

## IN BRIEF



## An early Tintin cover auctioned for \$1.1 million

WASHINGTON  
An original drawing used for the first published Tintin cover was sold at an auction in U.S. for \$1.12 million. The illustration, by Tintin creator Herge (the pseudonym of Belgian cartoonist Georges Remi), shows the reporter sitting on a tree stump carving a makeshift propeller for his plane after the original was damaged. AFP



## Watch NASA making its Mars 2020 rover live

WASHINGTON  
NASA has installed a webcam that allows the public to get a live, bird's-eye view of its Mars 2020 rover as it takes shape, the U.S. space agency said. The move will allow people to watch as engineers and technicians assemble at and test the rover the NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in the U.S. before it embarks next year. PTI



## Meals taste better when you are seated: study

WASHINGTON  
Food tastes better when you are seated, say scientists. Holding a standing posture for even a few minutes causes physical stress, muting taste buds. The research looked at how the vestibular sense, which is responsible for posture, interacts with the gustatory sense, which impacts taste. PTI

## Aviation sector faces heat over warming

Climate activists are calling for a boycott of air travel and 'green tax' on the industry is being mooted

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
PARIS

Under pressure from frequent flyers alarmed over climate change, the airline industry says it is "hellbent" on reducing emissions – but the technology needed to drastically reduce its carbon footprint is still out of reach.

In recent months, climate activists have stepped up efforts to convince travellers to boycott air travel, with Swedish schoolgirl and campaigner Greta Thunberg spearheading the trains-over-planes movement and making "fly-skam", or flight shame, a buzzword in the Scandinavian country.

"The sector is under considerable pressure," admitted



Rough air: Companies are eyeing a new generation of less polluting planes and aerodynamic modifications.

Alexandre de Juniac, Chief Executive of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), whose members met this week in Seoul.

The industry has been under fire over its carbon emissions, which at 285 g of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted per km travelled by a passenger far exceed all

other modes of transport. Road transportation follows at 158 and rail travel is at 14, according to European Environment Agency figures.

Mr. De Juniac said the industry was "hellbent" on lowering emissions but the sector is also accused of underestimating its environ-

mental impact, with the IATA chief lobbying heavily against a "green tax" on aviation backed by several countries including the Netherlands.

The International Civil Aviation Organization estimates that air transport is responsible for 2% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – roughly equivalent to the overall emissions of Germany, according to consulting firm Sia Partners.

But aircraft also emit particles such as nitrogen oxides, which can trap heat at high altitude, meaning the industry is responsible for 5% of warming, according to the Climate Action Network.

The industry has committed to improving fuel effi-

ciency by 1.5% per year from 2009 to 2020 and stabilising its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in preparation for a 50% reduction by 2050 compared to 2005.

Companies are banking on a new generation of less polluting planes with updated engines, aerodynamic modifications and fittings that weigh less.

However, Shukor Yusof, analyst with Malaysia-based Endau Analytics, said the industry had made progress but "that all these technological advances to cut emissions are tough to implement quickly due to the nature of the industry hemmed by high costs and the fact that planes typically take decades before they are replaced".

## Internet may alter brain functions, says study

It can affect specific areas of cognition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE

The Internet can alter specific brain regions and affect our attention capacity, memory processes and social interaction, a study has found. The research, published in the journal *World Psychiatry*, showed that the Internet can produce both acute and sustained alterations in specific areas of cognition.

Researchers, including those from Oxford University in the U.K. and Harvard University in the U.S., investigated hypotheses on how the Internet may alter cognitive processes.

"The key findings of this report are that high-levels of

Internet use could indeed have an impact on many functions of the brain," said Joseph Firth, Senior Research Fellow at the Western Sydney University in Australia. The limitless stream of prompts and notifications from the Internet divides attention, which, in turn, may decrease the capacity to concentrate on a single task, said Mr. Firth, who led the study.

"Given we now have most of the world's factual information literally at our fingertips, this appears to have the potential to begin changing the ways in which we store, and even value, facts and knowledge in society, and in the brain," he added.

## Seeking blessings



Nepal's Living Goddess, also known as 'Kumari', being taken to an event to mark the Rato Machindranath chariot festival in Kathmandu. The festival, celebrated by both Buddhists and Hindus, is organised to pray for a good monsoon. AFP

## When it's time for a cuppa

Novel web-based tool to optimise caffeine intake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
WASHINGTON

Scientists have developed a web-based tool that optimises your caffeine intake, designing effective strategies to maximise alertness while avoiding excessive tea or coffee consumption.

Using multiple sleep-deprivation and shift-work scenarios, they generated caffeine-consumption guidance using the open-access tool 2B-Alert Web 2.0, and then they compared the results with the U.S. Army guidelines.

The research, published in the journal *Sleep*, found that the solutions suggested by the quantitative caffeine optimisation tool either required on average 40% less caffeine or enhanced alertness by an additional 40%.

Caffeine is the most widely consumed stimulant to counter the effects of sleep deprivation on alertness.



The tool enables users to automatically obtain optimal caffeine timing. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

However, to be safe and most effective, the right amount must be consumed at the right time.

The automated caffeine-guidance algorithm lets users input several factors: the desirable peak-alertness periods within a sleep/wake schedule, the minimum desirable level of alertness, and the maximum tolerable daily caffeine intake.

The 2B-Alert Web 2.0 tool

allows users to predict the alertness of an "average" individual as a function of his or her sleep/wake schedule and caffeine schedule. It also enables users to automatically obtain optimal caffeine timing and doses.

This freely available tool will have applications that extend beyond the realms of the military and the research lab, said Jaques Reifman, a research scientist.

## A film tracks Russia's Internet saga

Documentary looks back at an era when 'Internet developed completely freely'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
MOSCOW

In the early days of Russia's Internet, hippies founded the first telecoms venture with Americans, an astrophysicist ran the country's most visited website and providers punished hackers by kneecapping them with baseball bats.

The heady time, which coincided with the 1991 break up of the Soviet Union, is the subject of a new documentary that looks back at a very different era as the Kremlin clamps down on Internet freedom in present-day Russia.

Setting the tone, footage from 1990 shows American Joel Shatz and his Soviet partner Joseph Goldin – the duo behind the first Soviet-American telecoms venture – driving a ballistic missile transporter carrying clowns to Red Square after convincing the traffic police that the performance had been approved "by the highest



Hippies to hackers: Filmmaker Andrei Loshak. AFP

authorities".

Andrei Loshak, a former television reporter, tracks the main personalities behind the Russia-based Internet, known as Runet, for the documentary *Holy War. The history of Runet*, to be screened on Sunday at Moscow's Beat Film Festival.

His travels take him back and forth across the Atlantic to film the current lives of early Internet savants, website editors and trolls, who are now Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, cannabis investors and pro-Kremlin politicians.

Although Russia now dominates headlines with ever-tougher legislation restricting Internet use, in the 1990s "the Internet developed completely freely," said Mr. Loshak.

Russia has benefited enormously: Internet access is cheap and home-grown platforms are more popular than U.S.-based corporations like Google and Facebook.

In one clip, Russian President Vladimir Putin is shown meeting Internet entrepreneurs in 1999 and telling them that the Internet is a

"promising initiative" that he would not touch.

"And in fact, he did not touch the Internet for 15 years," Mr. Loshak said, adding: "Thanks for that, curiously."

## New regulations

However, a raft of new laws clamping down on Internet use were passed following mass anti-government demonstrations in 2011-12 and Moscow's rift with the West after its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

New restrictions on online content are proposed weekly, while Internet firms are required to store personal data in Russia and comply with security services.

Many websites and services deemed dangerous for law and order are blocked, from professional social network LinkedIn to the Telegram messaging app – though the blocks are easily circumvented for the moment.

## Vienna bids adieu to iconic Life Ball AIDS fundraiser

The 26<sup>th</sup> edition would be the last due to a lack of funding

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
VIENNA

The Austrian capital of Vienna bade farewell to the iconic Life Ball AIDS charity fundraiser on Saturday, as its extravagant costumes and celebrity guests took over the city's town hall for the last time.

Launched by former makeup artist Gery Keszler, among others, the ball has raised around €30 million (\$34 million) for anti-AIDS causes within Austria and abroad since its first edition in 1993, organisers said.

Mr. Keszler announced last month that this year's edition of the ball would be the last due to a lack of funding. Organisers say the ball is no longer viable as, paradoxically, advances in treatment and prognosis for people with HIV and AIDS have meant fewer donors are will-



Starry farewell: Participants performing during the opening ceremony of the Life Ball in Vienna. REUTERS

ing to contribute to such causes.

This year's ball began with a spectacular opening ceremony inspired by the worlds of magic and the circus, as well as the classic film *The Wizard Of Oz*.

Austrian Eurovision winner and drag star Conchita

## Protected areas failing to save wildlife: study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MELBOURNE

The world's protected areas are experiencing major shortfalls in staffing and resources and are therefore failing on a massive scale to safeguard wildlife, a study has found.

The analysis looked at more than 2,100 protected areas around the world and found that less than a quarter report having adequate resources in terms of staffing and budget.

The study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, looked at nearly 12,000 species of terrestrial amphibians, birds, and mammals whose ranges include protected areas and found only 4 to 9% are represented within the borders of the adequately resourced protected areas.

The findings also show that protected areas are grossly under-funded.

## Underworld and sexuality in the spotlight at Tony awards

While Anais Mitchell's dark folk opera *Hadestown* vies for best musical prize, the frontrunner for best play is *The Ferryman*

REUTERS  
NEW YORK

Race, sexual politics and a trip to the underworld are poised to take center stage on Sunday in New York at the annual Tony awards honouring the best of Broadway theatre.

Hosted by late night television personality James Corden, the Tonys cap a record season for Broadway, both in ticket sales and box office receipts, which exceeded \$1.8 billion.

"We're more in sync with the cross currents of the times," said Heather Hitchens, president of the American Theatre Wing which pre-



Musical odyssey: A file photo of Caitlin Kinnunen, center left, and Brooks Ashmanskas in the musical *The Prom*. NYT

sents the Tonys with *The Broadway League*. "You can see it in the themes of almost

every show," she said, adding, "It's hard to think of a show that doesn't touch on a

relevant or current issue."

League President Charlotte St. Martin said that topical issues and average ticket prices under \$100 are drawing in younger fans.

Anais Mitchell's *Hadestown*, a dark folk opera about young lovers trapped in the underworld, is poised to collect the prize for best musical, after receiving a leading 14 nominations.

But *The Prom*, a musical about a group of egocentric Broadway actors invading a Midwestern town to support a lesbian who wants to bring her girlfriend to her prom, has its cheerleaders, as does *Tootsie*, a hit show based on

the 1982 film about a struggling actor who finds stardom by passing himself off as a woman.

*Tootsie* is expected to bring a Tony for lead actor Santino Fontana, while Bryan Cranston, favoured as the unhinged TV news anchor in the play *Network*, faces competition from Jeff Daniels as noble white lawyer Atticus Finch in the racial drama *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Sexuality is at the centre of best play revival nominees *Torch Song* and *Boys in the Band*, but Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* or *The Waverly Gallery* may prevail.

Award watchers say Elaine

May, the veteran writer and director, is expected to win best actress in a play for her moving turn in *The Waverly Gallery* as an Alzheimer's patient. Best play frontrunner is British playwright Jez Butterworth's *The Ferryman*, a wrenching examination of a family during the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland in the 1980s that garnered nine nods.

Sexual politics get an airing in Heidi Schreck's one-woman show *What the Constitution Means to Me*, while Hillary Clinton's unsuccessful bid for the White House in 2008 is revisited in *Hillary and Clinton*.

## First gene-edited babies at early death risk: study

21% increase in mortality in later life

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
LOS ANGELES

The first babies whose genes were reportedly altered to help them fend off HIV infection are more likely to die younger, says a study.

According to an analysis by scientists from the University of California, Berkeley, the genetic mutation that a Chinese scientist attempted to create in twin babies born last year is associated with a 21% increase in mortality in later life. The researchers scanned more than 4,000,000 genomes and associated health records contained in a British

database, U.K. Biobank, and found that people who had two mutated copies of the gene had a significantly higher death rate between ages 41 and 78, than those with one or no copies.

Previous studies associated two mutated copies of the gene, CCR5, with a four-fold increase in the death rate after influenza infection, and the higher mortality rate to susceptibility to death from the flu. But the researchers said there could be any number of explanations, since the protein that CCR5 codes for is involved in many functions.