

In every 10 years, the changes in rules, regulations and the improvement in equipment makes the game an entirely different ball game. Test cricket before World War II and thereafter, over every decade, changed in several parameters of the game. The first sea of change was cricket losing its stature as an amateur sport to becoming more professional in its approach.

Cricketers started looking at the sport as a way to make a living. One of India's greatest all-rounders, Vinoo Mankad, was a good example of it. He opted to play club cricket in England in 1959 rather than play for India. He was, therefore, not selected in the touring squad. Mankad was finally

called upon to save India at a time when the Indian side was down and out and his performance at Lords was one of the finest feats ever accomplished by a cricketer.

India took many years to finally be called a professional side. The BCCI had no money and therefore, the system of cricket becoming a full time profession was definitely not an option till the 21st century.

Rahul Dravid in one of his interviews recently said that the most crucial or significant decision he made before he played for the country was to concentrate on his cricket. He knew the uncertainty and the lack of financial returns of playing the game in India but his passion for the game is what pressed him into taking the risks that came with it.

This fortunately is not a tale for the present lot of cricketers as money has made the sport one that a cricketer can not only make plenty of but also enough to lead a good life in the future.

The commercial success of the game has brought a surfeit of cricket and in the last two decades made it into a 365 days affair. Cricketers were grumbling about excessive cricket, with players pleading and excusing themselves from playing for the country on the grounds of needing a break.

Unfortunately now, the uncertainty of life and the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic has confined them to their homes. The frustration of not wielding their bat or ball

and being caged among four walls must be quite a concern for them. This must have given rise to mental anguish in each one of them, especially, as they were used to the fast and active way of life earlier.

The present cricketers have never encountered being away from the game for such a long period of time and so the big question in their mind would be as to whether they will be able to perform at the same level as they did earlier.

This was a dilemma that cricketers in the earlier days faced year after year. The first-class season in India came to a close in March and the next season only got underway in November. Although, one did play club and corporate cricket, most of the months were sans cricket because of the monsoon.

One kept fit playing other sports and exercising on one's own as facilities like gyms and fitness centers were not in existence then. After the long break and on return, one developed unconsciously at times a change in ones' grip, stance and even in body movement. This is a fundamental issue that the present cricketer may face when they return. Fortunately for them they have video clippings of their earlier batting and bowling performances to compare with.

It will be interesting to see how the modern cricketers handle the break from the game. Technology has spoilt them on being able to evaluate themselves but in my



Courtesy: The Statesman

The uncertainty of life and the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic has confined cricketers to their homes



Before the corona crisis, cricketers were grumbling about excessive cricket, with players pleading and excusing themselves from playing on the grounds of need

opinion they miss out on the human touch. They are fortunate that they play top-level cricket so frequently which kept their reflexes and movements alive. A long break like this is something they have never faced before. In cricket it is nice to be physically fit but more than the six packs, it is the skill, technique, confidence and mental toughness that prevails in the middle.

Cricket is not played through an on and off switch. Cricketers will need to chart their own current course, after all, hibernation for a present cricketer was never a part of their game.

(Yajurvindra Singh is a former Test cricketer. Views expressed are personal)

By Yajurvindra Singh

Triveni series' second chapter deliberations focus on recovery strategy for sports sector

Expert panel consisting of sports stars, business leaders, trainers and league officials come together for the second Triveni discussion, a joint initiative by Institute for Australia India Engagement (IAIE); Australia India Business Council (AIBC) and Centre for India Australia Studies (CIAS), O.P. Jindal Global University to deliberate over mutually strategic and beneficial issues for India and Australia.

The second Triveni dialogue zoominar was conducted on June 12 to discuss the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the sports sector in India and Australia as well as to deliberate on the way forward to revive this sector.

Among the panelists were Dr. Ashutosh Misra, CEO, IAIE, who read the welcome note; Matthew Hayden, AM, International cricketer and IAIE's Goodwill Ambassador to India who gave the opening remarks; Shaun Star, Director, CIAS, O.P. Jindal Global University, who acted as the moderator; Dr.

Nik Senapati, President, AIBC Queensland, who concluded the virtual discussion with his remarks and vote of thanks; and distinguished speakers -- Dr Sarah Jane Kelly, University of Queensland Business School and Deputy Chair, Brisbane Lands; Dale Sheehan, Director Training, International Centre for Sports Security, Qatar and Dr Jack Anderson, Director, Sports Law, University of Melbourne.

Significance of sports sector as revenue generator

At the outset, Dr Misra highlighted the global significance of the sports sector in generating revenue and commented specifically on the importance accorded to this sector in Australia and India as both rely substantially on it for generation of employment and revenue. So, the impairment of this sector in the wake of the current pandemic has impacted the stakeholders from the business sector as well. Shaun Star echoed Dr Misra about the primary role of the sports sector and the significance of

the discussion with the panel members to seek a way forward.

In his opening remark, Matthew Hayden, celebrated in the cricket world for his exploits on the field, shared his views on the prevailing crisis, calling it as a situation of counting one's blessings which has helped everyone to sharpen their focus and provided boundless opportunities to communicate on cost-saving forums. He also accepted the reality of sports organizations struggling to stay afloat and the inevitability of cutting down on the enormous entourage of managers accompanying sports teams in the future. Acknowledging the amicable bonds between India and Australia, he asserted the importance of cricket in this regard and the necessity to combine forces by anchoring ties to surge ahead towards recovery.

Optimism related to sports sector

Taking the discussion forward, Dr. Kelly exhibited optimism in the recovery of the sports

sector in India and Australia if both are pragmatic in tapping into their potential innovation capabilities. Citing examples of sporting leagues such as NBA and Formula 1 Racing which have been immensely agile in adopting simulated sports technology such as augmented sports and hologram applications as well as contactless stadiums to keep the fans and sponsors virtually engaged, she recommended both Australia and India to take a page out of their book and focus on upgradation of sports infrastructure.

Emerging legal issues and the way forward

Dr Jack Anderson elaborated the emerging legal issues due to renegotiating of contracts by television partners and sponsors even as sports organizations and leagues stare at losses due to the stalling or delaying of sports seasons while Dale Sheehan shared his concerns over the possibility of rise in cases of match-fixing and other corrupt activities such as betting

on e-sports and ghost matches online.

Following the trend of the inaugural Triveni dialogue, the panelists participating in this discussion also answered some of the queries of the attendees; an interesting and crucial one being on the kind of recourse available to clubs and athletes who are signatories to contracts which are sans the force majeure clause. This was answered by sports law expert Dr. Jack Anderson who suggested renegotiation being the only way out even as clubs have recently begun to realize that sports fields are like workplaces which are not exempt when it comes to revising their policies when it concerns the well-being of players.

The discussion concluded with the vote of thanks speech from Dr. Nik Senapati who laid stress on the importance of community sports at the grassroots level which binds people and epitomizes sports ethics.

By Ananya Sharma

India's T20 WC participation hinges on government nod, players' safety, says BCCI

New Delhi/IANS: Prime Minister Scott Morrison in a boost to the fate of the 2020 T20 World Cup said on June 12 that sports stadiums capable of seating 40,000 people will be allowed to host crowds of up to 10,000 from next month. But the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) doesn't want to look too far ahead and believes that the directives of the Indian government would dictate if they can participate in the showpiece event.

Speaking to IANS, a BCCI official said that while the Indian team would be more than willing to be a part of the T20 World Cup, it will all finally come down to the directives issued by the Indian government as well as the health professionals as the safety of the players is priority.

"It is a bold step by the Australian government and I am sure they have taken the step after assessing their circumstances for sports in Australia. We would be only happy to participate in the T20 World Cup in Australia but there are a lot of things that are in play and they all centre around health. The factors that affect the decision finally are factors that are not in the control of the BCCI. "We would have to decide in accordance with the directives of our government and the advice of



health professionals. The safety of our players and fans is paramount for us and it is not that the team has to travel in an exclusive and disinfected bus from Mumbai to Pune and play there and come back straight from the ground to their respective homes in a completely controlled environment," the official pointed.

In fact, the official said that the presence of fans could actually be a risk. "The presence of fans in the stadium is going to be a huge risk in a world event, especially on account of a longish incubation period of COVID-19 and the presence of asymptomatic carriers," the official explained.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) is still in the 'wait and watch' mode as it says contingency planning is on to hold the event as per schedule.

An ICC official — without getting into the details of the further relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions in Australia and its effect on the fate of the showpiece event — said that contingency planning was on to host the tournament as per schedule. The event is to be played from October 18 to November 15.

"We are continuing our contingency planning as we have already stated whilst planning for the event in its original window continues," the official told IANS.

Asked if allowing entrance of spectators into stadiums meant a boost to the planning since quite a few cricketers have also spoken about not being too comfortable with the idea of playing a T20 World Cup in front of empty stands, the official said, "Nothing to add."

Covid-19 effect: CA to cut more jobs and reduce costs for financial stability

Melbourne/IANS: Cricket Australia (CA) on June 17 detailed a program of operational changes that, according to them, will deliver significant savings in response to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation while ensuring the long-term sustainability and growth of the game.

According to the official CA statement, 40 more jobs would be lost, taking the total tally to 200 since the crisis began in March. The Australian cricket board has also slashed 40 million dollars from its annual budget.

"The amended FY21 plan presented to staff today identifies cost reductions of approximately \$40 million a year to partly mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on revenue and other factors such as biosecurity costs and match attendances," the statement said. "Regrettably, the plan includes a reduction of 40 roles. The positive impact of the Job Keeper program and an increasingly improved outlook for the season ahead, have been recent factors considered in arriving at this final number."

The domestic season, however, remains safe for now, as CA is planning to go ahead with Marsh Sheffield Shield and Marsh

Cup 'in their current formats'. Meanwhile, the Big Bash League and Women's Big Bash League also remain unscathed as the board stated the usual number of matches will be played next season.

"Throughout COVID-19, the need to work closely with the cricket community and to move quickly as circumstances have changed has never been more important," CA chairman Earl Eddings said.

"With increasing clarity about the impact of COVID-19, we have managed the financial impact on our organisation, our people, our partners and players.

"There will still be painful decisions for some parts of our organisation, but we have worked hard to carefully develop plans to protect our investment in community cricket and high-performance cricket, while ensuring the game's financial sustainability."

Recently, CA appointed Nick Hockley as its interim Chief Executive following the resignation of Kevin Roberts. Hockley is currently the Chief Executive of the ICC T20 World Cup and also oversaw the conduct of the women's edition of the tournament earlier this year.

Smith praises Kohli, calling him "a terrific guy"



He is a terrific guy and the way he has led the Indian Team has been amazing, they are an amazing side and can't wait to play them when they come out to Australia this year will be something incredibly special."

Talking about Kohli's ability to chase down games, Smith had earlier said: "Yeah, he is terrific. His batting numbers just speak

for themselves. I think he's an incredible player in all three formats and I think we will see him break many records. He's already broken plenty of them and I see him breaking many more over the years. He has got the hunger for runs and doesn't stop getting them. Hopefully, he can stop getting them against Australia, that'll be nice.

"As a captain he's already made India the number one side in the world in Test cricket. From what I have seen he sets really good standards for them. He is a lot about fitness and is health conscious and things like that. He's got the Indian side into a really good place and leads them exceptionally well."

Tokyo Olympics: Official favours second postponement, if needed

Tokyo/IANS: The Tokyo Olympics should be postponed once more if it is not possible to be held from July 23, 2021, an executive board member of the Games committee has said. This is the first time any official has spoken about a second postponement.

Haruyuki Takahashi was quoted as saying by Japanese newspaper Nikkan Sports that the organisers must "avoid cancellation."

"If it is cancelled, Japan and the world economy will be severely hit," he said. Takahashi said that if it is difficult to hold the Olympics next July or August, the

International Olympic Committee should consider postponing it again.

"The main priority is to make a united effort to hold them (Olympics) in the summer of 2021," Takahashi said. "If that is not possible we should start action once again to get another delay," he said.

The one-year delay is estimated to cost \$2 billion to \$6 billion, most of which will fall to Japanese taxpayers.

IOC President Thomas Bach and Tokyo 2020 Organising

Committee President Yoshiro Mori have both repeatedly ruled out postponing the Games again if it is not possible to be held on the new dates that were decided upon in March.

Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiro Muto said that 80 per cent of the competition venues have been secured for the rescheduled Olympic Games in 2021.

Muto told reporters that those secured venues include the new National Stadium and that negotiations are ongoing to secure other facilities.

Mumbai/IANS: They are undoubtedly the best in the business at present, but India skipper Virat Kohli and Australia batsman Steve Smith also have a sense of respect towards each other. While Kohli backed Smith when he made a return to the game after serving a 12-month suspension due to the Sandpaper Gate, Smith has time and again spoken about how Kohli is a machine when it comes to scoring runs.

Speaking on Star Sports show Cricket Connected, Australia

batsman Steve Smith spoke about his friendship with India team captain Virat Kohli, "I had few conversations with him (Virat) off the field, few messages here and there in recent times just to see how things are going in India. He is a terrific guy and we both play hard out on the field and play as well for our respective teams and its part of the game.

"Virat's gesture in the World Cup to the Indian fans that were giving me and David Warner little bit of a stick, I appreciated that and I share that with him straight up.

6 travel shows to help you plan your vacation post lockdown

On one hand, the long-extended lockdown has motivated us to develop new skills, and do something different, but it has also prevented a majority of us from satisfying our wanderlust. However, it hasn't stopped us from dreaming of a day when we can lounge by the beach, climb mountains, or go on a shopping spree at some of the world's most exotic markets.

What you can do though, is grab a bucket of popcorn, sit back, and go on a world tour, right from the comfort of your homes. Here is a list of some binge-worthy shows that will take you across the length and breadth of the home nation India, and also to other exotic foreign destinations.



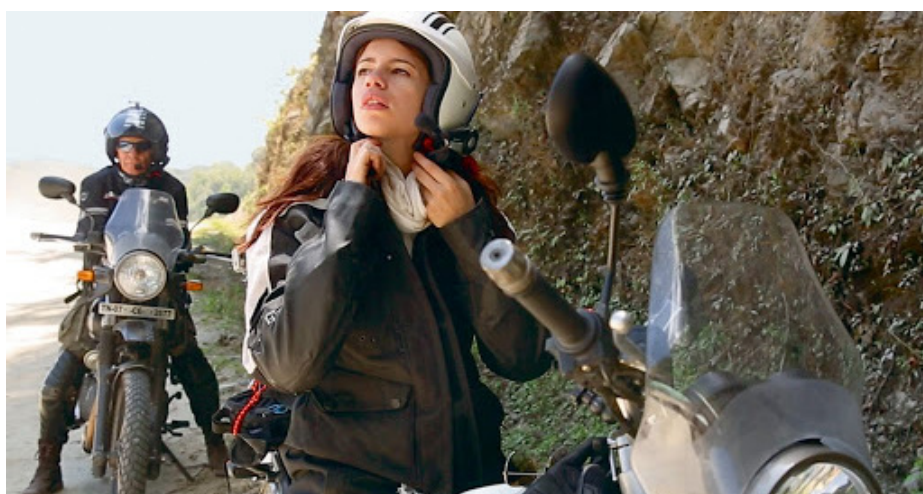
TVF Tripling Season 1&2 by TVF: The show covers the journey of three siblings—Chandan (played by Sumeet Vyas), Chanchal (played by Maanvi Gagroo), and Chitvan (played by Amol Parashar) who set out on a spontaneous adventure. Over the course of the show, travel along with them through the beautiful deserts of Rajasthan, and the picturesque North-East. The show is also filled with tons of sibling drama to make you want to plan your next trip with yours.



Bazaar Travels by Gobble: If you love travelling and exploring different shopping places in and around India, Gobble's Bazaar Travels is definitely for you. Hosted by digital influencer Barkha Singh, the show captures her journey to some of the finest, oldest, and most popular bazaars of India. Each episode talks about unique shopping destinations that offer the best of handicrafts by artisans, mouth-watering delicacies, and so much more. Right from Delhi's Chandni Chowk to Kolkata's Das Gupta and Co along with iconic destinations in Jaipur and Jodhpur, the show covers it all. The show is also a must watch for some of the greatest ideas for budget-friendly holiday destinations.



Four More Shots Please! Season 1&2 by Amazon Prime: Your bffs will always be some of the best travel partners you could ask for. No matter what life throws at you, you can always lean on each other to sail through it. This is exactly what 'Four More Shots Please!' covers, while taking you on a tour of South Bombay in the first season, and exotic Istanbul and Rajasthan in the second. Starring Kirti Kulhari, Maanvi Gagroo, Bani J, and Sayani Gupta the show will definitely give you vacation goals. So what are you waiting for? Get on that group call, and plan that exciting trip with your buddies!



Kalki's Great Escape by Hotstar: While this show is an old one, hosted by talented Kalki Koechlin and her father Joel Koechlin, this is a must-watch if you want to discover some of the best places to visit in North-East India. The adventure takes viewers on an emotional and exciting journey showcasing the local culture and traditions of these places. Are you planning a trip with your father already?



The Trip by Bindaas: If you've ever wondered how to find your life's goals, we recommend watching 'The Trip' for ideas. The story revolves around four best friends who embark on a road trip to find their goals in life before one of them gets married. In season 1, popular actors Lisa Haydon, Mallika Dua, Shweta Tripathi, and Sapna Pabbi take a trip by road and travel to Thailand from Delhi for their friend's bachelorette. In the second season, the girls discover a new side to Pondicherry, and will help you plan a great trip to this gorgeous city.



Love Ok Please by MX Player:

Despite being a relatively old show, we keep coming back just for the beautiful sceneries, and visuals of the mountains. The 12-episode show sees contestants explore Himachal Pradesh by road, while also taking part in fun activities.

5 books to hone English language skills to overcome pandemic blues

The world has changed and so have the ways in which we communicate and connect with each other. The current need of social distancing is propelling the transformation of the traditional classroom into virtual/digital learning.

As we adapt to a new normal and stay safe at home practicing social distancing, it's time to capitalise on the opportunity of availability of time to better ourselves as an individual with the most powerful language that unites people across geographies – English.

Oxford University Press, in its endeavour to promote excellence in education and research by publishing worldwide, recommends the following titles as part of its vertical 'English Language Teaching for Adult Learners' to master the language that you require in all that you do.

Whether it's preparing for competitive exams, or minimising common day-to-day errors, or just further sharpening your grammar, this list caters to all.

The Elevate Series by Shefali Ray, Samathmika Balaji and Simran Luthra

This series of three books caters to three levels of English –Elementary, Pre-intermediate and Intermediate. Mapped to the international language framework known as CEFR, these books help learners boost their all-round knowledge of English, including the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) along with grammar and vocabulary. The engaging exercises and activities in this series allows learners to enhance their real-life usage of English while enjoying the process of learning.

Spoken English for My World by Sabina Pillai

Speaking English is sometimes the most difficult skill, even for people who have good reading and writing skills. This book helps the learner sharpen their spoken language in various situations, such as their personal, professional and social worlds. It comes with audio and video components built into an interactive Smart Tutor along with quizzes in

the Areal app. With sections on spoken grammar and spoken vocabulary, this book is a complete resource for someone looking to speak English better in their daily life.

Common Errors in Everyday English by Saumya Sharma

This book is not just about common errors. It includes some cleverly deceptive mistakes that we commonly make, including often-mispronounced words. It also covers grammatical errors, frequently used and confused expressions and faux pas that are made unknowingly. This book can surely act as a worthwhile guide, a fact-checking resource and an easy-to-use reference tool. It will be of immense support in basic writing skills.

Be Grammar Ready by John Eastwood

Written by a British grammarian with over four decades of authorship experience, this book keeps in mind the particular needs of Indian learners of English and provides updated grammar rules and information about usage, along with examples tailored to Indian contexts and exercises for practice, all of which support learners towards achieving accuracy in their use of English.

With over 170 grammar topics explained in concise and informative chapters, this book makes learning grammar easy and interesting for both self-learners, such as professionals and exam aspirants, as well as for classroom teaching.

The Definitive Guide to IELTS General Training: Preparation and Practice by Audrone Raskauskiene, Irena Ragaisiene, Ramute, Zemaitiene and Santanu Sinha Chaudhuri

This series of separate books for IELTS Academic and General Training is designed to meet the needs of learners preparing for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System). It covers all four sections of the test, including Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. It also includes audio and video components.

IANS

Amish Tripathi launches new book 'Legend of Suheldev'

The 'Immortals of Meluha' author is out with his latest book, one set in 11th century India

In what is set to enthuse his readers, bestselling author and now director of London's Nehru Centre, Amish Tripathi announced the launch of his new fiction book – 'Legend of Suheldev: The King Who Saved India'.

The book's publisher Westland Publications said it will be available across physical and online bookstores from June 20.

Set in 11th century India, 'Legend of Suheldev' begins with the shattering invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni, and his Turkic hordes, as they destroy the holy Somnath Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. The book then traces the epic adventure and inspiring legend of the warrior-hero King Suheldev, as he unites Indians across religions, castes, and regions, under his leadership, and mounts a fierce resistance against the foreign invaders. It all culminates in the magnificent Battle of Bahraich, where King Suheldev destroys the Turkic army down to the last man.

According to the publisher, this is the story of a hero, who fights to defend the motherland, making huge personal sacrifices, displaying glorious leadership, and courage beyond compare. "The Turkic hordes were the most brutal global invaders in human history, destroying much of Eastern Europe, the Arab world, and the Far-east. But their conquest was stopped in India by King Suheldev, and the nation

enjoyed 150 years of peace and respite from these foreign invaders, after the Battle of Bahraich," Westland said in a statement.

"The idea behind writing 'Legend of Suheldev', was to bring to national consciousness an inspiring story that has been ignored in the pages of Indian history. A story that has particular relevance today. Legend of Suheldev is the story of a king who united men and women of the nation, irrespective of their religion, caste, region, or status in society. An epic adventure, and an inspiring tale of unity, the message of King Suheldev echoes across the chasm of time: when we Indians are united, we are unbeatable," Tripathi, who is based in London, said.

This is also Amish's first book under the Immortal Writers' Centre – a team of exceptional writers assisting Amish in conducting research and preparing first drafts. The story idea comes from Amish, he writes the detailed summary, then the



Legend of Suheldev – Cover

Writer's Centre works on the first draft, then Amish works on it and finalises the manuscript, the publisher said.

The 'Immortals of Meluha' author continues to write the fourth book of the popular Ram Chandra series, the sequel to 'Raavan – Enemy of Aryavarta'.

IANS

By Siddhi Jain

The many lives of Ruskin Bond

A novella, memoir and a short school story are all in the making

He starts with a pause. There is a window that lives on the wall of his writing room. He looks out often to take in the mist enveloped mountains of Garhwal embracing Landour. For decades, this setting has remained unchanged for writer Ruskin Bond, who recently celebrated his 86th birthday. Of course, he does miss the time when the many buildings did not eclipse his view. The yellow-painted room, where he spends most of his time is about his desk -- filled with sheets of white paper and a bed which also doubles up as his writing chair.

The pause breaks with him talking about how the first floor of his house is occupied by ghosts from the era in-between the two World Wars. "But they are quite harmless," he smiles, almost reassuringly. For someone who has been a writer for more than half a century now, working across genres -- fiction, short stories, non-fiction, romance and books for children, the fact that he is still writing is something he

looks at with "gratitude". "I am extremely happy that I found the time and made the opportunity to write so much. I can say without hesitation that it has given me absolute happiness," he tells IANS.

Not really fanatical about penning down a set number of words each day, this Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan recipient, on whose works several films like 'Junoon', 'The Blue Umbrella' and '7 Khoon Maaf' have been made says that there is always something to write everyday -- "In short, I really don't run out of ideas or subjects."

Talk to him about what is keeping him busy nowadays, and he asserts, "Currently, I am working on a novella, a memoir and a short school story."

Will several novels, non-fiction and anthologies to his credit including 'Koki's Song' and 'These are a Few of My Favourite Things' (Harper Collins), Bond, who can be seen signing autographs and posing with fans at the Cambridge Book Shop in Mussoorie once a week stresses that he shares a

unique connection with children. "During younger days, I wrote a lot of stories from my own childhood. Now, I find other lives just as interesting."

Pleased that over the years, major Indian publishers have started giving importance to children's literature, he adds, "Of course, it would be wonderful if we witnessed even more books for children," says the writer who wrote his first short-story at the age of sixteen.

IANS

By Sukant Deepak



Ruskin Bond (Photo by Sandeep Sahdev)

Shruti Haasan ticks boxes on her 'weirdo checklist'

Actress Shruti Haasan made a "weirdo checklist" and has ticked off all the boxes. In a new post on social media, Shruti has shared a photograph where she turns up in a black ensemble and red lipstick.

"WEIRDO CHECKLIST Midnight make up experiments (tick mark emoji) random red goth palette Access (tick mark emoji) insomnia (tick mark emoji) share on socials for no real reason (tick mark emoji) chocolate cravings (tick mark emoji) #mustbetheeclipse #capricorn #blameitonthepianets," she wrote.

Recently, Shruti shared that she is missing performing on stage.

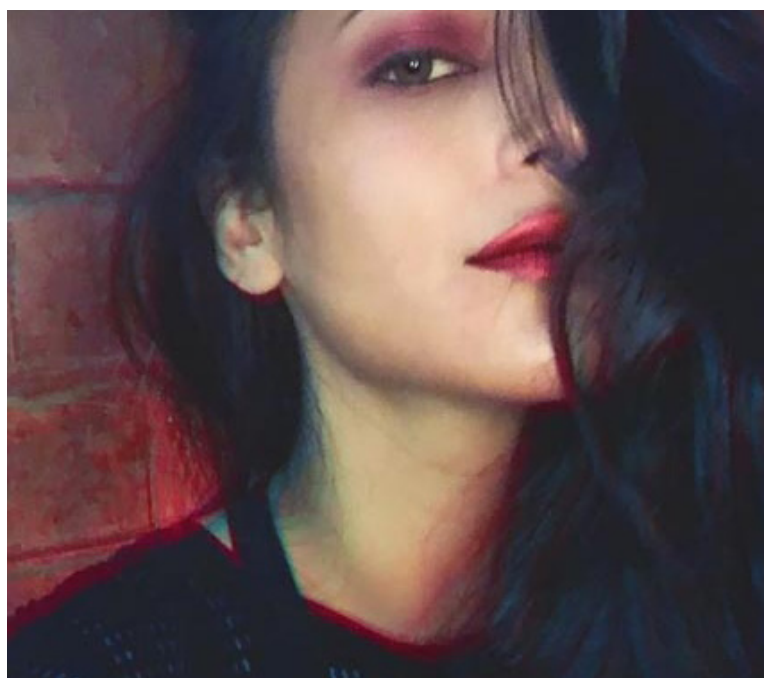
Amid lockdown, Shruti, who is the

daughter of veteran actors Kamal Haasan and Sarika, has been cooking, cleaning and spending time with her pet cat, going by her social media posts.

Shruti made her debut in Bollywood in 2000 with the film "Luck". She was later seen in Hindi films like "Dil Toh Baccha Hai Ji", "Ramayya Vasthavayya" and "Behen Hogi Teri".

In South, she has worked in hits like "Gabbar Singh", "Yevadu" and "Puli" among others films. She

will next be seen in Telugu movie "Krack" and "Laabam", a Tamil film.



#BoycottKhans trends

Hashtag #BoycottKhans was trending on Twitter last month. The hashtag demands that the Khans be shunned from Bollywood, in response to the untimely demise of Sushant Singh Rajput who netizens feel was a victim of nepotism and power play.

"Bihar, Jharkhand aur UP Main ban kar do Khan's k movie to kahin Nahi chalega tab Pata chalega inko (Khan movies should be banned in Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. When their films don't run anywhere, then they will learn a lesson)

"that talents are not only born in Bollywood godfathers house. Stupid people specially ban Yash raj film and all 7 production house films in these 3 states #BoycottKhans," tweeted a user.

"#BoycottKhans. If a corrupt government can't give him justice, then people can.. #CBIEnquiryForSushant



#BeFairInSSRMurderCase," tweeted another netizen.

"#BeFairInSSRMurderCase.

Real hero and good heart person Sushant Singh Rajput," shared another user.

"Dear Srk no doubt ur the best bt after sushant death i hate u ...u dnt have the pic of sushant in ur phone..y don't u kept a



fan moment in ur phone u google it n post it shame on u #BoycottKhans," expressed a user.

Priyanka Chopra tells Malala: Your degree from Oxford is such an achievement

Indian actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas has congratulated Pakistani education activist and Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai on her graduation from Oxford University with a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

Priyanka took to her Instagram Stories, where she posted a picture of herself along with Malala, who became the face of Taliban brutality when she was shot in the head for going to

school in the Swat valley.

She captioned it: "Happy Graduation, @malala! Your philosophy, political and economic degree from Oxford is such an achievement. I'm so proud!"

On June 19, Malala had shared her excitement on Twitter by posting a happy picture with her family, cutting a cake.

"Hard to express my joy and gratitude right now as I

completed my Philosophy, Politics and Economics degree at Oxford. I don't know what's ahead. For now, it will be Netflix, reading and sleep," she wrote.

Malala first shared the news of her graduation on June 8 when she participated in the YouTube special, #DearClassof2020.

Malala had shared then that she still had "four more exams to go".



Arjun Kapoor trolled for 'replacing' Sushant in 'Half Girlfriend'

A five-year-old tweet by author Chetan Bhagat has suddenly gone viral on Twitter where he announces Sushant Singh Rajput as the lead actor of the movie based on his book "Half Girlfriend".

Netizens are now sharing Bhagat's tweet and blaming nepotism for Arjun Kapoor eventually replacing Sushant Singh Rajput as the film's lead actor. In turn, Arjun Kapoor kept trending on Twitter throughout on June 24.

"So happy to share @itsSSR will play lead in @mohit11481 directed Half Girlfriend. Shooting begins 1Q16," reads Chetan Bhagat's now viral tweet, originally posted on November 7, 2015.

After Sushant Singh Rajput's untimely demise last month,

netizens have concluded that he was a victim of Bollywood's nepotism and power play. Hence, there is an angry outburst on social media and star kids are being trolled.

Sharing Bhagat's old tweet, a user wrote: "So it was supposed to be Sushant in Half Girlfriend but finally given to Starkid Arjun Kapoor. On whose direction?"

"See how nepotism works in corrupted Bollywood, Arjun Kapoor got this film by removing Sushant Singh Rajput #PapaHainNa," tweeted another user.

"Aditya replaced shushant....then Ranveer replaced shushant....then legendry arjun kapoor replaced shushant.....ok how many of u believe this is just a coincidence



Arjun Kapoor

or injustice with @itsSSRPls support shushant... otherwise we might see few other shushant really soon," reads another tweet.

Demand for CBI probe into Sushant's death cuts across party lines



Late Sushant Singh Rajput (File Photo IANS)

Various political parties and organizations have come forward demanding an investigation into the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

The Congress on June 23 wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, demanding a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into Sushant's death.

Lalan Kumar, former Bihar Youth Congress chairman and member of the Film Censor Board Advisory Committee, has written to Shah and Thackeray demanding that the CBI investigate Sushant's death.

Kumar said in the letters that Sushant made his mark in Bollywood in a very short span but coming from a small town, he made a section of the film

world unhappy. Quoting media reports, he said Sushant was abetted in committing suicide. Only a CBI investigation can clear up the entire matter, the letter said.

If the demand for a CBI inquiry is not met within 15 days, he will approach the court, Lalan said. He warned that till Sushant gets justice, the films of actor Salman Khan and Karan Johar will also not be allowed to be screened in Bihar.

Earlier Congress leader and former governor Nikhil Kumar had also demanded a CBI inquiry into the matter. BJP leader and actor Manoj Tiwari has also demanded a high-level inquiry into the death. Sushant allegedly committed suicide on June 14 at his Bandra residence in Mumbai.

4 arrested for threatening South Indian actress Shamna Kasim

The Kerala Police have arrested four youths for threatening and blackmailing South Indian actress Shamna Kasim.

Speaking to IANS, a police official attached to the Maradu Police station said the police launched a probe following a complaint and have arrested four people.

"All the four have been arrested and they are now remanded to judicial custody. The probe is going on," said the official who did not wish to be identified.

Kasim began her career as a dancer and a model and after becoming a success in the television industry, she entered films and in a career that began in 2004 she has acted in about 40 South Indian films so far.



Shamna Kasim

Late Inder Kumar was a victim of nepotism in Bollywood, says wife

Late actor Inder Kumar's wife Pallavi Kumar shared a long Instagram post on how her husband had been a victim of Bollywood nepotism, before mysteriously making her account private.

On the account named unfathomable.9, which is not verified, Pallavi has also shared a picture of Inder along with superstar Shah Rukh Khan. In the image, the two can be seen shaking hands.

Alongside the image she wrote: "These days everyone is talking about.. Nepotism...Just like Sushant Singh Rajput my husband late actor Inder Kumar achieved his fame on his own. He was at a peak in 90s."

She recalled Inder meeting two

"big shots", before he died of cardiac arrest in 2017.

"Before he passed away I still remember he went to 2 people big shots asking for work as help. Just for the record he was already doing small projects. But he wanted to do big movies just like he started. He went to Mr. Karan Johar, I was there too. In front of me all happened. He made us wait outside his van for 2 hrs. Then his manager Garima comes and says Karan is busy. But we waited and wen (sic) he came out, he says Inder keep in touch with Garima at the moment there is no work for you, (sic)" Pallavi wrote.

She recalled how filmmaker Karan Johar "blocked" Inder. "And Inder did that... for the next 15 days ... the fone was picked up

saying there is no work at the moment... After that Inder was blocked."

Pallavi said the same behaviour was given to Inder by Shah Rukh Khan.

"He met Inder and said he will call you in a week . At the moment there is no work. This all happened on the set of Zero. Later (he) was even asked to keep in touch with his manager Pooja... she did the same wat Garima did.... Can one imagine and believe dat there has not been any work available in these two production houses," she stressed. She questioned as to why such big personalities find it difficult to help "talented people".

"Karan Johar has said many times



Inder Kumar

he works with stars... well my husband was a star ... still people remember him by his work. Why is it so difficult for these big shots to help talented people. What are they scared of? Or we can just say they are bad human beings... Pretending to be nice."

She asserted that an end should be put on nepotism.

"Nepotism should stop... people are dying and these big shots are still not understanding the effect. Government should take strict action against such people."

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Justin Greenwell
Director, Mater Private Hospital Springfield

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