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History, Art and Culture

Kandha Women Abandon Facial Tattoo Tradition

Recently, Kandha women in Odisha's Kandhamal district are increasingly abandoning their centuries-old facial tattooing tradition, once a protective measure against exploitation, due to changing societal norms and awareness.

• **Kandha Tribe -** or Khond are Odisha's largest tribal community, primarily in Kandhamal, Rayagada, Kalahandi, and Koraput.
• **Language** - They speak Kui or Kuvi, Dravidian languages.
• **Sub-groups include** - Desia, Dongria, and Kutia Kandha Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
• **Origin of Tattoo Tradition -** Facial tattooing began as a protective measure to deter sexual exploitation by landlords and colonial forces, making women appear unattractive.
• **Cultural Significance -** The practice evolved into a crucial cultural identity marker, with tattoos becoming essential for marital eligibility and community acceptance.
• **Painful Ritual -** Girls, typically around 10, underwent hours of painful facial piercing with crude tools, causing severe swelling and infection. Silver earrings also denoted marital status.
• **Current Status -** The tradition has virtually vanished among women under 40 due to increased awareness and educational interventions since the 1990s, as younger generations no longer find it necessary.

Geography

Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki Erupts on Flores Island

Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki erupted twice on May 19, 2025, prompting Indonesian authorities to raise the alert to the highest level (Level 4) due to increased seismic activity and a significant ash plume.
• **Location & Features:** Located on Flores Island, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki (5,197 feet) is paired with the taller, calmer Mount Lewotobi Perempuan.
• **Eruption -** Eruption sent ash clouds of 0.7 miles (1.1 km) above the peak. Previous eruptions in November 2024 caused fatalities and flight disruptions.
• **Safety Measures -** Residents are advised to wear masks, avoid a 3-mile crater radius, and be aware of potential lahars.
• **Aviation Impact -** The Volcanic Ash Advisory Center (VAAC) in Darwin issued a red alert, indicating major ash emissions posing significant aviation risks.
• **Geological Context -** Indonesia, part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, has over 130 active volcanoes, making such events.

Polity & Governance

India Launches 'Sagar Mein Samman' for Women in Maritime

Recently, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways launched the 'Sagar Mein Samman' initiative in Mumbai.

• **Objectives -** The initiative seeks to promote inclusivity, ensure safety, provide equal opportunities, and offer skill development and leadership training for women, dismantling gender barriers in the maritime profession.

• **Growth in Women Seafarers -** India has seen a 649% increase in women seafarers since 2014, rising from 341 to 2,557 in 2024, supported by government financial assistance.

• **Policy Features -** The policy includes strategic planning, training, research, and community outreach. It offers incentives for shipping companies to hire women and provides scholarships for their training.

• **Future Goals -** The initiative targets 12% female representation in technical maritime roles by 2030, aligning with national and UN Sustainable Development Goals for gender equality.

• **International Alignment -** 'Sagar Mein Samman' aligns with the International Maritime Organisation's mission for gender inclusion and supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals, promoting gender equality across sectors.

India Launches e-Zero FIR for Cyber Financial Fraud

Recently, India has launched the e-Zero FIR initiative, announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, to expedite FIR registration for high-value cyber financial fraud cases. The pilot project began in Delhi and will expand nationwide.

• **e-Zero FIR** - This initiative allows victims of cyber financial crimes exceeding Rs 10 lakh to report incidents via the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) or helpline 1930. These complaints are automatically converted into an FIR, eliminating the need for police station visits.

• **Benefits -** Automated FIR registration would streamlines legal procedures, reduces response time, and facilitates swift freezing of fraudulent transactions, thereby enhancing cybercrime investigation effectiveness.

• **National Cybersecurity Focus** - The e-Zero FIR initiative underscores the Government of India's commitment to strengthening cybersecurity and creating a secure digital environment nationwide.

• **Role of I4C** - The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), established by the Ministry of Home Affairs, is the central agency for combating cybercrime in India, providing tools and resources for law enforcement.

• **Future Expansion** - Currently in its pilot phase, the e-Zero FIR initiative is slated for nationwide rollout, with plans to further enhance India's cybersecurity grid and foster citizen trust in the digital economy.

International Relations and Issues

China-Cambodia "Golden Dragon-2025" Joint Military Exercise

The "Golden Dragon-2025" exercise, the seventh iteration, commenced in mid-May 2025. Notably, it's the first to integrate operations from the China-Cambodia Ream Port Joint Support and Training Center, signifying deeper military cooperation.

• **Participants & Location -** China's PLA and Cambodian Armed Forces are participating, with operations spanning land and maritime areas in Cambodia, including Port Ream.

• **Themes -** Focusing on counter-terrorism, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and peace and cooperation.

• **Features -** The drill involves adaptive training, command drills, and live-force exercises. It showcases advanced technology like drone swarms and FPV drones.

• **Aims to** - Enhance joint land-sea-air combat capabilities, tactical coordination, and strengthen mutual military trust.

• **Strategic Significance -** "Golden Dragon-2025" underscores the deep military trust between China and Cambodia, bolstering China's strategic presence in Southeast Asia.

Sudan Appoints First PM Since Civil War

Recently, Sudan's army chief Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan appointed Kamil al-Taib Idris as PM, the 1st since Abdalla Hamdok's 2022 resignation. This follows the military's recent recapture of Khartoum from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) aiming to restore civilian governance.

• **Conflict Background -** The civil war, erupting in April 2023, stems from a power struggle between Sudan's military and the paramilitary RSF, spreading conflict and causing widespread humanitarian crisis.

• **Humanitarian Impact -** The conflict has resulted in over 20,000 deaths, 13 million displaced, and 25 million facing severe food insecurity, affecting half of Sudan's population.

• **Kamil al-Taib Idris -** A respected, neutral legal expert and diplomat, Idris previously served at Sudan's UN mission and the UN International Law Commission.

• **Appointment Objectives -** The appointment aims to form a transitional government leading to elections and civilian rule, and to counter the RSF's Nairobi charter for a parallel government.

• **Expert Opinion -** Analysts believe Idris's non-partisan background enhances his acceptance across various factions, including RSF supporters.

India's rank on the World Press Freedom Index 2025

India's rank improved to 151st out of 180 nations in 2025, up from 159th, reflecting ongoing efforts to enhance media freedom despite existing challenges.

• **World Press Freedom Index -** Published annually by Reporters Without Borders, the index assesses 180 countries based on political, economic, and social conditions affecting press freedom, using responses from over 5,000 individuals.

• **Top and Bottom Rankings** - Norway leads the index, followed by Estonia and the Netherlands. Eritrea ranks last, with North Korea, China, and Syria also at the bottom due to severe restrictions.

• **Challenges to Global Press Freedom** - The report highlights global challenges, including economic pressures on news organizations, political instability (e.g., Palestine, Tunisia), and media ownership concentration, leading to lack of diversity and self-censorship.

• **India's Media Landscape** - Despite a vibrant media environment with numerous TV channels and publications, India still faces press freedom issues. The improved ranking suggests a positive shift, though challenges persist.

• **Factors Affecting Rankings** - Political influence, economic viability of news outlets, and legal frameworks governing press freedom significantly impact a country's ranking, with restrictive laws often leading to lower positions.

Security

India's High-Altitude Platform (HAP) Prototype Completes Flight Tests

Recently, India's indigenous High-Altitude Platform (HAP) prototype, designed by National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), successfully completed pre-monsoon flight tests using a certified autopilot system, marking a significant step in its development.

HAP - Is a solar-powered, unmanned stratospheric aircraft operating at 17-22 km altitude, bridging the gap between terrestrial systems and satellites.

Developed by - National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), Bengaluru.

HAP aims - To provide persistent aerial coverage for border patrolling, surveillance, telecommunication relays, and meteorological platforms over sensitive and remote terrains.

Key Features - The solar-powered HAP prototype features a certified autopilot system for autonomous, fail-safe flight. It achieved 24,000 ft in tests, with a full-scale version targeting 65,000 ft and a 10kg payload capacity.

Applications - HAP has diverse applications including defense (surveillance, intelligence), meteorology (radiosonde deployment, monsoon measurements), telecommunications (temporary 5G), geoinformatics (mapping), and crowd monitoring.

Science

Dr. M. R. Srinivasan

Dr. M. R. Srinivasan, a pioneering Indian nuclear scientist and mechanical engineer, passed away on May 20, 2025, in Udhagamandalam, Tamil Nadu, at 95.

• **Key Roles -** He was instrumental in India's nuclear energy program, serving as former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and founding Chairman of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).

• **Career Highlights -** Joining the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in 1955, he worked with Dr. Homi Bhabha on Apsara, India's first nuclear reactor. He became Chief Project Engineer at Madras Atomic Power Station and later led the Atomic Energy Commission and NPCIL, overseeing the development of 18 nuclear power units.

• **Beyond Nuclear Energy -** Dr. Srinivasan also served as a senior advisor at the IAEA, a member of India’s Planning Commission, and on the National Security Advisory Board.

• **Awards & Legacy -** Recipient of Padma Shri (1984), Padma Bhushan (1990), and Padma Vibhushan (2015), his visionary leadership laid the foundation for India’s self-reliant nuclear energy program.

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Prostate Cancer

Recently, Prostate cancer is a global health issue for men, highlighted by recent diagnoses like Joe Biden's. Increased awareness, early diagnosis, and effective management strategies are vital for combating this aggressive disease.

• **Prostate Cancer -** Originates in the walnut-sized prostate gland, producing seminal fluid. It is the most common cancer in men across 112 countries, accounting for 15% of all male cancers, and ranks second in male cancer mortality, after lung cancer.

• **Risk Factors -** Age is a primary risk factor, increasing with advancing years. Family history also plays a role. Obesity contributes, with studies showing overweight men at higher risk. African American men face a higher risk compared to other ethnic groups.

• **Symptoms -** Early stages often show no symptoms. When present, symptoms include frequent, difficult, or painful urination; blood in urine or semen; lower back pain; and painful ejaculation. Early diagnosis is crucial.

• **Stages of Prostate Cancer -** Staging uses the Gleason score (2-10). Scores below 5 are non-cancerous. Stages 1 and 2 are localized, Stage 3 involves nearby tissue spread, and Stage 4 is advanced, metastasized cancer.

• **Treatment -** Depends on stage and health. Options include active surveillance for slow-growing cancers, surgery (prostatectomy), radiation, hormone therapy, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and targeted therapy.

• **Future Projections:** The Lancet Commission projects prostate cancer cases to rise from 1.4 million in 2020 to 2.9 million by 2040 due to aging populations. Late diagnosis is a challenge, particularly in low and middle-income countries

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