

Daily News Decode

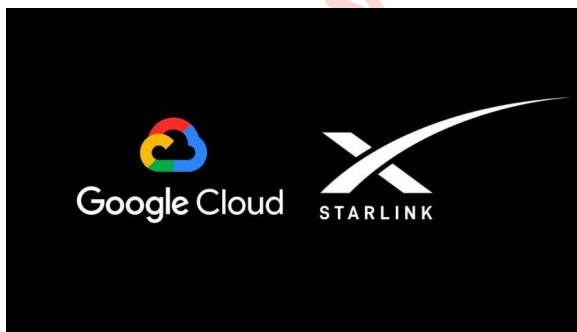
18.05.21

Manipur CM launches 'MOMA Market' for vegetable



- Manipur Chief Minister has launched a smartphone application "Manipur Organic Mission Agency (MOMA) Market" for home delivery of fresh vegetables to ensure that people get fresh vegetables at their doorsteps during the COVID-19 induced curfew.
- MOMA a unit of the state horticulture and soil conservation department launched the app under the CM's supervision to make fresh vegetables available for day-to-day consumption and to reduce the distress sales of farm produce during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown
- MOMA has been assigned to work in the area and channel farm produces to consumers via home delivery in order to prevent vegetable losses and COVID-19 spread.
- Farmers Producer Companies (FPCs) working with MOMA will harvest vegetables from various farms.
- It will then be transported to cold storage and warehouses at the department's complex in Sanjenthong and other locations.
- Finally, the consumer's MOMA Market order will be shipped to their doorstep.

Google Cloud partnered with SpaceX for providing satellite internet service



- Google Cloud and SpaceX signed a deal for providing internet service through Starlink satellite.
- Google will provide the Cloud infrastructure for this connectivity Project, while Space X will install ground terminals in Google's cloud data centres for connecting Starlink satellites.
- It will help in providing fast internet service to the rural areas. This service will be available to customers before the end of 2021.
- The first Starlink terminal will be established in a Google data centre in Ohio, United States.
- Earlier, Microsoft has also signed a similar agreement with SpaceX to connect its Azure cloud to Starlink.
- Starlink is a project under which SpaceX aims to send 12,000 satellites to provide space-based internet.

World AIDS Vaccine Day: 18 May



- World AIDS Vaccine Day, (also known as HIV Vaccine Awareness Day), is observed annually on May 18 to promote the continued urgent need for a vaccine to prevent HIV infection and AIDS.
- The first World AIDS Vaccine Day was thus observed on May 18, 1998, to commemorate the anniversary of Clinton's speech.
- The concept of World AIDS Vaccine Day was proposed on May 18, 1997, during a commencement speech at Morgan State University made by then-President Bill Clinton, which underlined the need for a vaccine to curb the spread of HIV.

IIT Ropar developed portable eco-friendly mobile cremation system



- IIT Ropar has developed a portable eco-friendly electric cremation system.
- It is one of its kind of technology that produces no smoke despite using wood for cremation.
- It is based on wick-stove technology.
- The cart has been developed in collaboration with the company Cheema Boilers Limited.
- The cart-shaped mobile cremation system has stainless steel insulation on both sides of the cart for reducing heat loss and wood consumption.
- It takes less time to dispose of the body entirely as compared to normal wood-based cremation.
- It uses half wood than normal wood-based cremation, so it is an eco-friendly technology.

India loses ONGC-discovered Farzad-B gas field in Iran



- India lost the ONGC Videsh Ltd-discovered Farzad-B gas field in the Persian Gulf after Iran awarded a contract for developing the giant gas field to a local company.
- The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has signed a contract worth USD 1.78 billion with Petropars Group for the development of Farzad B Gas Field in the Persian Gulf.
- The field holds 23 trillion cubic feet of in-place gas reserves, of which about 60 per cent is recoverable.
- It also holds gas condensates of about 5,000 barrels per billion cubic feet of gas.

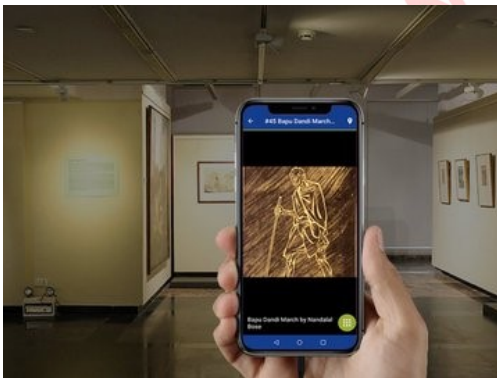
- ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL), the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC), had in 2008 discovered a giant gas field in the Farsi offshore exploration block.
- OVL and its partners had offered to invest up to USD 11 billion for the development of the discovery, which was later named Farzad-B.

IDRBT building National Digital Financial Infrastructure (NADI)



- The Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT) is building a next-generation Digital Financial Infrastructure named National Digital Financial Infrastructure (NADI).
- NADI would provide a roadmap and framework for future digital financial services growth in India.
- NADI will consist of modern network infrastructure which includes 5G/Edge Cloud with SDNs (software-defined networking) for connecting to the critical data centre infrastructure at the back-end.
- IDRBT is an arm of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- It will also have the middleware infrastructure for supporting both digital identity verification, digital identity assessment and digital asset management with the support of efficient digital ledger technologies and AI/ML technologies.”

National Gallery of Modern Art launches Audio-Visual Guide App on International Museum Day



- The app is an audio-visual guide for exploring the modern art treasures on display across galleries of the Museum.
- The app is available on both the Google Playstore and the Apple Appstore.
- A web version of the app is also available for those not keen to download the app and can be accessed by just scanning the QR code at location.
- The NGMA app and tours are free for all users.
- The museum tours are a rich mix of images, videos and voice.
- It will help people connect with art in an intimate way.

PLASMA THERAPY



- The use of convalescent plasma has been dropped from the recommended treatment guidelines for COVID-19, according to a advisory from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- Though a trial by the ICMR on 400 patients last year — called the PLACID trial — had found no significant benefit from the use of plasma, it continued to find a place in the recommended guidelines.
- Some experts have said the use of such plasma may have even played a role in facilitating new worrisome mutations to the virus.
- Blood plasma is a yellowish liquid component of blood that holds the blood cells of whole blood in suspension.
- It is the liquid part of the blood that carries cells and proteins throughout the body.
- It makes up about 55% of the body's total blood volume.
- This plasma contains viral antibodies that have treatment potential for severe cases of the disease.
- Plasma therapy is a medical procedure that uses the blood of a recovered patient to create antibodies on those infected individuals.
- Medically known as convalescent plasma therapy, this treatment uses antibodies found in the blood taken from a recovered Covid-19 patient.
- It is then used to treat those with severe SARS-CoV-2 infection to aid recovery.

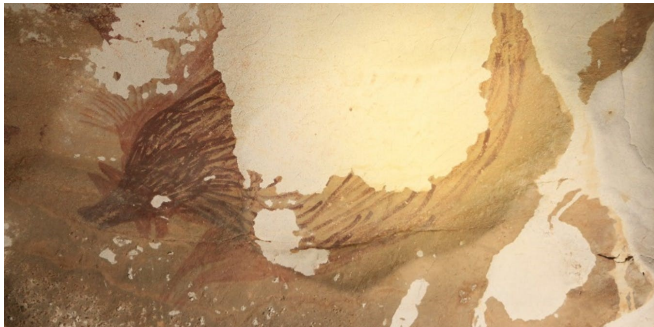
DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY



- After she allegedly hit two staff members at a boutique in Seoul last month, the wife of Belgium's ambassador to South Korea will now be exercising her diplomatic immunity to avoid criminal charges.
- Diplomatic immunity is a privilege of exemption from certain laws and taxes granted to diplomats by the country in which they are posted.
- The custom was formed so that diplomats can function without fear, threat or intimidation from the host country.
- Diplomatic immunity is granted on the basis of two conventions, popularly called the Vienna Conventions — the Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, and the Convention on Consular Relations, 1963.
- They have been ratified by 187 countries, including South Korea, which means, it is a law under that country's legal framework and cannot be violated.

- According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, the immunity enjoyed by a diplomat posted in the embassy is “inviolable”.
- The diplomat cannot be arrested or detained and his house will have the same inviolability and protection as the embassy.
- It is possible for the diplomat’s home country to waive immunity but this can happen only when the individual has committed a ‘serious crime’, unconnected with their diplomatic role or has witnessed such a crime.
- Alternatively, the home country may prosecute the individual.

WORLD’S OLDEST CAVE ART AND CLIMATE CHANGE



- Scientists have warned that environmental degradation is killing one of the oldest and most precious pieces of the world’s human heritage.
- Researchers have reported that Pleistocene-era rock paintings dating back to 45,000-20,000 years ago in cave sites in southern Sulawesi, on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, are weathering at an alarming rate.
- A team of scientists examined 11 caves and rock-shelters in the Maros-Pangkep region in Sulawesi.
- The artwork in the area includes what is believed to be the world’s oldest hand stencil (almost 40,000 years ago), created by pressing the hand on a cave wall, and spraying wet red-mulberry pigments over it.
- A nearby cave features the world’s oldest depiction of an animal, a warty pig painted on the wall 45,500 years ago.
- The cave art of Sulawesi is much older than the prehistoric cave art of Europe.

EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS (EMRS)



- Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Microsoft sign MoU on Joint initiative for Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools such as Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) and Ashram Schools.
- Under affirmative action initiative, Microsoft will make AI curriculum available to tribal students in both English and Hindi at all EMRS schools under the Ministry to skill educators and students in next-generation technologies including Artificial Intelligence.

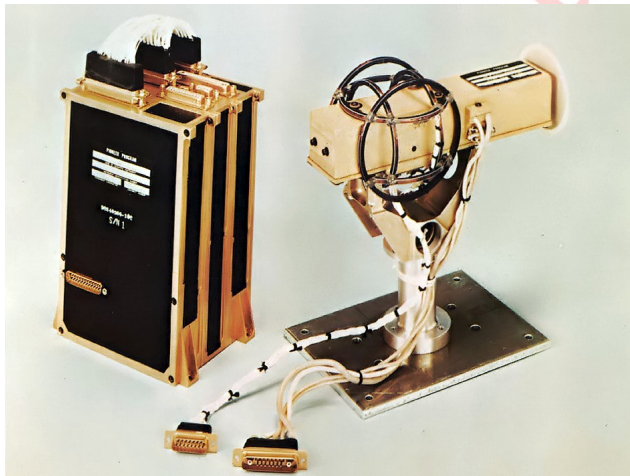
- Under this program in the first phase, 250 EMRS schools have been adopted by Microsoft out of which 50 EMRS schools will be given intensive training and 500 master trainers would be trained in the first phase.
- Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas in order to enable them to avail of opportunities in high and professional educational courses and get employment in various sectors.
- In order to give further impetus to EMRS, it has been decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an EMRS.

SAMVEDNA



- With an objective of providing psychological first-aid and emotional support to children affected during COVID-19 Pandemic, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is providing Tele-Counselling to children through SAMVEDNA.

MAGNETOMETER



- Scientists from Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bengaluru, an autonomous institute of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, have developed a magnetometer for low cost, reliable & real-time measurements of magnetic fields.
- A magnetometer is a device that measures magnetic field or magnetic dipole moment.
- Some magnetometers measure the direction, strength, or relative change of a magnetic field at a particular location.
- A compass is one such device, one that measures the direction of an ambient magnetic field, in this case, the Earth's magnetic field.

ELDERLINE



- Toll Free Helpline for elderly persons ELDERLINE (14567) becomes operational in several states.
- In order to address the problems of elders in the context of the ongoing COVID pandemic, the Ministry of Social Justice has started state wise call centres in major states under the ELDERLINE project.
- The facility is already made operational in 5 major States of UP, MP, Rajasthan, TN and Karnataka. In Telangana, this facility has been working for more than a year.
- These call centres can be reached by toll free number 14567. All elders may be advised to use this facility.
- The ELDERLINE is a facility operationalised with the assistance of Tata Trusts and NSE foundation.

Cave art of Sulawesi



- Researchers have reported that Pleistocene-era rock paintings dating back to 45,000-20,000 years ago in cave sites in southern Sulawesi, on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, are weathering at an alarming rate.
- The area is known to be home to over 300 cave paintings, and more are being discovered with further explorations.
- A team of Australian and Indonesian archaeological scientists, conservation specialists, and heritage managers examined 11 caves and rock-shelters in the Maros-Pangkep region in Sulawesi.
- The artwork in the area includes the world's oldest hand stencil (almost 40,000 years ago), created by pressing the hand on a cave wall, and spraying wet red-mulberry pigments over it.
- A nearby cave features the world's oldest depiction of an animal, a warty pig painted on the wall 45,500 years ago.
- The cave art of Sulawesi is much older than the prehistoric cave art of Europe.
- The researchers studied flakes of rock that have begun to detach from cave surfaces to find that salts in three of the samples comprise calcium sulphate and sodium chloride, which are known to form crystals on rock surfaces, causing them to break.
- The artwork made with pigments was decaying due to a process known as haloclasty, which is triggered by the growth of salt crystals due to repeated changes in temperature and humidity, caused by alternating wet and dry weather in the region.
- As Indonesia has also experienced several natural disasters in recent years, it has quickened the process of deterioration.

- Hence the researchers have recommended regular physical and chemical monitoring of the sites, akin to the preservation efforts at the French and Spanish prehistoric cave art sites such as Lascaux and Altamira.

Subdoluseps nilgiriensis



- A new species of skink *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis* has been found from Nilgiri hills, Tamil Nadu (Western Ghats).
- The reptile has a slender body of just about 7 cm and is sandy brown in colour.
- Based on genetic studies, the new species is closely related to *Subdoluseps pruthi* that is found in parts of the Eastern Ghats.
- This species is only the third skink species discovered from mainland India in the last millennium.
- Its discovery in a dry deciduous area, shows that even the dry zones of India are home to unrealised skink diversity which needs to be further explored.
- Hence the notion that *S. pruthi* group skinks are restricted to the Eastern Ghats is falsified.
- Skinks are non-venomous.
- Their inconspicuous limbs make them resemble snakes.
- Most skinks are diurnal and are usually secretive in their habits.
- Most of the species are placed under the data-deficient category.
- *Subdoluseps nilgiriensis* is currently considered a vulnerable species.
- Potential threats include seasonal forest fires, housing constructions, brick kiln industries in the area and rapid urbanisation.

Malerkotla



- Punjab Chief Minister declared Malerkotla as the 23rd district of the state on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.
- It was established in 1454 by Sufi saint Sheikh Sadruddin-i-Jahan also known as Haider Sheikh from Afghanistan.
- The settlement was being called 'Maler' which was bestowed by the Behlol Lodhi to the Sheikh whose lineage too was Afghan, as was Lodhi's.
- 'Kotla', meaning Fortress, was added later in 1657 by Bayazid Khan, a descendant of Haider Sheikh, who got it as a jagir by Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan.
- Bayzid Khan supported Aurangzeb against his brother Dara Shikoh and thus gained favour with the emperor and added permanency to the rule of his family.

- After Maharaja Ranjit Singh consolidated his rule in Northern Punjab in the early 19th century, Malerkotla aligned itself with the neighbouring Sikh states like Patiala, Nabha and Jind which too were feeling threatened by Maharaja Ranjit Singh's consolidation.
- These cis-Sutlej states accepted British protection in 1809 and were free from interference from the Sikh Maharaja.
- Malerkotla continued under the British protection and the alliance with the neighbouring Sikh states till 1947 when it became the only Muslim majority Sikh state in East Punjab.
- After the dissolution of the princely states in 1948, Malerkotla joined the new state of Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU).
- PEPSU itself was dissolved in 1954 and Malerkotla became a part of Punjab.

Famous rock formation in Galápagos 'Darwin's Arch' collapses



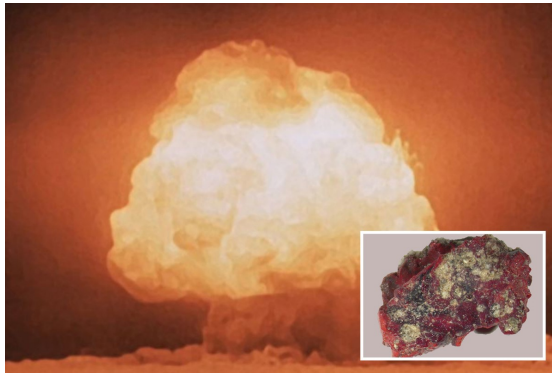
- Darwin's Arch, a rock formation south-east of Darwin Island in the Galápagos archipelago, has collapsed due to natural erosion, Ecuador's environment ministry said.
- The arch is famous as a diving spot for underwater encounters with sea turtles, whale sharks, manta rays and dolphins.
- The rock formation was named after British scientist Charles Darwin, who visited the islands in 1835.

Mask prototype to reuse oxygen in exhaled air made: IIT Bombay



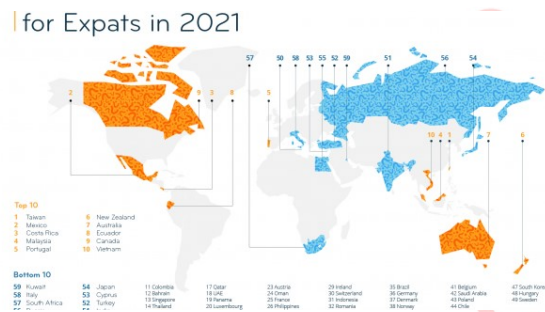
- An IIT Bombay team has developed a mask prototype that reuses oxygen present in exhaled air.
- The device, reBreather, can help reduce wastage of oxygen when a patient is put on assisted breathing support such as ventilators.
- It's a semi-closed circular breathing system that would allow patients to breathe in unused exhaled oxygen which has been filtered to remove CO₂.

Trinity Site nuclear blast made oldest man-made quasicrystal



- A newly discovered quasicrystal was created by the first nuclear explosion at Trinity Site, Los Alamos National Laboratory reported.
- This new quasicrystal is now the oldest known human-made quasicrystal, with an unmistakable timestamp, it added.
- This material was formed accidentally in the blast, which resulted in the fusion of surrounding sand, the test tower, and copper transmission lines.

Which are the best and the worst places for expats in 2021 as per a new survey?



- Taiwan has been ranked the best place to live for expats in 2021 in a survey conducted by Inter Nations, a Munich-based expat network.
- Taiwan is followed by Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada and Vietnam in the top 10.
- Kuwait was ranked the worst city for expats and India bagged the 51st position among 59 countries.

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