

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

A made in India aromatherapy spray is being pulled off retail giant Walmart's shelves in the United States after a medical investigation linked it to melioidosis, a rare disease that has sickened at least four, and may have caused two deaths, in the country. The spray was reported to contain a bacterium, *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, that causes a rare but deadly disease called melioidosis, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said.

A study of 40 lakes in North America, 18 in Europe and two in Asia concluded that lakes in the Northern Hemisphere are warming six times faster in the years from 1992 to 2016 than any other period in the last 100 years. On average, the lakes were losing 17 days of ice cover per century, the York University study found.

Hot Jupiters are gas giant planets closely bound to their stars. A paper published in Nature Astronomy can serve as a 'field guide' to hot Jupiters and also offer insights into planet formation. The researchers used the observations of the Hubble Space Telescope which allowed them to study the emission spectra of 19 such planets.

While leafing through the world's oldest, 2.5-billion-year-old deposits of ruby, in Greenland, University of Waterloo researchers found a sample containing graphite, a form of carbon. Analysis showed that this graphite contained the remains of ancient life, which the team deduced contained the remains of organisms such as cyanobacteria.

Human activity has stronger influence on abundance of apes than ecological factors, finds a study in American Journal of Primatology. Even if a suitable habitat, such as a tropical rainforest, was found near a human settlement, apes were not to be found there. The study also found only 10.7% of apes were found in highly protected areas.

Between 2.5 and 4 billion years ago it was not uncommon for asteroids or comets to hit the Earth. In fact, the largest ones, more than 9 kilometres wide, altered the chemistry of the planet's earliest atmosphere. Now, a study by U.S. researchers analysed remnants of ancient asteroids and modelled the effects of their collisions to show that the strikes took place more

AMRUT 2.0

1.The Union Cabinet approved the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation 2.0 (AMRUT 2.0) till 2025-26. First launched in 2015, AMRUT Mission aims to provide tap connections & sewer connections to every household in Mission cities. **AMRUT 2.0 targets 100% coverage of water supply by providing household tap connections in all 4,378 statutory towns.** 100% coverage of household sewerage/ septage management in 500 AMRUT cities targeted. Rejuvenation of water bodies and urban aquifer management will be undertaken to augment sustainable fresh water supply.

2.Recycle and reuse of treated wastewater is expected to cater to 20% of total water needs of the cities and 40% of industrial demand. Under the Mission, fresh water bodies will be protected from getting polluted to make natural resources sustainable.

3.**AMRUT-2.0** Mission has been mandated for cities having million plus population to take up Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects worth minimum of 10% of their total project fund allocation. The PPP project could be on Annuity/ Hybrid Annuity / BOT Model.

4.**AMRUT 1.0** Launched in 2015, AMRUT Mission is the first focused national water Mission for providing tap connections and sewer / septage connections to every household in 500 Mission cities (60% of the urban population). All cities having population above 1 lakh are covered under Mission. AMRUT aims to increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery & well maintained open spaces & reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport. This Mission is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

MOUNT MANIPUR

1.The Union government rechristened Mount Harriet, a historical tourist spot in the Andaman and Nicobar islands, as 'Mount Manipur'. Mount Harriet is the third highest peak in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It served as the summer headquarters of the Chief Commissioner during British Raj. Close by the Mount Harriet is the Mount Harriet National Park known for its wide variety of birds. Manipur's connection to Mt. Harriet - Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 was fought between the kingdom of Manipur and the British.

2.**Manipuris who had fought the British in the War, including Maharaja Kulachandra Dhwaja Singh, were exiled to a hillock in the Andaman Islands.** The battle was triggered by a coup in the palace of Manipur, which had been marked by internal factionalism in the years leading up to 1891.

3.The British government took advantage of the "internal dissension" among the princes of the royal family. The war led to Manipur becoming a princely state under the indirect rule of the British crown. Original name - Mount Harriet is believed to be named after British artist, Harriet Christina Tytler, who was the wife of Robert Christopher Tytler, a soldier who served in the British Indian Army.

BITING THE BULLET ON PETRO PRICES

1.Prices of fuels were increased again taking petrol and diesel prices to record high levels with diesel nearing Rs 100/litre mark in most cities. What are the reasons for fuel price rise? A sharp increase in global demand as the world economy recovers from the pandemic. The price of Brent Crude breached the \$85 per barrel mark earlier this week reaching its highest level since 2018 . The output of the top oil-producing countries is inadequate to meet the demands. OPEC+ cartel has been slow to boost the production of oil. Low crude oil supply from the US keeps the crude oil prices elevated. Elevated tax levels in India - The central government had last year increased levies on petrol by Rs 13 per litre and on diesel by Rs 16 per litre.

2.What will be the implications of rise in fuel prices? The consumer price index (CPI) may breach 6 per cent although fuel

often than previously thought. These strikes may have delayed when oxygen started accumulating on Earth, says a Harvard University press release. The new models can help scientists understand more precisely when the planet started its path toward becoming the Earth we know today. The researchers found existing planetary bombardment models underestimate how frequently asteroids and comets would hit Earth. The new, higher collision rate suggest impactors hit the planet roughly every 15 million years, about 10 times higher than current models. The scientists realised this after analysing records of what appear to be ordinary bits of rock. They are actually ancient evidence, known as impact spherules, that formed in the fiery collisions each time large asteroids or comets struck the planet.

Insulin is a hormone secreted by the β cells of the pancreas. It is commonly associated with an ability to regulate glucose metabolism. However, later studies (from around 1949 until recently) have shown it plays a larger role and helps in growth and maintenance of tissues. Despite years of study, fundamental details as to how differential amounts of insulin impact cells are unknown. An important mechanism in the cell is insulin signalling, which is a series of biochemical reactions that convey information about availability of insulin and the necessity to regulate the glucose in the blood. There are two main pathways for insulin signalling, named AKT and ERK, which together balance metabolism and growth. These specifically control storage of glucose in the liver and also stimulate glucose transport in skeletal muscle and fat. Abnormalities in insulin signalling thus impact health and survival itself of organisms and the study addresses an important piece of the puzzle.

Fossils unearthed in Argentina's southern Patagonia region is the oldest known evidence that some dinosaurs thrived in a complex, well organised herd structure, with adults caring for the young and sharing a communal nesting ground. The fossils include more than 100 dinosaur eggs and the bones of about 80 juveniles and adults of a Jurassic Period plant eating species called *Mussaurus patagonicus*. The animals experienced a mass death event, probably caused by a drought, and their bodies were subsequently buried by windblown dust. The animals were found to have been grouped by age at the time of their deaths. This phenomenon, called "age segregation," signals a complex social structure.

The defacing of Assamese slogans on

and power accounts for around 5.5% of the weightage of CPI. If CPI inflation goes beyond 6 per cent, it may result in stagflation which is characterized by slow economic growth and relatively high unemployment. The breach in inflation target might force RBI to hike policy rates, which will severely impact the post-pandemic economic recovery. Diesel prices breaching the ₹100 mark will have a serious cascading effect on food inflation.

3. What are the possible solutions for controlling the petrol prices? Tax cut - Central and State taxes on fuel must be slashed as higher prices may spur inflation and derail the incipient economic recovery. On the other side, tax slash will increase the demand and consumption of fuel, leading to greater crude oil imports, which could widen the trade deficit. It will also affect the revenue of the government.

GST- Bringing petrol and diesel under the maximum GST tax rate of 28 per cent would reduce the petrol and diesel prices to less than ₹50.

4. But there will be a huge tax revenue shortfall for the governments and states such as Tamil Nadu, Punjab, West Bengal, Telangana, Rajasthan, and Kerala opposed this move. By bringing petrol and diesel under GST, the life cycle cost may be favourable to ICE vehicles than electric vehicles. Reducing the cess and VAT - The Centre should slash the cess up to ₹10 and should ask the States to slash the Value Added Tax up to ₹10 which would increase the sales of fuel thus compensating the revenue loss for States.

TRADE PROTECTIONISM IN INDIA

1. The trade protectionism measures in India is at rise and could potentially hamper the international trade limiting the trade gains. What reflects India's protectionist regime? Tariff measures - The average of India's tariffs has increased by almost 25 per cent to 11.1 per cent in 2020-21 since the past decade. These increases in tariff rates have reversed the political consensus on tariff liberalisation that India followed since 1991. Anti-dumping measures - According to the WTO, from 2015 to 2019, India initiated 233 anti-dumping investigations. The anti-dumping initiations by India from 1995 till 2020 stand at 1,071 which is higher than the initiations by the US, the EU and China.

2. Ban on import or export - India recently amended Section 11(2)(f) of the Customs Act of 1962, giving the government the power to ban the import or export of any good if it is necessary to prevent injury to the economy. This provision was applied earlier only to gold and silver and is consistent with Article XX(c) of the GATT. The amendment is non-accordance with the GATT provisions that impose certain conditions for imposing import bans such as If a sudden, significant and sharp increase in imports causes serious injury to the domestic industry On trade on account of balance of payment difficulties For national security purposes Must not be applied in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner Must not restrict the international trade.

3. Expanding the scope of Article 11(2)(f) to cover any good is inconsistent with India's WTO obligations. FTA restrictions - Rules of origin determine the national source of a product and helps in deciding whether to apply a preferential tariff rate (if the product originates from India's FTA partner country) or to apply the most favoured nation rate (if the product originates from a non-FTA country). India amended the rules of origin requirement under the Customs Act imposing burdens on importers to dissuade them from importing goods from India's FTA partners. Vocal for local - India's Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) gives preference to domestically made goods creating an ecosystem where imports are undermined, upsetting the trading partners.

4. What are the implications? Protectionist steps are justified on the ground that they would help domestic companies grow into viable competitors. But the fact is that protectionism does not benefit the domestic economy. It rather encourages inefficiency of domestic manufacturers. It is likely to hurt exports, make domestic goods costlier and reduce benefits to consumers from increased competition. So in the long term, protectionism is likely to have only a negative effect on industry's ability to compete globally.

5. For India to reap the benefits of the summits and partnerships like Quad, there needs to be a fundamental shift in policy. A more pragmatic approach in line with the recent initiatives to reverse the retrospective tax legislation and

hoardings of Jal Jeevan Mission in the Bengali majority Barak Valley has led to a call for the bifurcation of Assam. Miscreants had over the past few days smeared some hoardings in black to protest the “imposition” of the Assamese language in Barak Valley, where Bengali is the official language. The valley covers the southern Assam districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. Several Brahmaputra Valleybased organisations, including the All Assam Students’ Union, viewed the defacement as an insult to the Assamese language and people. Their demand for action against the miscreants saw the police arrest two persons. Both were released on bail.

provide support to the flailing telecom sector must be expanded.