Chinese transgressions must end, say people living at LAC

Llah (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.

Darubk Namgyal, former congress councillor from Village Darubk, 123 km 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.

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

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 G2 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.
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. 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
New Delhi (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 the islands it claims to own, a chain that Beijing has for long set its eyes on.

The Ishigaki city council in Okinawa prefecture approved a bill to take control of the uninhabited island group called Senakkus, 2,913 km southwest of Tokyo. Though the Senakkus, 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 the city council to abide by the spirit of the four-principle consensus, which both the countries “aspire to improve and deepen” and under international law. It is extremely serious that these activities continue will ‘undermine’ 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 1 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 1, 2020. 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 Payne said that the decisions taken on Thursday marked a major step forward in Australia and India’s security and defence relationship.

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 cooperation 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 nanomaterials.

“They can work jointly on their development by combining the expertise of the defence research laboratories and the efficiency of the private sector. They can 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 infrastructure and assembly facility infrastructure for its shipbuilding industry -- not just defence, but also for oil and gas and in tan mining.

New Delhi (IANS): Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on June 22 launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Chinese transgression 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”.

Mannan Singh was criticising Modi’s statement at the all-party meeting on Friday and was clarifying to 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 the Major General.

The PM statement was used by the Chinese to get away from the возможностями охолодиться с последствиями между Galwan Valley. “The Prime Minister cannot allow them to use his words as a substitute for diplomacy with India and must ensure that all organs of the Government work together to protect our borders and prevent it from escalating further,” said the former Prime Minister.

Mannan Singh also said, “We remind the Government that disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy or decisive leadership.”

The truth cannot be suppressed by having plant allies spent comforting but false statements,” added Mannan 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 decisions 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 Too by committing multiple incursions between April 2020 till date.

“The Nation, lost twenty brave soldiers in the Galwan Valley, Ladakh on June 15th-ninth, 2020. They laid down their lives in the ultimate act of sacrifice, valor and duty to our country. Our bravehearts defended the motherland till their last breath and for that we thank them, and their families, our eternal gratitude,” said the former Prime Minister.

“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 of a solemn duty.

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 Adobe Flash Reader 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, 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, Snack 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, the report citing an unnamed government official.

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

Disinformation is no substitute for diplomacy: Mannohan to Modi

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 Mannan 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 and our javans who have made the ultimate sacrifice and for that we respectively defended our territorial integrity,”

To do any less would be a historic betrayal of the people’s faith,” said the statement from Manmohan Singh.
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 at 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 Vinyasa Yoga. It is a flow yoga, where each flow leads to a different Surya Namaskaram. Every asana is modified to have a combination of traditional yoga as well as Hatha Yoga and Iyenger 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.”

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.

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 IndiWeb.
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 observed the 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. Muthumariadhan 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 Alok Jay 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, came 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 (IAE) and indibz. 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. Raman Mohan, immediate past president, FICQ: Finky Singh, Liberal candidate for McConnel and Fadni Thevar, Labour candidate for Malvern, Shayam 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 epitomises the ways 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, Ilona 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, Alok Jay and Neha demonstrated the various yoga postures beginning with the Sukhasana 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 30 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 2013 organized 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.

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

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"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 and traditions in true sense. Indian diaspora and organisations abroad can help in creating the essence of Indian culture across the world. They are the ambassadors of Indian culture and traditions in true sense.

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, and the world meets India. Titled ‘#BeTheRevival: India & A Better New World’, this three-day event from 9 - 11 July (Australia Stream on 10 July) will bring together over 5,000 global 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.

Register Now to engage with the biggest names from the world of business, politics and culture at this mega event. So come on, sign up and be part of India Global Week and #BeTheRevival!
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 (SVA), a non-profit organization 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 grip of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Virtual Recording of Spiritual Songs**

It was decided that a 5-minute composition, “Mere Naal Hai” 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 Giri who produced the final video, and Jameel 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**

Following the inauguration of Sikh Volunteers Australia’s 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 endeavours.

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 6,000 meals in 97 days and distributed these across 13 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 and 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.

As many as 21 families and numerous musicians and composers from various parts of the world, including 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 SVA is indeed an effective way to stay optimistic and hopeful as the whole world steers its way towards recovery and eventual normalcy.

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

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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 and 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.

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**Sikh Youth Australia**

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 SVA is indeed an effective way to stay optimistic and hopeful as the whole world steers its way towards recovery and eventual normalcy.
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 nations 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 upsize in the Indian and Australian strategic relations was the one on cyber affairs and critical technology with both countries agreeing to invest nearly $1 million in cyber technology and other allied fields for the next four years. Both the countries have been proactive in fortifying cyber security in the backdrop of growing concerns over the security of their respective 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 cybersecurity 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 46-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 $1 billion by the financial year 2024-25. Australia, being among the top three nations to produce cobalt and zinc, 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 last year. According to the outcome 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 $3 billion (AUD) 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 Systems 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 115th 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 Summers 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 Gujratli 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, Asialink Diplomacy, University of Melbourne; Jim Varghese, AM, Asialink Diplomacy, University of Melbourne; Professor Purnendra Jain, an academic expert on India-Australia relationships who has recently been awarded the Japan 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 retaining 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

THANK YOU!

FARMERS, MANUFACTURERS, FISHERMEN AND PROCESSORS

for you hardwork and commitment during COVID-19

#BUYAUSTRALIAN
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 $6 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 Sa-37Mr 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 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.

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

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

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, 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 lower age group (25-45 years age group), 70 per cent in the lower education group, 64 per cent in the higher income 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 90.9 per cent of Christians were willing to boycott Chinese products, followed by 86.2 per cent of Scheduled Tribes, 73.8 per cent of Other Backward Classes, 70 per cent of Scheduled Castes and 74.9 per cent upper caste Hindus. The anti-China sentiment is very high in majority of the categories, except Muslims (57.1 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 36.78 per cent of NDA voters too said that they were willing to boycott Chinese products.

In the gender category — 75 per cent males agreed to boycott Chinese products while 64.7 per cent expressed similar sentiments.
Seven Austalians of Indian Origin among recipients of Queen’s Birthday Honours 2020

Seven honours 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 1990s landing his first job in the small town of Tenterfield. Dr Arumugam has worked to help people with long-term mental disabilities to lead a normal life amid the community. He has also participated extensively 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 1978. Thereafter, she undertook her training as a rheumatologist in Perth and went on to begin her research fellowship in 1980 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 autoinflammatory 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 devoted 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 Venkateswara 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 Mulacava Santhadevi Parvathy—recipient of Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)

Hailing from Cochin, Dr Parvathy completed her MBBS from Kerala University in 1986 and has been taking special interest since the late 80s 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 1988; 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 endeavors which have had the 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 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 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, Sahathevan has been supported by several organizations such as Bharatayala 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
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 worked and built their careers, 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.

Lean of Four for 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 NanoSonic Exfoliating Device, NuBleach Hair Device and NuBalm 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 Nulbrush & Holy Basil Serum recognised as a finalist in the National Beauty Awards for TVSN.

- 2020 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 66th in 2019 Dr Tanya Unni was ranked for the second consecutive year in Australia’s Top 100 list, ‘Ranked 66th in Australia’s Top 100 Young Entrepreneurs’
- 2018 Australian Business Awards – Top 100 – Ranked 86th – in 2018 Dr Ameer Hamza and Dr Tanya Unni were ‘Ranked 86th in Australia’s Top 100 Young Entrepreneurs’ – Business News Australia.
- The Indo-American Press Club, Global Entrepreneur Award by AIBC, member of Queensland Management Committee.
- Dr Tanya Unni was honoured to receive the Global Entrepreneur Award by the Indo-American Press Club, Houston, USA.
- All Star Family Health Care – Award Medical

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 gains 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 two billion 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 499,000 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 12 million children who were already out of school before COVID–19 struck.

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JULY 2020
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 where there is expected growth in job opportunities."

From 2021 course fees for maths and agriculture degrees will fall 62 per cent to A$5,200 ($3,520) 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$4,500 per year, a 113 per cent increase.

Law and commerce degrees students will face fee hikes of 28 per cent to A$4,500 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 resurgence occur with a return of lockdowns, confidence would suffer and cash flow would be undermined," 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 Jobseeker 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 suburbs 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.

"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 21,000 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

T he 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 1, Marise Payne, Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and her 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 $2.7 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

Mr. Jatin Savalia, tax accountant at McFillins & Partners Accountants and training procedures is followed at McFillins and Partners Accountants? McFillins 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. McFillins 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 a route to be certified accountants.

Apparel exporter body seeks early CEPA pact with Australia

The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEP) 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 five years time. The AEP had approached Prime Minister Modi on June 1 as he was scheduled to hold a virtual bilateral meeting with Australia 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,’ AEP had said in its letter.

AEP 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 8th 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, that takes at least 12-18 months to develop. Last month, global pharmaceutical major Pfizer said 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.

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 25 per cent and the mortality rate to 0.6 per cent,” she said.

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 221 patients. Of these, 72 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 Pet, 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 21 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 neurologist, the researchers said they cannot exclude the possibility that these were undiagnosed before the 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 39 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.

Statin therapy linked to lower death rate in coronavirus 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.

Statins 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 13,983 corona patients admitted to 21 hospitals in Hubei Province, China.

Among these patients, 1,299 used statins, primarily atorvastatin at an average dose of 20 mg per day.

Among patients with hypertension, 39% 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 2.5% lower mortality rate, compared to 6.8% percent without statin use, representing a 32% per cent decrease, said the study.

FAO-IANS) (Soumya Swaminathan, Deputy Director-General of the WHO)
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 building 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, helps 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 countries were unable to reach any agreement.

Second, a simultaneously steady decline in the inter-Korean relations. 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 6 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 more than a hypocritical 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 the US, because “Americans taxpayers are against paying too much for other countries’ security.”

The US military is set to remove 5,400 US troops and halve the US military personnel stationed in Germany, from 45,257 to 23,000. This has caused Germany to send a message to Berlin that it is “wasting more, on the Indian side, working towards complete denuclearisation”. A second summit in Hanoi between Kim Jong-un and Trump ended in a stalemate after the two countries were unable to reach any agreement.

Secondly, the negotiating tactic 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, 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.

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World This Fortnight

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

What does it mean?
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 a 2.0% 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 single 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 damaged the relations between Berlin and Washington.

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 spot 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 on ways to mitigate its local economies dependent on the US military base and for the US, the potential diminution 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 24,000. 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 warn 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 Russian 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 appropriate 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 has 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 authorises refused to acknowledge the numbers. Talks were held at the Maj. Gen. level in order to diffuse the tensions on the ground. The diplomatic approach to resolving the External Affairs ministers of both countries ensured that the issue would be handled in a responsible and appropriate manner. The rift 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 Constitution 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...
border disagreements with India. President Bidhuya Devi Bhandari gave her assent to the bill. The new map includes the three disputed areas - Kalapani, Limpi-yadhura 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 her 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, effectually 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 Medea Menoraa. The issue was raised by France during the meeting between NATO Defence Chiefs. A Turkish vessel was said to have avoided the alleged inspections in Libya and France was on a NATO mission investigating the incident.

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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 in 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 Representative Marco Rubio together with his Democrat Senator Robert Menendez. It is a diabolic sight to behold when German Green Party Member of the European Parliament Reinhard Butikofer united with its ideologically opposed Slovak Conservative Miriam Laxmann 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 unitd the global coalition of developed countries is that China’s cautious 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 assorptive Chinese leader is unsustainable which has been evident in the regime’s breaches of its internationat treaty obligations to Hong Kong, mass atrocities against the Uighurs in Xinjiang and increasng 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 Indo-Pacific, 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 the disinformation on the pandemic but also assuring the Chinese regime 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. Secondly, the possibility of an all-time assertive Chinese leader is fathomable. In the post-COVID-19 world order, the approaches are bound to vary, and not every member of the coalition would have been convinced of a policy to push back on China. Second, more than the deep-seat ed frustration with China’s assertions, there is concern over 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 countries making the coalition an elite voice.
North Korea warns the US against meddling in Inter-Korean affairs
South Korea 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 the disinformation on the pandemic but also assuring the Chinese regime of no harm in the economic ties.
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 leaders along with the failure to take forward the relations between the two countries. While the United States has asked for demuniarisation of the Korean peninsula before easing of sanctions, North Korea insists that the US unilaterally removed the sanctions. 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 hotlines 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 have defected from North Korea.
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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 abyssal 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 with the North, but also reassures of the safety of the defectors who might be in danger.

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

Chinese President Xi Jinping
Palestinians clash with Israeli soldiers during a protest against Israeli settlements near the West Bank city of Salfit, June 26, 2020 (Ayman Nobani/XinhuaIANS) 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 Lu Kang 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 on the denuclearization 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 reportedly maintained 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 confrontational stance 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 Gargash condemned parts of West Bank and reiterating 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 Yedioth 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-based paper, Al Otaiba said that annexation would undermine all bilateral exchanges, cooperation and progress.

What is the background?

First, amid normalization of UAE-Israel ties for the Arab world, ambassador Otaiba’s article was a rejoinder for the Arab world for Palestinian rights.

Second, in normalization of UAE-Israel ties, Otaiba’s article was a rejoinder for the Arab world for Palestinian rights.

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 devotion and staunch support for the Palestinian cause.

Second, the pre-emptive Arab move to not have annexation would undermine all bilateral exchanges, cooperation and progress.

People watch a movie inside their cars at a drive-in cinema amid coronavirus restrictions, June 12, 2020 in COEX, Seoul, South Korea (Xinhua/Naehyun ParktrossIANS) Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said that the US should 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 Bozansoro’s focus on strengthening his party’s image, 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 disastrously 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 8 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. After President Gotabaya Rajapaksa dissolved the Parliament in the initial stage. The lack of transparency highlights the failures of the health ministry. 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 disastrously for the largest democracy in Latin America. Following the failures and the mistrust, the fear of impeachment has pushed Bolsonaro to encouraging the call for military rule, which is unlikely. However, this has led to a divide in the opinions within society. 

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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).

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

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

Brazil has become the second country to pass 50,000 COVID-19 deaths. The country has seen a significant increase in cases and deaths in recent weeks, with the number of infections and fatalities doubling in the past month. The Brazilian government has been criticized for its handling of the pandemic, with questions being raised about the accuracy of the official data and the effectiveness of lockdown measures. The situation has led to increased pressure on the government to take more decisive action to control the spread of the virus.

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

A World Health Organization (WHO) expert in Geneva said that in light of the accelerating increases 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 Programme, made the remarks at a press conference in Geneva on June 22, responding to a question about whether the global 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 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 many of the most populous countries and most populated areas in the world, and all countries have started turning towards a peak in a number of large countries at the same time, which is likely to 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 liaison office in its border town of Kaesong on June 16, sharply escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula after North’s threats against Seoul over anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets.

The North blew up the liaison office at an inter-Korean liaison office 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 revising 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, our national 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 reconciliation mood created by summit talks between the two 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

A mid intense Chinese military provocations and ‘wolf warriors’ aggressive approach to cover up its culpability in spreading coronavirus across the globe, 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 national sovereignty in its 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, US, 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 multilateralism, 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, including 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 border land, to an increasingly maritime-based one. China’s recent actions along India’s Line of Actual Control in the Ladhak 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 prediction and favourable narratives that gobble up land, resources and in a way forces smaller states to become subservient to the CPC’s machinations, the officer added.

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 Mutual Logistics Support Agreement that will be mutually beneficial.

The reason for India’s continued success in these engagements is that these maritime alliances is the result of its demonstrated status as a responsible power; by promoting transparency about its military modernisation efforts and reaffirming the absence of territorial ambitions at the cost of global goodwill.

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 unprovoked and unauthorized aggression and intimidation policy. The so-called ‘wolf warriors’ are over and cooperative spirit could be the only face-saver for China at the moment.

By Sumit Kumar Singh (IANS)

*www.indianews.com.au*
Trump freezes H-1B visas; revamp plans may hit Indian outplacement firms

U.S. 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 its features would ban companies from bringing in employees on H-1B visas and ousting 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 out 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 $85,000, 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."

The official said the pause would help workers already in the country get access to more than 12,55,000 jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a justification for Trump's longstanding 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

U.S. 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 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 of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

Trump’s signing of the law coincides with the publishing of excerpts from the memoir of former White House National Security Advisor 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 discriminatory 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

The India-Australia relationship is in a sweet spot, having cemented virtual Summit between PM Modi and PM Morrison on 4 June. The relationship has shown significant improvement in bilateral ties, and the two countries have agreed to further strengthen their strategic partnership.

The summit showcased the strong and enduring ties between the two countries, with both leaders reaffirming their commitment to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). The CSP, established in 2002, is a framework for deepening the partnership between India and Australia in various sectors, including defense, trade, and technology.

It is worth noting that the CSP is a mutually beneficial partnership that is based on shared values and interests. The partnership is characterized by cooperation on issues of mutual concern, such as regional stability, economic growth, and security.

India and Australia are key partners in the Indo-Pacific region and play a crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in the region. The CSP is a testament to the growing strategic partnership between the two countries, which has been strengthened through cooperation in various areas, including defense, trade, and technology.

In conclusion, the India-Australia relationship is on a trajectory of growth and strengthening, and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is a key pillar of this partnership. The two countries have a bright future ahead, and the CSP is a testament to the strong and enduring ties between them.

By Dr. Ashutosh Misra, Australia-India Strategic Partnership

Australia and India: Next steps in the comprehensive strategic partnership

Australia and India share a deep and enduring relationship, forged through shared values, interests, and experiences. This relationship has evolved significantly over the years, and there are many opportunities for further cooperation and collaboration.

With the rise of China, the Indo-Pacific region has become a focal point of global attention, with the United States and China vying for influence and dominance. In this context, the Australia-India relationship has become even more important, as both countries seek to strengthen their strategic partnership and work together to ensure regional stability and prosperity.

Australia and India have a strong track record of cooperation in various sectors, including defense, trade, and technology. The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) has been a key driver of this cooperation, and both countries have committed to further strengthening this partnership.

In conclusion, the Australia-India relationship is a cornerstone of regional cooperation and stability. The two countries have a bright future ahead, and there are many opportunities for further cooperation and collaboration. By working together, Australia and India can contribute to the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.
China's geo-political adventurism

China has been surprising its neighbours recently when everyone else is funding for themselves with Covid-19 disaster that originated from Wuhan in China. In a series of actions that has been unnerving several countries, Beijing had used the spread of the virus in and around the world to strengthen its geo-political clout. As a consequence, today the world is witnessing China's geo-political adventurism, China's geo-political adventurism, China is moving to consolidate its position as a great power and is seeking to influence the global order in its favour. China is using the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to advance its geo-political agenda and to establish itself as a global power. China is using its influence in the health sector to further its geopolitical goals. China is using its cache of medical supplies and its global health efforts to consolidate its global standing and to establish itself as a global leader in health and medicine. China's geo-political adventurism is a cause for concern as it threatens the stability and security of the region and the world. China's actions are in violation of international law and norms and are likely to have a destabilizing effect on the region and the world. The international community must take action to counter China's geo-political adventurism and to ensure that it does not undermine the stability and security of the region and the world.
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 goals 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, the push 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 factors 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 chain management in Australia. Both countries would gain from one another via the optimizations 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 2015 (IES 2015) launched in 2018 was a step towards exploring the trade synergies between the two countries thereby strengthening overall bilateral relationships. 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 andphyto-sanitary (SPS) measures restrict import of many products such as poultry, swine, dairy, and most grains 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 ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan’. The ambitious strategy aims to empower its farmers to feed the domestic markets and occupy a larger market share in global agribusiness trade. The three significant ordinances aim at deregulating the commodities benefit 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).

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 commonly 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 Shilvani 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 FR fast radio bursts favour a certain type of galaxy; their search found all four bursts emerged from massive galaxies, confirming 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 thecensure of astronomy forward.

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By 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.

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

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Bucknor recalls handing Tendulkar wrong decisions

E
ter International Cricket Council (ICC) umpire Steve Bucknor recalled incidents involving former Indian cricket legend 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 past 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 there were no 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 winning, you hear nothing. "Because 200,000 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 sportsmen, but it is the right thing to do for the sport and for the television audience," Bucknor said.

"It has improved umpiring because there was a time when we were saying the batsman was not not out who was not out, realizing I know it has improved umpiring," 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."
The lockdown period of cricket has brought to the fore many discussions on the game. There have been several discussions, as well as individual interviews with cricketers and cricket experts. The game needed a break all along and the only way to do so is to have live performance.

Cricketers played 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 hearing as well as watching highlights of some of the great moments of cricket is wonderful, but one feels that comparing one cricketer 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 improvements in equipment make 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 not to make a living. One of India’s greatest all-rounders, Vinoo Mankad, was a good example of this. He opted to play club cricket in England in 1939 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 call him 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 is not a tale for the present lot of cricketers as money has made the sport one that a cricketer can 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 cricketers who 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 ascertained 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 grumbled about 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 fighting 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 one returned, 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 clipsings of their earlier ballplaying and ascertaining performances to compare with.

It will be interesting to see how the modern cricketers handle the breakage of rhythm. Technology has spoilt them on being able to evaluate themselves but in my opinion they miss out on the human touch. They are fortunate that they can 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 one can never 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 recently concluded the second Triveni discussion, a joint initiative by Institute for India-Engagement (IAIE), Australia India Business Council (AIBC) and Centre for India Studies (CISAS), O.P. Jindal Global University to deliberate over mutually strategic and beneficial issues for India and Australia.

The first 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. Aamir Misra, CEO, IAIE, who read the welcome note; Matthew Hayden, AM, International cricket legend; Dr. Jack Anderson, AM, Institute for International Centre for Sports Security, Qatar and Dr. Jack Anderson, AM, Institute for International Centre for Sports Security, Qatar and Dr. Jack Anderson, AM, Institute for International Centre for Sports Security, Qatar and Dr. Jack Anderson, AM, Institute for International Centre for Sports Security, Qatar.

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. Shaan 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 at a situation of counting one’s blessings which has helped everyone to sharpen their focus and provided bounteous opportunities to communicate on cost-saving forums. He also accepted the reality of sports organizations struggling to play albeit and the inevitability of cutting down on the enormous enthusiasm 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 strengthen heads recovery.

Optimism related to sports sector

Taking the discussion forward, Dr. Kelly emphasized optimism in the recovery of the sports sector in India and Australia if both are pragmatic in tapping into their potential innovation capabilities and reusability of sports 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 death or delaying of sports seasons while Dale Sheean 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 epitomises sports ethics.

By Ananya Sharma

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.
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 only be 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 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 creation of a 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."

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, Steve Smith also have faith in Kohli’s friendship with India team captain Virat Kohli. I had few conversations with him (Viret) 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. He is a terrific guy and the way he has led the Indian Team has been amazing, they are an amazing unit and can’t wait to play them when they come out to Australia this year. He will be something incredibly special." Talking about Kohli’s ability to chase down games, Smith had earlier said: “Yeah, he is terrific. His battling 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.

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.

Hajime 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 must 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 as circumstances have changed since the Games were originally scheduled for July 24 to August 9, 2020. But circumstances have changed since the Games were originally scheduled for July 24 to August 9, 2020. The Tokyo Olympics are due to start on July 23 and run until August 8.

Melbourne IANS: Cricket Australia (CA) on June 17 detailed a program of operational changes that, according to them, will deliver cost 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 staffers 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 to lessen 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.

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

"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."
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.

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, Malviya Dua, Shweta Tripathi, and Sapna Pabbi take a trip by road and travel to Thailand from Delhi 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!

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.

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.
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 opportunities of availability of time to better ourselves as an individual with the most possible intelligence and to bridge people across geographies – English.

Oxford University Press, in its endeavour to promote excellence in education and research by publishing world-wide, 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, Sanamika Balhara and Diwan Latha

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 English 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 Sanmya 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 confusing expressions and faux pas that are made unknowingly. This book could act as a wholesome 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.


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 Indi’. 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, which decimates the kingdom, as they destroy the holy Sommath 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 Bhojpur, where King Suheldev destroys the Turkic army down to its last man.

According to the publisher, this is a story of a hero, who fights to defend the motherland, making huge personal sacrifices, displaying great 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 Bhojpur,” 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 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 Siddhiji 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 Lansdown. 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 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 ’Khoun Ma’ 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 Bangalore 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) +sunset+nebula+capricorn+blameitontheflareplanets,” 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.

Hash tag “#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.

“Impressed with the courage of treading the untrodden path of Sushant Singh Rajput. Where there is no justice for Sushant, we shall be the voice of justice and will continue to fight for it. #BoycottKhans,” tweeted a user.

“#BoycottKhans. If a corrupt government can’t give him justice, then people can,” tweeted another user.

“#BeFairInSSRMurderCase. Real hero and good heart person Sushant Singh Rajput,” shared another user.

“Dear Srk no doubt ur the best but after sushant death i hate u ...u dnt have the pic of sushant in ur phone,... 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 of 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, a 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”. A
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.

“Happy to share @itsSSR will play lead in @mohit11481 directed Half Girlfriend. Shooting begins in June,” 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?”

“So how nepotism works in corrupted Bollywood,” another user pointed out. “Aditya replaced shushant....then Ranveer replaced shushant....then legendary arjun kapoor replaced shushant...ok how many of u believe this is just a coincidence or injustice with @itsSSR ...PIs support shushant... otherwise we might see few other shushant really soon,” reads another tweet.

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.

Later (he) was even asked to do big movies just like Inder keep in touch with Garima and believe dat there has not been any work available in these two months,” the former governor said.

“Big shots” , before he died of cardiac arrest in 2017.

She recalled how filmmaker Karan Johar quoted 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 called 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 to Inder. Can one imagine and believe that there has not been any work available in these two production houses,” she stressed.

She questioned as to why such big production houses,’ she stressed.

“Just for the record he was already doing small projects. But he wanted to do big movies just like 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 to Inder. Can one imagine and believe that there has not been any work available in these two production houses,” she stressed.

She questioned as to why such big production houses, “It is so difficult for these big shows to help talented people. What are they scared of? Or can we just say they are bad human beings... Pretending to be nice.”

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 unfathomable00, which is not verified. Pallavi has also shared a picture of Inder along with superstar Shah Rukh Khan. In the image, two can be seen shaking hands.

Alongside the image she wrote: “These days everyone is talking about nepotism... Just like the 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

In turn, Arjun Kapoor kept trending on Twitter throughout on June 24.

“Investigation (CBI) probe into Sushant’s death.

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.

Lalankumar, 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.

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Justin Greenwell
Director, Mater Private Hospital Springfield

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