



Courtesy NASA

Later this year, U.S. Navy Commander Sunita Williams, 40, is to become the second American astronaut of Indian heritage to fly into space, when she soars in a space shuttle toward the International Space Station to serve as its flight engineer for several months as part of a three-person team, NASA announced on May 2. Named a U.S. astronaut in 1998, Williams is an expert helicopter pilot, has a master's degree in engineering management, and trained in Moscow on manipulation of the robotic arm that Space Station teams use to carry out work. She is married to Michael J. Williams and her hometown is Needham, Massachusetts, not far from the home of her parents, Gujarat-born neuroscientist Dr. Deepak Pandya, and his wife, Bonnie. America's first astronaut of Indian heritage was Kalpana Chawla, who died February 1, 2003, aboard the space shuttle Columbia.



VIKAS NARJULA

The non-profit organization Family Health International, in collaboration with the U.S. Agency for International Development, distributed child-friendly materials on HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness in New Delhi on March 30. They worked with the Young Women's Christian Association, the Salaam Baalak Trust and the Sharan group to develop materials that meet the needs of slum and street children. USAID Mission Director George Deikun (left) and FHI International CEO Albert Siemens (seated in center) interacted with children at the YWCA Family Service Centre in Najafgarh, New Delhi.

NEWS SCAPE

A 9th-10th century stone idol, stolen from a temple in Mandsour, Madhya Pradesh, six years ago, was recovered from a New York art gallery in December 2005 and returned to Indian custody by U.S. law enforcement agents. Martin D. Ficke, special agent in charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, presented the 133-kilogram idol, depicting the Varaha incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, to Neelam Deo, India's consul-general in New York on April 17.



MOHAMMED JAFFER/SNAP, INDIA



HEMANT BHATNAGAR

Romya Ramesh (from left), an MBA student and sports parachutist, Shyamala Jayashankar, an adventure trainer, and her husband Wing Commander Jayashankar read SPAN at the Barista coffee shop in Khan Market, New Delhi. From April-June, multiple copies of SPAN have been placed at 10 Barista coffee shops throughout New Delhi, and collections of SPAN issues have been sent to call centers for employees to enjoy during their breaks. Also, as part of the project aimed at interacting with new readers on topics in the magazine, SPAN is sponsoring appearances by experts, who will have informal chats with interested clients at Barista outlets. One such event was a May 19 presentation by a representative of the U.S. Educational Foundation in India at the Barista coffee shop in the Safdarjang Development Area, across the street from IIT Delhi.