

Suspect in Kansas shooting appears in court

HOUSTON, FEB 28 --/A US Navy veteran, who is accused of killing an Indian teacher and injuring two people at a pub in Kansas, has made his first court appearance in the case that is being investigated as a possible hate crime.

Adam Purinton, 51, appeared before a Johnson County District Court judge via a video conference yesterday. Purinton faces one charge of first-degree murder and two charges of attempted first-degree murder in last Wednesday's shooting at the bar in Olathe.

According to Steve Howe, Johnson County District Attorney, Purinton is serving 50 years jail term on state charges. Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, was killed and Alok Madasani, of the same age, was injured in the shooting by Purinton who yelled "get out of my country" before opening fire.

A 24-year-old American named Ian Grillo tried to intervene and received injuries in the firing in Austins Bar and Grill in Olathe, Kansas.

Michelle Durrett from the Johnson County Public Defenders Office will serve as Purinton's attorney. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has joined local law enforcement agencies in investigating the incident that has shocked the entire Indian-American community and several hundreds of Indians either working or studying in the US.

The FBI is helping gather evidence in the shooting because Kansas does not have a hate crime statute.

If their agents can prove that Purinton's alleged actions constitute a hate crime, he could face federal charges that could potentially carry the death penalty. Purinton is currently being held in the Johnson County jail on a USD 2-million cash bond.

Purinton was arrested hours later at an Applebee's restaurant in Clinton, Missouri, about 70 miles away from Olathe. At the restaurant, he confided to the bartender that he had been involved in a shooting.

In 911 calls received by CNN affiliate KSHB, an Applebee's bartender told police that a man had admitted to shooting two "Iranian" people in Olathe and was looking for a place to hide. Purinton was extradited back to Kansas on Friday.

Reacting to the shooting, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer has said that "early reports coming from Kansas are equally disturbing."

Spicer, during his press briefing, also condemned the hate crimes against the Jewish community and asserted that there is no space for violence based on religion and ethnicity. (PTI)

Samsung heir indicted for bribery, embezzlement: Prosecutors

SEOUL, FEB 28 --/The heir to the Samsung empire and four other top executives from the world's biggest smartphone maker were indicted today on multiple charges including bribery and embezzlement, South Korean prosecutors said.

"Special prosecutors today indicted Samsung Electronics vice chairman Lee Jae-Yong... for bribery, embezzlement, hiding of assets overseas... and perjury," said Lee Kyu-Chul, spokesman for the team probing a corruption and power abuse scandal that has seen President Park Geun-Hye impeached.

Lee was arrested earlier this month. The presentation of formal charges against him and his colleagues makes them almost certain to face trial, casting new uncertainty over South Korea's biggest firm as it seeks to recover from a humiliating smartphone recall.

Three of the five - but not Lee - resigned their positions, said the conglomerate of which Samsung Electronics is the flagship. It added that it was "dismantling" its Future Strategy Office, the co-ordinating body that oversees major decisions such as acquisitions or entering new business. The move, described as a "reform plan", was announced in a brief five-line statement emailed minutes after the indictment. Lee, 48, has effectively been at the helm of the conglomerate since his father suffered a heart attack in 2014.

Among other allegations, he is accused of paying nearly USD 40 million in bribes to a confidante of President Park to secure policy favours. Lee - who is also accused of concealing stolen assets - has denied all charges. His colleagues face similar charges except for the perjury count.

The indictment came as the special prosecutors - who were appointed in December - were set to hand back the case to state prosecutors Wednesday after the government rejected a request to extend their probe.

During their term the special prosecutors indicted a total of 29 suspects - 16 of them on Tuesday - including an ex-arts minister and former presidential chief of staff.

The special prosecutors' spokesman Lee said it would be up to the state prosecutors to probe other South Korean conglomerates, including Hyundai Motor and retail giant Lotte Group. The scandal centres on Choi Soon-Sil, who is accused of using her close ties with President Park to force local firms to "donate" nearly USD 70 million to non-profit foundations, which Choi allegedly used for personal gain. Samsung was the single biggest donor to the foundations.

It is also accused of separately giving millions of euros to Choi to bankroll her daughter's equestrian training in Germany. (AFP)



Japan's royal family members and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (2nd L) and his wife Akie (L) wave as they send off Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko boarding a special flight for their visit to Vietnam and Thailand, at Haneda Airport in Tokyo, Japan. Royal family members are (R-L) Crown Prince Naruhito, Crown Princess Masako, Prince Akishino, Princess Kiko, Princess Mako, Princess Kako and others - REUTERS

NYT slams Trump's silence on Kansas shooting

NEW YORK, FEB 28 --/By keeping mum on the killing of an Indian engineer in Kansas, President Donald Trump has "stoked" hate crime in America, a leading US daily has said, warning that his silence will "damage" the vitality and strength of the country.

"President Trump and his administration have not only tried to keep many immigrants and foreign visitors out of the country, they have done so by casting them as criminals, potential terrorists and trespassers, out to steal the jobs and threaten the lives of Americans," the New York Times said yesterday in its editorial "Who Belongs in Trump's America?"

Rather than tamp down hate, the president has stoked it, it said. "He has not said anything about the Kansas shoot-

ing," the paper added. 32-year-old Indian engineer Srinivas Kuchibhotla, who was working in aviation systems for Olathe-based Garmin Ltd, died after he was shot by navy veteran Adam Purinton on Wednesday. The NYT said while each act of violence is easily explained away as the work of a disturbed person, had these attacks been perpetrated by a Muslim or an undocumented immigrant, it would surely have been treated as such.

The editorial referred to the claim that "we belong" posed by Srinivas Kuchibhotla's wife Sumayana Dumala after the killing of her husband.

The Trump administration has an "obligation" to convince people like Dumala that they do belong here, it said, adding that Dumala and millions of other members of minorities are "integral" to the US, which is almost entirely made up of immigrants and their descendants. "If Trump does nothing, he will enable the perpetrators of hate crimes and he will damage the vitality and strength of the country," it said.

The editorial slammed Trump for being "shockingly slow" to condemn acts of hate perpetrated across the country following his election, saying his "denunciations of and policies" targeting Mexicans, Muslims and others have "re-awakened and energized the demons of bigotry."

This history might not comfort marginalised groups who hear the administration's words and see what is happening in this country and wonder if it is safe to stay here, or come here," it said.

It said as hate crimes and other incidents of bias have flared up in Trump's America, Kuchibhotla's "murder" is one end of a continuum of hate and elsewhere, people have defiled or threatened violence at Jewish cemeteries and synagogues.

The NYT said Trump can learn from Ian Grillo, a 24-year-old who confronted the Kansas killer and was injured. In a video from his hospital bed, Grillo said: "I was just doing what anyone should have done for another human being. It's not about whether he was from or his ethnicity." (PTI)

India-born top Uber official fired over old sexual allegation

NEW YORK, FEB 28 --/An India-born top executive at Uber was asked to resign after the ride-sharing titan found that he did not disclose that he had left his previous job at Google after a sexual harassment complaint, a media report said.

Ami Singh had joined Uber in January as Senior Vice president of Engineering after working for 15 years at Google, where he oversaw the internet giant's search efforts.

A report in technology news website Reuters said Uber CEO Travis Kalanick asked Singh to resign yesterday after it was found that Singh did not disclose to the car-hailing company that he had left Google a year earlier after an allegation against him of sexual harassment from an employee. Google had deemed the employee's claim of sexual harassment against Singh "credible" in an internal investigation.

The report said Singh, "a highly

regarded engineer in Silicon Valley", had disputed the allegation to Google executives at the time and denied the allegations again. "Harassment is never been accused of anything like this before and the decision to leave Google was my own," he said.

Uber executives reportedly found about the situation after the report informed them of the chain of events between Singh and the search giant this week. Sources at Uber said the company had done extensive background checks of Singh but had not uncovered any hint of the circumstances of his departure from Google.

Singh's departure comes at a time when Uber is facing intense scrutiny following allegations of sexual harassment by a former female em-

ployee against her manager. She said in a blog post last week that her manager had sent inappropriate messages to her and that the company's Human Resource department and upper management were not supportive when she had reported the situation to them.

Sources said that Google was prepared to fire Singh over the allegations after looking into the incident, but did not have to do so after he resigned, according to the report.

The female employee who filed the formal complaint against Singh did not work for him directly, but worked closely with the search team, the report said, adding that she also did not want to go public with the charges, which is apparently why Google decided to allow Singh to leave quietly. Singh's goodbye letter before leaving Google gave no hint of any accusations against himself and his longtime employer. (PTI)



Britain's Catherine the Duchess of Cambridge arrives at the Ronald McDonald House in Berlin in London, Britain - REUTERS

Queen hosts reception to launch UK-India Year of Culture

LONDON, FEB 28 --/Queen Elizabeth II yesterday hosted a reception at the Buckingham Palace to launch the UK-India Year of Culture 2017 with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley representing the Indian government at the historic event.

Jaitley was joined by an Indian delegation that included the likes of actors Kamal Hassan, Suresh Gopi, cricket legend Kapil Dev, singer and actor Gurdas Mann, fashion designers Manish Arora and Manish Malhotra and sitar maestro Anoushka Shankar, at the grand event this evening.

"That my name was recommended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a huge honour. This is a great occasion to celebrate the shared history of India and the UK. The English language is the best example of that and I often refer to it as a great Indian language that unites us all," said Tamil actor-filmmaker Hassan. This is the kind of celebration of India-UK culture that should have happened long ago," said Kapil.

Indian High Commissioner to the UK Y K Sinha invited the Indian cricket legend back to the UK in June to launch a special cricketing event celebrating India-UK ties as part of

the UK-India Year of Culture events, which he accepted.

The 90-year-old Queen was joined by her husband, Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, and grandson Prince William and his wife Kate.

High-profile guests from various fields were greeted to the main foyer of the palace with a special Indian dance performance on the steps titled 'Ekam', presented by the Akademi and choreographed by Arunima Kumar. It showcased the cultural diversity of India in the form of dance.

"Musicians from the Bhavan Centre in London performed Indian music with Balu Raguraman on the violin and Shri Balachander on the Mridangam. As we celebrate this 70th year of Indian independence, we remember the soulful soul of Mahatma Gandhi. I am looking forward to having eye contact with the legendary Queen who is the longest reigning British monarch," Malayalam superstar and politician Gopi said. "We were under this regime and we have lots of good things they initiated in India, which we carry on with pride...but we built over that and are zooming to one of the most developed nations," he said.

UK-based Indian-origin filmmaker Gurinder Chadha described the evening as a "perfect combination" of the two cultures while singer Mann said, "I am ready to do the bhanga if I get the chance".

The guests posed over unique displays from the Royal Collection, including ancient Indian manuscripts such as the 'Shahnama' and some Persian calligraphy, and Indian ornaments.

The event included the projection of a unique artwork on to the Buckingham Palace facade of India's national bird - the peacock. Royal chef Mark Flanagan and the chef from Veeraswamy, the UK's oldest Indian restaurant, Uday Salunkhe, led a kitchen team at the palace to prepare a special spread of canaps.

The Indian dishes prepared were essentially Anglo Indian in taste, with flavours from different regions of India. "Today's food is a classic case of the amalgamation of the Indian food and British food. Bringing out the Indian flavours in such miniature form was difficult, but after six weeks' trial and working over the weekend, it has come out perfectly well today," Salunkhe said. (PTI)

Kansas shooting incident disturbing: White House

WASHINGTON, FEB 28 --/The White House has called "disturbing" the Kansas shooting incident in which an Indian engineer was killed in an apparent case of hate crime in the US. The White House also condemned the alleged hate crimes against the Jewish community in the country.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer told reporters at his daily news conference that "early reports coming from Kansas are equally disturbing". Srinivas Kuchibhotla, 32, was killed and Alok Madasani, of the same age, was injured in the shooting by 51-year-old US navy veteran Adam Purinton who screamed racial slurs and told them "get out of my country". A 24-year-old American named Ian Grillo tried to intervene and received injuries in the firing in Austins Bar and Grill in Olathe, Kansas.

Spicer, during his briefing, also condemned the alleged hate crimes against the Jewish community and asserted that there is no space for violence based on religion and ethnicity. "From our country's founding, we've been dedicated to protecting the freedom of our citizens' rights to worship. No one in America should feel afraid to follow the religion of their choice freely and openly. The President is dedicated to preserving the originating principle of our nation," Spicer said. And while we're at it, I don't want to get ahead of law enforcement, but I was asked the other day about the story in Kansas, the shooting in Kansas. While the story is evolving, early reports out of Kansas are equally disturbing," the White House Press Secretary said. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has joined local law enforcement agencies in investigating the incident that has shocked the entire Indian-American community and several hundreds of Indians either working or studying in the US.

Spicer said Trump continues to be deeply disappointed and concerned by the reports of further vandalism at Jewish cemeteries. "The cowardly destruction in Philadelphia this weekend came on top of similar accounts from Missouri and threats made to Jewish community centers around the country. The president continues to condemn these and any other form of anti-semitic and hateful acts in the strongest terms," he said.

No evidence of Trump campaign-Russia ties: House Intel chair

WASHINGTON, FEB 28 --/A top Congressman heading the House intelligence committee said today that there is "no evidence" of any contact between the Trump Campaign and Russia. "There is no evidence that I've been presented (by the intelligence community) of regular contact with anybody in the Trump campaign. The way it sounds like to me, it's been looked into, and there's no evidence of anything there," House Intelligence Committee Chairman David Nunes told reporters here. Addressing a news conference here, on Russian hacking reports, Nunes said he and his committee members have not seen any evidence of anyone from the Trump campaign or any other campaign for that matter that has communicated with the Russian government. Responding to questions, Nunes said the recent leaks being reported in the mainstream media is committing a major crime. "If you look at what's happened, major crimes have been committed. And what I'm concerned about is this, no one is focusing on major leaks that have

occurred here," he said. So right after the leak of the transcript that President (Donald) Trump had with the Australian Prime Minister, I was in contact with the Australian ambassador. I was also in contact with the White House and the appropriate agencies because we can't run a government like this. A government can't function with massive leaks at the highest level of our president talking to foreign leaders," he said.

Nunes said one should be concerned about these major leaks. Insisting that there would be no evidence of that nor is there any evidence of the Trump administration speaking to Russians, he claimed that it has been known for a long time that the Russians have been very interested in manipulating elections, manipulating the press. "They're very good at propaganda. That's what caused me a year ago to come out and criticize the intelligence agencies for the largest intelligence failure since 9/11 because of the lack of good intelligence we were getting on Putin's plan and intentions," he said.