

IN BRIEF



Vaping: U.S. teen gets double lung transplant
A 17-year-old American boy facing "imminent death" from vaping injuries has undergone a double lung transplant, the first in a patient suffering from the effects of e-cigarettes, a hospital in Detroit said. The teen's lungs had an "enormous amount of inflammation and scarring," said a doctor. REUTERS



Russell Crowe's property scorched by bushfires
Bushfires raging across Australia's east coast destroyed two buildings on a rural property owned by Russell Crowe, the Oscar-winning actor said on Twitter on Wednesday. The 55-year-old posted a video and pictures on his Twitter feed of a helicopter water-bombing smoke-filled trees near a fence and driveway. REUTERS



Friends reunion special planned for HBO Max
Could the "Friends" be getting back together, if only for one night? *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* recently reported that preliminary talks were under way for an unscripted reunion special that would feature all six *Friends* actors and air on upcoming streaming service HBO Max. REUTERS

Climate change is harming health of children, says *Lancet* report

'Infants will bear the greatest burden of malnutrition and rising food prices'

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

Climate change is already damaging the health of the world's children and is set to endanger the well-being of an entire generation, unless the world meets the target to limit warming to well below 2°C, according to a major new report published in *The Lancet*.

"The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change" is a comprehensive yearly analysis tracking progress across 41 key indicators. The project is a collaboration between 120 experts from 35 institutions, including the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, University College London, and the Tsinghua University in Beijing.

The report notes that as temperatures rise, infants



At risk: More children could become susceptible to infectious diseases, says the study. ■ B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

will bear the greatest burden of malnutrition and rising food prices – average yield potential of maize and rice has declined almost 2% in India since the 1960s, with malnutrition already responsible for two-thirds of the deaths of children under

five years. Also, children will suffer most from the rise in infectious diseases – with climatic suitability for the *Vibrio* bacteria that cause cholera rising 3% a year in India since the early 1980s, the study warns. Co-author Poornima

Prabhakaran, Public Health Foundation of India, said: "With its huge population and high rates of healthcare inequality, poverty and malnutrition, few countries are likely to suffer from the health effects of climate change as much as India."

She explained that diarrhoeal infections, a major cause of child mortality, will spread into new areas, whilst deadly heat waves could soon become the norm.

"Over the past two decades, the government of India has launched many initiatives and programmes to address a variety of diseases and risk factors. But this report shows that the public health gains achieved over the past 50 years could soon be reversed by the changing climate," she said.

Charles to spend birthday in Bengaluru

British prince will join his wife at a wellness centre

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

Prince Charles, who is in India on his 10th official visit to celebrate British-Indian ties, will mark his 71st birthday on Thursday at a wellness centre in Bengaluru.

The Prince of Wales will join his wife, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, who has already arrived in the city for a week-long rejuvenation therapy at Soukya International Holistic Health Centre.

Ms. Camilla arrived here with five others, including members of the royal family. Ms. Camilla is undergoing



Prince Charles helping in the community kitchen at Gurudwara Bangla Sahib in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ PTI

therapy under the care of holistic health practitioner Issac Mathai, who has been a consultant to the royal family for several years now.

While this is her sixth visit to the centre, Prince Charles is visiting for the first time. The duchess has been put on a South Indian diet with vege-

tarian organic food. The couple is said to be fond of idly, dosa and organic soups.

Gurudwara visit

On Wednesday, the prince visited the Bangla Sahib Gurudwara in New Delhi. Following the tradition, he covered his head with a scarf and paid obeisance. He also helped in preparing chapatis in the 'langar' or community kitchen area and interacted with the devotees.

He was presented with a 'kirpan' by Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

The prince also met President Ram Nath Kovind at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. (With inputs from PTI)

Writer Eve Ensler calls for end to the silence around abuse

She launches campaign to counter gender-based violence

DEBORAH CORNELIUS
MUMBAI

Girls are born with the inherent right to thrive and not just survive, American playwright, performer, feminist, author and activist Eve Ensler said at the Royal Opera House in Mumbai on Wednesday.

Ms. Ensler was in the city ahead of the launch of One Billion Rising's 2020 campaign, hosted by One Billion Rising (OBR) India and Delhi, chapters of a global campaign calling for an end to violence against women. The event was organised by Royal Opera House, Mumbai and Avid Learning along with Akshara Centre, a not-for-profit organisation and resource centre working for the empowerment of women.

Ms. Ensler also launched her book *The Apology* at the



Eve Ensler

event, where she spoke on sexual abuse and gender justice in a conversation with journalist Faye D'Souza.

Actor Rahul Bose kicked-started the evening with a reading of six excerpts from Ms. Ensler's book. Ms. Ensler, 66, said her book was the apology her dead father ought to have given but never did for sexually abusing her from the ages of five to ten.

"I've never witnessed a man publicly apologise for rape, incest, battery or violence," said an impassioned Ms. Ensler talking about the fake apologies that usually go along the lines of "I'm sorry you feel that way." "I was going to write the words that I had never gotten, [and create] a blueprint for men," she said.

Ms. Ensler also made references to U.S. President Donald Trump and cases of sexual misconduct against him. "I feel like something is happening in this world we are living in with this strongman-machismo misogyny and the desecration of women," said Ms. Ensler. "Once someone breaks the silence, people can have courage and we have to build more resistance against this wave of fascist darkness that is circling the planet."

French circus bear Mischa dies after rescue

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

A performing bear used in shows in France has died following an operation at an animal refuge, just two months after he was rescued from owners who allegedly subjected him to years of ill treatment, officials said on Wednesday.

Mischa had become a celebrity in France when the government in September banned him from appearing in performances and ordered him to be placed into care after an animal rights group accused his owners of keeping him in conditions akin to a mediaeval prison.

Nine doctors were conducting a major operation on Mischa as the bear's paws and nose had been infected with maggots and recent scans had showed several tumours.

His plight raised new questions in France about the treatment of wild animals in circuses and fairs, where their use is still legal but set to be the subject of new regulations to be unveiled later this year.

"I am very sad to learn of the death of Mischa the bear. I did everything so that he stopped performing and could be treated," Environment Minister Elisabeth Borne wrote on Twitter.

WHO initiative to boost insulin access

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
GENEVA

The World Health Organisation on Wednesday said it had begun an initiative that would cut prices and dramatically increase insulin access for diabetics.

The UN health agency voiced alarm ahead of World Diabetes Day on Thursday at the soaring prevalence of diabetes in the world, with nearly three times more diabetics today than 35 years ago.

There are currently more than 420 million diabetic adults in the world, up from 180 million in 1980, WHO statistics show. And according to the International Diabetes Federation, the number could swell to 629 million by 2045. "Diabetes is on the rise globally, and rising faster in low-income countries," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

Prequalification norms

"Too many people who need insulin encounter financial hardship in accessing it, or go without it and risk their lives," he warned, adding that "WHO's prequalification initiative for insulin is a vital step towards ensuring everyone who needs this life-saving product can access it".

The initiative involves the evaluation of insulin developed by manufacturers to ensure their quality, safety, efficacy and affordability.

Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death and a major cause of debilitating complications like heart attacks, stroke, kidney failure, blindness and lower limb amputations.

Polanski faces calls for boycott of film after fresh rape claim

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
PARIS

Roman Polanski was facing calls for a boycott of his new film which opened in France on Wednesday, in the wake of the latest rape accusation against the controversial director.

An online campaign to boycott his historical drama based on the Dreyfus affair, *An Officer and a Spy*, was backed by former French Women's Minister Laurence Rossignol.

"I will not go to see it," she told France 2 television, urging others to give it the cold shoulder.

"We cannot allow him to wipe this away, and going to see this film is that," she added after demonstrators tried to block people entering a preview screening in Paris on Tuesday night.



Roman Polanski

The legendary film-maker has been under mounting pressure since a French photographer claimed on Friday that he raped her in 1975 when she was 18 after beating her "into submission" at his Swiss chalet.

Valentine Monnier said she felt impelled to speak out after Polanski compared himself to the hero of his new film, Alfred Dreyfus, the

Jewish officer wrongly persecuted as a spy by the French army at the turn of the 20th century.

The 86-year-old French-Polish director has been a fugitive from U.S. justice since admitting to the statutory rape of a 13-year-old girl in 1977 in a plea bargain to avoid a trial on more serious charges.

Polanski was accused of drugging and raping the girl, and fled to France when it appeared a judge was reconsidering his release.

Promotional interviews on French television and radio for *An Officer and a Spy* were either pulled or cancelled after the latest accusations – which Polanski fiercely denies. The French directors guild, ARP, will decide next week whether to suspend him.

Joyful welcome



Traditional tunes: Students wearing farmer hats participate in a dance rehearsal for the welcoming ceremony of Pope Francis in Bangkok, Thailand, on Wednesday. The Pope is expected to visit the country from November 20-23. ■ AP

Actor Amol Palekar returns to the stage after long absence

Kusur, a thriller, will be performed in Mumbai on November 24

SHOUMJIT BANERJEE
PUNE

There's a touch of painter Lucian Freud about the famously reclusive actor Amol Palekar as he welcomes me into his studio in the leafy environs of Pune's Prabhat Road, far from the city's maddening crowds.

"When I turned 70, I decided to go back to my first love that is painting. For the last five years, my vocation has primarily been that of a painter. I paint the whole day," says the actor, as he settles down to talk about his return to the stage after 25 years with the thrilling play titled *Kusur* ("The Mistake").

What made him turn back to theatre after his long, enforced absence?

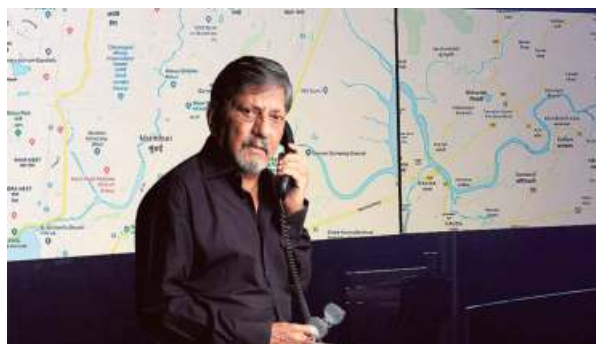
"The problem was to find a good enough script. While I keep getting a steady stream

of offers to perform in plays and films, I found nothing which was particularly exciting, challenging or different. So, when Sandhya came up with *Kusur* which is absolutely riveting, it made me start biting my nails and wonder whether I will be able to stretch myself and remove the rust of so many years," says Mr. Palekar.

Partners in play

Adapted by his wife and intimate collaborator Sandhya Gokhale from the 2018 Danish film *Den Skyldige* ("The Guilty"), the play – jointly helmed by Mr. Palekar and Ms. Gokhale – will be staged in Mumbai's NCPA on November 24 on the occasion of the actor's 75th birthday.

The thespian plays a retired Assistant Commissioner of Police at an emergency



Back in the act: Amol Palekar. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

control room in a Mumbai police station on a rainy night which proves to be momentous and disconcerting.

The unconventional drama, with its byzantine twists is also a probing and trenchant 'social thriller' at the same time.

"What appealed to me about *Kusur* was that without our realising, we have our own points of view, our own biases which are very difficult to overcome. Here is a thriller which is completely

different. Every seven or ten minutes there is a disconcerting twist that keeps changing like a kaleidoscope and overturns our assumptions while laying bare our prejudices. I thought the exercise was riveting and challenging," says Mr. Palekar.

The play is also a thanksgiving of sorts for the actor's legions of fans who have clamoured for his return to acting.

"In this long passage of time, I have been simply

overwhelmed with the love and affection the audience still keeps showering on me and this, despite me not having acted in theatre and films for such a long time. When people, especially from the younger generation still walk up to me with so much warmth and say that they miss me, I am all the more surprised and happy. So, I thought, well, this what I owe them and I hope I give them my best with this new offering," he says.

According to Mr. Palekar, *Kusur* offered him a chance to be on top of his game as well as satisfying his ever-present fire to conquer new horizons and experiment anew.

"If you see a musician, however acclaimed he may, he religiously does his *riyaz* daily. Likewise, the dancer practices her or his craft rigorously but never the actor. We actors take things for granted too early. So, this

basics I learnt as a young man and brush up what I had forgotten," he observes, remarking, "Only when you are in command of your craft can you start experimenting".

He notes that the fascinating part of the play was that it is a thriller.

Nuanced offering

"The offerings in the thriller genre these days are either a murder-mystery or a high-octane, larger than life film with convoluted plots. But not so with *Kusur* and the kind of nuance that Sandhya has brought in adapting it to Indian conditions is amazing," he says.

If Mr. Palekar's gentle, yet perceptive comedies and dramas like *Rajnigandha*, *Chhoti Si Baat* and *Gol Maal* echoed Jack Lemmon's American everyman, his sneaky, startling and devious turns in films like *Bhumika*,

Plot No. 5 and *Ankahee* brings to mind subtle European actors like Jean-Louis Trintignant.

"I have never followed the diktats of the market. Right at the beginning of my career, after my first three silver jubilee hits as a hero, I chose Shyam Benegal's *Bhumika* in which I played a negative character. This was unheard of at the time and thoroughly upset many in the industry who questioned my choice. My simple answer was that once I know that I can do this easily, I lose my interest in that thing," says Mr. Palekar, stating that he has always gone against the tide.

"The artist in me wants to find out if there is something else which I haven't tried out and if I can do that successfully and whether people would like this new experimentation. So, I have never been perturbed by market forces. The best part is that

people have not only loved me but today they respect me for this," he remarks.

In *Kusur*, one finds a perfect symbiosis and harmony of his primary vocation as a painter and his 'accidental' vocation as an actor.

"The painter in me has always inspired the actor and the director in me and vice versa. Whatever I learnt in films, especially the usage of sound and the visual quality of a sound, I can relate to as a painter," he says, remarking, "I am only grateful that I can dabble in three different art forms."

Mr. Palekar has made a commitment for a limited run of only 25 shows.

"I do not only want to perform in the major theatre-going cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru of Kolkata but want to take this play to places like Guwahati or Surat where such plays or performances may not reach audiences there," he says.