



# sunday pioneer

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Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA

QUOTE OF THE DAY The pioneer

Rythu Bandhu funds have to be given to four lakh farmers. It is my responsibility to give it to all remaining farmers by May 9. If someone proves that there are still arrears, I will rub my nose on the ground and apologise at the Martyrs' Statue. If he cannot prove that there are dues then KCR should apologise. The loans of Telangana farmers will be waived by August 15 and the witness for that is Bhadrachalam Ram. I will waive the loans of farmers by August 15 and clear my debt to them.

- A. Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister



Canada incidents mostly due to their internal politics' 5

Government lifts BAN ON onion exports 6

Listening to tunes within for DANCING glory on stage

DON'T MISS... Attracting voters to polling... To increase the poll percentage in the city for Lok Sabha, the Election Commission of India (ECI) will establish 180 thematic polling stations in Hyderabad and Secunderabad parliament constituencies including Secunderabad cantonment assembly segment. The polling stations will be set up to attract the voters. A total of 12 thematic polling stations will be set up in every Assembly constituencies in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. A total of 180 thematic polling stations will be set up...

## I will apologise if Rythu Bharosa dues remain pending by May 9

- BJP only option for KCR to ally with for Govt formation: CM
- Revanth reiterates his allegation that BJP would scrap quotas

PNS ■ HYDERABAD Taking exception to BRS president K. Chandrasekhar Rao's statement that the farmers' investment scheme Rythu Bharosa has been scrapped after the BRS stepped down from office, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he would apologise if any dues under the scheme are pending to any farmer by May 9. He said that KCR is spreading the lie that the Rythu Bharosa scheme has been scrapped. The Chief Minister said that he will silence BRS MLA T. Harish Rao by waiving the loans of farmers by August 15. Addressing the Kothagudem Jana Jata public meeting for the Congress's Khammam Lok Sabha candidate, Ramashayam Raghuram Reddy, on Saturday, the CM said that KCR should be ready to apologise if



CM Revanth Reddy addressing Jana Jata public meeting for the Congress's Khammam Lok Sabha candidate Ramashayam Raghuram Reddy, in Kothagudem on Saturday

any dues under the scheme are pending to any farmer by May 9 and if not KCR should rub his nose on the ground. "Rythu Bharosa has to be given to four lakh farmers more. It is my responsibility to give Rythu Bharosa to all the remaining farmers by May 9. If someone proves that there are still arrears, I will rub my nose on the ground and apologise at the

Martyrs Statue. If he cannot prove that there are dues then KCR should apologise. The loans of Telangana farmers will be waived by August 15 and the witness for that is Bhadrachalam Ram. I will implement the loan waiver scheme by August 15 and clear my debt to farmers," the CM said.

## Govt to take over farmers' loans through corporation

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is on a farm loan waiver promising spree and is making vows in the name of God wherever he goes. The CM is God fearing and so Congress workers are confident that he would waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh. This has become an issue in the Lok Sabha elections. The government is likely to float a corporation and transfer farm loans to itself. "From farmers, the loan will be transferred to the government. So farmers will have to pay nothing and the government will pay back the loan and interest. The loans in the names of farmers will be cleared and the government will stand surety for that. The farmers' responsibility to repay their loans with interest will be taken over by the government. Continued on Page 2



## KCR again rakes up TG's self-respect issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD your work done," he asked. He said that rural forests are drying up and garbage is accumulating in municipalities. "Why are integrated market yards left incomplete? All schemes implemented by the BRS government are being scrapped," KCR said. "Koppula Eshwar was a labourer in SCCL. If he wins he will save SCCL," he added. He said the Congress is punishing the people of Telangana even though its rule reflects negligence. "This Congress government does not respect any caste. They stopped iftar tofa for Muslims and Dalit Bandhu for Dalits," KCR said. "In Peddapalli, the competition is between the rich and the poor. Koppula Eshwar should win with a huge majority," he said.

Malaria linked with genetic... Malaria infection is linked with genetic changes, known to be brought about by ageing, according to a new study. Researchers extracted genetic material from blood samples of more than 1,800 adults from the African countries of Tanzania, Botswana, Ethiopia, and Cameroon, where malaria is known to be endemic, or constantly present. According to the 2023 World Health Organisation (WHO) Malaria report, published in 'The Lancet Microbe' journal, around 70 per cent of the global...

NCLT registers 43% jump in debt... Amid several bottlenecks, the Insolvency Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) declared 2023-24 as a landmark year, with the National Company Law Tribunal achieving a significant 43 per cent increase in resolutions, jumping from 189 cases last year to 270 this year. The IBBI is expected to submit a report to the government over the next 2-3 months for including "mediation" in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), which is currently under discussion and scrutiny. The regulator is also working on prepackaged insolvency for...

Yoga officially makes debut in... After making global headlines, the ancient Indian physical, mental and spiritual practice of yoga has officially arrived in neighbouring Pakistan. According to the official Facebook page of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), which is responsible for the upkeep of Islamabad, the Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad has launched "Free yoga classes in F-9 Park" in the capital. Recognising its universal appeal, the United Nations on 11 December 2014 proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga. A draft resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. Yoga is normally linked with India and there are not many formal...

## 'BRS facing survival threat, not SCCL' Minister Uttam accuses KCR of spreading lies against Congress

Irrigation Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy criticised BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao for spreading misinformation about the Godavari and Krishna River waters, SCCL and other issues. He said that around 20 BRS MLAs would join the Congress after the Lok Sabha elections and that the BRS would disappear. Speaking to the media while campaigning in Suryapet district for the Congress candidate in Nalgonda, K. Raghuvendra Reddy, on Saturday, Uttam dismissed KCR's recent charges against the Congress government. KCR had levelled the allegations at a roadshow in Ramagundam after a 48-hour ban imposed by the Election



Commission for using offensive language. "Instead of reflecting on his behaviour during the ban, KCR resumed with more lies and continued to blame the Congress for actions taken during his government. As the saying goes, 'Old habits die hard,'" Uttam said. He pointed out that the Congress

has repeatedly clarified that it was the KCR government and not the Congress that had agreed to hand over Telangana's irrigation projects to the Krishna River Management Board (KRMIB). However, the Congress tried to stop it, he said. By repeating lies, KCR is trying to mislead the public. Regarding the SCCL issue, Uttam said that KCR in collusion with the Modi government attempted to privatise SCCL, a move that the Congress opposed, leading to its cancellation. He criticised KCR for remaining silent when the BJP government attempted to privatise four coal blocks in Telangana. "As an MP, I opposed the privatisation and demanded their allotment to the SCCL," he said.

All those who indulged in corruption will face legal action, says Modi P2

PM Modi a 'shahanshaah', cut off from public: Priyanka P5

BRS leaders separated me from public: Tamilisai PNS ■ HYDERABAD The former Governor of Telangana, Dr Tamilisai Sounderarajan, said that BRS leaders had created a gap between the people and her. She said that she had tried to introduce the Ayushman Bharat Scheme in Telangana. However, the BRS government did not cooperate. She said that she had intended to make available Central schemes to the poor.

KTR: BRS will oppose reorganisation of districts PNS ■ HYDERABAD "The CM came to Sircilla for campaigning. As an MLA of this region, I expected the government would say some good words. But the CM's attitude in the last four and a half months has been nothing but small talk. Revanth just wants to do the opposite of what KCR did. He says that the new districts created by the BRS government will be scrapped. 23 new districts were created as per the aspirations of the people. Some districts have been named after great people. Similarly, there are districts for which local people fought.

## Shah to address 3 meetings today

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is coming to Telangana on May 5, that is, Sunday. He will arrive at the Begumpet Airport at 1.50 pm on Sunday and will go to Kagaznagar in Adilabad district by helicopter. He will attend a public meeting at the SPM Cricket Grounds at 3.20 pm. Later, Amit Shah will fly to Nizamabad, reach the Giriraj College Grounds by helicopter at 5 pm, and address the public meeting there. After that, Amit Shah will return to Begumpet Airport by 6.30 pm. Later, he would attend a public meeting at the Parade Grounds. Amit Shah will leave for West Bengal by a special flight from Begumpet Airport at 7.55 pm.

## Power demand is on rise One engineer to monitor every 11KV feeder

The consumption of electricity is increasing massively in the current summer season due to the rise in temperatures. The Chairman & MD of Southern Telangana Electricity Transmission Company, Musharraf Farooqui, ordered officers to be alert to ensure that there is no disruption in power supply. Till the end of summer, one engineer should be appointed for every 11 KV feeder on a shift basis. Around 300 engineers working in the company's head office, other circles and zonal offices have also been deployed for operational duties. In addition to this, the CMD also ordered accounting staff working in

circle offices to take up operational duties. Speaking at a review meeting organised with Chief General Managers, Superintending Engineers and Divisional Engineers, he said that Greater Hyderabad city has already recorded the highest demand of 4,214 MW this season on 30.04.2024. The highest consumption of 89.71 million units was recorded on Friday (03.05.2024), which is 53.7% higher than last year's consumption of 58.34 million units recorded on 03.05.2023. On Saturday a demand of 4,209 MW has been recorded and consumption is expected to cross 90 million units, he said. Continued on Page 2

## 'Anti-TG forces' want Hyd to continue as joint capital: Harish

BRS MLA Harish Rao said that some anti-Telangana forces want Hyderabad to continue as the joint capital of TG and AP even though the arrangement ends in June. During a 'meet and greet' with the media, he said, "Some people who opposed bifurcation want Hyderabad to continue as the joint capital for another 10 years. Revanth has AP roots. The people

of Telangana should be alert." He said that only the BRS can effectively handle this issue. Harish said that in the past, the Congress supported the BJP's decision to merge seven mandals in AP and added that only the BRS had opposed this move. He said that both parties have done injustice to the state on the joint capital issue and the rights of TG and so the BRS must win in the LS elections. Harish said that in just five months a quiet revolution has started and people now want a change from the Congress.

OBTUSE ANGLE HE HAS COME TO SELL HIS WEAPONS... SENNA BHAIWAN TIME TO FULLY INDIGNIFY WEAPONRY ARMY CHIEF

## Heat intensity reduces in east, southern India

The intensity of the heat wave prevailing in east and parts of southern peninsular India came down slightly on Saturday, with the weather office predicting relief from the scorching conditions in these regions after two days. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said heatwave to severe heatwave conditions prevailed in parts of Gangetic West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Telangana, with maximum temperatures settling 3-5 degrees Celsius above normal in these regions. The mercury settled above 44 degrees Celsius in at least 10 places

in these states. According to IMD data, 13 places on Friday and 17 on Thursday recorded maximum temperatures above 44 degrees Celsius. Nandyal in Andhra Pradesh sizzled at 46 degrees Celsius and was the hottest place in the country for the third consecutive day on Saturday. The IMD said the ongoing heatwave spell in east and south peninsular India will continue until May 5-6 and abate thereafter. Light to moderate rainfall and thunderstorms are predicted in Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand from May 5 to 9.

Maximum temperatures were recorded at 45.9 degrees Celsius in Kurnool (Andhra Pradesh), 45 degrees in Mahbubnagar (Telangana), 44 degrees in Odisha's Boudh, 43.5 degrees in Karur (Tamil Nadu), 44.6 degrees in Nizamabad (Telangana), 45.4 in Andhra Pradesh's Cuddapah, and 43.5

degrees in West Bengal's Kalaikunda. The IMD said the ongoing heatwave spell in east and south peninsular India will continue until May 5-6 and abate thereafter. Light to moderate rainfall and thunderstorms are predicted in Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand from May 5 to 9. Scattered light to moderate rainfall is expected in east Uttar Pradesh, Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Chhattisgarh during this period. Scattered light to moderate rainfall is also very likely in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and Karnataka from May 6 to May 9.

TERROR ATTACK IN J&K One IAF soldier killed, 4 injured PNS ■ JAMMU One soldier was killed and four were injured as terrorists ambushed an Indian Air Force (IAF) convoy in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Saturday, three weeks ahead of polling in Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency. Poonch is part of Anantnag-Rajouri parliamentary constituency which goes to polls in the sixth phase on May 25.











"Disease is an experience of a so-called mortal mind. It is fear made manifest on the body" — Mary Baker Eddy



Amid mounting concerns regarding Covishield's safety and the acknowledgment of potential adverse effects by its maker UK giant AstraZeneca, public unease is on the rise, with calls for accountability, says ARCHANA JYOTI

# COVISHIELD'S SHIELD IN QUESTION

My CT scan result showed that they (doctors) had never seen anything like this before. Numerous blood clots were removed through surgery from my legs and lower abdomen. Alex Mitchell, a key litigant in the legal proceedings in the UK against British pharma giant AstraZeneca told a news channel in India about the side effects that he suffered after receiving the COVID vaccine. Mitchell is not the only one who has been reeling under the side effects due to the COVID jab and taken up a legal battle against AstraZeneca over allegations linking its vaccine to fatalities and severe adverse effects. The firm is facing at least 51 such cases and has recently conceded that its vaccine could, albeit exceedingly rarely, induce Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), a medical condition characterized by abnormally low levels of platelets and the formation of blood clots. With this admission by the UK pharma giant, in India, the Serum Institute of India (SII), headquartered in Pune, which was a licensee to AstraZeneca's vaccine formula may too find itself mired in potential legal ramifications with the parents of a young woman who died purportedly due to complications arising ten days post her inoculation with the vaccine in 2021 said that they are contemplating legal action against both SII and AstraZeneca. Though a section of legal experts say that



## BIG NUMBER

India's vaccination campaign began on January 13, 2021, administering Covaxin and Covishield. Covishield received approval for use in 49 other countries. As of April 29, 2024, India has administered 1,749,417,978 doses of Covishield, making it the world's largest vaccination program. India's vaccine arsenal during the pandemic included Covaxin, Covishield, Sputnik-V, Covovax, Corbevax, and ZyCoV-D, among others. Worldwide, 13.5 billion COVID-19 vaccines have been administered since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to science research organization Our World in Data. Around 71% of the world's population has received at least one dose of a Covid vaccine.

## GLOBAL INSIGHT

According to global data on TTS available in the public domain, as of January 5, 2024, Canada had reported 89 cases of TTS, of which 56 cases were reported following vaccination with AstraZeneca's Vaxzevria/Covishield COVID-19 vaccine, and 24 cases were reported following vaccination with Pfizer-BioNTech's Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine. Eight cases were also reported following vaccination with Moderna's Spikevax COVID-19 vaccine. In the U.K., 122 instances of TTS following the administration of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been reported as of November 2023.

## OPP MAKES A GIBE

Where is the Thank You Modi ji banner now? Why are the PM and Health Ministry silent? Is this the reason why deaths due to heart attack at young age occur? Was this the reason why BJP took electoral bonds worth Rs 50 crore from Serum Institute? This issue is not a matter of politics but of safeguarding people's lives." Srinivas Bhadravathi Venkata, the National President of the Indian Youth Congress in a post on X.

monitoring and reporting of adverse events. Another netizen Parikshit Suri has emphasized on the rigorous testing and transparency in vaccine development and echoed widespread calls for accountability and scrutiny in the approval process. Dr. A Rajkumar Sreenivasan's plea for informed consent highlighted the ethical dimensions of healthcare decision-making, emphasizing the need for individuals to have agency and autonomy in vaccination choices. Michelle Zeh's skepticism about vaccine necessity and safety shed light on broader concerns surrounding pharmaceutical influence and the importance of evidence-based decision-making. Manish Kumar's observation of increased heart attacks post-vaccination prompted calls for comprehensive investigation and surveillance to ensure the ongoing safety and efficacy of vaccination programs. While many doctors have said that benefits outweighs the downsides Dr Sankha Shubhra Chakrabarti, Head-Geriatrics, IMS-BHU posted on X, @theseniuss Indian doctors who are self consoling by saying it occurs within few weeks and cannot after 3 years probably do not know how the AdenoV delivery system is designed to work.

Amidst these concerns and controversy over the safety aspects of the Covishield vaccine, the matter has now reached the Supreme Court on May 1, 2024, with a petition led by advocate Vishal Tiwari adding a layer of complexity and urgency to the discourse. Tiwari has sought the constitution of an expert medical panel to study the risk factors. "More than 175 crore doses of Covishield have been administered in India. After Covid 19 there has been an increase in deaths due to heart attacks and sudden collapse of persons. There have been several cases of heart attack even in youngsters. Now after the document filed in UK court by the developer of Covishield, we are compelled to think on the risk and hazardous consequences of Covishield vaccine which have been administered to the citizens at a large number," the petition filed by advocate Tiwari says. The plea points out that AstraZeneca, the company that developed the vaccine, has said that its AZD1222 vaccine against Covid-19, which was made under license in India as Covishield, could cause low platelet counts and the formation of blood clots in rare cases. The petition says the medical panel should

be headed by an expert from AIIMS and supervised by a retired Supreme Court judge. Tiwari has further sought directions to the Centre to establish a 'Vaccine Damage Payment System' for citizens or families who have suffered debilitating health setbacks or even deaths after taking the vaccine. The plea has also called for strict action against the circulation of spurious Covishield, an offshoot of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, which underwent extensive administration across India. However, SII, conspicuously headquartered in Pune, has remained reticent in response to the looming specter of legal action. Equally intriguing is the silence maintained by the Union Health Ministry, notwithstanding mounting apprehensions and criticisms voiced by recipients of Covishield on various social media platforms. Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj has already raised the Centre's attention to these links, saying that it should work to urgently address the alleged side-effects of the Covidshield vaccine as millions of people in India were administered the shot during the Covid pandemic. Bharadwaj expressed concern over the alleged link between the vaccine's side effects and a series of sudden deaths in India, claiming that Covidshield was banned in several European countries, including Germany, France, Spain, Finland, Norway, and Denmark. Despite the government's formation of a national committee to probe such occurrences, the determination of insufficient evidence linking her demise to the vaccine underscores the intricate challenge of establishing causality in rare adverse events. However, the narrative shared by individuals such as Govindan underscores the exigency for robust surveillance, reporting mechanisms, and support infrastructure to address post-vaccination complications comprehensively. Against the backdrop of Covishield's legal conundrum, SII's competitor Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, has underscored the efficacy of its jab, Covaxin, saying that it was meticulously evaluated and efficacy/efficacy trials were held within India.



## Study confirms higher risk of very rare clot with AstraZeneca Jab

The Global Covid Vaccine Safety Project conducted an extensive analysis of adverse events associated with COVID-19 vaccines across multiple regions, including Argentina, Australia (New South Wales and Victoria), Canada (British Columbia and Ontario), Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand, and Scotland. They employed a method called observed versus expected (OE) ratios to compare the number of adverse events reported with the expected baseline rates. In simple words, this means first healthcare providers have a baseline 'expectation' of how many adverse events are likely given a certain number of vaccinated people, and compare it with the number of events reported to health systems. Expectations are formed based on experience with the rates of vaccination, and reactions observed historically. However, COVID-19 vaccination was an outlier event that saw billions of vaccines administered over a relatively short span. OE ratios greater than 1.5, indicating 50% more adverse reactions than expected, were identified as potential safety signals requiring thorough investigation. Notable findings included elevated OE ratios for Guillain-Barré syndrome and cerebral venous sinus thrombosis following the first dose of the ChAdOx1 vaccine. Additionally, acute disseminated encephalomyelitis showed a high OE ratio following the first dose of the mRNA-1273 vaccine. Increased OE ratios for myocarditis and pericarditis were also observed following vaccination with BNT162b2 (Pfizer/BioNTech), mRNA-1273 (Moderna), and ChAdOx1 (AstraZeneca/Serum Institute of India) vaccines. In India, as of December 6, 2022, a total of 92,003 Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI) were reported, accounting for approximately 0.009% of the population vaccinated against COVID-19. However, it's essential to note that the strength of adverse event reporting systems can vary

There have been studies that show the baseline rate in European states (adverse events related to COVID-19 vaccines) is higher than Asia. This is a combination of both a better reporting system as well as physiological factors. Studies done in one country may not easily translate to another." —CHANDRAKANT LAHARIYA Physician and health policy expert

significantly between countries, influencing reported incidence rates. The study also highlighted differences in adverse event reporting rates between regions. For example, the affidavit submitted by the Indian government to the Supreme Court cited higher AEFI rates in the United States (0.2%) and the United Kingdom (0.7%) compared to India. These variations may be influenced by reporting system robustness and physiological factors. Despite confirming previously identified rare safety signals associated with COVID-19 vaccination, the study emphasized the need for further investigation to confirm associations and evaluate clinical significance. An affidavit by the government to the Supreme Court claimed that compared with India, nearly 0.2% of the people in the United States who received COVID-19 vaccines showed AEFI, as did 0.7% in the U.K. These ratios are, however, significantly influenced by the strength of the adverse event reporting system in countries. This can significantly vary among countries. "While our study confirmed previously identified rare safety signals following COVID-19 vaccination and contributed evidence on several other important outcomes, further investigation is warranted to confirm associations and assess clinical significance," the study by the Global Covid Vaccine Safety Project said.

## Symptoms of TTS

A rare condition associated with Covishield, include severe headaches, abdominal pain, leg swelling, or shortness of breath, usually appearing two weeks post-vaccination. Timely identification and intervention are crucial in mitigating severe consequences.



SII may get clean chit in the case given it was a mere manufacturer of the jab, Venugopalan Govindan, bereaved father of the deceased Karunya has expressed profound dissatisfaction with AstraZeneca's belated admission, lamenting its timing vis-à-vis the lives already lost. He also castigated SII for its failure to suspend vaccine distribution following the restriction imposed by 15 European nations due to reported incidents of blood clot-related fatalities in March 2021. Govindan has also implicated governmental agencies, regulatory bodies, and other stakeholders in the unfortunate demise of his daughter and numerous others post-vaccination. His sentiments have reverberated across social media platforms following AstraZeneca's acknowledgment of its COVID jab's potential to precipitate blood clotting. Govindan spearheaded a petition titled 'Post-vaccination side effects - Blood clots, MIS-A, etc. Awareness was required' shortly after his daughter's tragic demise in 2021. As the petition gained traction, it served as a platform for individuals to share their own experiences, concerns, and opinions regarding COVID-19 vaccines. For instance, one Shikha Bhalla, a netizen, has given her account of losing vision in her left eye due to a rare side effect underscoring the importance of thorough

## DOCTORS SPEAK

TTS is a very rare condition resulting from an abnormal immune response. While it has several causes, it has also been linked with adenovirus vector vaccines. The WHO has deemed the vaccine safe and effective for all individuals aged 18 and above. ... We are yet to fully understand the impact of coronavirus on people, also called long Covid. The



difficulty is to distinguish between the complications that are caused by Covid itself or the vaccine. That remains debatable. People who are vaccinated have an overall lower risk of complications such as post-Covid heart attacks and strokes among others.

— DR RAVI WANKHEDEKAR, Former national president of the IMA

"Like many things in medicine, the exact mechanism for this is also unknown. It is an unusual immune reaction to a particular vaccine genre which is called as adenovirus vector vaccine. Adenovirus vectors are not disease-causing viruses but these are artificially fitted with the spike of the virus that our immune system

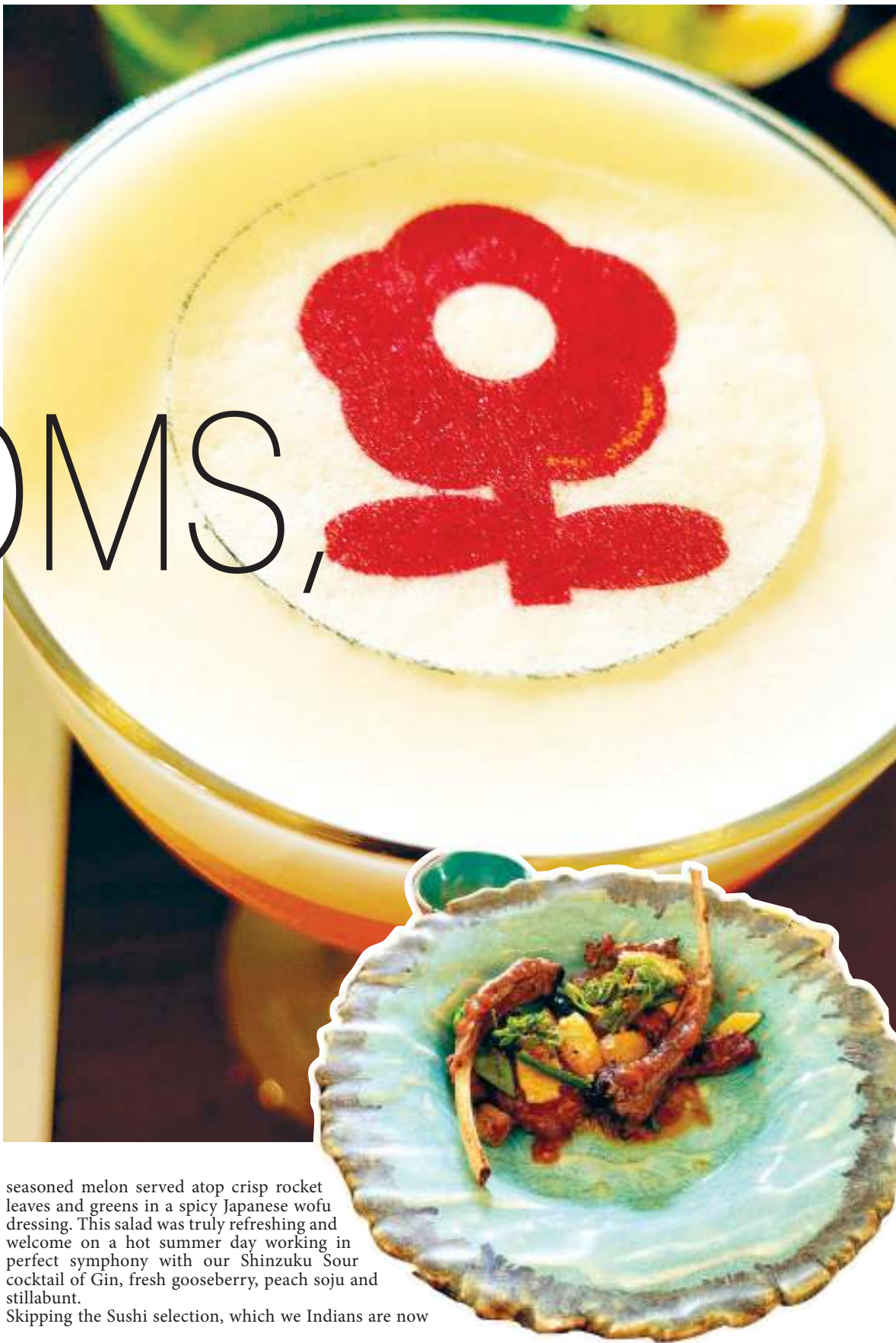


needs to fight. In the case of AstraZeneca's adenovirus vector vaccine, a chimpanzee adenovirus - ChAdOx1 - has been modified to enable it to carry the Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) spike protein injected into the muscles of humans." — DR RAJEEV JAYADEVAN, Co-Chairman, IMA Covid-19 task force



The Japanese celebrate the Hanami, the festival of Spring, with as much gusto as we Indians do. SHOBORI GANGULI participates in the gastronomical delights accompanying this ancient ritual at Guppy right here in Delhi

# CHERRY BLOSSOMS, CHEER AND CAMARADERIE



This week I had the great fortune to partake of the Hanami festival at one of Delhi's finest Japanese restaurants Guppy (part of the Olive Chain). This is cherry blossom season of spring in Japan, a time to mark the Hanami festival — a unique cultural tradition of viewing flowers in full bloom, an ancient ritual which serves as a Japanese reminder of the transience of nature, the blossoms a metaphor for life, draped in the immortal philosophy of hope and renewal.

And no festival in the world is complete without its attendant share of feasts and festivities. Guppy, in an earnest attempt to keep this old Japanese heritage alive and robust in a faraway land from Japan, in the very heart of India in Delhi, laid out a sumptuous fare of what would typically be a part of a Hanami dining spread. Among the salads on offer — Artichoke & Melon, Avocado, Beet & Edamame and Chicken, Avocado & Greens — my friend and I

settled for the first one which was a refreshing mix of marinated artichoke, grapes, and

seasoned melon served atop crisp rocket leaves and greens in a spicy Japanese wofu dressing. This salad was truly refreshing and welcome on a hot summer day working in perfect symphony with our Shinzuku Sour cocktail of Gin, fresh gooseberry, peach soju and stillabunt.

Skipping the Sushi selection, which we Indians are now

quite familiar with, we opted for the translucent Tobanjan-spiced Chicken Steamed Dumplings, the filling a burst of minced chicken in a Japanese spicy tobanjan chili paste served with a ponzu dip.

Perhaps it is me and my changed taste buds over the years or a conscious attempt by Japanese kitchens based out of India, the element of spiciness has notched up a bit from what was often termed as a "bland" taste emanating from traditional kitchens, which may suit the Japanese palate even today, in Japan and elsewhere in the world, but were not embraced with the same degree of enthusiasm one has watched with Italian, Spanish, Chinese, West Asian and Mediterranean spreads across continents.

The fact that Guppy was brimming with people, almost all tables occupied, on a busy working week day, is perhaps testimony to the fact that Japanese cuisine has certainly found an innovative way to work around the Indian palate and its natural inclination for well-spiced food.

From their Small Plates offering we went past the vegetarian Stuffed Tofu Katsu to the Crisp Chicken Parcel, an oven-baked phyllo parcel with ginger flavoured chicken accompanied by soy apple salsa and a yuzu miso sauce.

For the Mains, while my friend settled for the undoubtedly healthy and delicious Grilled Yuzu Khoso Fish, marinated in Jaanese yuzu khoso and herb salsa, grilled and served with lemon butter soy, I ventured into the now universally forbidden territory of red meat. The Grilled Marinated Lamb Chop came with seasonal vegetables and was served with red wine miso. I must admit that while the flavours of the grill settled rather smoothly on my palate, the meat itself was on the rare side and a tad stringy. Red meat requires adequate time to be rested in its marination for it to step delicately away from the bone. In my opinion, the Lamb Chop needed some more attention.

That said, the experience was a rather cheerful one, given that the Japanese dedicate as much time to the aesthetics of the inanimate as to the animate. Guppy is that cheerful, pretty, comfortable Japanese place one would like to hang around at, with friends or family. Here's wishing everyone a happy Hanami, the Japanese spring festival so similar to our own spring festival of Basant Panchami.

## Gurugram's latest Culinary Contender



BY PAWAN SONI

Nestled between two established dining spots at Two Horizon, Marieta emerges as Gurgaon's newest culinary contender, overtaking the space vacated by well-regarded Italian eatery Artusi. Although the name "Marieta" which is a popular female name hails from Greece, the restaurant's global menu lacks prominent Greek offerings.

The start was a bit of a let down. Not being served a hard copy of the menu and asking diner to scan a barcode for the digital menu at a finedine restaurant with an excuse that they are new doesn't go well with me. May be I am an old timer who doesn't like reading the menu on mobile's small screen. The manager quickly impro-

vised and offered to share a b&w printed menu with which I was okay but it never came. However he later shared his laptop with me to read the menu. For a classy looking restaurant they can easily do with few laptops if even after a month of their opening they are finding it difficult to get the printed menu.

I am here with my wife and like most men opt for 'The Second Date'. Don't get me wrong, it is a tequila and sake based cocktail with a bit of lychee and Jasmine tea. Its delightful aroma and soothing taste set a pleasant tone for the evening. As I perused the drinks menu, I noticed a variety of tequila and mezcals cocktails, signaling an interesting trend. Just as gin has surpassed vodka in popularity for cocktails, it seems tequila-based cocktails might be the next big trend.

While the food initially took some time to arrive, once it did, the dishes came out in quick succession. Most of the dishes we ordered were impressive. The Mushroom and Cream Cheese (Rs495), encased in crispy kataifi on a cauliflower sauce base, was particularly exciting. Similarly, the Habanero Butter Shrimp (Rs750), served with airy sourdough bread, was noteworthy, although I expected a bit more heat from the habanero, making the dish's name somewhat misleading.

The Avocado Cream Cheese Uramaki (Rs750) sushi roll was



### FACT SHEET

Sector 43, Gurgaon  
Phone: 8800186953  
Cuisine: Global with focus on Mexican  
RATINGS  
Food: 3.5/5  
Drinks: 4.0/5  
Service: 3.75/5  
Ambience: 3.5/5  
Overall: 3.5/5

enjoyable, with the added crunch of fried sweet potato crisps on top. However, the Spicy Sweet Potato Soft Shell Taco lacked the necessary spiciness to balance the sweetness of the potato. Adding a bit of spicy sauce on the side made it more enjoyable for me.

The only disappointment was the Neapolitan Margherita pizza, which fell short on the dough, kneading, and rolling. The edges didn't rise properly, the center wasn't thin enough, and the sauce was mediocre. However, the chef acknowledged the issue without making excuses, which in my view was commendable. Since we had no room for a main course, we opted for desserts directly. The Vanilla Bean Panna Cotta (Rs595) was exceptional, perfectly set and delicious. Topped with figs and caramel sauce, this dessert, an Artusi recipe, is reason enough to visit Marieta.

We arrived early for a Monday dinner and found the music to be too loud for an empty restaurant. However, as more guests arrived, the sound was absorbed, creating a more enjoyable ambience. The tables in alfresco settings are a bit small for four people; fitting more than two people would be a challenge. Despite minor initial hiccups, the service was good and well-informed. Overall, Marieta is worth a try, especially for the panna cotta.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)



# A NIGHT IN OSTELLO BELL SHARED STORIES, SHARED SPACES



BY PAWAN SONI

After watching Kangana Ranaut's film, *Queen* which includes a scene where she stays in a hostel, I was intrigued and mentally noted to experience it at least once. This opportunity arose when I was traveling alone for work in Milan for a few days. Since my wife is not keen on such experiences, I could only do it while traveling solo. I myself was a bit hesitant and booked the hostel room for only one night post which I booked a luxury hotel room.

Staying in a hostel room with bunk beds shared by eight tourists from different countries and continents was an eye-opening experience. As someone accustomed to the privacy of hotels, the idea of sharing a room with strangers was initially daunting. However, the warmth and friendliness of my fellow travelers quickly put me at ease. Additionally, in India, we would never think of sharing a room with both guys and girls. Here, we were six guys and two girls sharing the dormitory room.

One of the most memorable aspects of my stay was the interactions with my roommates. Despite our diverse backgrounds, we found common ground in our love for travel and adventure. Each person had a unique story to share, from their reasons for travelling to their favourite destinations. I learned about different



cultures, traditions, and ways of life, broadening my perspective and igniting my curiosity about the world.

The hostel's facilities played a significant role in fostering a sense of community among guests. The small locked storage below the beds ensured that our belongings were safe, while the charging points were necessary for



the phone charging, individual reading lights provided convenience without disturbing others. The common bathroom, although shared, was always clean and well-maintained, a testament to the hostel staff's commitment to guest comfort and roommates ensuring to leave the washroom with the same hygiene level

they expected from others.

The common kitchen was a hub of activity, with guests preparing meals and sharing recipes from their home countries. It was a delightful experience to taste dishes from around the world, each one infused with the flavours and spices of a different culture. The complimentary



fruits and groceries added a thoughtful touch, making us feel at home in this foreign environment.

Beyond the practical amenities, the hostel's vibrant atmosphere made it a memorable stay. It served as a meeting point for young travellers, where friendships were formed over shared meals and late-night conversations. The hostel also organised social events, such as pub crawls and city tours, allowing guests to explore the city together and create lasting memories.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com)

## EXPERIENCING CULTURE ONE COURSE AT A TIME POP-UP DINNERS

BY RUPALI DEAN

Pop-up restaurants are like culinary jazz performances, where chefs create impromptu meals in unconventional settings, such as dining rooms or even courtyards. These temporary dining experiences allow chefs to experiment freely with their cooking skills within a confined timeframe and for a select audience. For example, Chef Vladimir Mukhin recently hosted famous Chef Joan Roca from El Celler De Can Roca at Krasota restaurant in Dubai. They worked together to create a unique culinary experience, exploring the deep stories behind well-known dishes. By combining different textures, ingredients, and flavours, they presented a special event in Dubai that highlighted the perfect blend of artistry in both appearance and taste. Roca's *Memories of a Neighbourhood Bar* paired with Deyneka's *The Light of The Past* set the scene. This dish, from El Celler de Can Roca's cookbook, honours the family's legacy. The three brothers learned cooking early at Can Roca, perfecting their skills. Inspired by Roerich's *Himalayas*, Mukhin's *Artichoke Curry* and *Coconut Rice* reflect the painting's colours. The *Black Cod with Plum and Fig* drew from Aivazovsky's art, symbolizing a shipwreck survival. Five Senses Bon Bons by Jordi Roca at Casa Cacao concluded the feast magically, blurring reality and fantasy.

### THE WORLD IS GETTING SMALLER AND MORE INCLUSIVE

Engaging in pop-up events presents chefs with a valuable chance to acquire new skills and engage in the exchange of culinary knowledge amongst peers in the industry. "Pop-ups are a great platform of exchanging ideas and sharing our cooking philosophies and techniques. It's a true example of how the world is getting smaller and more inclusive. It's a sense of pride when I get an opportunity to cook Indian food for an audience that may not be well educated about Indian Cuisine, or when Chefs of the most renowned restaurants around the world join us at Trésind Studio to share their cooking philosophy with our guests. In the end it's a celebration of culture and creating new friendships. The ideas and brainstorming during pop ups sometimes create dishes that eventually become



CHEF JOAN ROCA WITH CHEF VLADIMIR MUKHIN AND HIS TEAM AT KRASOTA, DUBAI



CHEF JOAN ROCA AND VLADIMIR AT A POP UP COLLABORATION IN KRASOTA, DUBAI



CHEF HIMANSHU SAINI AND CHEF JITIN JOSHI

part of our menu", says Chef Himanshu Saini of Trésind Studio (1 Michelin star), Dubai. Traditionally, pop-ups served as a stepping stone for aspiring restaurateurs to showcase their cooking prowess and test new concepts. However, nowadays, some chefs view pop-ups as standalone ventures, using them to delve into and share their cultural culinary heritage. "I myself have been doing pop up around the globe as a guest chef and this year I would be hosting a guest chef every month in our Private room at the Crossing Dubai. I think it is a great way to show a different and unique style of food philosophy with another chef in the same kitchen. It's not only a great showcase of talent, but also a great learning for the team. I don't think this trend will pass soon and personally would like to see more chefs collaborating and coming together", adds Jitin Joshi Director of Culinary, Lemon Butter, Dubai, U.A.E.

### THE LEARNING MUST NEVER STOP

These gatherings often feel like a blend of educational sessions and personal memoirs, weaving intimate tales through cherished recipes and unique ingredients. "As a chef, it's important to never stop learning. We love inviting chefs from various backgrounds into our

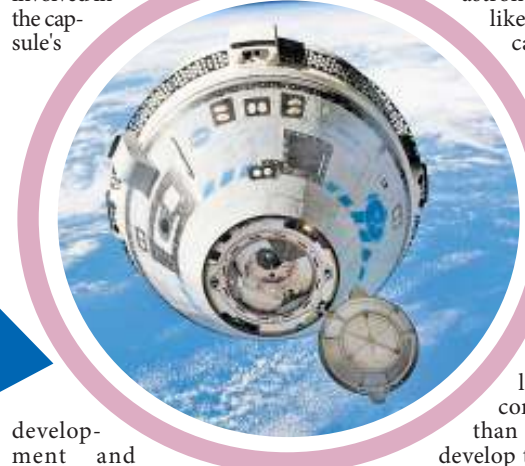
spaces for 4-Hands collaboration events. It's an excellent way for us to learn from each other and discover new possibilities. We've been fortunate to have the opportunity to travel overseas and meet fantastic people, learning and experiencing entirely new cultures, cuisines and ingredients. I always try to bring a few of my team with me on these trips, I believe that travel helps to widen one's perspective and encourage accelerated growth. It's fulfilling for me to groom and provide opportunities for my team to learn", says Julien Royer Chef Owner- Odette (3 Michelin stars), Singapore.

These modern chefs charge for their dinners, yet none are earning vast fortunes from them. They often promote their events on Instagram and sell tickets digitally. Regardless of the practical details, pop-up dining enables them to innovate and test ideas with a small group of guests, fostering a fleeting sense of community. In a time where personal narratives hold greater significance in art and conversations, pop-ups provide chefs with a platform to express, through cuisine, "This is my heritage. This is my identity."



NEWEST ENTRY TO SPACE TRAVEL

Boeing is on the verge of launching astronauts aboard new capsule



STARLINER VS DRAGON

Both companies' capsules are designed to be autonomous and reusable. This Starliner is the same one that made the first test flight in 2019. Unlike the SpaceX Dragons, Starliner has traditional hand controls and switches alongside touchscreens and, according to the astronauts, is more like NASA's Orion capsules for moon missions. Williams and Williams briefly will take manual control to wring out the systems on their way to the space station. NASA gave Boeing, a longtime space contractor, more than \$4 billion to develop the capsule, while SpaceX got \$2.6 billion. SpaceX already was in the station delivery business and merely refashioned its cargo capsule for crew. While SpaceX uses the boss' Teslas to get astronauts to the launch pad, Boeing will use a more traditional "astrovan" equipped with a video screen that Wilmore said will be playing "Top Gun: Maverick." One big difference at flight's end: Starliner lands on the ground with cushioning airbags, while Dragon splashes into the sea.

After years of delays and stumbles, Boeing is finally poised to launch astronauts to the International Space Station for NASA. It's the first flight of Boeing's Starliner capsule with a crew on board, a pair of NASA pilots who will check out the spacecraft during the test drive and a weeklong stay at the space station. NASA turned to US companies for astronaut rides after the space shuttles were retired. Elon Musk's SpaceX has made nine taxi trips for

Veteran NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams are retired Navy captains who spent months aboard the space station years ago. They joined the test flight after the original crew bowed out as the delays piled up. Wilmore, 61, is a former combat pilot from Mount Juliet, Tennessee, and Williams, 58, is a helicopter pilot from Needham, Massachusetts. The duo have been involved in the capsule's development and insist Starliner is ready for prime time, otherwise they would not strap in for the launch. "We're not putting our heads in the sand," Williams told The Associated Press. "Sure, Boeing has had its problems. But we are the QA (quality assurance). Our eyes are on the spacecraft."

THE TEST FLIGHT

Starliner will blast off on United Launch Alliance's Atlas V rocket from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. It will be the first time astronauts ride an Atlas since NASA's Project Mercury, starting with John Glenn when he became the first American to orbit the Earth in 1962. Sixty-two years later, this will be the 100th launch of the Atlas V, which is used to hoist satellites as well as spacecraft. "We're super careful with every mission. We're super, duper, duper careful" with human missions, said Tory Bruno, CEO of ULA, a joint venture of Boeing and Lockheed Martin. Starliner should reach the space station in roughly 26 hours. The seven station residents will have their eyes peeled on the approaching capsule. The arrival of a new vehicle is "a really big deal. You leave nothing to chance," NASA astronaut Michael Barratt told the AP from orbit. Starliner will remain docked for eight days, undergoing checkouts before landing in New Mexico or elsewhere in the American West.

increased land demand limit the scaling up of carbon removals. Nevertheless, there is still plenty of room for designing fair and sustainable land management policies, they said.

THE CAPSULE

White with black and blue trim, Boeing's Starliner capsule is about 10 feet (3 metres) tall and 15 feet (4.5 metres) in diameter. It can fit up to seven people, though NASA crews typically will number four. The company settled on the name Starliner nearly a decade ago, a twist on the name of Boeing's early Stratoliner and the current Dreamliner. No one was aboard Boeing's two previous Starliner test flights. The first, in 2019, was hit with software trouble so severe that its empty capsule couldn't reach the station until the second try in 2022. Then last summer, weak parachutes and flammable tape cropped up that needed to be fixed or removed.

THE CREW

"Carbon dioxide removal (CDR) methods have a small but vital role to play in achieving net zero (target) and limiting the impacts of climate change," said Naomi Vaughan of the University of East Anglia, UK, and co-author of the study published in the journal Nature Climate Change.

Current carbon removal plans will fall short of meeting Paris goals: study

The current carbon removal plans of countries around the world will fall short in limiting the warming of the planet to 1.5 degrees Celsius, set out under the Paris Agreement, new research has suggested. The researchers pointed out that climate policy regarding removal of carbon dioxide (CO2), the most important greenhouse gas, from the atmosphere "needs more ambition". However, if the global energy demand could "significantly" reduce, the current carbon removal plans might be closer to achieving net-zero emissions, they found. "Carbon dioxide removal (CDR) methods have a small but vital role to play in achieving net zero (target) and limiting the impacts of climate change," said Naomi Vaughan of the University of East Anglia, UK, and co-author of the study published in the journal Nature Climate Change.

Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change (MCC), Germany, analysed reports of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) taking yearly measurements since 2010 of the emissions gap -- the difference between what countries pledge versus what is needed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The researchers found that if national targets were fully implemented, the yearly amount of carbon removed by humans could increase by 0.5 gigatonnes (a gigatonne is a billion tonnes) of CO2 by 2030, and by 1.9 gigatonnes by 2050. This, however, contrasts with the 5.1 gigatonne increase in the amount of carbon required to be removed in a 'focus scenario', according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment report, the researchers said.

The 'focus scenario' is when CO2 emissions are severely cut down to meet net-zero goals by or after 2050, achieving the Paris Agreement, said Vaughan.

"Our analysis shows that countries need more awareness, ambition and action on scaling up CDR methods together with deep emissions reductions to achieve the aspirations of the Paris Agreement," said Vaughan. The international team, led by Mercator Research

Drone footage shows Ukrainian village battered to ruins as residents flee Russian advance



The Ukrainian village of Ocheretyne has been battered by fighting, drone footage obtained by The Associated Press shows. The village has been a target for Russian forces in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. Russian troops have been advancing in the area, pounding Kyiv's depleted, ammunition-depleted

forces with artillery, drones and bombs. Ukraine's military has acknowledged the Russians have gained a "foothold" in Ocheretyne, which had a population of about 3,000 before the war, but says that fighting continues. Residents have scrambled to flee the village, among them a 98-year-old woman who walked almost 10 km (6 miles) alone last week, wearing a pair of slippers and supported by a cane, until she reached Ukrainian front lines. Not a single person is seen in the footage, and no building in Ocheretyne appears to have been left untouched by the fighting.

temperature targets of arresting global warming to within 1.5 degrees Celsius, as laid out in the Paris Agreement, or at least below 2 degrees Celsius. Therefore, the emissions gap for the year 2050 is at least 3.2 gigatonnes of CO2, according to the researchers. They also assessed an alternative 'focus scenario' which assumes a significant reduction in global energy demand. Also derived from the IPCC, the reduced demand is considered to be driven by politically-initiated behavioural changes as the core of climate protection strategy. The team found that in 2050, this scenario could increase the carbon removed by a more modest amount - 2.5 gigatonnes. In this scenario, full implementation of the current carbon removal plans of countries would be almost sufficient, with a gap of 0.4 gigatonnes in 2050, the authors found. "The most ambitious proposals for carbon dioxide removal (CDR) are close to levels in a low-energy demand scenario with the most-limited CDR scaling and aggressive near-term emissions reductions," the authors wrote. The team acknowledged that sustainability issues, such as

were wounded. Ukraine's military said Russia launched a total of 13 Shahed drones at the Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions of eastern Ukraine overnight, all of which were shot down by Ukrainian air defences. Ukraine's energy ministry on Saturday said the overnight strikes damaged an electrical substation in the Dnipropetrovsk region, briefly depriving households and businesses of power. According to Serhii Lysak, the province's governor, falling drone debris damaged unspecified "critical infrastructure" and three private houses, one of which caught on fire. Two residents, a man and a woman, were rushed to hospital. Russia's Defense Ministry claimed early on Saturday that its forces overnight shot down four US-provided long-range ATACMS missiles over the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014. The ministry did not provide further details. Ukraine has recently begun using the missiles, provided secretly by the United States, to hit Russian-held areas, including a military airfield in Crimea and in another area east of the occupied city of Berdiansk, US officials said last week. Long sought by Ukrainian leaders, the new missiles give Ukraine nearly double the striking distance -- up to 300 km (190 miles) -- than it had with the mid-range version of the weapons it received from the US last October. A Ukrainian drone also damaged telecommunications infrastructure on the outskirts of Belgorod, a Russian city some 50 km (31 miles) from the Ukrainian border, according to the local governor.

Most houses, apartment blocks and other buildings look damaged beyond repair, and many houses have been pummeled into piles of wood and bricks. A factory on the outskirts has also been badly damaged. The footage also shows smoke billowing from several houses, and fires burning in at least two buildings. Elsewhere, Russia has in recent weeks stepped up attacks on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, in an attempt to pummel the region's energy infrastructure and terrorise its 1.3 million residents. Four people were wounded and a two-story civilian building was damaged and set ablaze overnight after Russian forces struck Kharkiv, in northeastern Ukraine, with exploding drones, regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said Saturday. The four, including a 13-year-old, were hurt by falling debris, he said on the Telegram messaging app. Russian state agency RIA reported Saturday that Moscow's forces struck a drone warehouse in Kharkiv that had been used by Ukrainian troops overnight, citing Sergei Lebedev, described as a coordinator of local pro-Moscow guerrillas. His comments could not be independently verified. Syniehubov said Russia also bombed Kharkiv on Friday, damaging residential buildings and sparking a fire. An 82-year-old woman died and two men

Yoga officially makes debut in Pakistan

After making global headlines, the ancient Indian physical, mental and spiritual practice of yoga has officially arrived in neighbouring Pakistan. According to the official Facebook page of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), which is responsible for the upkeep of Islamabad, the Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad has launched "Free yoga classes in F-9 Park" in the capital. "Many people have already joined in to kickstart their journey towards health and wellness," the CDA said. It also posted pictures of people taking part in the yoga exercises. Recognising its universal

appeal, the United Nations on 11 December 2014 proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga. A draft resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. Yoga is normally linked with India and there are not many formal institutions in Pakistan to teach yoga. Though privately people like the physical part of yoga exercises. Many residents appreciated the move to organise Yoga classes with several people inquiring about the programme. A step at the official level to organise yoga at the most prominent park of the capital



is a welcome move and may send a positive message across the border amidst a chill in bilateral ties over the Kashmir issue and cross-border terrorism. "Good job I really appreciate your work CDA pls send the timing," Shahid Iqbal, a resident, commented. However, some criticised the CDA for failing to provide decent residential facilities to the people of Islamabad and instead resorting to show-casing sideshows. Ghulam Mustafa said in his comments that CDA failed to develop new sectors. "For God's sake concentrate on your core functions and develop the residential sectors you failed to develop during the last 35 years," he said

Houston braces for flooding to worsen in wake of storms



High waters flooded neighbourhoods around Houston on Saturday following heavy rains that have already resulted in crews rescuing hundreds of people from homes, rooftops and roads engulfed in murky water. A flood watch remained in effect through Sunday afternoon as forecasters predicted additional rainfall Saturday night, bringing another 1 to 3 inches (2.5 to 7.6 centimeters) of water to the soaked region and the likelihood of major flooding. Friday's fierce storms forced numerous high-water rescues, including some from the rooftops of flooded homes. Officials redoubled urgent instructions for residents in low-lying areas to evacuate, warning the worst was still to come. "This threat is ongoing and it's going to get worse. It is not your typical river flood," said Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, the top elected official in the nation's third-largest county. She described the predicted surge of water as "catastrophic." Schools in the path of the flooding cancelled classes and roads jammed as authorities closed highways taking on water. For weeks, drenching rains in Texas and parts of Louisiana have filled reservoirs and saturated the ground. Floodwaters partially submerged cars and roads this week across parts of south-eastern Texas, north of Houston, where high waters reached the roofs of some homes. More than 21 inches (53.34 centimeters) of rain fell during the five-day period that ended Friday in Liberty County near the city of Splendora, about 30 miles (48 kilometres) northeast of

Houston, according to the National Weather Service. In the rural community of Shepherd, Gilroy Fernandes said he and his spouse had about an hour to evacuate after a mandatory order. Their home is on stilts near the Trinity River, and they felt relief when the water began to recede on Thursday. Then the danger grew while they slept. "Next thing you know, overnight they started releasing more water from the dam at Livingston. And so that caused the level of the river to shoot up by almost 5 or 6 feet overnight," Fernandes said. Neighbours who left an hour later got stuck in traffic because of flooding. The Harris County Joint Information Center told KPRC-TV that 196 people and 108 animals have been rescued by emergency response agencies in Harris County. Elsewhere, in neighbouring Montgomery County, Judge Mark Keough said there had been more high-water rescues than he was able to count. "We estimate we've had a couple hundred rescues from homes, from houses, from vehicles," Keough said. In Polk County, located about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northeast of Houston, officials have done over 100 water rescues in the past few days, said Polk County Emergency Management Coordinator Courtney Comstock.