

IN BRIEF


French film legend Agnes Varda dead at 90

PARIS
Film director Agnes Varda, the arty, eccentric "grandmother" of French cinema, has died aged 90. A statement from her family said that she died at her home on Thursday due to complications from cancer. She won an honorary Oscar in November for her film *Faces Places*. AFP


Chicago seeks \$130,000 from Jussie Smollett

CHICAGO
Chicago city officials have ordered actor Jussie Smollett to pay \$130,000 to cover the cost of the investigation into his report of a street attack that police say was staged to promote his career. The prosecution sealed the case, but authorities still say the actor concocted the assault. Smollett has insisted that he is innocent. AP


Tom Hanks eyes role of Elvis Presley's manager

LOS ANGELES
Veteran actor Tom Hanks is in talks to play Elvis Presley's iconic manager Colonel Tom Parker in Baz Luhrmann's biopic on the musician. The Warner Bros project is also penned by Luhrmann along with Craig Pearce. According to *Variety*, the director wants to cast a newcomer for the role of Presley. PTI

Get ₹13 lakh to stay in bed for 2 months

German researchers seek volunteers to test how artificial gravity can keep astronauts healthy

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW YORK

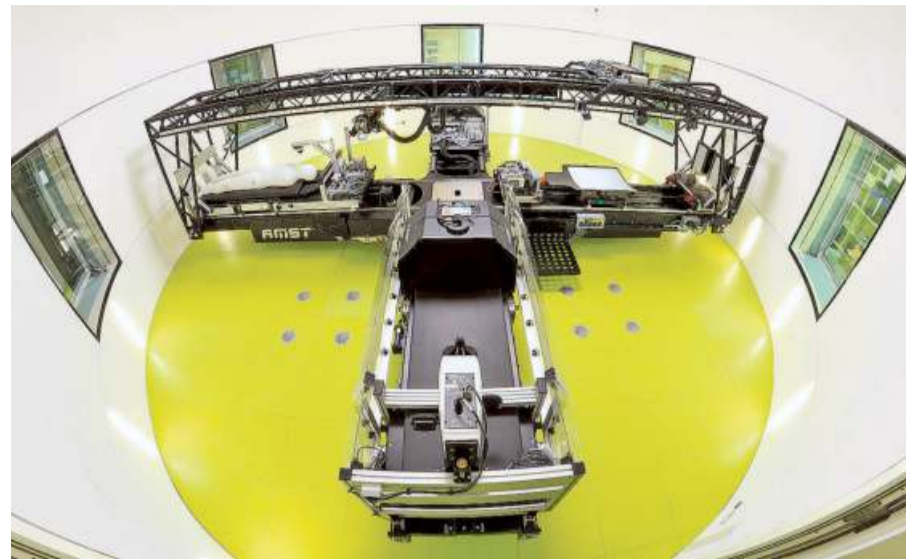
Love to lounge in bed? Now you can get paid for it, if selected for a research project that is seeking healthy volunteers who can speak German.

NASA and ESA, the space agencies of the U.S. and Europe respectively, are ready to pay \$18,500 to volunteers who commit to lying in bed for two months.

The space agencies want to test how artificial gravity might help keep astronauts healthy in space, CNET reported on Friday.

The prolonged lie-in is part of the "Artificial Gravity Bed Rest" study that launched this week to study the effects of weightlessness on the human body.

The second phase of the programme is to be conducted by the German Aerospace Centre from September to



The short-arm centrifuge at the German Aerospace Centre. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

December in Cologne, Germany. It requires 12 men and 12 women, aged between 24 and 55 years, who can speak German, as the research is conducted in Germany.

If astronauts are to live for long periods in space, or on the moon and Mars, science needs to come up with efficient methods to counteract bone and muscle atrophy.

The 24 volunteers will spend their days and nights in beds angled downward by six degrees and propped up with their feet at an incline above their heads, with one

shoulder touching the mattress at all times, the report said. This position reduces blood flow to the extremities, simulating the experience of astronauts in space.

While astronauts currently stick to an intense exercise regimen to stay strong, the bed rest study will, for the first time, investigate the use of a so-called short-arm human centrifuge to generate artificial gravity and force blood back into the limbs.

One group of study volunteers will be spun around in the centrifuge while the other group would not. The centrifugal force can be adjusted according to the subject's size.

In addition to the 60 days required for bed rest, participants will stay an additional 30 days for adaptation and supervised recovery involving stretching, massage and physiotherapy.

Russia develops washing machine for space

Proposes to use CO₂ for cleaning

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MOSCOW

The days of astronauts packing enough clean clothes to last a whole mission could soon be over as Russia said on Friday that it is developing a washing machine for space.

The RKK Energiya space corporation that builds spacecraft dropped a brief mention of the innovation in a video posted on YouTube. "By the way, for future lunar expeditions and other interplanetary crafts, RKK Energiya has started developing a special space washing machine," the voice-over says.

Currently, astronauts — who live on the International Space Station (ISS) for stints of some six months — cannot wash their clothes in any way and simply put on new outfits when their

clothes get dirty. Astronauts usually wear the same outfit for three to four days and then throw them away with other rubbish.

In 2017, a Russian space industry journal published a paper by RKK Energiya researchers with a description and diagrams of a washing machine that could be used on the ISS.

It said that for three crew members, up to 660 kg of clothes have to be ferried to the ISS over a year.

For a two-year flight to Mars with six crew members this could increase to three tonnes, the authors warned. Researchers proposed using not water, which would be wasteful and require extra storage, but carbon dioxide that is produced by humans' breathing and can be turned into a liquid under pressure.

Women shine at Art Basel Hong Kong

Shilpa Gupta, Anju Dodiya and Reena Saini Kallat to exhibit their work

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HONG KONG

It is a celebratory time for India at the seventh edition of Art Basel Hong Kong, with the country fielding the best of its contemporary female artists, including Shilpa Gupta, Anju Dodiya and Reena Saini Kallat, at the annual event that opened to the public on Friday.

The participating galleries — Chemould Prescott, Experimenter, Vadehra Art Gallery, Tarq and Gallery Space — are also helmed by women.

Ms. Gupta's work at the Chemould Prescott booth seeks to explore the reasons why an individual might choose, or is compelled to



Art Basel Hong Kong opened to the public on Friday. •AFP

change their names.

Through a cluster of fragmented photographs, which is part of the Mumbai-based artist's larger project work titled, *The Surname Project*, she tells the stories of individuals from different parts of

the globe who took on different identities for factors that were sometimes political, at other times familial or even emotional.

Ms. Dodiya is another artist whose works have been brought to the fair both by Chemould Prescott and Vadehra Art Gallery.

Emotions to the fore

Ms. Dodiya's *Heartbeat* at the Chemould Prescott booth revolves around the emotional theatre of the mind. The acrylic on canvas work features two faces against a red backdrop and explores the connection between two individuals.

Leaking Lines by Ms. Kallat is also part of the Mum-

bai-based gallery's show.

The event will also see artist Aditi Singh's set of eight ink-on-paper works, a medium the artist is best known for. Solo shows by Savia Mahajan, Zarina and Lubna Chowdhury are on display by Tarq, Gallery Espace and Jhaveri Contemporary respectively.

Gallery Espace has brought works by Ms. Zarina created over her three-decade long career, including print work, sketches and a sculpture. "It is wonderful to showcase an artist who is internationally acknowledged by museums, collectors," said Renu Modi, founder and director of the Delhi-based gallery.

Five varieties of Indian coffee awarded GI certification

ASIAN NEWS INTERNATIONAL
NEW DELHI

Five varieties of Indian coffee have been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, a move that will enhance their visibility globally and allow growers to get the right value.

While Coorg Arabica coffee is grown specifically in Kodagu district of Karnataka, Wayanaad Robusta coffee is from Wayanaad district in Kerala, Chikmagalur Arabica coffee from Chikmagalur district in the Deccan plateau of Karnataka, Araku Valley Arabica coffee from the hilly tracks of Visakhapatnam district in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha region, and Baba Budangiri Arabica



coffee from the central portion of Chikmagalur district.

The Monsooned Malabar Robusta Coffee, a unique coffee from India, was given the GI certification earlier, according to an official statement issued on Friday by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.

India is the only country where the entire coffee cultivation is grown under

shade, hand-picked and sun-dried. It is cultivated across 4.54 lakh hectares by 3.66 lakh farmers, the statement said.

In another development, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Thursday launched an online marketplace for coffee.

The initiative will help integrate farmers with markets in a transparent manner, and lead to realisation of fair prices for coffee producers.

The Coffee Board of India will collaborate with Bengaluru-based digital Eka Software Solutions (Eka Plus) for development of a blockchain-based marketplace application.

Now, Hindi innings for French bestseller Asterix comics

Translators worked hard on the cultural references

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

Launched in 1959, the French comic classic *Asterix* boasts having sold an unmatched 370 million copies in more than 100 languages. After capturing the global comics market, the series is now available for Hindi readers — after five years of painstaking translation.

The Hindi translation of the first four albums of the *Asterix* series was released here on Thursday by French Ambassador Alexandre Ziegler, who called the comics' total of 33 albums "a monument of French pop culture" and "opportunity to learn not French, but about the French (people)."

The series follows the adventures of a group of Gallic villagers as they resist Roman occupation in 50 B.C. It was originally written by



Rene Goscinny and illustrated by Albert Uderzo.

Published by Om Books International, the "albums", as they are called, were co-translated by Dipa Chaudhuri and Puneet Gupta beginning in 2014.

Translating each album took at least six to eight months, as the task was "not

merely a word-to-word translation". "There are so many cultural references. You have to find equivalent Hindi words, terminology, proverbs, jokes, songs. There is Latin used as well," Mr. Gupta, who has also translated *The Adventures of Tintin*, said.

Ms. Chaudhuri said, "There was a huge translator's block when we started. It wasn't just any translation. These were graphic novels and the graphic form imposes a lot of restrictions as to how you can translate.

"While you'd hit a person with a 'Paf' in French, it'll be 'Bang' in English and 'Thak' in Hindi," Mr. Gupta explained.

The translation rights were acquired by publisher Ajay Mago from the French Hachette Livre after over five years of negotiations.

Jewel tones



Royal touch: Models present creations at Eji's Pastoral Song Autumn/Winter collection show during the ongoing China Fashion Week in Beijing. The event draws to a close on Sunday. •REUTERS

Scientists identify genetic mutation in a woman who feels no pain

Discovery could help in finding new anaesthesia methods

HEATHER MURPHY

She had been told that childbirth was going to be painful. But as the hours wore on, nothing bothered her — even without an epidural.

"I could feel that my body was changing, but it didn't hurt me," recalled Jo Cameron, who is now 71. She likened it to "a tickle." Later, she would tell prospective mothers, "Don't worry, it's not as bad as people say it is."

It was only recently — more than four decades later — that she learned her friends were not exaggerating.

ing different about the way her body experienced pain: For the most part, it didn't.

Scientists believe they now understand why. In a paper published Thursday in *The British Journal of Anaesthesia*, researchers attributed Ms. Cameron's virtually pain-free life to a mutation in a previously unidentified gene. The hope, they say, is that the finding could eventually contribute to the development of a novel pain treatment. They believe this mutation may also be connected to why Ms. Cameron has felt little anxiety or fear throughout her life and why her body heals quickly.

"We've never come across a patient like this," said John Wood, the head of the Molecular Nociception Group at University College London. Scientists have been docu-



Unique lifestyle: Jo Cameron. •MARY TURNER/NYT

menting case studies of individuals who experience little or no pain for nearly 100 years. But the genetic mutation that seems to be responsible for Ms. Cameron's virtual painlessness had not been previously identified.

The sequence of events that led scientists to investigate Ms. Cameron's genes began about five years ago. She was living a happy, ordinary life on the banks of Loch Ness in Scotland with her husband, she said. After a hand operation, a doctor seemed perplexed that she was not experiencing any pain and did not want pain-

killers. "I guarantee I won't need anything," Ms. Cameron recalled telling Devjit Srivastava, a consultant in anaesthesia and pain medicine at a National Health Service hospital in northern Scotland and one of the authors of the paper.

Not all is rosy

A few follow-up questions revealed that Ms. Cameron was unusual. At 65, she had needed to have her hip replaced. Because it had not caused her pain, she had not noticed anything was amiss until it was severely degenerated. Cuts, burns, fractures — these did not hurt either.

Dr. Srivastava referred her to University College London's Molecular Nociception Group, a team focused on genetic approaches to understanding the biology of pain

and touch. They had some clues for her. In recent decades, scientists have identified dozens of other people who process pain in unusual ways. But when Dr. James Cox, a senior lecturer with that group and another author of the new paper, inspected her genetic profile, it did not resemble that of others known to live without pain.

Eventually he found what he was looking for on a gene the scientists call FAAH-OUT. All of us have this gene. But in Ms. Cameron's case, "the patient has a deletion that removes the front of the gene," he said. Additional blood work confirmed this hypothesis, he said.

Ms. Cameron said she had been shocked by the interest in her case. Until her conversation with Dr. Srivastava, pain was not something she

thought about. Perhaps it helped that even though she burned and cut herself quite often, her injuries rarely left scars — something else that scientists believe is connected to the mutation.

A number of articles have been written about parents of children with similar conditions. Many live in fear that without pain, their children won't learn how to avoid hurting themselves. Her parents never made it an issue, she said. She suspects this may be because she inherited the mutation from her father.

"I can't remember him needing any painkillers," she said. "I think that's why I didn't find it odd."

Scientists are also intrigued by Cameron's extraordinarily low anxiety level. On an anxiety disorder

questionnaire, she scored zero out of 21. She cannot recall ever having felt depressed or scared. "I am very happy," she said.

The researchers said they would now focus on trying to better understand how FAAH-OUT works so that they can design a gene therapy or other pain intervention around it. Turning a discovery of this sort into an actual pain or anxiety treatment requires many steps, many years and many millions of dollars.

"I'm reasonably confident that the lessons we are learning from the genes involved in pain will lead to the development of an entirely new class of pain medications," said Dr. Stephen G. Waxman, a neurologist at Yale, who was not involved in the study. NY TIMES

Students persist with climate strike

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BERLIN

Thousands of students skipped school on Friday to take to the streets of the German capital as part of a growing worldwide youth movement urging governments to take faster action against climate change.

Carrying signs with slogans like "I want snow for Christmas" and "The climate is changing, why aren't we?" the demonstrators gathered in a park near Berlin's main train station to march through the government district. Police estimated the size of the crowd at more than 20,000.

Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, who inspired the protests worldwide, headlined the demonstration, joining others at the rally shouting: "What do we want? Climate justice. When do we want it? Now!"