

News in brief

◆ **Russia plans to begin mass trials of its second coronavirus vaccine, EpiVacCorona, on people aged over 18, the RIA news agency cited the consumer health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor as saying.** EpiVacCorona, which is being developed by Siberia's Vector Institute, was authorised this month to carry out trials on 150 volunteers over 60 and 3,000 volunteers over 18, the watchdog has said. The trials will be conducted in Moscow and several other cities including Kazan and Kaliningrad, the TASS news agency cited it as saying.



Russia begins mass trials of second coronavirus vaccine

◆ **A Chinese court jailed 53 people on Monday** after convicting them on charges including bribery and negligence over a massive chemical factory explosion in eastern China last year that killed 78 people. The blast in Jiangsu province in March 2019 was one of the

China jails 53 for deadly factory blast



worst industrial accidents in the country in recent years, and led to the closure of the plant. Executives and employees of Jiangsu Tianjiayi Chemical company received sentences

ranging from 18 months to twenty years in prison, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

◆ **Maritime border talks between Lebanon and Israel scheduled for Wednesday have been postponed,** and U.S. mediators will now contact the two old foes separately, Israeli and Lebanese officials said on Monday. The negotiations were launched in October with delegations convening at a U.N. base to try to resolve a dispute about their maritime border that has held up hydrocarbon exploration in the potentially gas-rich area.

Israel-Lebanon maritime border talks postponed



◆ **US President-elect Joe Biden will nominate former Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen to be his treasury secretary and announced other members of his economic team on Monday,** the Biden transition team said in a statement. The Democrat's picks include Wally Adeyemo as deputy treasury secretary, Neera Tanden as director of the Office of Management and Budget and Cecilia Rouse to lead the Council of Economic Advisers, the transition team said.

Biden taps Yellen for Treasury, announces other members of economic team

It's a complex op

Iran says Israel, exile group killed

● **Attack had been carried out with the help of "a remote-controlled automatic machinegun" mounted on a pickup truck**

● **Iran Doubled the organisation's budget to continue Fakhrizadeh's path "vigorously"**

AFP News

Iran said Israel and an exiled opposition group used new and "complex" methods to assassinate its leading nuclear scientist, as it buried him yesterday in a funeral befitting a top "martyr".

As it laid Mohsen Fakhrizadeh -- seen by Israel as the "father" of Iran's nuclear weapons programme -- to rest, the Islamic republic also vowed to redouble his work.

Fakhrizadeh died Friday after his car and bodyguards were targeted in a bomb and gun attack on a major road outside the capital, heightening tensions once more between Tehran and its foes.

Iran's top security official, Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani of the Supreme National Security Council, said the "operation was very complex, using electronic equipment and no one was present at the scene".

The People's Mujahadeen of



Despite his high status, Fakhrizadeh maintained a low public profile. He was rarely mentioned in Iranian state media and was typically referred to as a university professor. This secrecy recently slipped when he appeared on Iranian websites with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.



Who was Mohsen Fakhrizadeh?

One of the most prominent scientists of Iran, Fakhrizadeh was also a member of the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and has been compared by The New York Times to J Robert Oppenheimer, the American theoretical physicist who was the director of the Los Alamos laboratory during the development of the world's first atomic weapon. According to the BBC, he was a "key player" - Something that Israel has alleged in the past - especially since Iran started breaking its nuclear deal commitments.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	13,757,807	273,152
2 India	9,449,093	137,397
3 Brazil	6,314,740	172,848
4 Russia	2,295,654	39,895
5 France	2,218,483	52,325
6 Spain	1,646,192	44,668
7 UK	1,617,327	58,245
8 Italy	1,585,178	54,904
9 Argentina	1,418,807	38,473
10 Colombia	1,308,37	36,584
11 Mexico	1,107,071	105,655
12 Germany	1,060,414	16,602
13 Poland	990,811	17,150
14 Peru	962,530	35,923

Global tally

63,231,139

Deaths

1,467,928

Recovered:

43,724,713

New cases

+171,572

New deaths

+3,077

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	106,707		6,211		98,981	1,515
Saudi Arabia	345,631	+399	5,329	+16	332,117	8,185
UAE	127,624	+1,390	482	+2	122,458	4,684
Kuwait	123,092	+775	756	+7	114,116	8,220
Oman	113,820	+466	1,203	+13	99,997	12,620
Qatar	131,689	+257	230		128,617	2,842

Iran weighs retaliation

Parliament on Sunday demanded a halt to international inspections of nuclear sites in the country, a step that could prove a fatal blow in 2015. The head of the Expediency Council, Mohsen Razai, hinted Iran should leave the global non-proliferation treaty.

Trump withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 and began reimposing crippling sanctions, but US President-elect Joe Biden has said Iran has emphasised Rouhani will seek its revenge for the assassination in "due time" and not be rushed into a "trap". The US slapped sanctions on Iran, contributing to the development of Iran's nuclear programme".

Around a year after the US withdrew from the nuclear deal, it began gradually abandoning most of its key commitments under the agree

Elephants eating plastic trash



Sri Lanka's government said Monday that it was building trenches and erecting electric fences to stop elephants eating plastic trash at open garbage dumps. Plastic in Sri Lankan landfills is a major killer of elephants, with autopsies showing large quantities of it in the stomachs of animals who died in agony after rummaging at dumps. The Department of Wildlife Conservation said the number of open tips had been cut to 15 from 54 since 2017, but that the problem persisted at nine sites.

Mount Ili Lewotolok

