



25 May 2024

National and International News

<p>Ferroptosis</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research by Columbia University has revealed that ferroptosis, a specific form of cell death, occurs in the lungs of severe COVID-19 patients. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This discovery sheds light on the previously unclear cause of extreme lung damage leading to conditions such as pneumonia, inflammation, and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). Published in Nature Communications, the study found that ferroptosis, which involves the collapse of outer fat layers in certain cells, is the primary mechanism behind COVID-19 lung disease. This form of cell death, distinct from the more common type involving the breakdown of internal cell molecules, was first identified by Professor Brent Stockwell in 2012. Stockwell's lab has demonstrated that while ferroptosis plays a role in normal bodily processes, it can also attack healthy cells in neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and Lou Gehrig's disease. The study suggests that halting ferroptosis with therapeutic drugs could improve outcomes for severe COVID-19 patients. Additionally, inducing ferroptosis might be beneficial for treating diseases characterized by uncontrolled cell growth, such as cancer. This research offers new potential treatment avenues for combating COVID-19 lung disease, with Professor Stockwell emphasizing its importance in improving health outcomes and reducing mortality.
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<p>ASMPA Missile</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France has successfully tested the updated ASMPA supersonic missile, capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. • Defence Minister Sébastien Lecornu announced the successful test. • This test underscores France's commitment to maintaining a robust nuclear deterrence capability. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ASMPA, developed by MBDA France, has been a crucial component of France's defense strategy since its initial development in 1986. • The missile has undergone several upgrades, with the latest modernization program, ASMPA-R, launched in 2016. • The recent test, using a strategic Rafale fighter jet, demonstrates the missile's reliability and France's readiness. • The Durandal military exercises, running from May 13 to June 14, focus on nuclear deterrence and military readiness. • This successful test coincides with increased military activities in Russia's Southern Military District, amid escalating nuclear rhetoric from President Vladimir Putin.
<p>Neanderthals</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent analysis of two Neanderthal skeletons has uncovered traces of three viruses: adenovirus, herpesvirus, and papillomavirus. • These findings suggest that Neanderthals, who lived around 50,000 years ago, were infected with these viruses, making them the oldest known human viruses, surpassing the previous record by 20,000 years. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research team, by extracting DNA from the skeletons found in the Chagyrskaya cave in Russia, identified viral sequences by comparing them to modern viruses and ruled out contamination from modern humans or predators.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The identified viruses are akin to those causing cold sores, genital warts, and cold-like symptoms in humans today. • This study supports the theory that viruses may have played a role in the extinction of Neanderthals around 40,000 years ago. • Understanding these ancient viruses can provide insights into the evolution of modern diseases and potentially inform the development of new vaccines and antiviral treatments. • Despite the intriguing possibility of resurrecting ancient viruses, experts like Sally Wasef caution against it due to the complexities involved in reconstructing damaged viral DNA. • As the field of ancient virology grows, more discoveries are expected to enhance our understanding of past and present diseases.
<p>Preeclampsia</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preeclampsia is a serious pregnancy complication characterized by high blood pressure and potential organ damage. • It affects approximately 5-8% of pregnancies globally and is a leading cause of maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality. • Early detection is crucial as it can save lives. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Preeclampsia Day, observed annually on May 22nd, aims to raise awareness about this life-threatening condition. • The Society of Fetal Medicine (SFM) highlights the importance of early detection and proper management to safeguard the health of both mothers and babies. • The SFM calls on healthcare professionals to stay informed about the latest research and advancements in diagnosing and managing preeclampsia. • They also advocate for policy support to enhance maternal healthcare services, ensuring all women have access to quality prenatal care.



GSAP SKILLS Platform



Context:

- The **Global Species Action Plan (GSAP)** has unveiled **GSAP SKILLS**, an online platform aimed at **bolstering species conservation efforts worldwide**.
- Launched during the Fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, **Convention on Biological Diversity in Nairobi on 22 May 2024**, GSAP SKILLS is a critical component of the broader GSAP initiative.

Key points:

- GSAP, designed to support the **implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**, emphasizes strategic interventions for species conservation aligned with the GBF targets.
- Developed collaboratively by the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**, its Commissions, Members, and Partners, the GSAP calls upon governments and stakeholders to unite in scaling up species conservation actions in response to the escalating biodiversity crisis.
- The GSAP SKILLS online platform serves as a **comprehensive resource hub, offering tools, training support, and technical guidance to assist governments and stakeholders worldwide** in effectively implementing the main species outcomes of the GBF.
- It aims to prevent extinctions, reduce extinction risks, and maintain or increase the abundance of native wild species.

About:

- Managed proactively by **IUCN**, the **GSAP SKILLS platform** is responsive to the needs of governments and stakeholders for effective species conservation actions.
- The platform's development has been **principally supported by the Ministry of Environment, Republic of Korea**, with additional resources from the **Tech4Nature Initiative** launched by **IUCN and Huawei in 2020**.

Kerala Regional News



Kerala Faces Financial Turmoil Due to Loan Approval Delay; June Payments at Risk

Context:

- Kerala faces a financial crisis due to the central government's delay in approving a loan request.
- This delay affects the state's ability to pay June salaries and pensions.

Key Points:

- Kerala's loan request has been pending for over two months.
- State Finance Secretary Rabindra Kumar Agarwal is in Delhi to negotiate approval.
- Over 16,000 employees retiring in May need their benefits.
- The central government usually notifies loan availability in April, which hasn't happened this year.
- The delay may be retaliatory, linked to Kerala's Supreme Court case against loan control.

Cabinet approves draft bill to increase panchayat and municipality wards



Context

- The Kerala Cabinet has approved a draft bill to increase the number of panchayat and municipality wards.
- This decision is part of broader efforts to improve local governance and representation.

Key Points

- **Legislative Session:** The 11th session of the 15th Kerala Legislative Assembly will convene on June 10.
- **Padma Award Committee:** A special inspection committee is formed for Padma Awards 2025, including key ministers and officials.
- **Government Guarantees:** Guarantees for loans to K Phone Limited and funding agreements for the development of Varkala and Thiruvananthapuram Central Railway Stations.

Additional Information



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This initiative aims to enhance local administrative efficiency and ensure better service delivery to the public.
<p>Kerala Governor Challenges State Government Over University VC Appointments with Legal Action</p>	<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Kerala Governor has initiated legal action against the state government to prevent the appointment of vice-chancellors (VCs) in eleven universities. • This move follows legal advisor P. Sreekumar's recommendation to exclude Senate representatives and form a two-member search committee. <p>Key Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governor plans to file a writ petition against the state government, universities, and higher education department. • The High Court previously blocked the Governor's two-member committee. • Dispute over who has the authority to appoint VCs: the Governor or the state government. <p>Additional Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Supreme Court has stated that the Chancellor should appoint VCs. • The state government argues it has the prerogative under Article 162 of the Constitution.



Historic Pen of Sree Narayana Guru to be Enshrined at Washington Ashram on May 26



Context

- A pen blessed by the touch of Sree Narayana Guru will be installed at the Sree Narayana Guru Ashram in Washington on May 26th.
- The pen has historical significance and was preserved in Ulloor Sreedharma Nilayam's puja room.

Key Points

- Event: Installation at Washington Ashram
- Date: May 26th
- **Significance:** Blessed by Sree Narayana Guru, gifted to disciple V Bhargavan Vaidyar
- Current Custodians: Sheela R Chandran and Vishnu Sharma

Additional Information

- The pen symbolizes the **spiritual and cultural heritage of Sree Narayana Guru's teachings and has been safeguarded by the Guru's disciples and their descendants.**

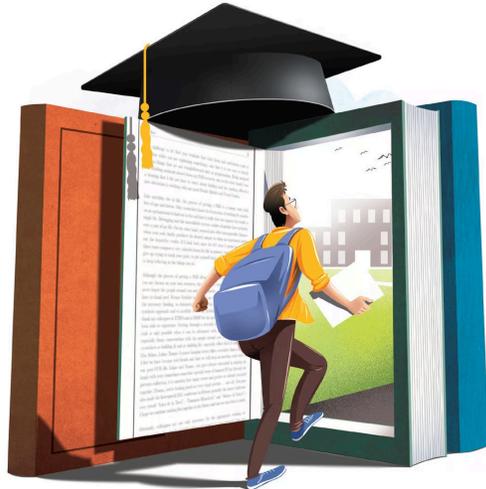
Narayana Guru

- **Sree Narayana Guru (1855-1928)** was a prominent Indian social reformer, spiritual leader, and philosopher from Kerala.
- He advocated for social equality, education, and spiritual enlightenment, challenging the caste system and promoting unity.
- Guru's teachings emphasized the importance of self-improvement, morality, and non-violence.
- He established temples, schools, and libraries, making significant contributions to the upliftment of marginalized communities.



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New Bill on Private Universities Set for Debate in Kerala Assembly



Context

- The Kerala government is preparing to introduce a bill that allows the establishment and regulation of private universities in the state.
- This move is seen as a significant policy shift aimed at enhancing the quality of higher education by leveraging the infrastructure and academic standards of private institutions.

Key Points

- **Draft Bill:** Ready and awaiting cabinet approval to be tabled in the assembly.
- **Regulations:** Private universities will adhere to strict state-imposed regulations.
- **Institutional Standards:** Only institutions meeting high academic and infrastructural standards will be considered.
- **Government Oversight:** Private universities will function under state legislation, ensuring compliance with social justice norms.
- **College Upgrades:** State to upgrade select colleges to constituent universities with additional government support.

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