

News in brief

◆ **Sophisticated scanning technology is revealing intriguing secrets about Little Foot, the remarkable fossil of an early human forerunner that inhabited South Africa 3.67 million years ago during a critical juncture in our evolutionary history.** Scientists



Painstaking study of 'Little Foot' fossil sheds light on human origins

◆ **Global CO2 emissions have returned to pre-pandemic levels and then some, threatening** to put climate treaty targets for

CO2 pollution bounces back, climate goals at risk: IEA



capping global warming out of reach, the International Energy Agency said yesterday. Energy-related emissions were two percent higher

in December 2020 than in the same month a year earlier, driven by economic recovery and a lack of clean energy policies, the IEA said in a report. "The rebound in global carbon emissions toward the end of last year is a stark warning that not enough is being done to accelerate clean energy transitions worldwide," IEA executive director Fatih Birol said in a statement.

◆ **Indonesia has detected two cases of the**

Indonesia says identifies two cases of British COVID-19 variant



more infectious COVID-19 variant first discovered in Britain, officials said on Tuesday, marking a potential new complication for the country as it tries to contain one of the worst coronavirus outbreaks in Asia. Dante Saksono Harbuwono, the deputy health minister, said the discovery of the variant represented a new challenge. Indonesia's COVID-19 task force also confirmed cases of the variant, known as B117, had been found but declined further comment.

◆ **Mikhail Gorbachev, the historic reformer who presided over the collapse of the Soviet Union, marked his 90th birthday in quarantine Tuesday and like everyone else is "tired" of virus restrictions, his spokesman said.** Congratulations poured in from around the world, with Russian President Vladimir Putin, US leader Joe Biden and German Chancellor Angela Merkel all sending their best wishes, Gorbachev's spokesman said.

Gorbachev marks 90th birthday in quarantine



◆ **Huawei exec's extradition fight enters final round in Canada**

Chinese Huawei Technologies executive Meng Wanzhou was back in a Canadian court Monday to fight a final round against extradition to the United States, her lawyers challenging the crux of the case -- that she allegedly hid business dealings in Iran.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	29,317,024	527,472	115,122,847
2 India	11,136,452	157,360	
3 Brazil	10,589,608	255,836	
4 Russia	4,268,215	86,896	Deaths
5 UK	4,182,009	122,953	2,553,018
6 France	3,760,671	86,803	Recovered:
7 Spain	3,204,531	69,609	90,818,029
8 Italy	2,938,371	97,945	New cases
9 Turkey	2,711,479	28,638	+121,401
10 Germany	2,457,348	71,078	New deaths
11 Colombia	2,255,260	59,866	+3,105
12 Argentina	2,112,023	52,077	
13 Mexico	2,089,281	186,152	
14 Poland	1,719,708	44,008	

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	183,010		10,736		141,347	30,927
Saudi Arabia	378,002	+302	6,505	+5	368,926	2,571
UAE	396,771	+2,721	1,253	+15	383,998	11,520
Kuwait	192,031		1,085		180,155	10,791
Oman	142,169	+361	1,580	+3	132,945	7,644
Qatar	164,600	+463	259		154,420	9,921

Philippines fires diplomat whose maid attacks were caught on film

AFP News

The Philippines has sacked its former ambassador to Brazil, after she was caught on camera attacking a domestic worker at her official residence in Brasilia.

Marichu Mauro was recalled to Manila late last year after Brazil's GloboNews channel broadcast security camera footage filmed over eight months showing her repeatedly assaulting a member of her household staff.

The career diplomat has now been dismissed from the foreign service, President Rodrigo Duterte told a television audience on Monday.

"There are rules to be followed. If you disobey, you take the risk. If something goes wrong, it's gonna hit you," Duterte said.

Mauro's firing means she will lose her pension. She is also barred from standing for public office.

According to GloboNews, the Filipino worker was employed at the ambassador's official residence, a large gated compound



Millions of Filipinos escape low wages, unemployment and limited opportunities at home by going overseas, including as domestic workers

in Brazil's capital.

Footage of the abuse -- dated between March and October 2020 -- was used as evidence in a complaint lodged with the Philippine government against Mauro, it said.

Mauro was posted to Brazil in 2018, from where she oversaw the missions to Colombia, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela.

Mauro has not responded to AFP's request for comment on her dismissal.

Millions of Filipinos escape low wages, unemployment and limited opportunities at home by going overseas, including as to become domestic workers. Their remittances are vital to the local economy.

But many of these workers face difficult or dangerous conditions, and reports of physical or psychological abuse are not uncommon, though most instances involve foreign employers.

Indonesia's Mount Sinabung volcano spews ash into sky



Reuters | Jakarta

Indonesia's Mount Sinabung volcano sent a cloud of hot ash as high as 5 km (3.1 miles) on Tuesday, in its first big eruption since August last year, the country's volcanology centre said.

Mount Sinabung's activity has increased since last year and the alert for the volcano in North Sumatra province has been placed at the second-high-

est level.

No casualties were reported, but an official had earlier urged people to stay at least 3 km from the crater, Indonesia's Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation Centre said.

Videos on social media showed little panic among residents over the eruption, which sent a column of white ash into the blue sky.

Wirda Br Sitepu, a 20-year-old resident, told Reuters that the situation had calmed and

said "the mountain is not erupting, and the ash has decreased."

Indonesia straddles the so-called "Pacific Ring of Fire", a highly seismically active zone, where different plates on the earth's crust meet and create a large number of earthquakes and volcanoes.

Indonesia has nearly 130 active volcanoes, more than any other country.

Sinabung had been inactive for centuries before it erupted again in 2010.

Woman dies from brain haemorrhage in Japan days after vaccine, but link uncertain

Reuters | Tokyo

A Japanese woman in her 60s died from a brain haemorrhage three days after receiving a Pfizer coronavirus vaccine, the health ministry said on Tuesday, adding that there may not be a link between the two. The woman was vaccinated on Friday and

is suspected to have suffered a brain haemorrhage three days later, on Monday, it said. It was Japan's first reported death following a vaccination.

"The brain haemorrhage that is suspected as a cause is relatively common among people from their 40s to their 60s, and at this time, based on examples overseas, there does not seem to

be a link between brain haemorrhages and the coronavirus vaccine," the ministry quoted Tomohiro Morio, a doctor advising the government, as saying.

"It may be a coincidental case, but there is a need to gather more information and make an assessment in upcoming working groups."



Nigeria

● The pupils from Jangebe, a town in Zamfara state, were abducted just after midnight

● One father, whose seven daughters were among those kidnapped and freed, said the incident would not deter him from schooling his children

Reuters | Gusau, Nigeria

Gunmen have freed all 279 girls kidnapped from a boarding school in north-west Nigeria, officials said on Tuesday, as victims described how their abductors had beaten and threatened to shoot them.

The pupils from Jangebe, a town in Zamfara state, were abducted just after midnight on Friday. All had now been freed, Zamfara Governor Bello Matawalle said.

Two American

AFP News

An American father and son were handed to Japanese officials on Monday, their lawyer said, after losing an extradition battle over accusations they helped former Renault-Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn to flee Japan.

Michael Taylor and his son Peter Taylor were arrested in May after Japan issued a warrant accusing them of helping Ghosn flee Tokyo for Lebanon in December 2019 -- reportedly hidden in a large box in a private jet -- as he faced financial charges in Japan.

Two weeks ago, the US Supreme Court rejected the Taylors' emergency appeal and cleared the way for their extradition following similar rulings by lower courts.

"This is a sad day for the family, and for all who believe that veterans deserve better treatment from their own country," Paul Kelly, their lawyer, said in a statement