

1773

Captain James Cook becomes 1st to cross Antarctic Circle (66° 33' S)



1912

Captain Robert Scott's expedition arrives at the South Pole, one month after Roald Amundsen

1946

United Nations Security Council holds its 1st meeting

1991

Operation Desert Storm begins, with US-led coalition forces bombing Iraq, during the Gulf War

...t,' says first person vaccinated ...s massive COVID-19 campaign

...ame the first person in India to to get the Covid-19 vaccine



Sanitation worker Manish Kumar receives a dose COVID-19 vaccination

Harsh Vardhan.

The government is calling its immunisation campaign the biggest in the world and hopes around 300,600 people will be vaccinated on the first day - a first step in administering around 300 million people with two doses in the first six to eight months of the year.

With a population of nearly 1.4 billion people, India is the world's most populous country after China. Some 10.5 million people in India have been infected with

the coronavirus, the highest number of infections after the United States, and more than 151,000 have died, though infection rate has come down from a peak in mid-September.

India is using the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine and a government-backed vaccine developed by India's Bharat Biotech whose efficacy is not yet known. People will not be able to choose which of the vaccines - both of which are being produced locally - that they get.

“
The vaccine will give me strength and motivation to serve my hospital which has been at the forefront of taking care of coronavirus patients. Since I'm feeling relieved after taking the vaccine, I think everyone should go for it

MANISH KUMAR

First in line are some 30 million health and other frontline workers, such as those in sanitation and security, followed by about 270 million people older than 50 or deemed high-risk because of pre-existing medical conditions.

The government has already bought 11 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVISHIELD shot, produced by the Serum Institute of India, and 5.5 million of Bharat Biotech's COVAXIN.

COVISHIELD is 72 per cent effective, according to the Indian drug regulator, while Bharat Biotech says COVAXIN's last-stage trial results are expected by March.

While nationalist politicians are cheering COVAXIN, some health experts consider it rushed, as the vaccine has only limited, "clinical-trial mode" approval.

In addition to efficacy concerns, the close monitoring required for its use will be a massive challenge.

Taliban kill 12 pro-govt militiamen in Afghanistan insider attack

AFP | Kabul

Two Taliban fighters who had infiltrated a base of pro-government Afghan militiamen killed 12 of them, officials and the insurgent group said yesterday.

The night-time attack at a post manned by the militiamen occurred in the district of Ghorian in the western Herat province, the governor for the district Farhad Khademi said.

"Twelve pro-government militiamen were killed in the Taliban attack in Ghorian district last night," he said.

Herat provincial council member Mohammad Sardar Bahaduri confirmed the attack and said it was carried out by two Taliban fighters who had infiltrated the base.

"The militiamen were dining when the attack happened," he said.

The Taliban also said two of its fighters had carried out the attack and then returned.

In a separate incident, a vehicle carrying policemen was struck by a roadside bomb in the centre of the Afghan capital Kabul, police spokesman Ferdaws Farmarz told reporters.

Uganda's Museveni declared winner of presidential poll

AFP | Kampala

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni won a decisive re-election victory yesterday, elections officials said, but his main rival Bobi Wine alleged widespread fraud and said citizens should reject the result.

Museveni won 5.85 million votes, or 58.6 per cent, while main opposition candidate Wine had 3.48 million votes



Yoweri Museveni

(34.8pc), the Electoral Commission said at a news conference on the final results from Thursday's election.

Earlier, Wine accused Museveni of fabricating the results and called the poll "the most fraudulent election in the history of Uganda". In a phone interview before the final results were announced, he urged citizens to reject the results.

Trump receives Morocco's highest award for Middle East work

Reuters | Washington

US President Donald Trump received Morocco's highest award for his work in advancing a normalization deal between Israel and Morocco, a senior administration official said.

In a private Oval Office ceremony, Princess Lalla Joumala Alaoui, who is Morocco's ambassador to the United States, gave Trump the Order of Muhammad, an award given only to heads of state. It was a gift from Morocco's King Mohammed VI. White House senior adviser Jared Kushner and Middle East envoy Avi Berkowitz received other awards for their work on the Israel-Morocco deal, which was reached in December.

The United States in the last



White House senior adviser Jared Kushner and Middle East envoy Avi Berkowitz received other awards for their work on the Israel-Morocco deal, which was reached in December

five months helped broker deals between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco. The agreements are

aimed at normalizing relations and opening economic ties.

Trump, who leaves office on Wednesday, has drawn some criticism over the Morocco agreement because to seal the deal, he agreed that the United States would recognize Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.

Western Sahara has been the site of a decades-old territorial dispute between Morocco and the Algeria-backed Polisario Front, a breakaway movement that seeks to establish an independent state in the territory.

The Kushner team had been working on reaching more agreements between Israel and the Arab world. But time has run out and no more are expected before Trump's departure.

News in brief

Biden elevates science post to cabinet level



US President-elect Joe Biden announced he is upgrading the White House science advisor position to cabinet-level -- a sharp break from predecessor Donald Trump as America grapples with the pandemic. The former vice-president will have to grapple with a nation hard-hit by Covid-19: known infections have surpassed 23 million with almost 400,000 deaths recorded. Eric Lander, a geneticist who helped map the human genome, will head the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and advise Biden.

The National Rifle Association announced it was filing for bankruptcy protection from creditors and moving to Texas, in an apparent bid to dodge a corruption probe in New York.

The powerful gun lobby group and one of its subsidiaries filed petitions for so-called Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in a Dallas court. The NRA said its decision to reincorporate its non-profit status in Texas will ensure that in the future it is "free from the toxic political environment in New York." The NRA was set up in New York in 1871.



US National Rifle Association files for bankruptcy

UN peacekeeper killed in Central African Republic



A Burundian peacekeeper was killed during an ambush by rebels in the Central African Republic, the United Nations said, the fifth soldier killed since a rebel offensive began. The soldier died in an ambush by a coalition of rebels near Grimari, roughly 300 kilometres northeast of the capital Bangui, the UN said, during a security mission to the town with Burundian and Bangladeshi peacekeepers. MINUSCA -- the UN peacekeeping force in the region -- also said that two Bangladeshi soldiers were lightly wounded.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is taking a stand against "cruel" Japanese whaling.

The Telegraph newspaper said, after a minke whale became caught in fishing nets for 19 days before being killed by fishermen this week. Drone footage of the trapped whale in the port of Taiji captured the world's attention and received flak from animal rights activists and environmentalists across the world.



UK's Johnson takes stand against 'cruel' Japanese whaling

The Guatemalan military has detained hundreds of migrants at its border as thousands of Hondurans, including many families with young children, continued to walk north as part of a caravan hoping to reach the United States. Guatemalan authorities returned 102 Honduran migrants back to Honduras, after the first groups in the caravan set off from San Pedro Sula.

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	24,155,927	402,693	94,642,344
2 India	10,557,646	152,288	
3 Brazil	8,413,413	208,542	Deaths
4 Russia	3,544,623	24,65,085	
5 UK	3,357,361	88,590	2,024,554
6 France	2,872,941	69,949	Recovered:
7 Turkey	2,380,665	23,832	
8 Italy	2,368,733	81,800	67,548,417
9 Spain	2,252,164	53,314	New cases
10 Germany	2,031,469	46,778	
11 Colombia	1,870,179	47,868	+358,233
12 Argentina	1,783,047	45,227	
13 Mexico	1,609,735	139,022	New deaths
14 Poland	1,429,612	33,213	

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	105,705		6,142		98,413	1,150
Saudi Arabia	364,753	+140	6,318	+5	356,541	1,894
UAE	249,808	+3,432	740	+7	222,106	26,962
Kuwait	118,531	+813	721	+7	109,916	7,894
Oman	131,264		1,509		123,593	6,162
Qatar	147,089	+204	246		143,612	3,231