

JUNE 27-JULY 3, 2021

SUNDAY POST

HERE . NOW



Telegram: The Dark Empire

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COVER STORY



POPULAR TV ACTRESS PRIYANKA MOHAPATRA, WHO IS SET TO STAR IN UPCOMING ODIA FILM *HAPPY ENDING*, LOVES TO LEND A HELPING HAND TO HER PARENTS AT HER LEISURE



With family

Fighting Fat
 With fitness centres remaining shut due to pandemic, I go for a two-hour workout session every day at home to burn my calories

Shopaholic
 Shopping not just lifts my mood, it also gives me a sense of achievement. With the shopping centres keeping their shutters down, I go online Sundays to buy my favourite stuff.

Happy Chef
 I not only love paratha with chhole, I also manage to cook them properly. It makes my Sundays if I serve the item steaming hot to my family.

My Family My Strength
 My parents are my strength as well as the weakness. When free, I make sure to spend as much time as possible with these two angels and help them in finishing household chores.

Honing Skills
 I spend long hours reading books as it helps me improve my dialogue delivery. Besides, I pursue online acting classes to brush up my skills.



With co-artists

RASHMI REKHA DAS, OP

WhatsApp This Week
Only on Sunday POST!
 Send in your most interesting Whatsapp messages and memes received to: features.orissapost@gmail.com
 And we will publish the best ones

THE BEST MEMES OF THIS ISSUE

- If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.
- If "Plan A" didn't work. Don't worry; the alphabet has 25 more letters.
- Having one child makes you a parent, having two makes you a referee.
- All my life I thought air was free, until I bought a bag of chips.

APT TRIBUTE

Dear Sir, The cover story 'The Super Dads'(June 20) was an apt tribute to the single dads on the occasion of Father's Day. In her lucid narrative, the author has rightly highlighted the trials and tribulations of single parenting and the patience and perseverance needed to establish the right emotional connect with the offsprings and adopted children. The three success stories bear ample testimony to the fact that given the right will and determination, it is not difficult for a single dad to mother the child and fit into the triple roles of being a guardian, guide and giver of unconditional love to the little ones. Some additional inputs on the challenges encountered by single dads during the pandemic-stricken times would have been useful.

AMIT BANERJEE, NEW DELHI

LETTERS

A WORD FOR READERS
 Sunday POST is serving a platter of delectable fare every week, or so we hope. We want readers to interact with us. Please send in your opinions, queries, comments and contributions to features.orissapost@gmail.com
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Telegram: The Dark Empire

Messenger service 'Telegram' is one of the world's most popular chat apps today for its extremely high level of security and possibly also because the app does not bow to any government pressure

AGENCIES

Having been installed on 570 million smartphones, messenger service Telegram, founded by Pavel Valerievich Durov, also known as Russian Zuckerberg, is arguably the world's most secure messenger service.

Little is known about this Russian billionaire, who is considered to be the richest person in his adopted home of Dubai. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, Pavel's app has been more popular than ever with millions of users switching this year from WhatsApp to Telegram.

But Pavel's is not just a messenger service, it credits itself as a platform that is beyond the reach of governments and authorities, a place where anyone can write and make whatever claim they want. This attracts conspiracy theorists, right-wing extremists, drug dealers and con artists to use the service. Counterfeiters use the app to peddle fake COVID-19 vaccination cards while dealers use it to sell all kinds of drugs. Crimes are openly and visibly planned and committed on Telegram.

Authorities across the globe are powerless, because Pavel denies them access to user data. He has set up an opaque web of companies

that is difficult to penetrate and makes government access even harder. The old and rarely true saying about the internet being a lawless place really does apply to Telegram.

Below is a close look at Telegram and its founder's meteoric rise and how the platform has turned into a safe haven for people involved in not so lawful activities.

The Russian Zuckerberg

Born in Saint Petersburg, Pavel launched social networking site VKontakte, later known as VK, in 2006, which was initially influenced by Facebook. During the time when he and his brother Nikolai built the VKontakte website, the company grew to a value of \$3 billion.

Dismissal from VK

In 2011, he was involved in a standoff with police in St. Petersburg when the government demanded the removal of opposition politicians' pages after the 2011 election to the Duma. On April 16, 2014, Pavel publicly refused to hand over data of Ukrainian protesters to Russia's security agencies. On April 21, 2014, Pavel was dismissed as CEO of VK. He then claimed the company had been effectively taken over by Vladimir Putin's allies, suggesting his ouster was the result of both his refusal to hand over personal details of users to federal law enforcement agency and his refusal to hand over the personal

details of people who were members of a VK group dedicated to the Euromaidan protest movement. Pavel then left Russia and stated that the country was incompatible with Internet business.

Telegram

Upon leaving Russia, he obtained Saint Kitts and Nevis citizenship through donating \$250,000 to the country's Sugar Industry Diversification Foundation, and secured \$300 million in cash in Swiss banks. This allowed him to focus on creating his next company, Telegram, focused on an encrypted messaging service of the same name. The company was headquartered in Berlin and later moved to Dubai. Entrepreneurs like him are exempted from taxes in the Gulf, which was important to him. On the other hand, the city is controlled with all the instruments of a modern surveillance state and NGOs criticise the human rights situation there. Nevertheless, Durov felt safe and even met with the crown prince of Dubai and had his photo taken together with him on the roof of a skyscraper.

Brothers in Arms

Even as most information about the company remains shrouded in mystery, the name of one important person is known to many – Pavel's elder brother Nikolai, who is responsible for the technology.





A few controversial images posted in Telegram

Safe Haven for Arm Dealers, Drug Racketeers

Telegram is home to almost every imaginable infraction that can be committed on the internet. Arms dealers are on the channel, as are people offering counterfeit money and hacked data. Some groups focused on manipulating financial markets have membership rolls in the six figures on the channel. Because of the numerous drug groups on Telegram, the Berlin police established a team specifically to address the messenger-group narcotics trade and have since identified more than 100 dealer rings in Berlin alone, some of them with more than 20,000 members. This, in spite of the company claiming that illegal content is not allowed on its app.

the 21st century world to avoid regulation altogether. Such views would seem to be consistent with his practice of doing almost nothing to prevent illegal and extremist content on Telegram and of publicly resisting all censorship.

A former colleague of his, Anton Rosenberg, believes that such positions are primarily the product of business considerations. "The fight for freedom sells well and attracts new users," he says.

Even if the Russian opposition celebrated Pavel as a hero in 2011 after he publicly stood up to the Russian security agency FSB, his primary motivation likely had to do with his business interests. He simply didn't want to lose any users to the competition.

Wealth

The financial health of Telegram remains Pavel's secret. It is clear, though, that the messaging app produces plenty of expenditures: In the 2020 video testimony provided to a US court, he said that he had invested around \$218 million in Telegram by 2017. Independent estimates agree that he brought in between \$300 and \$400 million with the sale of his final stake in VKontakte. By the time he was 28, he wrote in a blog entry, he had already earned "hundreds of millions" – but, he added, "that never made me happy."

During his time at VKontakte, he literally threw money out the window. Together with his long-time friend and deputy Perekopsky, he dropped 5,000-ruble banknotes – worth the equivalent of 124 euros at the time – out of the windows of their office on the sixth floor of the magnificent Singer House in the heart of St. Petersburg. Former co-worker Rosenberg still remembers that day. It was the anniversary of the city's founding and the streets were full. "First, they just tried to throw the notes, but because of the wind, they got stuck on the façade ornamentation. So, they started folding the notes into paper airplanes and flying them down to the street." It caused quite a commotion below.

A child prodigy who began reading at the age of three, Nikolai went on to complete two doctorates in mathematics, including one he earned from the University of Bonn in Germany. Like Pavel, Nikolai has also been interested in programming since his childhood. A former employee says that even as the relationship between the brothers was close, it is Pavel who calls the shots.

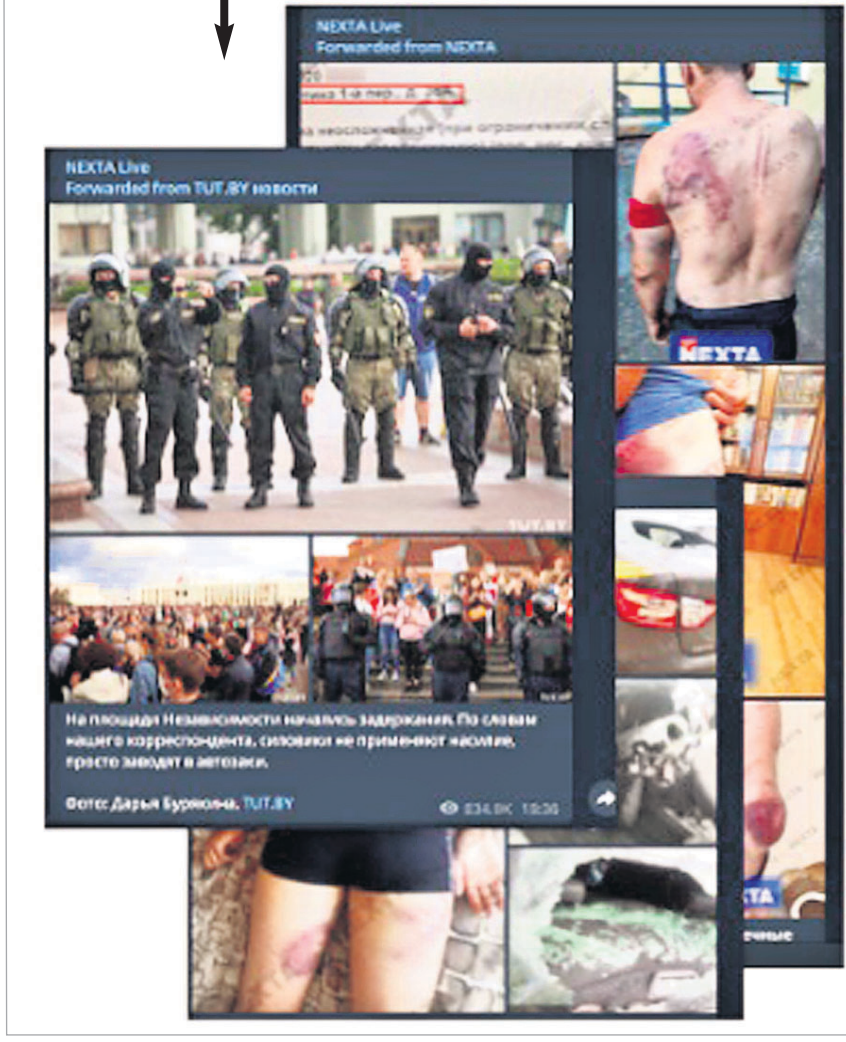
IS's Preferred App

The brothers have created a global success story, with Pavel as the strategist and Nikolai as the genius programmer in the background. The two make a good team. Telegram often offers user-friendly features earlier and better than the competition – things like funny stickers. Telegram offered its end-to-end encryption long before WhatsApp took that step, briefly earning it a reputation for being Islamic State's favourite chat app.

Of particular importance for Telegram's growth in recent years are the functions allowing for groups and channels. In the groups, whether public or private, up to 200,000 people can chat with each other, while channels allow the creator to blast their messages to an unlimited number of subscribers. On WhatsApp, by contrast, groups can include 256 members at most.

Terrorists Turn Heroes on Telegram

The channel belonging to the German musician Xavier Naidoo shows how openly violence is celebrated on Telegram. According to an analysis, Naidoo has shared content from particularly extreme channels on more than 150 occasions since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. Even terrorists can become heroes on Telegram, as can currently be seen in the US. They are celebrating a 28-year-old Texan named Coleman B, who was recently arrested after he used his mobile phone to send out a threat that the US investigators determined represented an imminent danger. They are convinced that he was planning to go on a shooting spree in a Walmart store. When they raided his apartment, they found weapons, ammunition and flags bearing Nazi symbols.



Where Does Pavel Stand Politically?

In the past, he has leaned more toward libertarianism. The world is changing too fast for lawmakers to keep up, he once wrote. As such, he continued, it would be best in

Crypto blow

The unsuccessful attempt to launch a cryptocurrency is perhaps the largest setback the Durov brothers have suffered. In October 2019, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) imposed an immediate halt to the sale of the cryptocurrency, alleging the sale to be an impermissible stock market launch. Telegram criticised the move as being "unreasonable and wholly unnecessary," but the court responsible for such cases declined to overturn the decision. Telegram even had to pay a penalty of \$18.5 million.

It is possible that in the future, capital will be more of a determining factor for the course charted by Telegram than government attempts to regulate the service. Advertisers and investors want cordial environments, after all. Pavel must also be wary of spoiling things with Apple and Google, since he needs their app stores to remain relevant. The chat app Parler demonstrated what happens if you get on their bad side. The storming of the Capitol in January was organised using Parler – and soon thereafter, both Apple and Google threw the chat platform out of their app stores, essentially destroying Parler's reach and significance. Pavel Durov must be careful if he wants to avoid that fate.

WITH EXPERTS PREDICTING YET ANOTHER WAVE OF COVID, PARENTS OF MANY PRE-SCHOOLERS NOW SPEND SLEEPLESS NIGHTS DUE TO UNCERTAINTY OVER OPENING OF PLAY SCHOOLS



Tiny Tots at crossroads



RASHMI REKHA DAS, OP

After matric results, right now everyone's focus is on board examination results for the students of Class XII. But what about those tiny tots whose schoolings have never started due to the pandemic. Their first introduction to education is yet to begin with the pre-schools remaining closed for over a year. With the experts predicting yet another wave of Covid-19 which is likely to hit the kids, parents of toddlers in particular are quite worried about their children losing out on learning. In order to ensure continuity in their education, many have enrolled their wards in online classes to get some form of learning. A few such parents told **Sunday POST** whether making the preschoolers attend online classes was really beneficial for them.

Bangalore-based Master Reevansh's mother **Banita Palai** who works in an advertising company, says, "We took up an online format Finto Box in 2020 for our son to avoid a near zero-learning year. We were sure that Reevansh would at least grasp important pre-primary skills such as recognising

colours, printed names, alphabets and numbers. However, he didn't like the online format and got irritated after a while. I don't disagree that online classes keep the students of higher classes in touch with their studies but they are hardly of any help for the tiny tots. For us, there is no alternative to early childhood education at school."

A Delhi-based HR **Deepti Lata Patra** says her daughter's early childhood education has almost gone. "When a child turns two, we rush to enroll him in pre-schools so that he can learn the art of sharing and caring and open up. But Covid-in-

duced lockdown has almost spoiled my daughter's early childhood. Naira has been at home since March 2020. In between, we admitted her to Dragon Box to get some online tips to develop her motor skills and things like tracing alphabets, building vocabulary, expressing her before others. But it didn't work. We feel helpless as we don't have other choices to keep our child engaged."

Suprabha Patnaik, mother of three-years-old Swatika says, "Even as learning apps are being promoted aggressively during the pandemic, they are of no use, for the toddlers in particular. When I recite a nursery rhyme with actions in front of my daughter, she emulates me quite accurately. But such actions online don't excite her at all. Peer-interaction is very important for all round growth of a kid. Unfortunately, a large number of children are being deprived of this crucial phase of their life due to the pandemic outbreak."

Sumitra Das Palai, a homemaker from Bhadrak, was under the impression that her daughter Aradhya will take keen interest in studies after being enrolled in an online class. However, that did not happen. She found the online classes boring and started reacting violently when she was made to attend them. "Online classes did not attract her at all. All she wants is to be taught by me. Being a parent I observed that most teachers engaged for online classes fail to make online teaching interesting and amusing for toddlers. So much so that Aradhya often hides herself under a chair and doesn't come out till the app is closed on mobile. The closure of pre-nursery schools is going to take a heavy toll on her mental growth," apprehended the worried mother.

Sandipta Rout, Principal of Bhubaneswar-based Kids' Kingdom Playschool, says, "Physical interaction plays an important role in overall growth of the children. If the toddlers are asked to listen only, after sometime they will lose interest as their attention span is very short. One-to-one interaction is missing for which preschoolers don't show interest in online classes. On the other hand, a bond is created between them and the instructors during physical schooling. A teacher, at pre-school stage, makes the kids learn things by holding hands, and even kisses them when they do something good. This sort of activities build up a bond between them in the classroom which is not possible in case of online classes. Absence of physical interactions will certainly have some adverse impact on the psyche of the toddlers. But at the moment we have no choice but to wait till normalcy returns."



Banita Palai



Suprabha Patnaik



Sumitra Das Palai



Sandipta Rout



Deepti Lata Patra

Amyra seeks relief for Covid victims

Amyra Dastur is donating to Covid relief amid the ongoing second wave of the pandemic. The actress is deeply affected by how the pandemic has left people devastated and displaced families across the nation.

"Covid-19 has devastated so many in our country and displaced so many families. It's because of this that we all really need the children of today to be able help create a better world for tomorrow," Amyra said.

The actress also feels we should educate our children about the reality of our country so that they learn to donate for those in need.

"Children shouldn't be living in a bubble. Poverty is a huge humanitarian issue in India. Kids need to know this reality so that when they grow up they can help and make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate than them," she suggested, adding, "As a child my mother worked with The Red Cross as a volunteer on and off. I learnt so much and became so grateful for what I have."

Amyra prefers donating to smaller NGOs which are working to aid Covid affected families in India. IANS



When Ranbir stalked Taimur

There is hardly anyone in the country who is immune to Taimur Ali Khan's charm. No wonder, his pictures and videos go viral on social media in no time. Even his uncle, Ranbir Kapoor once confessed to being a huge 'Taimur Fan'.

In a throwback interview with a news portal, Ranbir not only confessed to being a 'Taimur fan' but also admitted that he stalks his nephew online for photos. According to the actor, Taimur's haircut, the way he walks, everything just warms your heart.

In the same interview, Ranbir also spoke about his childhood which he says was comparatively less chaotic. Although there were no camera phones and pa-

parazzi culture prevalent at that time, they had their own share of public spotlight. However, people knew that Riddhima and Ranbir were Rishi



Kapoor's children. According to him, they had a nice time basking in their parents' glory.

Meanwhile, on the work front, he will be resuming shooting of Ayaz Mokerji's fantasy drama, *Brahmastra* in Budapest where they will be completing the last leg of the movie. The film also stars Alia Bhatt in the lead role. It also features Amitabh Bachchan, Dimple Kapadia, Nagarjuna Akkineni and Mouni Roy in key roles. AGENCIES



Rasika's wardrobe tips for fans

Actress Rasika Dugal had some wardrobe tips for fans last week, which she shared on Instagram.

Rasika posted an image dressed in a long blue dress, and shared some advice on how to wear an outfit.

"Essential steps when you wear an outfit: Step 1: (and most important)... Look for the pockets Step 2: Roll up those sleeves Step 3: Throw your hair back Step 4: Chin up and game face #OOTD #GoodVibes #Throwback #ThrowbackThursday #OOL2 #Promotions," she wrote as caption.

Rasika has carved her niche on OTT with roles in web series such as *Mirzapur*, *Delli Crime*, *Made In Heaven* and *Out Of Love*.

She was recently seen in season two of *Out Of Love*, directed by Oni Sen and co-starring Purab Kohli.

The actress will be soon seen sharing screen space with Naseeruddin Shah in *The Miniaturist Of Junagadh*.

Incidentally, Shah was also her teacher at Film and Television Institute of India (FTII).

IANS

TIGER'S UNIQUE B'DAY WISH TO DANCE GURU

Actor Tiger Shroff last week took to Instagram and shared a video of him with his dance mentor Paresh Prabhakar Shirodkar.

The duo was seen dancing to the beats of the fastpaced *Breathe in breathe out*, and Tiger wished Shirodkar on his birthday using the video.

"Happy bday guru ji lv u," wrote Tiger, along with the clip.

He also took to social media earlier to wish his rumoured ladylove, actress Disha Patani on her 29th birthday in a special way.

What can be said as a visual treat to Tiger and Disha's fans, the actor shared a video where the two of them were dancing together.

The actor has an interesting lineup of upcoming films including *Ganapath*, *Baaghi 4*, *Heropanti 2* and *Rambo*.

IANS

