NY Times, Wall Street Journal win Pulitzers

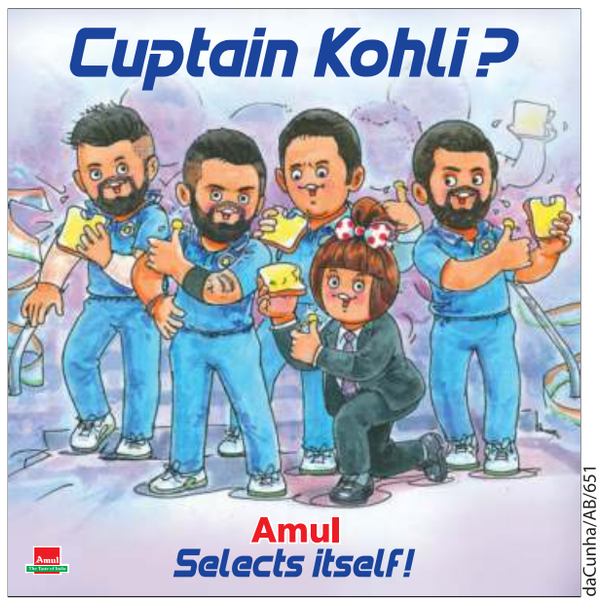
AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
NEW YORK

The *New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* have won Pulitzer Prizes for their separate investigations on U.S. President Donald Trump and his family.

The Times won the prestigious journalism award for explanatory reporting for its probe of the Trump family's finances that "debunked his claims of self-made wealth and revealed a business empire riddled with tax dodges," the Pulitzer Prize Board announced on Monday.

Coverage of Trump's secret hush money payments to two women during his 2016 presidential campaign earned the *Journal* a national reporting nod.

Special citations were awarded to soul legend Aretha Franklin for her contributions to music and to the staff of the *Capital Gazette* newspaper of Annapolis, Maryland, which lost five employees in a June 2018 shooting.



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IIT-B's lightweight *palkis* to ferry pilgrims to Vaishno Devi temple

Galvanised iron pipes have been replaced with stainless steel in the new design

JYOTI SHELAR
MUMBAI

Lightweight, aesthetic and ergonomic *palkis* (open palanquins) conceptualised by the Industrial Design Centre of the Indian Institute of Technology - Bombay (IIT-B) will now be used to carry pilgrims to the Vaishno Devi temple at Katra in Jammu and Kashmir.

On Friday, 53 of these newly designed *palkis* will be distributed among the porters by the J&K Governor Satya Pal Malik.

While most pilgrims cover the 13-km-long treacherous hilly path from Katra up to the temple on foot, some opt for a helicopter ride. However, for those who cannot sit in the chopper or walk up to the shrine, palanquins have been the only means of transport. The existing *palkis*, made by welding galvanised iron pipes, are heavy, easily damaged and cumbersome for the porters.

IIT-B researchers said they have tackled these issues in their design.

Lending a shoulder: The prototype of a lightweight *palki* getting tested at IIT-Bombay. ▪ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

More durable

"The main advantage of our *palki* is its light weight We have used stainless steel which is lightweight and durable," IDC's head B.K. Chakravarthy told *The Hindu*. He said that seven prototypes were made until the team got it right.

The *palki* is carried by four porters. The *palkis* in use currently are fabricated locally and weigh about 45 kg. The porters take about four hours to trek up to the temple, carrying a pilgrim and their luggage. Sometimes, pilgrims insist on carrying a child as well. The load comes to about 100 to 120 kg, causing extreme musculoskeletal discomfort for the porters.

IIT-B's *palkis* weigh 34 kg and offer better support and balance. The wooden logs used by the porters to carry the *palki* were retained in the new design as wood was found to be best for load carrying.

The *palki* project at IDC began in 2017 when the then principal scientific advisor R. Chidambaram saw the palanquins designed for Ajanta Caves. "He told us about the porters' struggle and we immediately began work on the project," said Prof. Chakravarthy. Four porters from Katra were brought to the IIT-B campus to review the design, weight and overall comfort by using the prototypes while the National Institute of Industrial Engineering closely studied ergonomics.

One of the porters, Kakuram, who only uses his first name, told *The Hindu* that the new *palki* feels very light and easy. "Every day is a battle for us. Using the new *palki* will add at least 10 years to our life as it is comfortable on the body."

Dog rescued 220 km off Thailand's coast

Rescuer promises to adopt pooch

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BANGKOK

An exhausted dog found paddling 220 km off the Thailand coast is set for a new lease on life after an oil rig worker who rescued him promised to adopt the plucky pooch.

The tan-coloured dog, named Boonrod by his rescuers – Thai for "survivor from karma" – was fished out from the ocean on Friday by rig workers who spotted his head bobbing between the waves in the Gulf of Thailand.

There was no indication of how he got there, or how long he had been lost at sea.

But local media speculated he may have fallen off a fishing vessel and paddled towards the rig.

Boonrod the dog after being rescued. ▪ AFP/VITISAK PAYALAW

Boonrod is recovering in Songkhla province under the care of a vet, an animal charity group said.

"Since he came onto the platform, he didn't cry or bark at all," Chevron worker Vitisak Payalaw said.

"He likely lost a lot of body water from the sea water."

Mr. Vitisak said he plans to adopt the canine once he returns to shore at the end of the month.

Lakes are filled with liquid methane on Titan

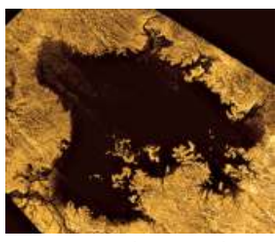
NASA scientists study Saturn's moon

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

Scientists have provided the most comprehensive look to date at one of the solar system's most exotic features: prime lakeside property in the northern polar region of Saturn's moon Titan: if you like lakes made of stuff like liquid methane.

Using data obtained by NASA's Cassini spacecraft before that mission ended in 2017 with a deliberate plunge into Saturn, the scientists found that some of frigid Titan's lakes of liquid hydrocarbons in this region are surprisingly deep while others may be shallow and seasonal.

Titan boasts lakes, rivers and seas of hydrocarbons: compounds of hydrogen and carbon like those that are the main components of petroleum and natural gas.



Ligeia Mare, the second largest known body of liquid on Titan. NASA

The researchers described landforms akin to mesas towering above the nearby landscape, topped with liquid lakes more than 100 metres deep comprised mainly of methane. The scientists suspect the lakes formed when surrounding bedrock chemically dissolved and collapsed.

Even remote peaks are not free of plastic

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

A secluded mountain region thought to be free of plastic pollution is in fact blanketed by airborne microplastics on a scale comparable to a major city such as Paris, researchers have found.

Over a five-month period in 2017-2018, an average of 365 tiny bits of plastic settled every day on each square metre of an uninhabited, high-altitude area in the Pyrenees straddling France and Spain, they reported in the journal *Nature Geoscience*.

"It is astounding and worrying that so many particles were found in the Pyrenees field site," said lead author Steve Allen, a doctoral student at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland.