

IN BRIEF


Explorer Barbara Hillary passes away at 88

NEW YORK
Barbara Hillary, who was in her 70s when she became the first black woman to officially make it to the North and South Poles, has died at 88. She had retired from a nursing career and survived separate occurrences of breast and lung cancer when she started travelling in the Arctic. **AP**


Kamala Harris makes dosas with Mindy Kaling

WASHINGTON
U.S. Senator and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris recently joined comedian, actor and writer Mindy Kaling at the latter's Los Angeles home to make masala dosa, during which they discussed their south Indian heritage. The video of their joint dosa making adventure has gone viral on social media. **PTI**


Australian writer Clive James is dead

LONDON
Clive James, an expatriate Australian writer and broadcaster who wrote incisively and often hilariously about television, literature and current affairs, has died aged 80, his agents said on Wednesday. James has won awards for journalism and broadcasting. His memoirs *Unreliable Memories* was a bestseller. **REUTERS**

'Global warming alters rainfall pattern'

Scientists say that a shift in a key weather system is stimulating cyclones in the Bay of Bengal

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

Global warming has altered a key weather system and that may be whetting cyclones in the Bay of Bengal, decreasing winter rain in north India and altering global rainfall patterns, a study by a team of Indian and U.S. researchers has found.

The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO), as it's called, is a moving band of rain clouds that travels around the globe spanning 12,000-20,000 km across the tropical oceans. In its journey, it interacts with surface waters of the Indo-Pacific ocean, the largest pool of warm water in the globe, and due to this – the authors say – the lifecycle of the MJO gets affected.

The MJO clouds on average are spending only 15 days, instead of 19, over the Indian Ocean.

Over the west Pacific, it increased by five days (from an



After the gale: In this photo dated November 19, 2019, men are clearing debris from their damaged house after cyclone Bulbul hit the area in Namkhana, West Bengal. **REUTERS**

average 16 days to 23 days). "It is this change in the residence time of MJO clouds that has altered the weather patterns across the globe," according to the research paper that appears in the latest edition of the journal *Nature*.

When the MJO appears in the Indian Ocean during the

monsoon months of June-September, it can increase rains over India. This year, India was poised to receive below normal monsoon rainfall in April but ended up with excessive rain partly due to the MJO.

The study, led by Roxy Mathew Koll, a researcher at the Indian Institute of Tropi-

cal Meteorology, Pune doesn't delve into the impact of the MJO during the monsoon months. However, Mr. Koll told *The Hindu*, the change in the MJO could drift warmer surface water towards the Bay of Bengal and increase cyclones. "The MJOs haven't been as extensively studied as say the El Nino. This study shows that we need better observation of the Indian Ocean and improve forecasts that can warn us about a cyclone."

Ocean temperatures

To compute the reduction in the number of MJO days over the Indian Ocean, the researchers – they included scientists from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the University of Washington and the University of Tokyo – compared ocean temperatures from 1981-2018 to compute the

changes. Global warming has been expanding the size of the warm pool on average by 2,300 sq. km. annually from 1900-2018 and at an accelerated average rate of 4,000 sq. km. per year during 1981-2018.

The changes in MJO behaviour have increased the rainfall over northern Australia, west Pacific, Amazon basin, southwest Africa and southeast Asia (Indonesia, Philippines and Papua New Guinea).

At the same time these changes have brought a decline in rainfall over central Pacific, along the west and east coast of U.S. (e.g., California), north India, east Africa and the Yangtze basin in China. The frequent California fires, droughts in Africa and East Asian floods and cyclones in the Bay of Bengal may be linked to these changes in global weather, the study noted.

Singapore shows off rare Philippine raptors

Only 800 believed to be left in the wild

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SINGAPORE

Singapore showed off on Wednesday two critically-endangered eagles that were loaned from the Philippines as part of a breeding programme to reverse the dwindling numbers of the feathered giants.

Destruction of tropical rainforest and relentless hunting have decimated the population of the Philippine Eagle – one of the world's biggest and most powerful birds whose wingspan can reach 2 metres with only around 800 believed left in the wild, conservationists say.

The birds, Geothermica and Sambisig, are the first pair ever to be sent outside the Philippines and arrived in Singapore in June on a 10-year loan from Manila.

The creatures are being cared for at the city-state's



A male Philippine eagle named Geothermica. **AFP**

main aviary and were shown to the media, as part of events marking 50 years of diplomatic relations between the countries.

"Any future offspring of the eagles will be returned to the Philippines to contribute to the sustainability of the species' population," said Wildlife Reserves Singapore, which runs the aviary.

Outside the box: Takashi Miike's latest film explores the greys

The celebrated Japanese filmmaker discusses his thriller, *First Love*, which had its Indian premiere at the 50th edition of IFFI

KENNETH ROSARIO
PANAJI

Before the Indian premiere of *First Love* at the 50th International Film Festival of India, celebrated Japanese filmmaker Takashi Miike, walked on-stage and introduced his latest film as "a kind movie". What followed was a nearly two-hour-long thriller, packed with classic Miike-style violence – including decapitations and samurai swords – and oodles of dark humour, prompting me to ask: where is the kindness? Mr. Miike said in Japanese via a translator, "Ultimately, violence is an expression of love."

In a short interview with

The Hindu, the 59-year-old film-maker said, "Where there is love, there is a possibility of violence but it's not that love is connected to violence but there's a possibility." Taking place overnight in Tokyo, the film revolves around the rather fragile relationship between a young boxer, who believes he is terminally ill, and a drug-fuelled sex worker, who hallucinates about her torturous father. The two find themselves in a drug-smuggling racket, battling the police, assassins and a lot of bad luck.

Receiving thunderous applause and whistles in a packed Kala Academy, *First Love*, concluded a five-film



Takashi Miike

tribute to Mr. Miike, the festival's 'director in focus' this year. The retrospective included *Ichu the Killer* (2001), *Audition* (1999), *Dead or Alive* (1999) and *13 Assassins* (2010).

With *First Love*, Mr. Miike sought out to revisit the yakuza gangs, whose stories have formed a sub-genre of gangster films in Japan. "They exist in the society, and it's not that they are bad people but they are also not good," said Mr. Miike. Caught in the web of yakuza are three unsuspecting characters – boxer Leo, sex worker Monica and Julie, a woman seeking revenge for her slain pimp boyfriend. Laced with humour, the chase in the film, often resulting in bloodshed, is sharp and flavourful.

Does the filmmaker intend to generate catharsis among his audience through vio-

lence, as is the case with his characters? "When you see the violence of Hollywood movies, there is a tendency that the hero is combating and confronting many people, without much harm to himself," says Mr. Miike. "But in my films, the hero takes a lot of hits so the very act of the hero being the one on the receiving end, makes the audience cheer and connect with him."

Bending genres

With a vast repertoire of over 100 films, the auteur has tried his hand at everything from horror, gore, action, family drama to even musicals. But he prefers to abstain

from labelling his own films. "It's the audience or the media who classify it in a certain genre but for me, I'm just making a movie," explained Mr. Miike. At present, he is working on a Japanese television drama, which airs on Sunday mornings and is catered towards girls, as young as three. "It shows women as heroes, and it shows that I can go beyond violence," he said.

Interestingly, the female characters in *First Love*, Julia and Monica, are complete opposites of each other. While one is strong and vengeful, the other is docile and traumatised. Mr. Miike informed that the two actress-

es essaying the roles have a lot in common with their characters. "The first one (Sakurako Konishi) is more naive and feels nervous, like a fish out of water and the other one (Becky) is a veteran at life... she broke up with musician Enon Kawatani two years before our film, which was a big scandal and she couldn't find any work," informed Mr. Miike.

For all those, like Becky, who are embarking or re-starting their lives, as filmmakers or actors, Mr. Miike has only one piece of advice: "Live life before making movies, because you cannot make films about life, without having lived one."

Deck the fairground



Fun time: A glowing Ferris wheel at the Christmas Market in Bremerhaven, Germany. **AFP**

1,500-year-old shipwreck discovered

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
NICOSIA

An official with the Department of Antiquities in Cyprus confirmed on Saturday the discovery of an ancient shipwreck laden with cargo of ceramic pots off the south shores of Cyprus.

Ceramics expert at the University of Cyprus, Stella Demesticha, said that an abundance of underwater findings were ceramic pots dating back to the end of the 6th century or 7th century.

Extensive remains of amphorae were found scattered over an area that seemed to be part of an ancient commercial port.

New snake species found in Arunachal

Researchers spotted the reptiles inside the thickly forested Tally Valley Sanctuary

SHIV SAHAY SINGH
KOLKATA

Researchers have discovered a new species of non-venomous burrowing snake in Arunachal Pradesh, named *Trachischium aptei*.

The snakes were found under fallen logs inside a thickly forested area of the Tally Valley Wildlife Sanctuary near the town of Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh during a field expedition by researchers in July 2019.

Researchers Harshal Bhonsle, Gaurang Gowande and Zeeshan Mirza have published their find in the international science journal *Comptes Rendus Biologies*.

While Mr. Bonsel is associated with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai, Mr. Gowande is associated with Pune's Ferguson College, and Mr. Mirza works with the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru.

Mr. Mirza said that the newly discovered species



Evasive type: *Trachischium aptei*. **SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT**

belongs to a group of fossorial snakes that live mostly underground, and surface mainly during or after a heavy monsoon shower.

Burrowing habit

Experts behind the discovery suggested that due to the burrowing habits of species of this genus, snakes belonging to the group are seldom seen and hence remain poorly studied.

This could have been one of the reasons that the species had eluded the researchers.

Trachischium aptei was named so to honour the contribution of Deepak Apte, noted marine biologist and Director of the BNHS.

Trachischium are commonly called slender snakes. Seven species are distributed across the Himalayas, and the Indo-Burma and Indo-China regions.

Morphologically, the snake is distinguished by smooth and dorsal scales arranged in 15 rows throughout the body.

The dorsal colour of the

holotype is dark brown to black with faint dorsal longitudinal lines. Large-sized members of the genus measure about 293 mm to 299 mm (measuring a little less than a foot).

Biodiversity hotspot

Researchers behind the discovery, who covered large tracts of forested land in northeast India, said that they have documented more species from the forests of Arunachal Pradesh, which is likely to yield new species. Work is under way to describe them.

Underlining that forests across northeast India have not been well-explored for their biodiversity, especially reptiles, amphibians and most invertebrate groups, the authors said that "anthropogenic pressures like road widening, construction of dams and hydropower plants threaten the forest and biodiversity across Arunachal Pradesh".

FRONTLINE

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SECULARISM

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JNU

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