

AI cannot be patent ‘inventor’

Rules UK Supreme Court

REUTERS, London

A US computer scientist on yesterday lost his bid to register patents over inventions created by his artificial intelligence system in a landmark case in Britain about whether AI can own patent rights.

Stephen Thaler wanted to be granted two patents in the UK for inventions he says were devised by his “creativity machine” called DABUS.

His attempt to register the patents was refused by Britain’s Intellectual Property Office on the grounds that the inventor must be a human or a company, rather than a machine.

Thaler appealed to the UK’s Supreme Court, which yesterday unanimously rejected his appeal as under UK patent law “an inventor must be a natural person”.

‘HONOUR KILLING’ Pakistani parents sentenced to life in Italy

REUTERS, Rome

An Italian court sentenced two parents to lifetime imprisonment on Tuesday for killing their teenage daughter after she refused to travel to Pakistan for an arranged marriage.

The so-called honour killing of 18-year-old Saman Abbas, who went missing in April 2021, shocked Italy.

Her father, Shabbar Abbas, was convicted by the court in the northern city of Reggio Emilia along with the victim’s mother, who remains at large. The girl’s uncle was sentenced to 14 years in prison while two cousins were acquitted.

The verdict was at a court of first instance and can be appealed.

The father had wept and protested his innocence in testimony to the court on Tuesday.

“This trial is not complete. I too want to know who killed my daughter,” he told the court, according to Italian media reports.

Shabbar Abbas had been extradited to Italy in August to face trial after he was arrested in his village in eastern Pakistan on suspicion of murder. His wife is believed to be in hiding in Pakistan.

MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Mass burial of 87 victims held

AFP, New Delhi

Bodies of 87 people killed during bitter ethnic violence over the past eight months in India’s Manipur state were buried in a mass ceremony yesterday, a community leader said.

At least 200 people have been killed in the northeastern state since fighting broke out in May between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community.

Tensions between the two communities have revolved around competition for land and public jobs, with rights activists accusing local leaders of exacerbating ethnic divisions for political gain.

The far-flung state has fractured along ethnic lines, with rival militias setting up blockades to keep out members of the opposing community – meaning many families were not able to travel to collect the bodies of their relatives.

The remains of the victims had been lying in morgues in the state capital Imphal, considered a mainly Meitei-dominated area.

India’s top court last month ordered authorities to cremate or bury the bodies, with the remains of 64 people airlifted from Imphal and handed over to their families.

“The burial is over of all the 87 bodies,” said Ginza Vualzong, a spokesman for the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) in Manipur, told AFP.

“It is a day of mixed emotions. It is a sad day, but in a way a sense of relief as we can finally put our martyrs to rest.”

Long lines of coffins – many with Christian crosses laid on top – were lowered into separate holes dug into a hillside, while men with rifles fired volleys into the air.



Palestinians search for casualties at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

FOOD DELIVERIES HALTED

Gaza children dizzy from hunger

REUTERS, Rafah

The children displaced to south Gaza were craving chicken, but all their mother had left to feed the family for the day was a tin of peas donated by a man who took pity on her when he saw her crying.

Left homeless by Israel’s military offensive against Hamas, like most of Gaza’s 2.3 million population, Tahany Nasr was in a tent camp in Rafah focused on one thing only: how to find enough food and water to get everyone through another day.

She said her children had lost weight and were getting dizzy spells because they were not eating enough.

“I’ve been begging to feed my children and don’t find anything. I go to Social Affairs, they say go to the mosque. I go to the mosque, they say go to the Affairs,” she said, referring to Gaza’s welfare ministry which normally organises distributions of basic goods like flour to people in hardship.

Hunger has become the most pressing of the myriad problems facing hundreds of thousands of displaced Gaza Palestinians, with aid trucks able to bring in only a small fraction of what is needed,

and distribution uneven due to the chaos of war.

Some trucks have been stopped and looted by people desperate for food, while swathes of the devastated territory are beyond their reach because access roads are active battlegrounds.

Even in Rafah, which has a crossing to Egypt through which aid trucks enter and is an area where the Israeli army has told civilians to seek refuge, the dearth of food and clean water is so severe it is causing people to lose weight and get ill.

“We have started to see people coming in emaciated,” said Samia Abu Salah, a primary care doctor in Rafah.

She said weight loss and anaemia were common and people were so weak and dehydrated they were more susceptible to chest infections and skin conditions. Babies and children were particularly at risk, and their growth would be affected.

“My children just told me today that they were craving chicken. Where would I find them chicken? Where? Do I know? May Allah save us,” said Nasr, breaking down in tears as she spoke.

“We haven’t received any food in

two days. How do I fool my children? With some pasta? Some lentil stew? If I could find it!” she said, adding that sometimes she had resorted to making meals out of only onions.

Nasr went into her tent to fetch the tin of peas she said a kindly man had given her, even though he had bought it for himself. “This is it. This can be all we have for a whole day,” she said, holding it up, her voice rising in anger.

Far from being an extreme case, the account given by Nasr echoed stories told by many interviewees who spoke to Reuters in Rafah and elsewhere. People spoke of eating only once a day, of inadequate meals with insufficient nutrition, of rationing water, of children getting diarrhoea from drinking dirty water.

The war was triggered by Hamas fighters who stormed into southern Israel from Gaza on October 7, killing 1,200 people, according to Israeli authorities.

Israel has responded with a military assault on the densely populated, Hamas-run Gaza Strip, which has killed nearly 20,000 people, mostly women and children.

Maha Al-Alami, a displaced woman sheltering in a school in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis with eight children and grandchildren, said everyone was traumatised by the experience of hunger.

“I’m telling you, once the war is over, God willing, the Palestinian people should sit before psychiatrists,” she said.



10 dead as heavy rains hit south India

AFP, New Delhi

At least 10 people were killed in floods after intense rainfall in southern India, local media reported yesterday, weeks after a cyclone triggered intense flooding in the same areas. Hundreds are stranded in the state of Tamil Nadu as water submerged roads, with the airforce dropping 10 tonnes of emergency supplies to those stranded.

Footage from news agency Press Trust of India showed entire neighbourhoods underwater, with rescue teams using boats.

Tamil Nadu’s chief secretary, Shiv Das Meena, said at least 10 people had died and 12,600 people were forced to flee to safer areas, the Indian Express newspaper reported.

The situation was “grim” in districts including Thoothukudi and Tiruvelveli, the state governor’s office posted on X, previously known as Twitter.

Tamil Nadu state chief minister M K Stalin said “historically high rain” falls had “severely impacted the livelihoods of many and caused extensive damage to infrastructure”.

The heavy rains come two weeks after eight people were killed by Cyclone Michaung, which hit Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

PLOT TO KILL SIKH SEPARATIST IN US

Modi willing to ‘look into’ it

REUTERS

India will look into any information it receives on its alleged links to a foiled plot to murder a Sikh separatist leader in the United States, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the Financial Times newspaper in an interview published yesterday.

“If someone gives us any information, we would definitely look into it,” Modi told the paper, as he played down any impact on diplomatic ties with Washington because of the issue. “If a citizen of ours has done anything good or bad, we are ready to look into it. Our commitment is to the rule of law.”

Last month the US Justice department said an Indian government official had directed the plot, and unveiled charges against a man accused of orchestrating the attempted murder. India expressed concern about the linkage and dissociated itself from the plot, saying it would formally investigate the concerns of the United States, and take ‘necessary follow-up action’ on the findings of a panel set up on November 18. US officials have named the target of the attempted murder as Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist and dual citizen of the United States and Canada. Modi said India and Washington shared a “mature and stable partnership”. “Security and counter terrorism co-operation has been a key component of our partnership,” he said. “I don’t think it is appropriate to link a few incidents with diplomatic relations between the two countries.”

ROLE IN US CAPITOL ATTACK

Trump barred from Colorado primary ballot

AFP, Los Angeles

Donald Trump is ineligible for the US presidency because of his involvement in the January 2021 assault on the Capitol, Colorado’s supreme court ruled Tuesday, setting off a political earthquake that could upend next year’s election. The stunning legal decision – which Trump’s campaign said it would appeal – drew immediate condemnation from Republicans across the spectrum, and looked set to light a fire under the former reality TV star’s claim to political persecution.

The ruling, which only applies to the Colorado primary ballot, is the first of a number of legal actions across the country to successfully invoke the US Constitution’s 14th Amendment, which bars from office anyone formerly sworn to protect the country who later engages in insurrection.

“A majority of the court holds that President Trump is disqualified from holding the office of President under Section Three of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution,” the Colorado high court wrote. “Because he is disqualified, it would be a wrongful act under the Election Code for the Colorado Secretary of State to list him as a candidate on the presidential primary ballot. “We do not reach these conclusions lightly,” the 4-3 majority wrote. “We are mindful of the magnitude and weight of the questions now before us. We are likewise mindful of our solemn duty to apply the law, without fear or favor, and without being swayed by public reaction to the decisions that the law mandates we reach.”

An earlier ruling by a lower court found that while Trump had clearly given succor to the January 6 riot, the office of president was not included in the list of federal elected positions affected by the 14th Amendment.



Earthquake-affected residents look on beside aid tents erected in a school compound at Gaoli village in Jishishan County in northwest China’s Gansu province yesterday. Survivors of China’s deadliest earthquake in years huddled in aid tents yesterday after overnight temperatures plunged well below zero, with the death toll rising to 131.

PHOTO: AFP

DEADLY SHOOTINGS

Thailand halts new gun licences for a year

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand has stopped issuing new gun licences for a year, the interior ministry announced yesterday, after a series of high-profile shootings.

The change comes into effect immediately, the ministry said, and follows debate in the kingdom about firearms control following deadly gun incidents.

“In order to improve security and decrease crime rates, we will temporarily ban the issuing of personal guns,” interior ministry spokeswoman Traisuree Taisaranakul said on her official Facebook page.

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in the region with 10 million firearms in circulation, according to the GunPolicy.org website – roughly one for every seven Thais.