

IN BRIEF



Vast car-free garden to surround Eiffel Tower

PARIS  
The city of Paris has chosen an American landscape architect to re-design a huge area surrounding the Eiffel Tower, a project that will banish almost all vehicle traffic near the immensely popular monument. “We can create the biggest garden in Paris... with much more biodiversity,” architect Kathryn Gustafson said. **AFP**



Fashion firm Prada joins the fur-free chorus

MILAN  
Prada will stop using animal fur in its products from the 2020 women's spring-summer collections to be presented in September, the luxury group said on Wednesday. The decision is part of a wider trend among fashion brands to champion ethical policies to win over more customers. **REUTERS**



U.S. author Siri Hustvedt wins top Spanish award

MADRID  
U.S. writer Siri Hustvedt has been awarded Spain's prestigious Princess of Asturias prize for literature for her work, which the jury said was among “the most ambitious on today's literary scene”. Ms. Hustvedt is the author of bestsellers *What I Loved* and *The Summer Without Men*. **AFP**

Gender diversity good for businesses: UN

‘Companies reported higher profits’

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
GENEVA

Companies that improve gender diversity – especially at the top – perform better and rake in higher profits, while countries that increase women employment see better economic growth, the United Nations said on Wednesday.  
The UN's International Labour Organization found in a study that companies that improve gender diversity in their management reported significant profit increases.  
“Gender diversity is a smart business strategy,” according to the report, which based its findings on a survey of nearly 13,000 companies across 70 countries.  
According to the survey, nearly three-quarters of companies that tracked gender diversity in their management reported profit

hikes of between five and 20%.  
The study reported that 57% said growing the number of women at the top made it easier to attract and retain talent, while nearly as many said they saw improvements in creativity, innovation and openness, and an enhancement of the company's reputation.  
The report also analysed data from 186 countries between 1991 and 2017, and found that increasing women's employment is associated with more economic growth at the national level.  
“These results are eye-opening,” said Deborah France-Massin, who heads ILO's employers' activity bureau.  
“Companies should look at gender balance as a bottom-line issue, not just a human resources issue,” she said in a statement.

Israeli scientists make a brew with 5,000-year-old yeast

The development is a step forward in experimental archaeology, a field that seeks to reconstruct the past by offering flavours of times gone by

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
JERUSALEM

Israeli researchers raised a toast on Wednesday to celebrate a long-brewing project of making beer and mead using yeasts extracted from ancient clay vessels, some over 5,000 years old.  
Archaeologists and microbiologists from the Israel Antiquities Authority and four Israeli universities teamed up to study yeast colonies found in microscopic pores in pottery fragments. The shards were found at Egyptian, Philistine and Judean archaeological sites in Israel spanning from 3,000 BC to the 4th century BC.  
The scientists are touting the brews made from “resurrected” yeasts as an important step in experimental archaeology, a field that seeks to reconstruct the past in or-



Cheers to that: A scientist displays a brew made with revived yeast extracted from ancient pottery, right, found in Israel. **AP, AFP**



der to better understand the flavour of the ancient world.  
“What we discovered was that yeast can actually survive for a very, very long time without food,” said Hebrew University microbiologist Michael Klutstein. “Today we are able to salvage all these

brews, including “iron beer”, “friend's beer” and “beer of the protector”.  
The yeast samples came from nearly two dozen ceramic vessels found in excavations around the country, including a salvage dig in central Tel Aviv, a Persian-era

palace in southern Jerusalem and En Besor, a 5,000-year-old Egyptian brewery near Israel's border with the Gaza Strip.  
Other researchers of ancient beers, such as University of Pennsylvania archaeologist Patrick McGovern, have

Crested ibises fly free in South Korea

Endangered bird was last seen in the wild in 1979

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SEOUL

An endangered bird was reintroduced to the wild by South Korean authorities on Wednesday, four decades after it went extinct on the peninsula.  
The crested ibis is listed as South Korea's National Monument number 198, but was last seen in the wild in 1979 in the demilitarized zone dividing the peninsula.  
China and Japan are also part of the species' natural range, but the species was driven to the edge of extinction – partially because pesticide use eliminated its food sources – until captive breeding programmes were



Wings of joy: A crested ibis, which was bred in a restoration centre, is released into Upo wetland in South Korea. **AFP**

set up. Starting with birds donated by Beijing, the South Korean captive-bred population has reached 363, and the Environment Ministry said 40 of them had been selected and released into the Upo wetland 350 km southeast of Seoul.  
The species, *Nipponia nippon*, is also known as the Japanese crested ibis, but is best known for a popular children's song composed in the 1920s, when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule.  
The song describes the

Chacoan peccaries born in Prague zoo

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
PRAGUE

Prague's zoo says two Chacoan peccaries (a wild pig-like mammal) have been born there for the first time, a vital step in efforts to save an endangered species that was once considered extinct.

sound of the bird's call as a sad reminder of a lost mother, and was banned by the Japanese authorities – who reportedly saw it as a form of anti-colonial resistance – but became popular again after Korea regained its independence in 1945.



Desperate situation: Pham Thi Ca's son Ho Huu Hanh, left, standing amidst the ruins of their house while his mother rests in a makeshift shelter. **AFP**



A 99-year-old grandmother is resisting Vietnam's coal rush

She refuses to move even after her house was demolished

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
VAN PHONG BAY

Toothless and nearly blind, grandmother Pham Thi Ca refuses to leave her plot of land even after bulldozers demolished her house – an extraordinary holdout against Vietnam's deepening addiction to coal.  
The 99-year-old was offered money to move as authorities hovered up land for a planned \$2.6 billion Japanese-funded coal plant in the remote Van Phong Bay she has called home since birth.  
But when she said no, around 100 authorities showed up, forcibly removed her from the house and bulldozed it as she and her grandson looked on.  
They were helpless to prevent the destruction of the property two years ago, but Ms. Ca, frail and wizened, has rebuffed all attempts to evict her from the land since.  
“The authorities carried me away, but I refuse to move,” explains Ms. Ca, who now lives in a makeshift shelter of corrugated tin, wooden beams and coconut fronds next to the pile of rubble that was once her home.  
“My house is here, my

land is here, so I will be buried here,” she says, sitting on a small cot where she spends much of her time.  
It's a story playing out across Vietnam, where a strong-fisted government is powering ahead with coal projects to meet the soaring energy demands of a turbo-charged economy.  
Coal accounts for about a third of Vietnam's current energy production and is slated to rise to about 50% by 2030.  
That means building more coal plants in places like Van Phong Bay despite a chorus of opposition from locals who complain of land grabs, loss of livelihood and environmental damage.  
**Relocated far away**  
Some 300 people have already been relocated from Ms. Ca's community in south-central Khanh Hoa province.  
They were offered cash compensation and rooms in state housing – but the residences were far from their farms and fishing grounds.  
The \$43,000 inducement to leave their plot was not enough to upend Ms. Ca's family.  
“We cannot work there, there is no land for cultivation,” says Ms. Ca's son Ho

Huu Hanh, referring to the proposed relocation area.  
He insists that they were never told about the planned coal plant and accuses authorities of bending the law to force residents to leave.  
The family lost their farmland anyway. Now Mr. Hanh works as a day-labourer or catches snails and small fish to get by, earning about \$170 a month.  
“I can't do anything, I feel so sorry for myself,” he adds, crying.  
Others in the area are worried about what the coal plant will do to fish and coral reefs in the bay where water temperatures could rise due to the plant's run-off.  
The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) last month approved a \$1.2 billion loan for the project, which is sponsored by the Sumitomo Corporation of Japan and is set to come online in 2023. Sumitomo says consultation meetings were held with residents and that compensation and resettlement was “carried out under the responsibility of local authorities in accordance with the laws of Vietnam”.  
Vietnamese officials did not reply to AFP's request for comment.

Scrupulous Singapore



Follow the rules: Singapore has launched “smoking cabins” on streets to stop smokers sneaking a puff in public spaces. The city-state has some of the world's strictest anti-tobacco laws, with a fine of up to Sg\$1,000 (₹50,000) if caught smoking in restricted zones. **AFP**

Once Upon A Time in Hollywood makes Cannes debut

Actors Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio give glowing turns in the Quentin Tarantino film that premiered at the festival

NAMRATA JOSHI  
CANNES

“The greatest breakdown scenes by my friend Leo here” is how Brad Pitt spoke about a dazzling performance by Leonardo DiCaprio in Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon A Time in Hollywood* that recently premiered at the Cannes Film Festival.  
Mr. DiCaprio, as Rick Dalton, an actor in decline, depressed, lacking confidence, crying over his failures, is in crackling form. Specially in the scene where he weeps tears of joy on being told by a child method actor that his acting was the best she had seen in her whole – all of eight years – life.  
Mr. Pitt as Cliff Booth, the one “carrying his load” as



Brad Pitt and Quentin Tarantino at Cannes. **AFP**

Rick's stunts double, “more than a brother and less than a wife” to him, keeps pace with an ease, style, swagger and attitude. Both are the highpoints of Mr. Tarantino's “love letter to the 60s cinema”.  
Mr. Pitt described the two

characters as one individual. In a manner of speaking, two sides of the same coin – Rick grappling with the life's ironies and vicissitudes and Cliff carrying on with a sense of acceptance, at peace with himself. Mr. DiCaprio spoke of his character as someone

on the outskirts of the industry, left far behind in the changing times. “I could identify with him, having grown up in the industry... I could feel an immense gratitude and appreciation,” he said.  
**Robbie shines**  
While Mr. DiCaprio and Mr. Pitt play fictional characters it's Margot Robbie who gets to don a real one – Sharon Tate, wife of Roman Polanski, who turned into the hottest director after the success of *Rosemary's Baby*. “Quentin told me that she [Sharon Tate] is the heartbeat of the film. For me, she was the ray of light,” she said.  
Mr. Tarantino refers to some real artists without them bringing them in the

frame. Apart from Mr. Polanski, there is Italian filmmaker Sergio Carbucci, for instance, who is one of his favourite directors. There is Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby and Simon and Garfunkel and California Dreaming playing on in the background, Steve McQueen turning up at the Playboy Mansion and Bruce Lee in a slapstick fight with Cliff.  
It takes a while to enter the film's world and settle down with its seemingly disjointed, disorienting and sprawling universe. Perhaps because the whole lore around the sinister hippie commune of Spahn Movie Ranch and Manson Family Murders is so quintessentially American. Mr. Tarantino, marking 25 years of his *Pulp*

*Fiction* bagging the Palme D'Or at Cannes, confessed being fascinated by the Manson saga. “But it remains unfathomable at the end of the day,” he said. The more concrete information you get, the more obscure it becomes. “There is the impossibility of being able to truly understand it,” he said.  
When questioned about the portrayal of extreme violence (comic book and funny in its impact though) in these tricky times, particularly with women being the targets, Mr. Pitt came to the film's defence. His assertion was that the rage was not directed at individuals so much as the loss of innocence. He called it “a sobering look at the dark side of human nature”.

Dominic Sangma and Payal Kapadia win laurels

Their films picked for Hubert Bals Fund

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CANNES

Two independent Indian filmmakers – Mumbai-based Payal Kapadia and Dominic Sangma from Meghalaya – have been selected for the International Film Festival of Rotterdam's prestigious Hubert Bals Fund for script and project development for Spring 2019. The announcement was made by IFFR on the sidelines of the Cannes Film Festival.  
The upcoming projects are among the ten picked up in the Bright Future section which supports debut or second feature films.  
Ms. Kapadia and Mr. Sangma will get funding of €9000 each for their res-



Payal Kapadia, left, and Dominic Sangma

pective films – *All We Imagine As Light* and *Rapture*.  
“It will be a great push for the project,” said Mr. Sangma, who is now in Cannes. A Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI) Kolkata graduate, he co-produced his first feature in Garo language, called *Ma.Ama*, with a Beijing Film Academy product Xu Jianshang.  
She is his co-producer for *Rapture* as well.