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THE VIEWS



STRANDED IN SPACE: A TEST FLIGHT GONE AWRY

It's unthinkable for astronauts to not know when they will return to Earth, but that's exactly the predicament Nasa's Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore find themselves in aboard the International Space Station. The duo lifted off on June 5 aboard Boeing's Starliner as part of its inaugural test mission to the ISS, but have not been able to return as the spacecraft ran into technical glitches. Meant to be an 8-day trip, it now appears their touchdown on Earth may not happen before February 2025 | **P8**

Mpox 'not the new Covid', says WHO

TOP OFFICIAL ASSURES RISK TO GENERAL POPULATION LOW

GENEVA

The mpox outbreak is not another Covid-19, the World Health Organisation said yesterday, because much is already known about the virus and the means to control it. While more research is needed on the Clade 1b strain which triggered the UN agency into declaring a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC), the spread of mpox can be reined in, the WHO's European director Hans Kluge said.

In July 2022, the WHO declared a PHEIC over the international outbreak of the less severe Clade 2b strain of mpox. The alarm was lifted in May 2023.

"Mpox is not the new Covid," Kluge insisted. "We know how to control mpox. And, in the European region, the steps needed to eliminate its transmission altogether," he told a media briefing in Geneva, via video-link.

"Two years ago, we controlled mpox in Europe thanks to the direct engagement with the most affected communities.

"We put in place robust surveillance; we thoroughly investigated new cases contacts; and we provided sound public health advice.

"Behaviour change, non-

UNDER CONTROL

GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY



The predominant route of mpox transmission remains close skin-to-skin contact.

1 WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said the WHO was not recommending the use of masks.

2 The WHO declared an international health emergency on August 14, concerned by the rise in cases of Clade 1b in the Democratic Republic of Congo and its spread to nearby countries.

discriminatory public health action, and mpox vaccination contributed to controlling the outbreak."

Kluge said the risk to the general population was low. "Are we going to go in lockdown in the WHO European region, it's another Covid-19? The answer is clearly: 'no'," he said. Kluge said the predominant route of transmission remained close skin-to-skin contact.

But he said it was possible that someone in the acute phase of mpox infection, especially with blisters in the mouth, may transmit the virus to close contacts by droplets, in circumstances such as in

the home or in hospitals. "The modes of transmission are still a bit unclear. More research is required."

Pakistan on alert

Meanwhile authorities in Pakistan started screening all travellers to the country for the mpox virus as a precautionary step after a positive case was detected this month.

Scanners have been put in place at all airports and at border crossings with Afghanistan, China, India, Iran to report suspected infections as part of efforts to prevent the virus from spreading in the country.

—Agencies

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Signs your phone has been hacked

ABU DHABI
BY ALI AL HAMMADI
Reporter

As part of an initiative to raise awareness among mobile phone users on how to safeguard their devices against hackers, the UAE authorities have released a report outlining the signs one should look out for.

According to Digital UAE, there are four signs that indicate that a smartphone user may have fallen victim to electronic fraud. They include: An abnormal rate at which the phone battery is being consumed; general slowness of the device; phone performing automatic tasks without any activation, such as sending text messages to contacts, or downloading additional applications; and device overheating without using applications that consume the device's resources.

It advised users to keep a back-up copy of personal data, update the operating system regularly, and follow security alerts issued by phone manufacturers.

SEE ALSO P3

Oldest person never went to hospital once

Spain's Maria who died on Monday aged 117 lived through two world wars

MADRID

The world's oldest living person, Spain's Maria Branyas Morera, who was born in the United States and lived through two world wars, has died at the age of 117, her family said yesterday.

"Maria Branyas has left us. She died as she wished: in her sleep, peacefully and without pain," her family wrote on her account on X. "We will always remember her for her advice and her kindness," they said. Branyas, who had lived for the last two decades in the Santa Maria del Tura nursing home in the town of Olot in northeastern Spain, had warned in a post last Tuesday that she felt "weak".

"The time is near. Don't cry, I don't like tears. And above all, don't suffer for me. Wherever I go, I will be happy," she added in the account which is run by her family.

Guinness World Records had



■ Maria Branyas Morera

officially acknowledged Branyas's status as the world's oldest person in January 2023 following the death of French nun Lucile Randon aged 118.

Secret of longevity

Branyas lived through the 1918 flu, World War I and World War II and Spain's civil war. Her youngest daughter, Rosa Moret, once attributed her mother's longevity to "genetics". "She has never gone to the hospital, she has never broken any bones, she is fine, she has no pain," Moret told regional Catalan television in 2023.

Branyas was born in San Francisco on March 4, 1907 shortly after her family moved to the United States from Mexico. The family returned to their native Spain in 1915. —AFP



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