

TOPOF THE WORLD



Cohen was given a prison term over hush-money payments to two women

USA

Trump's former personal lawyer to begin jail time

New York: Michael Cohen, the lawyer who once vowed to “take a bullet” for President Donald Trump but now calls him a “con man,” on Monday will begin serving a three-year prison sentence for arranging hush payments to two women who said they had sexual encounters with the president and lying to the US Congress. Cohen, Trump's longtime former personal attorney, must report by 2 pm to the Federal Correctional Institution in Otisville, New York, about 10 km northwest of New York City. He is expected to stay at the prison's minimum security camp.

PAKISTAN

Science minister says Hubble Telescope sent to space by Pak

Islamabad: Pakistan's Science and Technology Minister Fawad Chaudhry said that the Hubble Space Telescope was sent into space by the country's space agency Suparco, instead of NASA. Chaudhry, speaking on a talk show, claimed “The world's biggest telescope was sent by Suparco (Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission)”. The minister's gaffe triggered hilarious reactions on Twitter: “May be NASA head will resign and also join the ministry of @fawadchaudhry as head of Suparco,” one user tweeted.

CHINA

Missing student alleges abuse

Beijing: A missing student labour activist has accused Chinese police of abusing him over several days, including by forcing him to listen to a three-hour speech by President Xi Jinping, amid a crackdown on campus activism. In a video and written testimony published after he disappeared last week, Peking University student Qiu Zhanxuan said local police “tormented” him over a five-day period late February.

SOWMIYA ASHOK & AMITABH SINHA

BEIJING, PUNE, MAY 6

THE HEALTH of ecosystems that humans and other species depend on is “deteriorating more rapidly than ever”, with up to one million species threatened with extinction, many within decades, a large-scale global assessment by a United Nations body has found. Natural habitats are being destroyed at an accelerating pace, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report says, adding that the current rate of global species extinc-

tion is “tens to hundreds of times” higher compared to the average over the last 10 million years. “Even for global warming of 1.5 to 2 degrees, the majority of terrestrial species ranges are projected to shrink profoundly,” it notes.

This 1500-page report is amongst the most comprehensive health check-ups for the planet. Much like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which provides scientific assessments of climate change, the IPBES was set up in 2012, to provide a larger sustainability framework informed by the latest science. This is the IPBES' first report which can be seen as a 'state of nature' report. It



The current rate of extinction is “tens to hundreds of times” higher compared to the average over the last 10 mn years. AP

is compiled by 145 expert authors from 50 countries over the past three years and provides an assessment that combines science,

policy and knowledge.

It ranks “five direct drivers” that cause changes in nature that have the largest relative global im-

pect. In descending order, these include: changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution and “invasive alien species”.

These “negative trends in nature” are expected to continue to 2050 and beyond in all of the policy scenarios explored in the assessment, “except those that include transformative change”.

“The report is the best scientific assessment of the state of our natural ecosystems. It is an account of what science says has happened to our natural environment in the last few decades,” Suneetha M Subramanian, policy researcher on biodiversity and human well-being, at the UN

University Institute of Advanced Studies told *The Indian Express*. “Nature has been degraded in an unprecedented manner since the 1970s, primarily because of human interventions. It is not looking good at all. But the science-informed report also says that all is still not lost, and there is still an opportunity for human beings to live in harmony with nature. But we need to change the way in which we govern our natural resources, and change the way in which we produce and consume things.”

IPBES Chair, Robert Watson, said the report presents an “ominous picture”. “The health of ecosystems, on which we and all other species depend, is deterio-

rating more rapidly than ever. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide,” he said.

A systematic review of 15,000 scientific and government sources and resources collected from indigenous and local knowledge were part of the assessment. The report finds that “three-quarters of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment have been significantly altered by human actions”. Notably, “On average these trends have been less severe or avoided in areas held or managed by indigenous peoples and local communities.”

AMID WORSENING TIES



The USS Abraham Lincoln in Norfolk, Virginia, last month. AP

US dispatches carrier after ‘clear indication’ of Iran threat to forces

ROBERT BURNS & CATHERINE LUCEY

WASHINGTON, MAY 6

A WHITE House decision to dispatch an aircraft carrier and other military resources to send a message to Iran following “clear indications” that Iranian and Iranian proxy forces were preparing to possibly attack US forces in the region, a defence official told the *Associated Press*.

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information, said that the Pentagon approved the deployments and that US forces at sea and on land were thought to be the potential targets. The official declined to be more specific.

White House national security adviser John Bolton said in a statement Sunday night that the US is deploying the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group and a bomber task force to the US Central Command region, an area that includes the Middle East.

Bolton said the move was in response to “a number of troubling and escalatory indications and warnings.” He didn't provide details, but said the US wants to send a message that “unrelenting force” will meet any attack on US interests or those of its allies. “The US is not seeking war with the Iranian regime, but we are fully prepared to respond to any attack, whether by proxy, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or regular Iranian forces,” he said.

Bolton's reference to the



A shop damaged in clashes between two groups in Negombo's Poruthota village. Reuters

Archbishop of Colombo Malcolm Ranjith and some Muslim religious leaders visited the area in Negombo to try to defuse the tension and asked liquor shops to be closed after a personal feud escalated to sectarian violence

ters on the loose as fears grew of ethnic clashes targeting Muslims.

Gunasekera said a clash on Sunday between two individuals in Negombo, where 102 people attending an Easter service were

killed on April 21, quickly escalated.

Government sources told *Reuters* that some Catholics and Muslims clashed, prompting an overnight curfew in Negombo.

A *Reuters* witness saw at least

one shop, an office, three motorbikes and three three-wheel taxis had been damaged.

Gunasekera said there were no reports of any serious injuries.

Archbishop of Colombo



AEROFLOT CRASH-LANDING TOLL RISES TO 41

The damaged Aeroflot Sukhoi Superjet 100 at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport on Sunday. The pilot of the passenger plane said lightning led to the emergency landing. The flight was on fire as it landed, and the blaze claimed 41 lives. Reuters

BABY IS SEVENTH IN LINE TO BRITISH THRONE

It's a boy! Prince Harry and Meghan welcome first child

GERRY MEY

WINDSOR, MAY 6

MEGHAN, THE Duchess of Sussex and wife of Britain's Prince Harry, gave birth to a boy on Monday, the seventh-in-line to the throne and described by his proud father as “absolutely to die for”.

The baby, who has not yet been named, was born in the early hours of the morning, weighing 3.2 kg. Both Meghan and the baby, the couple's first child, were healthy and well, the palace said.

“How any woman does what they do is beyond comprehension but we're both absolutely thrilled and so grateful to all the lovely support from everybody

out there,” a smiling Harry told reporters in Windsor, west of London where the couple live.

“It was amazing, absolutely incredible. As I say, I am so incredibly proud of my wife and, as every father and parent would ever say your baby is absolutely amazing, this little baby is absolutely to die for.”

Harry, Queen Elizabeth's grandson, was present for the birth and Doria Ragland, Meghan's mother, was also with the couple at their home, Frogmore Cottage, on the estate of Windsor Castle where they married in May last year.

The queen and other members of the royal family were delighted by the news, the palace said.



Harry and Meghan attract huge media interest in the UK, but they plan to limit the baby's exposure to the press. Reuters

Prime Minister Theresa May sent congratulations.

“Wishing you all the best at

this happy time,” she told the royal couple on Twitter.

The baby is the eighth great

grandchild of the 93-year-old queen, the world's longest-reigning monarch, and could be entitled to hold joint British and American citizenship according to nationality rules.

However, the child will not automatically be a prince or a princess and any such title would have to be bestowed by the queen by issuing what is known as a letter patent.

Albert, Philip, Arthur and James are the favourite names for the child, according to bookmakers.

Britain's royal family attracts huge media interest but the younger members, especially Harry, 34, and Meghan, 37, a US-born former actress, are treated like Hollywood superstars.

Unlike Harry's brother Prince William and his wife Kate, who posed for massed photographers outside a London hospital just hours after their three children were born, Harry and Meghan are expected to take part in only a limited photo call in the grounds of Windsor Castle, within a few days of the birth.

For some the child's birth will represent a significant moment for the monarchy, becoming the first mixed race baby born into a senior position in British royalty, according to royal experts.

“It's symbolic of a more modern monarchy. It appeals to people across the world,” royal biographer Claudia Joseph said. “They will be able to identify with the royal family as never before.” **REUTERS**



At the funeral of a 4-month-old baby in Gaza. Reuters

suggesting that Iran had been behind the Gaza escalation.

Israel's military said more than 600 rockets and other projectiles had been fired at southern Israeli cities and villages since Friday. It said it shelled or carried out air strikes on some 320 militant sites.

The violence abated before dawn, just as Gazans were preparing to begin Ramadan.

Rocket sirens in southern Israel, which had gone off continuously over the weekend, did not sound on Monday and there were no reports of new airstrikes in Gaza. **REUTERS**

Central Command area would mean the *Lincoln* is headed to the Red Sea and perhaps then to the Arabian Sea or the Persian Gulf. **AP**

EXPLAINED

US move not extraordinary, but language aggressive

THE US moving forces in and out of West Asia is not an uncommon occurrence, but the way in which the movement of the carrier strike group was announced by the US shows that it is trying to deter any possible Iranian action. Bolton's warning to Iran comes after the Iranian foreign minister recently said the country would continue to sell oil despite sanctions and warned the US would face consequences if it tried to stop sales. According to CNN, some US officials were worried at the time that Iran may target US assets in the region.