

PEGASUS SPYWARE

- Spyware is unwanted software that infiltrates your computing device, stealing your internet usage data and sensitive information.
- Spyware is classified as a type of malware — malicious software designed to gain access to or damage your computer, often without your knowledge
- Jailbreak refers to the process of gaining root access to the iOS operating system that runs on Apple devices, including the iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch.
- Pegasus is spyware that can be installed on devices running certain versions of iOS, Apple's mobile operating system, developed by the Israeli cyberarms firm, NSO Group.
- Pegasus is the name of a spyware that can be installed on devices running certain versions of iOS, Apple's mobile operating system.
- Upon clicking on a malicious link, **Pegasus secretly enables a jailbreak** on the device and can read text messages, track calls, collect passwords, trace the phone location, as well as gather information from apps including (but not limited to) iMessage, Gmail, Viber, Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Skype.



- Apple released version 9.3.5 of its iOS software to fix the vulnerabilities. The company that created the spyware, NSO Group, stated that they

provide "authorized governments with technology that helps them combat terror and crime.

IMPORTANCE OF MID DAY MEAL SCHEME

- Girls who had access to free lunches provided at government schools had children with a higher height-to-age ratio than those who did not, said a new study on the inter-generational benefits of the midday meal scheme, published in Nature Communications this week.
- The scheme was launched in 1995 to provide children in government schools with a free cooked meal with a minimum energy content of 450 kcal
- More than one in three Indian children are stunted, or too short for their age, which reflects chronic undernutrition.
- The fight against stunting has often focussed on boosting nutrition for young children, but nutritionists have long argued that maternal health and well-being is the key to reducing stunting in their offspring.
- Noting that “interventions to improve maternal height and education must be implemented years before those girls and young women become mothers”

NEPAL POLITICS

- On July 12, 2021, the Supreme Court of Nepal handed over a 168-page verdict on a case filed by 149 lawmakers out of the 275 parliamentarians demanding that Sher Bahadur Deuba be made the Prime Minister.
- In December, when the President dissolved Parliament at the behest of Mr. Oli, the Supreme Court ruled against this order and reinstated Parliament.
- The Supreme Court even had a piece of warning for the President to remind her that the office of the President is also defined by the Constitution and hence, cannot be above it
- For the 2017 Federal and Provincial elections, the two major communist parties, the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) and the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist–UML), joined hands, and with a landslide victory, were to provide a stable government in Nepal in three decades.

- This coalition between the two parties had laid out some conditions, one of which was that Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and Mr. Oli were supposed to rotate the prime ministership
- International relations plummeted with Mr. Oli taking on India with an amended map of the country, which only affected bilateral relations
- However, his handling of the novel coronavirus pandemic created a public outcry due to a lack of health-care facilities.
- India needs to continue to build on people-to-people relationships and engage through official channels of bilateral platforms and diplomacy.

Draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021

- The draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021.
- The Bill, which will shortly be introduced in Parliament, aims at preventing and countering trafficking in persons, particularly women and children, to provide for care, protection and rehabilitation to the victims, while respecting their rights, and creating a supportive legal, economic and social environment for them.
- The Bill has expanded the area under coverage to include offences taking place, not only within India but also outside it.
- It envisages the setting up of anti-trafficking committees at the State and national levels to implement the provisions, when passed.
- Vociferous opposition has arisen over the key aspect of handing over investigation in trafficking crimes to the NIA both by those who believe that it would burden the already stretched unit further, and those arguing that this move would be an attack on federalism, by removing local enforcement agencies out of the picture.
- Another key criticism of the Bill has been its broad definitions of victims, smacking of refusal to consider consensual sexual activity for commerce.
- Reporting of offences has been made mandatory with penalties for non-reporting, but those with an understanding of the tortuous processes, point to the fact that victims often do not want a complaint to be recorded.

- The mention of the death penalty for various forms of aggravated trafficking offences.

Lockdown trilemma

- Data show that as of now 26.2% of the world population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Of them, only 1% live in low-income countries.
- By contrast, the richer nations, such as the U.S., Canada, Germany and Britain, registered above 50% vaccination by July 17.
- For India, the percentage of the adult population that has received at least one dose stands at 34.1% as of July 18.
- With incomes drying up, essential expenditures such as those on food, health and education cannot be sustained, implying that life cannot be lived.
- Extreme lockdown policies imply that you cannot quite have your life and live it too — at least not meaningfully.
- The vicious trilemma needs to be torn down if humanity is to be preserved.
- This calls for a careful assessment of the severity of lockdowns, their costs, and the resulting gains they hopefully lead to in terms of lives saved.

Cannes Film Festival's

- Julia Ducournau, the 37-year old French director of Titane, a freaky and provocative body-horror drama has become the first female director in 28 years to win the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'or.
- For the first time in history, women outnumbered men five to four in the Cannes Film Festival's main international competition jury
- Leos Carax won the Best Director Award for the popopera musical Annette
- The jury gave the Best Actor prize to Caleb Landry Jones for his lead performance in Nitram, a disturbing peep into the mind of a mass killer.
- The Best Actress prize was bagged by Norwegian late-bloomer Renate Reinsve for her performance in The Worst Persona in the World.

Rare arctic lightening

- Meteorologists were stunned this week when three successive thunderstorms swept across the icy Arctic from Siberia to north of Alaska, unleashing lightning bolts in an unusual phenomenon that scientists say will become less rare with global warming
- Typically, the air over the Arctic Ocean, especially when the water is covered with ice, lacks the convective heat needed to generate lightning storms.
- But as climate change warms the Arctic faster than the rest of the world, that's changing, scientists say
- Episodes of summer lightning within the Arctic Circle have tripled since 2010, a trend directly tied to climate change and increasing loss of sea ice in the far north.
- As sea ice vanishes, more water is able to evaporate, adding moisture to the warming atmosphere.
- "It's going to go with the temperatures,"
- These electrical storms threaten boreal forests fringing the Arctic, as they spark fires in remote regions already baking under the round the-clock summer sun.
- In Alaska alone, thunderstorm activity is on track to increase threefold by the end of the century if current climate trends continue
- On the water, the lightning is an increasing hazard to mariners, and vessel traffic is increasing as sea ice retreats.

Why is mercury core unique?

- A study by researchers from the University of Maryland disputes the prevailing hypothesis on why Mercury has a big-sized core relative to its mantle (the layer between its core and crust).
- Scientists had argued that hit-and-run collisions with other bodies during the formation of our solar system resulted in much of Mercury's rocky mantle being removed, leaving behind the big, dense, metal core inside.
- The researchers developed a model showing that the density, mass and iron content of a rocky planet's core are influenced by its distance from the Sun's magnetic field.
- There is a gradient in which the metal content in the core drops off as the four inner planets of our solar system get further from the Sun.
- The current work explains this by showing that the distribution of raw materials in the early forming solar system was controlled by the Sun's magnetic field.
- The new model shows that during the early formation of our solar system, when the young Sun was surrounded by a swirling cloud of dust and gas, grains of iron were drawn toward the centre by the Sun's magnetic field.
- When the planets began to form from clumps of that dust and gas, planets closer to the sun incorporated more iron into their cores than those further away.

RBI data localisation policy

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday banned Mastercard from issuing new debit and credit cards to customers in India with effect from July 22.
- According to the RBI, the U.S. card-issuer has failed to comply with the local data storage rules announced by the central bank in 2018.
- The ban has unsettled banks operating in India that use Mastercard's services to issue a variety of cards to their customers.
- In 2018, the Indian central bank had issued a circular ordering card companies such as Visa, Mastercard, and American Express to store all

Indian customer data locally so that the regulator could have “unfettered supervisory access”.

- This meant that foreign card companies had to store complete information about transactions made by Indian customers in servers located within India.
- Companies were initially required to comply with these rules within six months.
- The reason offered by the RBI to back up its data localisation rule was that local storage of consumer data is necessary to protect the privacy of Indian users and also to address national security concerns.
- Many also believe that data localisation rules are too stringent and they could simply be used by governments as tools of economic protectionism.
- For instance, they argue, it may not be strictly necessary for data to be stored locally to remain protected.
- Broadly speaking, formal international laws to govern the storage of digital information across.
- The RBI’s data localisation policy, as it burdens foreign card companies, may end up favouring domestic card issuers like RuPay.
- Mastercard owns about one-third of the market share in India, and the RBI’s ban is likely to significantly benefit its competitors.