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History, Art and Culture

Ancient Maya City Unearthed

*Archaeologists recently discovered the remains of a nearly **3,000-year-old Maya city** in northern Guatemala, featuring pyramids and monuments, indicating its significance as a ceremonial site.*

• **Maya Civilization -** A classical Mesoamerican civilization, flourished in present-day southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras, originating around 2600 B.C.
• **Intellectual Achievements -** They developed advanced astronomy, precise calendrical systems with leap day adjustments, and sophisticated hieroglyphic writing (over 800 glyphs) used for recording history and science.
• **Architectural Prowess -** Noted for elaborate ceremonial architecture, including temple-pyramids and observatories, the Maya constructed these impressive structures without metal tools. They also built extensive underground reservoirs.
• **Societal Structure -** Maya society comprised independent states with large urban ceremonial centers. At its peak, over 40 cities hosted 5,000-50,000 people.
• **Declined** - After 900 CE, leaving cities abandoned.
• **Enduring Legacy -** Despite decline and Spanish conquest, Maya peoples persisted. They remain in contemporary Mesoamerican societies, maintaining distinctive traditions alongside Roman Catholicism.

Ahilyabai Holkar's 300th Birth Anniversary

• Recently PM participated in a 'Mahila Sashaktikaran Maha Sammelan' in Bhopal to commemorate the 300th birth anniversary of legendary queen Ahilyabai Holkar.
• **Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar (1725-1795)** - Ahilyabai Holkar, ruler of Malwa from 1767 to 1795, presided over the zenith of the Holkar dynasty, bringing peace and prosperity. She was hailed as "Punyashlok" and "The Philosopher Queen."
• **Military Acumen** - Trained by her father-in-law, Ahilyabai personally led armies and modernized her forces with French assistance, appointing Tukoji Rao Holkar as commander.
• **Equitable Governance** - Known for impartial justice, she even sentenced her son to death. She established courts, reformed property laws for childless widows, and was accessible to all, rejecting purdah.
• **Cultural Patronage** - She transformed Maheshwar into a cultural hub, welcoming prominent poets and scholars. A prolific builder, she constructed hundreds of temples and Dharmashalas, notably renovating the Kashi Vishwanath Temple.
• **Economic and Infrastructure Development** - Ahilyabai established the renowned Maheshwari saree textile industry and oversaw the construction of forts, roads, wells, and rest houses, showcasing her foresight in development.

Geography

Switzerland Glacier Collapse

Recently, a massive glacier collapse in Switzerland's Loetschental valley buried Blatten village under ice and rock, raising flood concerns as the River Lonza is blocked.

• **Lonza Valley Location -** The Loetschental (Lonza) Valley is nestled in the canton of **Valais**, southern Switzerland, within the Alpine region.
• **Affected Country -** Switzerland is directly impacted, drawing international attention to climate-induced glacial hazards.
• **River Lonza -** Flows through the valley, fed by Alpine glaciers, and is now obstructed.
• **Fragile Ecosystem -** This high-altitude ecosystem, home to small Alpine settlements like Blatten, is highly **sensitive to global warming**.
• **Climate Vulnerability** - The valley faces vulnerability from glacial retreat, permafrost thawing, and associated hazards like landslides and flash floods.

International Relations and Issues

International Sex Workers' Day

June 2, marks the 50th anniversary of International Sex Workers' Day, observed annually to commemorate a pivotal protest.

• **Lyon Church Occupation -** On June 2, 1975, over a hundred sex workers occupied the Église Saint-Nizier in Lyon, France, protesting inhumane conditions and police brutality.
• **Acknowledging Exploitation -** The day honors sex workers and acknowledges the often exploitative and difficult circumstances they face.
• **Advocating for Rights -** It serves to raise awareness about their human and labor rights, combating stigma and discrimination globally.
• **Call for Decriminalization -** A key objective is to advocate for the decriminalization of sex work and improve access to justice and essential services.
• **Promoting Safety and Dignity -** Ultimately, International Sex Workers' Day is a crucial platform for the global movement, demanding safety, well-being, dignity, and respect for sex workers worldwide.

Environment

Valmik Thapar

Valmik Thapar, the renowned Indian wildlife conservationist, author, and filmmaker, passed away on May 31, 2025, at 73. He was celebrated for his unwavering dedication to **tiger conservation**.
• **Tiger Advocate -** For over five decades, Thapar passionately studied and advocated for wild tigers, particularly in Ranthambore, becoming a global authority on the species.
• **Prolific Creator -** He authored acclaimed books like "Land of the Tiger" and produced documentaries for major networks, bringing India's tiger story to a worldwide audience.
• **Ranthambhore Foundation -** In 1987, he co-founded the Ranthambhore Foundation, a pioneering initiative integrating wildlife protection with community development.
• **Influential Voice -** Thapar served on numerous government committees, fearlessly criticizing policies that hindered conservation efforts.
• **Deep Understanding -** His profound understanding of tiger behavior stemmed from years of firsthand observation, chronicling individual tigers and revealing their intricate lives.

New Frog Species Discovered in Shillong

Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India have announced the discovery of Amolops shilling.

• **What so special -** A new frog species found in Shillong, Meghalaya, highlighting the intersection of urbanization and biodiversity.

• **Urban Biodiversity Highlighted** - Discovered in Mawlai and Umrynjah, this cascade frog thrives in fast-flowing urban streams, demonstrating that cities can harbor unique ecosystems and sensitive wildlife.

• **Advanced Identification -** Identifying *Amolops shillong* required advanced genetic tools due to its cryptic nature and visual similarity to other species. Phylogenetic analysis revealed its genetic distinctness, with a 2.0-3.4% divergence from its closest relative, *Amolops siju*.

• **Significance of the Find -** This discovery underscores that urban areas are not devoid of wildlife and emphasizes the critical need to protect microhabitats within cities, indicating healthy urban ecosystems.

• **Urgent Conservation Needs -** The finding calls for urgent conservation efforts in urban settings. Preserving green spaces in expanding cities is crucial for maintaining biodiversity, which is often overlooked but vital for ecological health.

• **Northeast India- Biodiversity Hotspot -** Northeast India is a biodiversity hotspot with 20 *Amolops* species, 16 in India, and nine discovered in the last two decades, showcasing the region's rich natural heritage and potential for further discoveries.

Rare Lizard Found in Meghalaya

Calotes zolaiking, a rare lizard species, was recently recorded for the first time in Meghalaya, marking a significant discovery.

• **Calotes zolaiking** - First described in 2019 from Mizoram, this garden lizard measures approximately 5 inches, displaying various shades of green with dark patches.

• **Distinctive Appearance** - *Calotes zolaiking* has "strongly keeled" scales, meaning each long scale possesses a central ridge, contributing to a sharper appearance.

• **Calotes in India** - India is home to 14 *Calotes* species, with nine found in the diverse Northeast region.

• **Characteristics of Calotes -** These arboreal, tree-dwelling lizards of the Agamidae family are known for their extreme color changes when excited. They are diurnal, fast runners, and can swim.

• **Distribution and Diet** - *Calotes* are distributed across gardens and forests in India, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and some Pacific islands, primarily feeding on insects and small invertebrates.

Security

Indian Army's "Decade of Transformation

Recently, The Indian Army is conducting extensive Capacity Development Demonstrations at Pokhran, Babina, and Joshimath.

• **Goal** - Is to enhance operational readiness by rapidly absorbing emerging technologies and promoting self-reliance in defence manufacturing, aligning with the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign.

• **Key Technologies -** Evaluations include Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), UAV-Launched Precision Guided Munitions (ULPGM), Counter-UAS Solutions, Loitering Munitions, SVL Drones, and Advanced Electronic Warfare Platforms.

• **Integrated Systems -** Also being tested are Precision Multi-Munition Delivery Systems, Integrated Drone Detection and Interdiction Systems (IDDIS), Low-Level Light-Weight Radars, and VSHORADS (Next Generation Infrared Systems).

• **Evolving Warfare -** Modern conflicts demand integrated strategies across air, land, sea, cyber, and space, prompting a shift towards distributed and non-linear approaches.

• **Collaboration -** The Army is actively engaging Indian **academia and private sector** to leverage STEM talent and drive innovation in defense capabilities.

Science

Government Boosts Biostimulants

*The central government recently notified **34 biostimulants**, aiming to spur their manufacturing and use in agriculture.*

• **Biostimulants -** These are substances or microorganisms applied to plants or soil that **stimulate natural processes**, enhancing physiological abilities and reducing fertilizer needs.

• **Benefits for Plants -** Biostimulants improve plant growth, enhance nutrient efficiency, and boost resistance to **abiotic stresses** like drought, salinity, and extreme temperatures.

• **How They Work -** They target root development, stress tolerance, and soil microbial activity, ultimately improving overall plant health and productivity.

• **Common Types -** Examples include humic and fulvic acids, seaweed extracts, and beneficial fungi and bacteria like mycorrhizae and rhizobacteria.

• **Advantages and Regulation -** Biostimulants enhance nutrient uptake, improve soil health, boost crop quality, and increase yields.

• **Regulation** In India, they are regulated under the Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985.

China Launches Tianwen-2 Asteroid Mission

Recently, China launched its pioneering Tianwen-2 mission.

• **Aiming to** - *Retrieve samples from 469219 Kamoʻoalewa, a near-Earth quasi-satellite asteroid*.

• **Mission Objectives & Techniques** - The mission seeks to collect 100 grams of material using 11 instruments. Sample collection involves hovering, a robotic arm, and a "touch and go" drilling method.

• **Timeline and Return** - Tianwen-2 will reach Kamoʻoalewa by July 2026, with samples returning to Earth in November 2027. Success would make China the third nation to retrieve asteroid material.

• **Future Exploration** - Part of a 10-year plan, the spacecraft will then target 311P/PanSTARRS in the main asteroid belt for distant study.

• **Tianwen Mission** - Tianwen-2 follows the successful Tianwen-1 Mars landing in 2021. China's ambitious plans include Tianwen-3, aiming for Mars sample retrieval by 2028.

• **China's Growing Space Prowess** - Is Controlled by the People's Liberation Army, has rapidly advanced, achieving lunar and Martian landings and establishing the Tiangong space station, signaling its commitment to permanent space exploration**.**



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