

IN BRIEF

**EU Parliament okays ban on single-use plastics**

BRUSSELS
European lawmakers voted overwhelmingly on Wednesday for an EU-wide ban on single-use plastic products, such as straws and cutlery, that are clogging the world's oceans. The text had already been approved in negotiations with member States and EU officials. It will now be made into a law. The ban comes into effect from 2021. **AFP**

**Indonesia foils online sale of komodo dragons**

JAKARTA
Indonesian authorities said on Wednesday that they had seized five komodo dragons and dozens of other animals being sold on Facebook. The dragons, which can only be found in their natural habitat on a cluster of islands in eastern Indonesia, were sold for between 15 and 20 million rupiah (₹69,000 to ₹96,000). **AFP**

**Shakira defends her song in Spanish court**

MADRID
Singers Shakira and Carlos Vives denied on Wednesday at a court here that they plagiarised parts of their Grammy award-winning hit *La Bicicleta*. Cuban singer Rafael Castellanos had alleged that parts of the tune were copied from one of his songs. **AFP**

A museum with a heart and history

The National Museum of Qatar tells the story of the country and its people from the earliest times

VIVEK NARAYANAN
DOHA

After nearly a decade of planning and construction, the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) situated in Doha's corniche, which tells the story of Qatar and its people from earliest times to today, was inaugurated on Wednesday.

The journey is narrated through eight art films by Doha Film Institute and noted filmmakers, including Mira Nair, multimedia display, accompanied by exhibits that includes archaeological and heritage objects, jewellery, manuscripts and other documents. Braille and tactile display have also been provided for the exhibits.

Qatar comes alive

The NMoQ, which was inaugurated by the Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, will be thrown open to visitors on Thursday.



Desert rose blooms: A general view of the National Museum of Qatar, in Doha. **•SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

The NMoQ is organised in three chapters – Beginnings, Life in Qatar and the Modern History of Qatar – presented in 11 interlinked galleries. Passing through the 1.5 km walkway that showcases various galleries, visitors get to learn more about the formation of the Qatar peninsula and its natural habitat, the heritage of life in Al Barr (the

desert) and on the coast, the political development of modern Qatar, the discovery of oil, and Qatar's multifaceted relationships today with the larger world.

"A future must grow out of an understood and integrated past. As we move forward, we are focussing on culture in diverse forms. We are delving into Arab herit-

age while also exploring the arts as they are evolving today, both within Qatar and far beyond," said Sheikhha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums

Sheikha Amna bint Abdulaziz bin Jassim Al Thani, director, NMoQ, said, "The Qatar museums and the National Museums' team wanted to create a living experience for the people – a museum with a heart." The team organised meetings to take inputs from Qataris on the history and materials they had to offer.

The centrepiece of the 52,000-square-meter NMoQ is the restored historic palace of Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani, son of the founder of modern Qatar. A building that was once the home of the Royal Family and the seat of government.

The museum is designed like a desert rose, which

evokes the culture and climate of Qatar. "To imagine a desert rose as a basis for design was a very advanced idea. To construct a building with curved disks, intersections, and cantilevered angles we had to meet enormous technical challenges," said Jean Nouvel, the architect.

Pearl diving

Filmmaker Mira Nair said that she was asked to choose a chapter of nation's history and to make a film.

"I chose pearl diving, which was the economy before oil was discovered in this region. I wrote the film with Annmarie Jacir, a Palestinian director. We called it Nafas – which means breath in Arabic. We shot the film for six weeks and all of them are real people," she told *The Hindu*.

(The author is in Doha on the invitation of the NMoQ)

Tipu Sultan's gun fetches £60,000 at U.K. auction

It was 'collected from the battlefield'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
LONDON

A collection of rare artefacts from Tipu Sultan's armoury, including one of his personal swords, discovered by a couple in their attic in the English county of Berkshire has been auctioned for around £1,07,000.

The highlight of the lot was a silver-mounted 20-bore flintlock gun and bayonet. It attracted 14 bids before going under the hammer for £60,000.

"Unlike other Tipu Sultan guns this one exhibits clear signs of having been badly damaged in its past... rather than being taken directly

from the rack after the fall of Seringapatam it appears to have been collected from the battlefield," the lot description notes.

The other highlight lot, a gold-encrusted sword and suspension belt ensemble believed to be one of Tipu Sultan's personal swords, attracted as many as 58 bids before being sold to the winning bidder for £18,500.

The two centrepieces formed part of a collection of eight items brought back by Major Thomas Hart of the East India Company after the Tiger of Mysore's defeat at Seringapatam in 1799. Tipu died in 1799 aged 48.

Corgis are king at this cafe

Customers pay about \$11 for an hour with the dogs

REUTERS
BANGKOK

It started as an over-sized litter and turned into a business plan. When customers walk into Bangkok's "Corgi in the Garden" cafe, they're greeted by a dozen fluffballs on stubby legs rushing out to greet them, jump in laps and shake hands for treats.

The cafe houses 12 corgis, whose popularity has been soaring among Thai dog lovers. "They're funny dogs, like their appearances, short and stubby," said cafe owner Tanchanok Kanawaong.

This breed of dog is the beloved of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, whose last purebred corgi died in October 2018. She kept some 30 cor-



Corgis playing with customers at a cafe in Bangkok. **•REUTERS**

gis in her life, even inspiring an animated film *The Queen's Corgi*, which is yet to get a release date.

Ms. Tanchanok's corgis are being put to work six

days a week.

Customers pay about \$11 for one-hour sessions with the corgis with names like Porkchop, Pumpkin, Salmon, Bean, and Babycorn.

Artificial womb supports premature lamb foetuses

Offers extra time for lungs to develop

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
TOKYO

In a world-first, scientists have demonstrated the ability of an 'artificial womb' to support extremely premature lambs, an advance that may one day save human infants.

The research, published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, shows that an artificial placenta-based life support platform can maintain lamb foetuses weighing 600 to 700 gm.

While previous research has demonstrated the feasibility of extended survival with artificial placenta technology in late pre-term foetuses, there was no published evidence that demonstrated the use of the platform to support extremely pre-term foetuses – the eventual clinical target of this technology.

"For several decades, there has been little improvement in outcomes of extremely pre-term infants born at the border of viability (21-24 weeks gestation),"



The life support platform may save infants in future. **•GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO**

said Matt Kemp, an associate professor at Tohoku University in Japan.

"We have proven the use of this technology to support, for the first time, extremely pre-term lambs equivalent to 24 weeks of human gestation in a stable, growth-normal state for five days, said Mr. Kemp.

The findings represent a significant milestone in the technology's future implementation in clinical use.

"The goal is to offer a bridge between a natural womb and the outside world to give babies born at the earliest gestational ages more time for their fragile lungs to mature," he said.

London exhibition on Van Gogh's British connect

He drew inspiration from artists, literature

NINA SIEGAL
LONDON

We like to think of Vincent van Gogh as a creature of the elements: buffeted by the wind and rain, or going mad in the sunflower fields under the wilting Provençal sun.

But here's another, just as valid, idea of van Gogh: comfortable, middle-class Vincent in a top hat and coat, commuting to work in Victorian London and spending his weekends rowing on the Thames or strolling in Kensington Gardens.

That was, indeed, van Gogh in his early 20s, when he moved to London from his native Netherlands to work for international art dealing firm Goupil & Cie.

Van Gogh didn't make a single painting in London, but as "Van Gogh and Britain," a new exhibition at Tate Britain makes clear, his time in the British capital had an enduring effect on his work.

The exhibition, which opens on Wednesday and runs through August 11, offers us a vision of van Gogh as a thinker who absorbed the cultural influences around him, especially 19th-century English literature, and often used references from British illustrations, prints and paintings in his work.

"Looking at his work through his relationship with Britain brings into the foreground his amazing intellectual curiosity," said Carol Jacobi, lead curator of the show.

Recent research into lesser-known chapters of van Gogh's life, such as his time in Britain, have provided us with a more well-rounded image of the artist, slowly replacing the old vision of a wild man whose art came directly from the soul – though it will take a long time to shift that idea, said Sjraar van Heugten, an independent van Gogh art historian and curator based in Belgium.



Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* at the preview for the exhibition. **•AP**

"He read very widely: literature as well as popular science. If you carefully study his work, the image arises of a man who carefully thinks about his works and prepares."

"He started to work at Goupil when he was 16, and he was sent to the London branch when he was only 20."

"English art didn't appeal to me much at first, one has to get used to it," Vincent wrote to his brother Theo in July 1873.

"There are some good painters here, though, including Millais," whom he mentioned 17 times in his letters. By January 1874, he wrote a list of some 40 artists whose work he'd admired in London.

Tate Britain has assembled some of the particular works he mentioned, such as Millais' *Chill October* (1870), a bleak image of wild brush and windswept trees under a temperamental sky, which van Gogh may have used as the inspiration for his work, *Autumn Landscape at Dusk*, from 1885, also in the show.

Van Gogh probably had no idea during his time in London that he would start painting, at last, in early 1881. It wasn't until late in his life that the wilder van Gogh began to emerge – in the south of France, where he struggled with mental illness and painted almost a canvas a day. **NY TIMES**