

Charles V and Francis I sign the Treaty of Madrid, forcing Francis to renounce his claims to Burgundy, Italy, and Flanders

Dutch East India Company conquers the city of Malacca, killing about 7,000 people



Third Battle of Panipat: In one of the largest battles of the 18th century, the mostly Muslim Afghan Durrani Empire defeats the mostly Hindu Maratha Empire in northern India. An estimated 60,000 to 70,000 people are killed in the fighting, and about 40,000 Maratha prisoners are massacred afterward.



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02



The United States yesterday designated the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as well as Lebanon and Jordan as terrorist organizations, fulfilling a long demand of Arab allies and US conservatives.

These designations reflect the opening actions of an ongoing, sustained effort to thwart Muslim Brotherhood chapters' violence and destabilization wherever it occurs," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.

The United States will use all available tools to deprive these Muslim Brotherhood chapters of the resources to engage in or support terrorism."

President Donald Trump in November set in motion the process to take action

against the pan-Islamist movement, which was founded in Egypt in 1928 and has since spread across the Arab world.

The Trump administration designated the Egyptian as well as Jordanian chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood on the basis of their support for Hamas, the Palestinian armed group.

The Muslim Brotherhood rose to power in Egypt democratically through the election of Mohamed Morsi. He was deposed in 2013 in a military coup by then military chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who has since pursued a sweeping crackdown against the Muslim Brotherhood.

Egypt as well as fellow US allies Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have long sought to suppress the Muslim Brotherhood.



N. Korean leader's sister says Seoul's hopes for better ties a 'pipe dream'

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's powerful sister yesterday dismissed hopes for improved relations with Seoul as a "pipe dream", and demanded an apology over an alleged drone incursion from the South.

"As far as Seoul's various hope-filled wild dreams called 'repair of DPRK-ROK relations' are concerned, they all can never come true," Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by the state-run Korean Central News Agency, using the acronyms for the official names of both countries.

Pyongyang said over the weekend that it shot down a drone near the North Korean



Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un

city of Kaesong in early January after it crossed from the South Korean border county of Ganghwa.

Seoul denied the claim, saying the drone shown in photos released by Pyongyang was not

a model its military operates.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has ordered a joint military-police probe into the drone case, saying any civilian involvement would be "a serious crime that threatens peace on the Korean Peninsula".

Kim Yo Jong said the North sees the incident as a grave provocation.

"The Seoul authorities should admit and apologize for having violated the sovereignty of the DPRK and take a measure for preventing reoccurrence," she said, warning that repeated infringements would force them to "pay the price they cannot deal with".

"This is not a mere rhetorical threat," she added.

India hunts rampaging elephant that killed 20 people

AFP | Patna, India

Indian wildlife officers are hunting a rampaging wild elephant blamed for killing at least 20 people and injuring 15 others in the forests of Jharkhand, villagers and officials said yesterday.

The elephant, a lone bull, is reported to have gone on the rampage for nine days beginning in early January, creating panic in the rural West Singhbhum district.

"We are trying to trace and rescue this violent wild elephant that killed so many people," government forest officer



Representative picture

Aditya Narayan told AFP, confirming the toll of 20 dead.

Children and the elderly are among the dead, as well as a professional elephant handler, known as a mahout.

But after wreaking a trail of destruction, it had not been spotted since Friday, despite multiple patrols in the area.

Officials said search teams, aided by drones, are combing dense forest tracts, including a national reserve in neighbouring Odisha state.

Fear has driven residents of more than 20 villages to

abandon their farms or barricade themselves indoors at night, elected village head Pratap Chachar told AFP.

A police team, or forest official vehicle, visits in the night to provide essential help to villagers," Chachar said.

Asian elephants are now restricted to just 15 percent of their original habitat.

A former forest official said the elephant was likely in musth, and may now have calmed down and rejoined its herd.

YOU KNOW WHAT
India is home to the majority of the world's remaining wild Asian elephants, a species listed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and increasingly threatened by shrinking habitat.

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

WHO says sugary drinks, alcohol getting cheaper, should be taxed more



The WHO said consistently low taxes on the products in most countries were fuelling obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancers.

The organisation said that while such drinks generate billions of dollars in profit, governments capture a relatively small share of that through health-driven taxes

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

Sugary drinks and alcohol are getting relatively cheaper, the World Health Organization said Tuesday, urging countries to hike taxes to reduce consumption levels and boost health funding.

The WHO said consistently low taxes on the products in most countries were fuelling obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancers.

Weak tax systems are allowing harmful products to remain cheap while health systems face mounting financial pressure from preventable non-communicable diseases," the UN health agency said.

The organisation said that while such drinks generate billions of dollars in profit, governments capture a relatively small share of that through health-driven taxes, leaving societies to bear the long-term health and economic costs.

"Health taxes are one of the strongest tools we have for promoting health and preventing disease," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

"By increasing taxes on products like tobacco, sugary drinks, and alcohol, governments can reduce harmful consumption and unlock funds for vital health services."

Tedros told a press conference that in poorer countries left struggling as aid funding dries up, such taxes could help make the transition towards sustainable self-reliance in running health systems.

'Powerful industries with deep pockets'

Jeremy Farrar, WHO assistant director-general in charge of health promotion, disease prevention and care, said the

evidence on tobacco taxation reducing consumption was clear -- and sugary drinks should be seen in the same light.

"This is also about using taxation as a move to shift behaviour," he said, adding it could also bolster prevention in countries struggling to deal with the rise in non-communicable diseases, and allow countries to invest in healthcare.

Tedros warned that health taxes were not simple to implement.

"They can be politically unpopular, and they attract opposition from powerful industries with deep pockets and a lot to lose," he told reporters.

"But many countries have shown that when they are done right, they are a powerful tool for health," he said, citing measures in the Philippines, Britain and Lithuania.

The WHO is urging states to raise and redesign their taxes as part of its "3 by 35" initiative, aimed at increasing the prices of tobacco, alcohol and sugary drinks by 2035.

Slipping through the net

The WHO issued twin global reports on taxes on alcohol and on sugar-sweetened beverages.

They said at least 116 countries tax sugary drinks like sodas.

"But many other high-sugar products, such as 100 percent fruit juices, sweetened milk drinks and ready-to-drink coffees and teas, escape taxation," said the WHO.

The alcohol report found beer had become more affordable in 56 countries from 2022 to 2024, and less affordable in 37.

It said wine was exempted from excise taxes in at least 25 countries, particularly in Europe.

"Excise taxes should apply to all alcoholic beverages," it said.

"There is significant room for better design and higher excise taxes on alcoholic beverages to decrease affordability and thereby reduce alcohol consumption and its related harms."

More affordable alcohol "drives violence, injuries and disease", said Etienne Krug, head of the WHO's health determinants, promotion and prevention department.

"While industry profits, the public often carries the health consequences and society the economic costs."