

WEEKLY
21 JULY TO 27 JULY



CURRENT **AFFAIRS**

CHINA UNVEILS

THE FIRST HIGH-SPEED CARBON FIBER TRAIN IN THE WORLD

A cutting-edge carbon fiber-only passenger train has been unveiled in China. It represents a significant advancement in high-speed rail technology. This advancement has made China a global leader in this area.

Crucial Elements of the Carbon Fiber Railway

Smog levels will significantly decrease due to the new train's weight reduction over the older steel trains. The primary objective is moving as light a vehicle as possible without compromising performance. The carbon fiber train is expected to consume 7% less energy than conventional steel trains while reaching top speeds of 87 mph. This innovative concept is critical to a healthy, low-carbon transportation future.

The Environmentally Friendly Image of High-Speed Rail

High-speed trains are already the most environmentally benign means of long-distance transportation. Compared to vehicles and trains, it produces less noise, occupies less space, and pollutes the air relative to its passenger count. China boasts a 28,000-mile network of high-speed trains that reach top speeds of 125 mph. This enables quick and affordable travel. Operations and maintenance management have recently benefited from the addition of AI, which has increased efficiency and dependability.



CONCERNING HIGH-SPEED RAIL TECHNOLOGY

Over 250 km/h (155 mph), high-speed rail (HSR) operates. The Shinkansen, Japan's first high-speed rail route, debuted in 1964. The TGV from France holds the global record, having reached a speed of 357 mph (574 km/h) in 2007. Compared to cars, HSR systems consume less energy per person, making them more environmentally friendly. Many of them operate on dedicated lines, reducing wait times. China has the largest network of HSR rails in the world, spanning over 22,000 miles (35,000 km). Travel times can be greatly reduced by HSR, which can boost the local economy and connections.

NASA has confirmed six additional exoplanets

NASA has confirmed six additional exoplanets, increasing the total to 5,502, marking significant progress in its investigation of exoplanets. This is a critical step in our understanding of the cosmos and the potential for extraterrestrial life. The journey began in 1992 with the discovery of Poltergeist and Phobos, the first exoplanets discovered circling the pulsar PSR B1509-58. The rate at which the field was developing was demonstrated by the fact that by March 2022, there had been over 5,000 findings.

New Exoplanets Overview

A super Jupiter orbiting an enormous M giant star, much larger than our Sun, is HD 36384 b.

TOI-198b: It is located on the edge of its star's habitable zone and may be rocky.

Hot super-Earths TOI-2095b and c orbit the same M dwarf star.

The "hot Jupiter" TOI-4860b has a brief orbital period of 1.52 days.

Large protoplanet MWC 758c has a protoplanetary ring encircling it and is circling a young star. It displays the formation of planets.

Methods of Detection

Exoplanets can be located in several ways:

Radial Velocity: Examines how the planets around stars cause them to tremble.

Transit Method: It calculates the amount that sunlight decreases as planets pass in front of their stars. The MWC 758c has been identified using direct imaging.

TESS and Other Telescopes' Role

NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) has been instrumental in locating several potential exoplanets since its launch in 2018. The James Webb Space Telescope, Spitzer, Hubble, and other telescopes have all made significant advances in the study of exoplanets. The Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope is scheduled for launch by NASA in May 2027. For direct imaging, this telescope will be equipped with a coronagraph apparatus. Initiatives like the Habitable Worlds Observatory, which would search for evidence of extraterrestrial life, might be made feasible by this technology.

Expand on exoplanets

The number of confirmed exoplanets—worlds outside of our solar system—is over 5,000. 51 Pegasi B, discovered in 1995, the first exoplanet was confirmed. Most extrasolar planets can be located using the transit method, which involves seeing a star's light fading when a planet passes across it. Huge numbers of potential planets were discovered by the Kepler Space Telescope. The exoplanets known as circumbinary planets orbit two stars. Gas giants near their stars called hot Jupiters are used to test theories regarding planet formation. Two techniques applied in the investigation are gravitational microlensing and radial velocity. Seven planets roughly the size of Earth are found in TRAPPIST-1. Philosophers who lived in antiquity contemplated worlds other than our own.

TWO FLOWER FLY SPECIES

REPORTED FROM KERALA FOR THE FIRST TIME

The Old World genus *Mesembrius* Rondani, 1857 includes roughly 58 species found in the Mediterranean Basin of the Palaearctic Region as well as the Oriental, Australasian, and Afrotropical regions. Within the tribe Eristalini, they are members of the subfamily Eristalinae.

Research on Flower Flies at Shadpada Entomology Research Lab

Researchers from Christ College at Irinjalakuda's Shadpada Entomology Research Lab (SERL) recently discovered an intriguing finding. The Kole wetlands and Vilagan Kunnu hillocks in the Thrissur district are home to two species of flower flies, *Mesembrius bengalensis* and *M. quadrivittatus*. The team, led by research researcher Athul Sankar C., also included assistant professor Dr. Bijoy C. and associate professor Dr. Shaji E.M. These species have never before been documented in Kerala.

Flower Flies' Significance to the Environment

Flower flies are members of the Syrphidae family and are important to the environment. These flies' ability to imitate wasps and bees has allowed them to survive by scaring away potential predators. Beyond just being a means of survival, flower flies play a crucial role in pollination, and their larvae recycle nutrients and act as biological controllers. This ecological function emphasizes how crucial it is to record and comprehend their behavior and distribution.



SUPPORT FOR ENTOMOLOGICAL STUDIES

This team's findings have been published in the reputable entomology journal *ENTOMON*. The study broadens our knowledge of Kerala's biology while also adding new species to the list of wildlife there. The team's review of the literature revealed that there were 59 different species of flower flies in Kerala before this discovery.

RECOGNIZING THE SUMMER MONSOON **OF 2024** AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The summer monsoon, often known as the "southwest monsoon," is defined by winds that come from the southwest and pass the Western Ghats to enter mainland India from the Arabian Sea. The overall climatic patterns, water resources, and agriculture of India are all greatly impacted by this meteorological event.

Recognizing the Summer Monsoon of 2024 and Its Consequences

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The Monsoon's Wider Circulation

The influence of the monsoon season is not limited to India. The African highlands are grazed by winds from the southwest, which might be drawn towards India by the Bay of Bengal's activity. The heat over West Asia and the dust from its deserts also add to the variability of the monsoon and its alterations as a result of global warming. The eastern Bay of Bengal and areas like Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar are important in controlling the monsoon and bringing heat to the Indian subcontinent.

Limitations on Data and Forecasting

The IMD is constantly working to improve monsoon forecasting, but its efforts are frequently hampered by a dearth of thorough rainfall and meteorological data from locations outside of India. Although some data is provided by satellites, it is still not enough to provide reliable projections in real time. Forecasts are aided by global models that use information from the planetary atmosphere and oceans, but the volume of data is frequently insufficient.



INCREASING MONITORING ACROSS THE SUBCONTINENT

With improvements in forecasting infrastructure, India's long-standing rainfall monitoring network, which dates back to the 19th century, is already producing notable benefits. India needs to do more to increase prediction accuracy and maintain economic growth, especially with regard to food, water, and energy security. Furthermore, national security, which significantly depends on precise weather and climate forecasts, stands to benefit.

Increasing safety and lowering vulnerability can be achieved by building a comprehensive network to monitor weather and climate throughout the subcontinent and expanding the approach to share forecasts with adjacent countries. Opportunities for improved resource management, health, and general well-being for the entire region would be enhanced by this collaboration.



STUDENT PROTESTS IN BANGLADESH

The 2018 minor anti-quota movement planted the seeds for the current quota reform push. The Bangladesh High Court denied a plea on March 8, 2018, contesting the validity of the nation's quota system, which has been in place since the early 1970s. Amidst this context, Ms. Hasina said that she would uphold the quota for the offspring of the liberation war veterans.

Ms. Hasina and the Awami League have long dominated Bangladesh's political system. Opposition parties and opponents have increasingly expressed the opinion that the freedom fighter quota was simply an attempt to cultivate a cadre of close Awami League sympathizers inside the civil service or bureaucracy who would uphold the Awami League's control.

Ms. Hasina referred to the demonstrators who opposed the quota for the families of the freedom fighters as "razakars," or traitors who helped the Pakistani military commit massive crimes against both men and women in 1971.

China, Philippines reach deal in effort to stop clashes at shoal

The Philippine administration said on Sunday that China and the Philippines have achieved an agreement they believe will put an end to conflicts at the most hotly contested shoal in the South China Sea.

Second Thomas Shoal is disputed by China and the Philippines, and growing hostilities at sea have raised concerns about further confrontations in which the US may become involved.

Following several discussions between Chinese and Philippine diplomats in Manila and the exchange of diplomatic notes intended to create a mutually agreeable arrangement at the shoal without compromising either side's territorial claims, the important agreement was finally struck on Sunday.

"Both sides agree that communication and consultation are the best ways to resolve disagreements and defuse the current South China Sea situation.





Low recovery of fees led to Kerala airport fare hike

Tariff hike details

Tariffs for passengers and airlines were raised at Thiruvananthapuram airport on July 1 due to low recovery of fees during the Covid-19 pandemic and delay in revision of charges after privatization.

The June 21 order of the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) has increased the user development fee (UDF) for domestic passengers by 50% from ₹506 to ₹770 for a year.

A new user fee has been introduced for international passengers and the landing fee for aircraft has been increased threefold from ₹309 to ₹890 per metric tonne.

Reasons for hike

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol said the pandemic led to a sharp drop in traffic, leading to under-recovery of ₹789.29 crore for the second control period.

After the airport was handed over to Adani Enterprises Ltd in October 2021, the fixation of new tariffs has been delayed as the concessionaire was barred from seeking tariff hikes for 365 days from the date of takeover.



3 NEW MLAS TOOK OATH IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

New MLAs took oath

On Monday, Himachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker 'Kuldeep Singh Pathania' administered oath to 3 newly elected MLAs including Chief Minister 'Sukhwinder Singh' Sukhu's wife 'Kamlesh Thakur'. The Chief Minister, Leader of Opposition 'Jai Ram Thakur', Cabinet Ministers and other members were present at the ceremony.

New Assembly Structure

The MLAs who took oath include Congress MLA 'Kamlesh Thakur' from Dehra assembly seat, 'Hardeep Singh Bawa' from Nalagarh seat and BJP MLA 'Ashish Sharma' from Hamirpur seat.

After the joining of these MLAs, the Congress party now has 40 seats in the Assembly, while the BJP has 28 seats.

For the first time in history

For the first time in the history of Himachal Pradesh, there is no independent MLA in the Assembly. Apart from this, this is the first time that Mr Sukhu and his wife are working together in the same House.

SPOTLESS SWINE: A NEW DIMENSION IN HUMAN ORGAN PRODUCTION

Groundbreaking transplant

The first gene - edited pig organs transplanted into humans came from a research farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where strict biosafety measures are enforced. This includes vehicle washing, changing clothes and boot disinfection.

Precious animals

'These are precious animals,' according to David Ayres of Revivicor Inc., who has devoted decades to perfecting the cloning of genetically modified pigs.

A new herd of pigs is being raised under even stricter biosecurity for future animal - to - human transplant studies in Christiansburg, Virginia.

Controlled environment

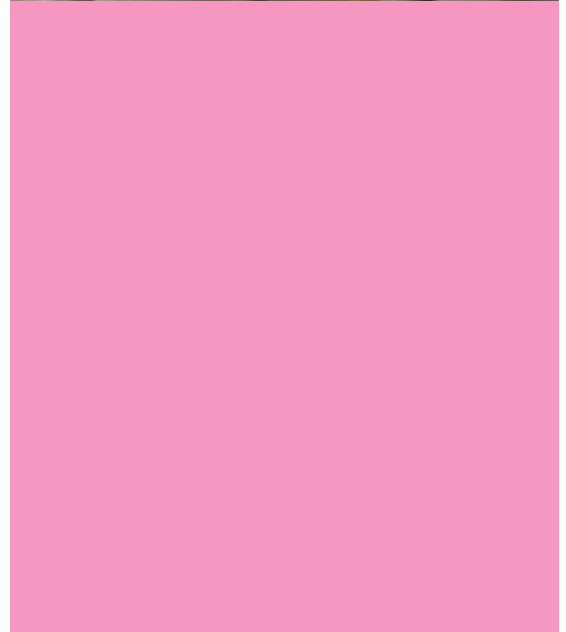
This state - of - the - art facility resembles a pharmaceutical plant rather than a farm, with a highly controlled environment to prevent infection. The pigs breathe filtered air, drink purified water and eat disinfected feed.

Possible solution to organ shortage

With thousands of people dying each year waiting for transplants, animal organs offer a promising solution. Four 'compassionate use' transplants using pig organs have already provided valuable lessons.

Next Steps

The FDA is evaluating promising results from human body and baboon studies to determine next steps. Revivicor scientists continue to refine genetic modifications, with the goal of making xenotransplantation a viable alternative to organ donation.





IN BEIJING, HAMAS AND FATAH SIGN HISTORIC PROCLAMATION TO HEAL PROLONGED RIVALRY

In a major move toward reconciliation, the opposing groups Hamas and Fatah signed a proclamation in Beijing intended to put an end to their protracted disagreement. The goal of the Beijing Declaration, which was unveiled on Tuesday, is to bridge a significant rift that has remained for years in spite of multiple attempts at reconciliation.

Dedication to Cohesion and Administration

As part of the deal, the two main Palestinian political parties promised to establish a unity administration for the Palestinian territories. According to the Chinese state media CCTV, the declaration's main objectives include "ending division and strengthening Palestinian unity." This action is being taken in the midst of a ten-month-old conflict in Gaza. A proposal for a cease-fire with international support is being worked on in an effort to put an end to the conflict and secure the release of the many Israeli captives that Hamas is holding.

Israel's Denial of the Accord

Israel Katz, the foreign minister of Israel, promptly disapproved of the deal, declaring that Hamas and Fatah will not share a government in Gaza. Katz stated unequivocally that Hamas's rule would be "crushed" and that Hamas would have no part in running Gaza after the battle. Additionally, Israel rejects US proposals for the Palestinian Authority, which is dominated by Fatah, to rule Gaza following the conflict.

The diplomatic role of China

The accord underscores China's growing sway in West Asian diplomacy, subsequent to its accomplishment in negotiating the mending of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Following the conclusion of the Sunday-starting discussions in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Route to the State of Palestine

The groups reaffirmed their intention to establish a state for the Palestinian people on territory that Israel had captured from its Arab neighbors in the 1967 war. The pact expands upon earlier attempts at reconciliation from 2022 and 2011. A representative for Fatah, Jamal Nazzal, emphasized that the agreement made in China includes Hamas and other groups joining the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).



Obstacles to Come

The Beijing Declaration is a big step toward Palestinian unity, but there are still many obstacles along the way. It is anticipated that the agreement would mostly be implemented following a possible cease-fire in Gaza.

Achieving long-term peace and stability in the region will depend on the PLO's inclusion of all factions and the effective establishment of a unity government.



In summary

An optimistic but intricate step toward healing the long-standing division between Hamas and Fatah is the Beijing Declaration. The international community will be keenly observing the agreement's implementation and its effects on the future of Palestinian government and the larger geopolitical scene, given China's increasing influence in West Asian diplomacy.

UNION BUDGET 2024: ENCOURAGING EVERY ASPECT OF THE COMMUNITY

On Tuesday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled the Union Budget, which was widely hailed as a budget that would empower all facets of society. The budget, according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has the ability to improve rural India, help the underprivileged, and grow the agriculture industry.

The Way to Financial Success

"This is a Budget that will take the country's villages, poor and farmers on the path of prosperity," PM Modi stated. He emphasized that 25 crore people had been lifted out of poverty in the last ten years. The budget seeks to maintain this pattern, giving special attention to the recently formed neo-middle class.

Tax Adjustments

Major announcements have been made about taxation, such as the lowering and streamlining of taxes and the regulations surrounding the tax deduction at source (TDS). It is anticipated that these adjustments will simplify compliance for taxpayers and lessen their tax burden.

Encouragement of the MSME Sector

In the budget, the micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector was given particular consideration. PM Modi stressed that the new rules would open doors for MSMEs and small traders to advance. He stated, "A new scheme to increase ease of credit has been announced in the Budget," adding that district-level projects are being undertaken to improve the export and manufacturing ecosystem. This program has the potential to open up new doors for startups and the space industry.

Incentives for Employment

A significant portion of the budget is set out for hiring young people. To create a lot of jobs, the government has implemented "employment-linked incentive" programs. The government will pay for new workers' initial salaries under this program. Young people from rural areas will also be able to work for the best corporations in the nation through an apprenticeship program.

Infrastructure Development and Economic Hubs

The budget includes plans for 14 major cities' transit systems, as well as development plans for 12 new industrial nodes and satellite towns. These programs seek to establish new economic centers and produce a large number of employment around the nation.

Reducing Poverty and Increasing Empowerment

PM Modi outlined a number of initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and empowering the underprivileged. Among the initiatives are the construction of three crore houses for the impoverished and the 'Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan,' which uses a saturation technique to connect five crore tribal families to basic amenities

Assistance with Startups and Innovation

The budget presents a plethora of chances for the innovation ecosystem and start-ups in India. PM Modi mentioned the decision to do away with the angel tax and the ₹1,000-crore corpus fund established to bolster the space industry. "Record high capital expenditure (capex) will become a driving force of the economy," he stated.

In conclusion, with specific efforts for tax reform, MSME support, youth employment, infrastructure development, poverty reduction, and encouraging start-ups and innovation, the Union Budget 2024 aims to empower all segments of society.



These 5 new schemes will prove beneficial in job creation

New employment measures

In view of rising unemployment and job losses, the first budget of the third Narendra Modi government has proposed to give priority to employment and skill development. The Union Budget has introduced 5 schemes with a total outlay of ₹2 lakh crore for the purpose of job creation for the youth.

Employment-linked incentives

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced 3 schemes under the Prime Minister's package, which are focused on 'employment-linked incentives'. These will be based on EPFO enrolment, which will provide assistance to first-time job seekers and their employers.

Newly appointed employees will get one month's salary in 3 installments, up to ₹15,000, which will benefit 210 lakh youth.

Manufacturing sector and skill programs

The second scheme will encourage additional employment in the manufacturing sector, benefiting 30 lakh youth. Another scheme will cover all sectors, with employers being reimbursed up to Rs 3,000 per month for each additional employee.

The budget also proposes to skill 20 lakh youth over 5 years and provide one crore internship opportunities in top companies.

Criticism from trade unions

Trade union leader Amarjit Kaur has criticized the proposals for focusing on skill development instead of providing jobs to the already skilled unemployed population, which is benefiting corporate houses more than addressing the employment crisis.



25/07/24

THE BIHAR ASSEMBLY

has passed a bill to prevent paper leaks in government recruitment exams



A new law was introduced

The Bihar Assembly on Wednesday approved the Bihar Public Examination (Prevention of Improper Means) Bill, 2024. The bill introduced by Parliamentary Affairs Minister 'Vijay Kumar Chaudhary' is aimed at curbing question paper leaks and malpractices in government recruitment exams.

Severe punishment was imposed

In this bill, 3 to 5 years of imprisonment and a fine of ₹10 lakh have been made mandatory for the persons involved in the misconduct.

Service providers found guilty of organized fraud face 5 to 10 years in prison, a fine of up to ₹1 crore and a four-year ban from service. It also includes confiscation of assets and recovery of costs from criminals.

National and regional context

This law is in line with anti-paper leak measures recently implemented by the central government and states like Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand. Jharkhand has passed a bill in 2023 with life imprisonment and a fine of ₹10 crore.



Recent exam scams in Bihar

There have been many exam controversies in Bihar, including NEET 2024 paper leak and cancellation of BPSC teacher recruitment exam and Bihar Constable recruitment exam due to leaks.

DRDO Tested Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defense System

Demonstration of advanced defense capabilities

The Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) on Wednesday successfully flight-tested its Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system. The test demonstrated India's ability to defend against ballistic missiles with a range of up to 5,000 km.

Progress from Phase I

Phase I of the BMD system, which can intercept ballistic missiles with a range of up to 2,000 km, has already been deployed. Initial testing of the Phase-II BMD system took place in November 2022.

Test details

During the test, a target missile was launched from the LC-IV Dhamra at 16:20 hrs, which was an imitation of an enemy ballistic missile.

The missile was detected by surface-based weapon system radars, which then activated the Air Defense (AD) interceptor system. This successful test marks a significant advance in India's indigenous missile defense capabilities.



Ketamine pills offer hope for treatment resistant depression, but also risks

Success in treating depression

A new slow-release ketamine tablet has demonstrated efficacy in the treatment of treatment-resistant depression, providing a viable alternative to conventional, cumbersome clinic-based therapies.

Ketamine, which was initially used as an anesthetic and is known for its acute antidepressant effects, is usually administered intravenously or via nasal spray, which can cause both significant side effects and Monitoring is required in the clinic.



Results of clinical trials

Developed by Paul Glue and his team, the extended-release tablet, R-107, has been tested on 231 volunteers from New Zealand, Australia, Singapore and Taiwan.

After an initial five-day treatment phase, 168 participants entered a double-blind study, where they were given either a placebo or one of four doses of R-107.

The results showed that the highest dose (180 mg) produced the most significant improvement in depression symptoms with the least side effects.

Benefits and challenges

The tablet's extended-release formulation allows home administration, making treatment more accessible, especially in underserved areas.

However, concerns remain about potential abuse and the need for further research to ensure safety and efficacy. Dr. Glu's team has made R-107 harder to abuse, but ongoing studies will be important to address these concerns and assess the long-term effects of the tablet on patients.



THE TAIWANESE ROCKET

START-UP COULD BE AN EARLY TEST OF JAPAN'S
SPACE HUB PLANS

Rocket Launch Plans

Taiwanese startup TiSpace is going to become the first foreign company to launch a rocket from Japan early next year. The purpose of the suborbital launch is to support Tokyo's goal of becoming the leading space center in Asia.

Challenges and support

TiSpace awaits final approval for its 12-meter sounding rocket, facing regulatory hurdles and delays.

Despite previous failures, including the 2022 attempt in Australia, this new rocket design is promising. This effort has received strong support from Japanese businesses and officials, particularly from the Taiki region of Hokkaido.



Potential geopolitical implications

While some analysts warn that the launch could attract China's attention, TiSpace President Yen-Sen Chen said no concerns have been raised. The Japanese government supports free economic and research activities within legal boundaries.

future prospects

If successful, TiSpace plans to expand its manufacturing in Japan, attracting customers such as Hokkaido-based Letara.

The initiative is in line with Japan's aspirations to grow its private space industry to more than \$50 billion by the early 2030s.

The Prime Minister of Israel called for a global coalition against Iran in America

Criticism of Ceasefire Protesters

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday condemned the Gaza ceasefire protesters and accused Iran of financing them. Addressing a divided US Congress, he called Gaza peace activists 'useful fools of Iran'.



U.S. - Call for Israel Security Coalition

Netanyahu calls on the U.S. to counter Iran's growing influence. and has urged the formation of a security alliance between Israel.

In which all countries living at peace with Israel are invited to join. He called Iran the 'axis of terror' behind communal violence in West Asia.



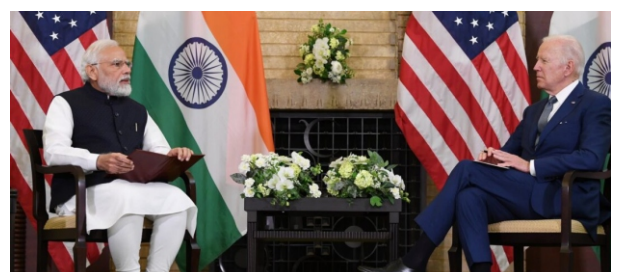
Divided reactions and opposition

As the human casualties in Gaza continue to increase, the U.S. And the protests in Israel are intensifying. Thousands of people demonstrated outside the Capitol and 6 protesters were arrested inside the House. Palestinian-American MP Rashida Talib called Netanyahu a 'war criminal'.



U.S. Meetings with leaders

Netanyahu met with President Joe Biden and is scheduled to meet with former President Donald Trump. His fourth address to a joint session of Congress reflected his belief that military pressure is necessary to defeat Hamas.



Suicides will be reduced by giving mental health education

GOVERNMENT'S INACTION

A recent Lancet article highlighted the issue of suicide, with psychiatrists criticizing the government's lack of interest in addressing the crisis.

National Suicide Prevention Strategy

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS), launched in November 2022, aims to establish effective suicide surveillance and create a psychiatric outpatient department within 5 years.

It also plans to integrate mental health curricula into educational institutions and develop guidelines for responsible media reporting.

Rising suicide rates

More than 100,000 people die due to suicide every year in India, making it the leading cause of death among children aged 15-29 years. Between 2019 and 2022, the suicide rate increased from 10.2 to 11.3 per 100,000.

call to action

Despite elaborate plans, no significant progress has been made in two years. Dr. Experts like Lakshmi Vijayakumar and Soumitra Pathare blame the lack of political will to reduce suicides and call for comprehensive, district-wise programs and policy implementation.

Community effort

Mentor Dheeraj Singh emphasizes the importance of community involvement in identifying and addressing suicidal thoughts, promoting open dialogue and providing timely support.

Assam's royal burial mounds now included in UNESCO's World Heritage List

Historic recognition to Assam's heritage

The 700-year-old burial mound system of the Ahom dynasty in Assam 'Charaideo Moidam' has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, becoming India's 43rd World Heritage Site. The announcement was made during the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in Delhi.



Comparison with Egyptian pyramids

Like the Egyptian pyramids, the Moidams are earthen burial mounds for the Ahom royal family. The Ahoms adopted Hindu cremation practices in the 18th century, burying the cremated bones and ashes in these mounds.

Tourist attractions and cultural significance

Charaideo Moidam is now a major tourist destination and symbolizes the deep spiritual beliefs and architectural prowess of the Tai-Ahom community of Assam. The site is the first site in Northeast India to receive recognition in the cultural category.

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Official nomination and conservation

Designated as India's official entry in 2023, 90 of the 386 Moidams at Charaideo are considered the best preserved and most complete examples of this tradition.

Uncertainty in the Atlantic Ocean has Europe worried about its security

Trump's 2016 comments and European response

Donald Trump's 2016 suggestion not to honor NATO's defense commitments has worried the alliance.

His 'America First' stance prompted European leaders to recognize the need for NATO to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century and take more responsibility for its own defense.

Emerging threats and strategic focus

The past eight years of Trump's presidency and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have highlighted the uncertainty of US military assistance and the threat to Europe's eastern border. At the same time, the US has shifted its strategic focus to China, Iran and North Korea.

European defense spending to rise

Europe's dependence on US military leadership is declining. This year, 23 of NATO's 31 non-US members will meet or exceed their 2% GDP defense spending commitment, compared with only three a decade ago.

European countries are urged to increase troop numbers, modernize equipment and enhance technological security to counter a variety of global threats.

China's role and response

China, a major economic backer of North Korea, is seen as crucial to Pyongyang's military and economic stability. The US Treasury claims Chinese citizen Shi Qianpei used the company to purchase illicit materials for North Korean operative Choe Chol Min, who is involved in weapons systems development.

Shi's network reportedly facilitated the acquisition of sensitive electronics and materials used in missile production.

China's defense

China says it complies with U.N. sanctions and opposes unilateral measures by the U.S. U.S. attorney Joshua Stanton argues that under President Xi Jinping, China has become a haven for North Koreans evading sanctions, including money laundering and weapons smuggling.

