

IN BRIEF



DiCaprio helps create environmental alliance
NEW YORK
Actor Leonardo DiCaprio is joining with philanthropists Laurene Powell Jobs and Brian Sheth to create a nonprofit environmental powerhouse charged with tackling climate change and the loss of biodiversity. The organisation, Earth Alliance, "will work to protect wildlife and ecosystems, ensure climate justice and support renewable energy". AP



Cigar-shaped object not a spaceship, say scientists
WASHINGTON
After tracking 'Oumuamua' for four months, an interstellar cigar-shaped object spotted in 2017, scientists have concluded that it is not an alien spaceship. However, its composition remains a mystery. The reddish object estimated to be 800 m long, was first spotted by astronomers in Hawaii. REUTERS



U.S. rapper A\$AP Rocky arrested after brawl
STOCKHOLM
U.S. rapper A\$AP Rocky was arrested in Sweden early on Wednesday for serious assault, prosecutors said. The 30-year-old performer was detained with three others for getting involved in a street brawl on Sunday, a few hours after performing at a hip hop festival. Of the three, two people were held for serious assault. REUTERS

An Arctic fox's record journey

It trekked over 3,500 km from Norway to Canada under harsh conditions in just 76 days

MEGAN SPECIA

The journey of a young arctic fox, which trekked more than 2,175 miles (3,500 km) from Norway to Canada in just 76 days, has stunned researchers and shed new light on the movement of the species over vast distances of sea ice. The animal, also known as a coastal or blue fox, set off from the Svalbard Archipelago of Norway last year and ended up on an island in northern Nunavut, Canada, says a study in *Polar Research*, published by the Norwegian Polar Institute. The areas are connected seasonally by sea ice, and much of the journey was completed over frozen Arctic Ocean. The fox also passed through Greenland, but kept forging further west, the researchers' data

showed, moving quickly across the ice sheets where food was scarce and conditions were harsh. While this type of arctic fox has long been known for its endurance in the barren polar climate, such a fast transcontinental journey has never been documented before. Eva Fuglei, one of the researchers, said, "We didn't think it was true," she said. "Could the fox have been found dead, the collar taken off and now aboard a boat?" But Ms. Fuglei said that no boats could travel that far north through the ice, so they knew it had to be the fox that was still on the move. The animal left Spitsbergen in the Svalbard Archipelago on March 26, 2018, and



The fox may have taken such an extreme trip in search of food. REUTERS

reached Ellesmere Island in Nunavut two-and-a-half months later. Using a satellite tracking device, researchers determined that in one day alone, the fox, a female, had tra-

velled about 154 km. "This is, to our knowledge, the fastest movement rate ever recorded for this species," Ms. Fuglei said in the report. The fox's tracking collar stopped transmitting in February 2019, according to the report, so the animal's ultimate fate is unknown. Why did the fox take such an extreme, transcontinental journey in the first place? The study indicated that the trek may have been prompted by a lack of available food or by the need to seek a new habitat. Sea ice plays a vital role in foxes' ability to migrate between areas and find resources, the study noted. But that ice has become increasingly threatened as a result of climate change. NY TIMES

NASA tests launch-abort system for moon mission

It aims at evacuation of astronauts under real-life conditions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

NASA carried out a successful test on Tuesday of a launch-abort system for the Orion capsule designed to take U.S. astronauts to the Moon. The three-minute exercise at Cape Canaveral in Florida aimed to test in almost real-life conditions the evacuation of astronauts from the capsule in the event of an explosion or rocket booster failure. In the test, an unmanned Orion capsule was launched by a mini-rocket – a repurposed first stage of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Fifty-five seconds after the launch, at an altitude of



Big moment: The Ascent Abort-2 flight test of NASA's Orion spacecraft lifting off from Cape Canaveral. REUTERS

9,500 m, a rocket-powered tower on top of the crew module ignited its engines to quickly pull the Orion away from a hypothetical rocket experiencing problems. In just 15 seconds, the capsule gained two miles of

altitude. Then the tower reoriented the capsule to prepare it for descent and disengagement from the tower. In real-life conditions, parachutes would open to ease the manned capsule's fall toward the Atlantic Ocean.

U.S. auto industry legend Lee Iacocca dies aged 94

He created Ford Mustang, saved Chrysler from bankruptcy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

Automobile industry legend Lee Iacocca, who is credited with creating the iconic Ford Mustang and saving Chrysler from bankruptcy, died on Tuesday at the age of 94. Mr. Iacocca died at his home in Bel-Air, a neighbourhood of Los Angeles, from complications of Parkinson's disease. Chrysler said in a statement that the company "is saddened" by news of Mr. Iacocca's death. "He played a historic role in steering Chrysler through crisis and making it a competitive force," the statement read. Mr. Iacocca began his career in 1946 at the Ford Motor Company, first as an engineer and then in sales. It



Lee Iacocca

Ford fired him in 1978. He, then, moved to the floundering Chrysler Corporation. In 1979, the U.S. government bailed Chrysler out of a potential bankruptcy with \$1.5 billion in secured loans. Mr. Iacocca took the reins once more and implemented a painful restructuring process. He had twisted Congress's arm for the loan, and he successfully brought Chrysler back from the brink – then paid off the loan ahead of schedule. Under his leadership, Chrysler invented the minivan and later the suburban utility vehicle (SUV). His famous line in Chrysler ads – "If you find a better car, buy it!" he would say, pointing at the viewer – turned him into a legend.

was his talent in marketing that helped realise his full potential. Mr. Iacocca had reaped massive sales over his career, particularly with the Ford Mustang that he designed in 1957. However, he was accused of plotting against Chairman Henry Ford II in a quest to reach the top company position.

South Americans marvel at solar eclipse

People in large numbers flocked to Chile's Coquimbo region to witness the moment

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE LA HIGUERA

A rare total solar eclipse plunged a vast swath of Latin America's southern cone into darkness late on Tuesday, briefly turning day into night and enthralled huge crowds in much of Chile and Argentina. Hundreds of thousands of people flocked to Chile's northern Coquimbo region near the Atacama desert – festooned with some of the planet's most powerful telescopes – which was situated directly on the eclipse's 100-mile-wide "path of totality." Large crowds congregated in the town of La Higuera, some 2,400 m above sea level and near the landmark La Silla Observatory, operated by the European Southern Observatory. "I don't believe there's a better place in the world to see an eclipse than La Silla,"



Stargazers' paradise: People watching the total solar eclipse in La Higuera, Chile, and, right, a view of the moon after it completely blocked the sun. AP



said Australian tourist Betsy Clark. Ms. Clark and her family were among thousands who flocked to the craggy peaks around the observatory on Tuesday. They were not disappointed. The eclipse had its longest duration as it made to La Silla: 2.36 minutes. "It was an experience to last several lifetimes," said Chilean tourist Rene Serey. Solar eclipses happen when the Sun, the moon and earth line up, allowing the moon to cast its shadow on earth. The area where the observatory is located, with its dry weather, crystal-clear air and low light pollution, is the perfect spot for such spectacles. In Argentina, people gathered to look into the sky in the western Cuyo, a wine-producing region, which had the country's longest exposure to the eclipse.

Shillong to host short film festival in November

Awards will be given in six categories

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI

A three-day festival of short films, the Kelvin Cinema Festival of Films, is set to roll out in Shillong from November 7 to 9, 2019. The festival will host a national competition for short films with prize money worth ₹4 lakh. The competition will be in six categories – best film, director, actor-male and female, cinematographer and editor. The northeast hosts many film festivals. The Guwahati International Film Festival is in its third edition. The Brahmaputra Valley International Film Festival focuses on the cinema of the region. There is also the Ad-da Film Festival held in Guwahati. The Kelvin Cinema Film Festival is being presented by producer, distributor

and philanthropist Shankar Lal Goenka and Jeevan Ram Mungi Devi Charitable Trust in association with Directorate of Information and Public Relation in the Department of Arts and Culture of the government of Meghalaya and Arts Cine Entertainment Society. It is supported by the Federation of Film Societies of India and will be held in the State Central Library in Shillong. The brainwave of young filmmakers Dominic Sangma and Pradip Kurbah (who are artistic director and head of programming, respectively, of the festival), is named after Kelvin, one of the first (now defunct) cinema halls in the northeast that was opened in 1926. Incidentally, the name Kelvin came from the projectors and technology used in the cinema halls.

27% of children with disabilities have never been to school: UNESCO

There are fewer girls with disabilities in school than boys, says report

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

More than one in four children with disabilities between ages 5 and 19 in India have never attended any educational institution, while three-fourths of five-year-olds with disabilities are not in school. A report by UNESCO and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences released on Wednesday recommends structural, funding and attitudinal changes to ensure that no child is left out of the right to education. Citing 2011 census data, the report showed that there are more than 78 lakh children with disabilities in the country between 5-19 years. Only

61% of them were attending an educational institution. About 12% had dropped out, while 27% had never been to school at all. "The number of children [with disabilities] enrolled in school drops significantly with each successive level of schooling. There are fewer girls with disabilities in school than boys," says the report. In 2014-15, there were more than 15 lakh children with disabilities in primary school. Two years later, enrolment had dropped by more than two lakh, data shows. At the higher secondary school level, there were less than 63,000 such children in 2016-17. Differences remain among various types of disabilities. Only 20% of children with visual and hearing impairments had never been in school. However, among children with multiple disabilities or mental illness, that figure rose to more than 50%. Home-based education Experts say the situation is worse than what the statistics show as the government data on enrolment includes children with disabilities in primary school, which often exists only on paper for children with disabilities. "In many parts of rural India, if a parent opts for home-based education, the child may not be getting an education at all. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan teacher is supposed to visit and check, but how often does

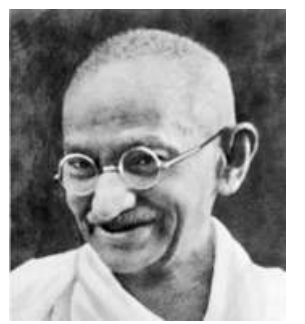
that happen? The number of excluded children is much higher than government data shows," said Arman Ali, executive director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People, who was part of the editorial board overseeing the report. "The Right to Education Act mandates enrolment, but not the provision of resources needed for the actual education of a child with disabilities," pointed out Susheela Jeliya, a disabilities specialist with World Vision India. Amendments to the RTE Act, 2009 to make it align with the Right of Persons With Disabilities Act, 2016 are among the major recommendations of the report.

Israel firm withdraws beer with Gandhi photo

Members raise concern in Rajya Sabha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA JERUSALEM

An Israeli company that stoked controversy by putting the image of Mahatma Gandhi on its liquor bottles to commemorate Israel's 71st independence Day on Wednesday apologised for hurting Indian sentiments. Rajya Sabha members on Tuesday expressed concern over the picture and this prompted Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu to direct External Affairs minister S. Jaishankar to look into the matter. "Malika Beer offers its heartfelt apologies to the people and the Government of India for hurting their sentiments," Gilad Dror, the brand manager of the company said in a statement, adding that the company had stopped production and is making efforts to withdraw



Mahatma Gandhi

the product from the market. Mahatma Gandhi was the only non-Israeli face on the limited edition bottles that included three former Israeli Prime Ministers – David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir and Menachem Begin and the father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl. The set featured a cartoon image of Gandhi decked out in shades and a tie-dye shirt.

Singapore schoolchildren struggle with stress

The country is embarking on reforms that will scrap some academic tests, change the rigid streaming process

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE SINGAPORE

Schoolchildren are paying a heavy price for Singapore's success in global education rankings, with rising numbers seeking psychiatric help as they struggle to cope with the relentless pressure for academic excellence. Children are reporting symptoms of anxiety and stress related to school as early as primary school, experts warn, and there have been extreme cases where pupils have been driven to suicide. Children often face long days at school, hours of homework, and are then pushed by parents to have private tuition, which is hav-

ing an impact on mental well-being – a recent report found that overall the city's pupils reported higher levels of anxiety than average. Now, in a bid to reduce stress in its schools, Singapore is embarking on reforms that will scrap some academic tests and change the rigid streaming process. "We have to balance the joy of learning and the rigour of education," Education Minister Ong Ye Kung said as he announced some of the changes in Parliament earlier this year. The move comes at a time when more authorities in Asia are being forced to assess if pupils are being overwhelmed by pressure to per-



All work and no play: Students in Singapore have hectic schedules both due to school and private tuitions. AFP

form – Hong Kong's Child Fatality Review listed problems with schoolwork among one of the key reasons for teen suicide. Japan reported its highest youth suicide rate in 30 years in 2016/17, with officials admitting there is an annual spike on September 1 – the start of the new school year.

Singapore has placed education at the heart of its development since independence in the 1960s and now tops the PISA international rankings for maths, reading, and science. But a study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which conducts the PISA assessment, found that despite academic success Singapore's students reported higher levels of anxiety about schoolwork than other nations. "Children are being forced to mature too fast without the relevant foundation and reasoning power to reassure oneself," said the psychologist Daniel Koh.

Nike pulls offensive shoes amid race controversy

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE WASHINGTON

Sportswear giant Nike said on Tuesday that it had withdrawn a shoe displaying an early version of the American flag, amidst reports of former National Football League quarterback Colin Kaepernick warning the company that the flag was associated with slavery. Nike had unveiled the design featuring an American Revolution-era design known as the 'Betsy Ross flag' to commemorate the U.S. Independence Day on July 4. But *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Mr. Kaepernick, who had led kneeling protests against racial inequality during the na-



The Nike Air Max 1 USA featuring 13 white stars in a circle on the heel. AP

tional anthems of NFL games in 2016, said that the design featuring 13 white stars in a circle was associated with a period of slavery legalised in the US after independence from Britain. However, Nike said in a statement that it withdrew the design on "concerns that it could unintentionally offend and detract from the nation's patriotic holiday."

Nicki Minaj to perform in Saudi Arabia

U.S. rapper Nicki Minaj will perform in Saudi Arabia this month, organisers said on Wednesday.

Ms. Minaj, known for her profanity-laced lyrics and raunchy music videos, will perform in Jeddah on July 18. The news was widely welcomed in a country where two-thirds of the population is under 30. The performance in the kingdom, which has a strict social code, comes as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pursues a liberalisation drive that has led to new cinemas, concerts and sporting extravaganzas.