

1772

Captain James Cook begins his second voyage to the South Seas aboard HMS Resolution to search for Terra Australis (Southern continent)



1832

Source of Mississippi River discovered by American geographer Henry Schoolcraft

1966

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada founds the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna movement) in New York City

1923

The Hollywood Sign is officially dedicated in the hills above Hollywood, Los Angeles. It originally reads "Hollywoodland" but the four last letters are dropped after renovation in 1949

# India shoots for the moon with latest rocket launch

● The latest iteration of the Chandrayaan ("Mooncraft") programme comes four years after an earlier attempt

AFP | Bengaluru



An engineer works on a component at a Godrej Aerospace manufacturing plant, which manufacture various parts for the Vikas and cryogenic engines for the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) space missions, in Mumbai

India tomorrow launches its latest attempt at an unmanned moon landing, the next frontier of a burgeoning, cut-price aerospace programme rapidly closing in on the milestones set by global superpowers.

If successful, the mission would make the world's most populous nation only the fourth country after Russia, the United States and China to achieve a controlled landing on the lunar surface.

The latest iteration of the Chandrayaan ("Mooncraft") programme comes four years after an earlier attempt ended in failure, with ground crew losing contact moments before landing.

"We're sure this one will be successful and will bring pride and recognition to everybody who has worked for it," Anil G. Verma of Godrej & Boyce, ISRO's principal engine and components supplier, told AFP.

The 14-day mission comes with a price tag of \$74.6 million, according to media reports, and aims to successfully land a rover to explore the lunar surface.



Chandrayaan-2, its previous attempt at a lunar landing in 2019, cost \$140 million -- nearly twice Friday's launch, but a much smaller price tag than similar ventures by other countries.

A huge crowd is expected to attend the launch, scheduled for 2:35 pm local time (0905 GMT) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre north of Chennai.

"I am very happy and hopeful," K. Sivan, the ISRO chief during India's last lunar landing attempt, told AFP.

India's space programme has

grown considerably in size and momentum since it first sent a probe to orbit the moon in 2008.

In 2014, it became the first Asian nation to put a satellite into orbit around Mars, and three years later, the ISRO launched 104 satellites in a single mission.

74.6

The 14-day mission comes with a price tag of \$74.6 million

## Abbas vows to rebuild Jenin camp after Israeli raid

AFP | Jenin

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas vowed Wednesday to rebuild the Jenin refugee camp during a rare visit that came a week after an Israeli raid left much of it destroyed.

Abbas described the camp as an "icon of struggle" during his first visit in over a decade to the camp in the northern West Bank city.

Twelve Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed last week in the two-day raid on Jenin, the largest in years by Israeli forces.

The raid on the camp, which Israel views as a "terrorism hub", employed hundreds of troops as well as drone strikes and army bulldozers that tore up streets and damaged scores of houses.

Several top officials of Abbas's Fatah party, including deputy chairman Mahmoud Aloul, had visited the camp



Abbas (2nd-R) recites a prayer as he lays a wreath of flowers by the graves of Palestinians killed in recent Israeli military raids

soon after the raid, only to be heckled by crowds of angry residents.

On Wednesday, Abbas expressed determination to back Jenin's reconstruction and security.

He described the camp as an "icon of steadfastness and struggle", in a short address as crowds of supporters cheered.

"We have come to say that we are one authority, one state, one law," he said, warning against anyone who "tampers with the unity and security of our people".

He further vowed to oversee the reconstruction of the camp and the city to restore it "to what it was or even better".

## 'Extremely angry' BBC star in scandal faces new claims



Representative picture

AFP | London

Allegations mushroomed yesterday against a star BBC presenter accused of paying a teenager for sexually explicit pictures, as three more people came forward with complaints.

Fellow BBC star Jeremy Vine urged the presenter to publicly identify himself to prevent further reputational damage to the broadcaster and false accusations against others.

"I know his survival instinct has kicked in... but my God look at the damage to the BBC, look at the damage to his friends, to those falsely accused -- and the longer he leaves it the worse it will be for him," the radio show host said Wednesday on a television show he hosts for another channel.

Former BBC North America editor Jon Sopel, meanwhile, described the star at the centre of the scandal as "extremely angry" over how the story had unfolded.

"It is fair to say that the presenter at the heart of this is also extremely angry over a lot of The Sun coverage and is convinced they're trying to dig and find new dirt," Sopel said on LBC Radio's The News Agents podcast.

The BBC itself reported on Tuesday that another person in their 20s had come forward to say they received "threatening messages from the unnamed high-profile figure".

Hours later, The Sun daily -- which broke the original story last Friday -- alleged he also broke Covid lockdown rules to meet another young person he met on a dating site.

## Over statement on islands

agic islands -- located at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, through which a large amount of oil output passes -- have long been a source of contention between the UAE and Iran.

bassador Alexey Dedov and voiced the Islamic republic's "objections on the content of the statement".

It further "called for a correction of the Russian Federation's stance on this issue".

The three strategic islands -- located in the Gulf near the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz, through which a

fifth of world oil output passes -- have for years been a source of contention between the UAE and Iran.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani on Tuesday said the islands "belong to Iran forever and issuing such statements goes against the friendly relations between Iran and its neighbours".

## Google AI health chatbot passes US medical exam: study

AFP | Paris, France

Google's artificial intelligence-powered medical chatbot has achieved a passing grade on a tough US medical licensing exam, but it's answers still fall short of those from human doctors, a peer-reviewed study said yesterday.

Last year the release of ChatGPT -- whose developer OpenAI is backed by Google's rival Microsoft -- kicked off a race between tech giants in the burgeoning field of AI.

While much has been made about the future possibilities -- and dangers -- of AI, health is one area where the technology had already shown tangible progress, with algorithms able to read certain medical scans as well as humans.

Google first unveiled its AI tool for answering medical questions, called Med-PaLM, in a preprint study in December. Unlike ChatGPT, it has not been released to the public.

The US tech giant says Med-PaLM is the first large language model, an AI technique trained on vast amounts of human-produced text, to pass the US Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



I wish a very happy birthday to our @UN Messenger of Peace, @Malala! Thank you for your work and relentless commitment to girls' education worldwide, at a moment when they're needed more than ever.

@antonio gutierrez

02



Pleased to have met H.E. Sheikh @MhmdAlissa, Secretary General of @MWLOrg and Chairman of the Organisation of Muslim Scholars. We had a great exchange of views on furthering inter-faith dialogue, countering extremist ideologies, promoting global peace, and deepening partnership between India and Saudi Arabia.

@narendramodi

03



One year ago, NASA released an image from the James Webb Space Telescope that reminded us America can do big things. Today, they've done it again.

@POTUS

04



NATO is where Ukraine belongs.

@RishiSunak

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)