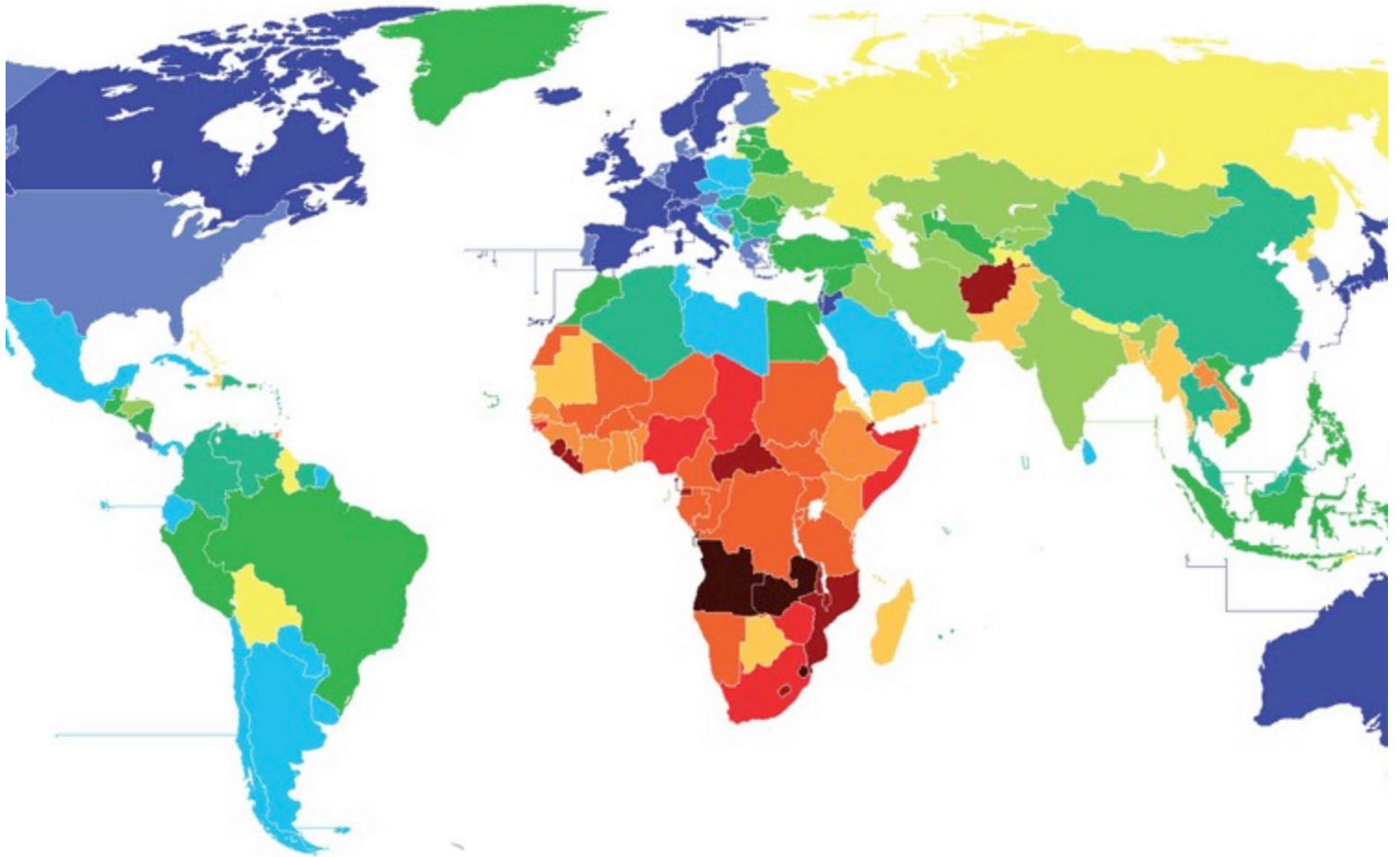


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**US ACCUSES CHINA OF RAISING
TENSIONS WITH APPARENT MISSILE
DEPLOYMENT**

**HARPER LEE, TO KILL A
MOCKINGBIRD AUTHOR, DIES AGED 89**

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RECÄS
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Headlines

U.S. ACCUSES CHINA OF RAISING TENSIONS WITH APPARENT MISSILE DEPLOYMENT



Woody Island, a island in the South China Sea occupied by China and claimed by several other countries, is shown in satellite images taken on February 14, 2016 and February 3, 2016, in this handout image provided by ImageSat International N.V. 2016, on February 18, 2016.

The United States accused China on Thursday of raising tensions in the South China Sea by its apparent deployment of surface-to-air missiles on a disputed island.

U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby said commercial satellite imagery suggested "very recent" placement of missiles on Woody Island in the Paracel island chain that went against China's pledge not to militarize the South China Sea.

"The Chinese have said one thing, and yet appear to be doing another," Kirby told a regular news briefing.

"We see no indication that ... this militarization effort, has stopped. And it's doing nothing ... to make the situation there more stable and more secure. In fact, it's having quite the opposite effect."

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the United States would have "very serious" talks with China about militarization of the South China Sea.

China has offered little specific response to the missile deployment reports, which first appeared on Fox News on Tuesday, but has accused Western media of "hyping up" the story and said China had a legitimate right to military facilities on territory it views as its own.

China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan have rival claims.

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, the first senior Western official to visit China since the reports appeared, said she raised the issue of the South China Sea's militarization in talks in Beijing on Thursday.

She told reporters after meeting China's top diplomat, State Councillor Yang Jiechi, that China had "challenged" the deployment report but had neither denied nor admitted the missiles were there.

"So until such time as we have a clear picture of it, of course it's a matter of concern," she said.

Bishop referred to comments by Chinese President Xi Jinping in Washington last year that China did not intend to militarize islands in the South China Sea, and added: "We certainly hold China to that and that's been reiterated to me."

'LIMITED DEFENSIVE FACILITIES'

Yang explained that the islands in the South China Sea had been China's since ancient times and that "the limited defensive facilities that China has deployed on its own territory have nothing do with militarization," a Chinese statement said.

Yang added that Australia should stick to its promise not to take sides and "not participate in or take any actions to harm regional peace and stability or Sino-Australia ties."

On Friday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said China was not militarizing the Spratly Islands and criticized U.S. air and naval patrols in the region.

"These actions have increased tensions in the South China Sea and constitute the militarization of the South China Sea," Hong told a regular briefing, when asked about Kirby's remarks.

The United States claims no territory in the South China Sea but has expressed serious concerns about how China's increasingly assertive pursuit of territorial claims there could affect the vital global trade routes that pass through it.

Beijing has been angered by air and sea patrols the United States has conducted near islands China claims in the South China Sea. Those have included one by two B-52 strategic bombers in November and by a U.S. Navy destroyer that sailed within 12 nautical miles of Triton Island in the Paracels last month.

An influential Chinese state-run tabloid, the Global Times, said in an editorial on Thursday that China needed to strengthen its "self-defense" in the South China Sea in the face of "more frequent provocations from the U.S. military."

"Jet fighters from the United States, an outside country, may feel uneasy when making provocative flights in the region. To us, that's a proper result," it said of the reported missile deployment.

By Reuters

Environment

WHY IS LITTERING STILL A PROBLEM IN SINGAPORE?

Complacency is the likely reason for Singapore's litter woes. Experts say that when people know there will be an army of cleaners to pick up after them, they become too lazy to do the right thing.



Singapore residents and Members of Parliament offer reasons why people do not clean up after themselves:

Coddled by cleaners

With cleaners out every day to sweep up trash, many people have developed the mindset that there is always someone, somewhere, to pick up after them.

Mr Lee Yong Se, 32, who works in the social sector, said that in countries like Japan, citizens are forced to clean up after themselves owing to a lack of cleaning staff. "Here, the expectations are different. People expect to find other people to clean up after them."

As of last September, there were 52,000 cleaners here, of which 38,000 - or about two in three - were Singaporeans or permanent residents, said the National Environment Agency (NEA).

Different cultural attitudes

New citizens and foreign workers may come from countries where keeping public spaces clean is not the norm.

About 19,000 tickets for littering were issued by the NEA last year, of which 31 per cent were given to non-residents.

"Some may not be attuned to our spirit of not littering, so you need to educate (them)," said Nee Soon GRC MP Lee Bee Wah, whose constituency holds a No Cleaners Day to get residents to pick up trash.

"The majority of us don't litter... it's just that we have these new social dynamics, so we need to keep pushing hard."

Mr Lawrence Loh, 65, a retired executive vice-president of marketing, agreed. "Some of them are from countries where there is no clampdown on littering, and they have the use-and-throw mentality," he said.

Because they can

In an NEA study done from 2009 to 2010, four out of 10 people in Singapore said they would litter out of convenience or if they knew they could get away with it.

"People litter because they don't care, and they don't care because they don't get caught," said bank analyst Jason Ng, 24.

National University of Singapore sociologist Paulin Straughan said there are those who litter to test their boundaries.

"These are the ones who would likely not break the rules if there were law enforcement officers right in front of them," she said.

Associate Professor Straughan, who led the NEA study, added that a very small minority is made up of people who are anti-establishment, very much like those of deviant sub-cultures.

"They find they cannot identify with the main group, the norms, and so they set their own rules," she said.

'That's not littering'

Everyone knows flicking a cigarette butt onto the floor or hurling a used nappy out of the window is littering.

But some Singaporeans have found their own way to justify their anti-social actions.

"If the litter bin is full and if you put trash around it, it is littering, but people will say no, (it is not)," said Prof Straughan.

The NEA study also found that about two in 10 people did not think they were littering if their serviettes blew away in the wind. Three out of 10 thought leaving rubbish on a park table after a barbecue was also not littering.

Too lenient now

"We have become reluctant to do the bad thing," said Mr Liak Teng Lit, chairman of the Public Hygiene Council, referring to enforcement, including fines and Corrective Work Orders (CWOs), and speaking up when one sees others littering.

Enforcement was more thorough in the 1970s to early 1990s, said Mr Liak, when photos of people queueing up to pay their littering fines were published.

When CWOs were introduced in 1992, offenders made to clean public areas did so under the glare of the media. Photos of them carrying out CWOs were splashed in the newspapers.

"Over the years, we have become more forgiving, with more emphasis now placed on education," said Mr Liak.

By The Straits Times

Economics

OIL PRICE FALLS AGAIN AFTER US STOCKS HIT RECORD HIGH

Industry expert warns of 'great pain' before output caps are agreed



Growing global concern about oversupply has caused oil prices to fall once again, reports Reuters.

A record build in US crude stocks has sent tremors throughout an already trembling market, causing oil futures to fall in Asian trade on Friday.

The news that US crude inventories rose by 2.1 million barrels last week, to a peak of 504.1 million, the third week of record highs in the past month, outweighed moves by oil producers including Saudi Arabia and Russia to cap oil output.

Analysts say that any deal to cap production is dependent on Iran - "but Iran has been clear, saying it wants to get back to its pre-sanctions (production) level," said Tony Nunan, the oil risk manager at Japan's Mitsubishi Corp in Tokyo.

"Everything is pointing to the end of this year [before there is an agreement] when Iran gets to 4 million barrels per day. By that time, the pain will be so great everybody will come to the table [to agree output caps]," Nunan added.

The development has stamped on recent tentative optimism. Oil prices had risen more than 14 per cent earlier this week, after Saudi Arabia and Russia, supported by other producers including Venezuela and Iraq, moved to freeze output at January's levels.

However, Adel al-Jubeir, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, said Riyadh was still "not prepared" to cut production, dashing growing hopes that talks with Moscow about capping output would help reduce the glut.

By The Week

Science and Technology

SCIENCE AND SUPERHEROES: HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO CREATING REAL SUPERPOWERS?

As Marvel's Deadpool hits screens we ask: with three out of five fictional superheroes owing their powers to science, will we ever have real superpowers?



Deadpool: an assassin with accelerated healing powers. Seems plausible, right?

There are, according to the Marvel Super Heroes role-playing game (a source I am choosing to accept as 100% canonical), five general origins for all superheroic powers: Altered Humans (Spiderman, Fantastic Four), High-Tech Wonders (Iron Man, Batman), Mutants (X-Men,) Robots (The Vision) and Aliens (Superman and gods like Thor).

Until quite recently all five of the general origins of super powers seemed entirely beyond reach. But is the high speed advance of science in the 21st century bringing those superpowers based upon it - Altered Humans, High Tech Wonders and Robots - any closer?

Altered Humans

Significant physical alterations have seemed largely impossible until very recently. Even breakthroughs in genetics hint at nothing like the weapon-x program that gave Wolverine his adamantium bones and Deadpool his accelerated healing. But quantum biology, championed by physicist and broadcaster Jim Al Khalili, suggests an enjoyably speculative direction for extreme human alterations. If quantum tunnelling can explain the high speed transformation of tadpole to frog, surely it's conceivable quantum effects might also allow a human body to regenerate from a gunshot or samurai sword attack.

Martial arts have been altering humans to pseudo-superheroic levels of power for centuries, with changes more psychological than physical. It seems the US military are at least interested in discovering if the Shaolin monks are skilled in more than just theatre, with a number of research studies underway to militarise ancient Buddhist techniques of mindfulness. Are we producing Jason Bournes and American Ultras in a CIA training facility somewhere? If we aren't, I imagine it's only because numerous attempts have so far failed.

High Tech Wonders

The speed of technological advancement creates an obvious downside to "high tech" superpowers. Had Lee Majors's Million Dollar Man been upgraded to the height of early 1970s technology, he would today be the Betamax of superheroes when placed beside, say, a Mark VIII Iron Man suit.

Given our huge industrial base, general robotics might seem a relatively easy challenge to tackle, but has proven much harder than expected. And human/robot interactions of the kind made to look easy in Iron Man are in fact fiendishly hard, at least without the risk of dismembering your pilot. But the news of robotic exoskeletons being used to overcome disabilities shows both that science is already delivering great boons, and that a full red and gold flying suit of armour might one day be mine ... MUAHAHA!

But as anyone who has tried getting through a full day of use on an iPhone 6 will tell you, power supply is the achilles heel of even the coolest gizmos and gadgets. Iron Man's armour is powered by what appears, from movie schematics, to be a tokamak fusion reactor. We can make these. In fact, we're building one in France. The only problem is it needs to be roughly the size of the Shakespeare's Globe theatre to produce even a smidgeon more energy than it takes to run.

Robots

Skipping the weak human elements of any high-tech design helps simplify things immensely. But it does raise the minor question, how will a robot think for itself? Artificial Intelligence has been a dream of computer scientists from Alan Turing onwards, and after many decades of negligible to slow progress, 2015 became a watershed year for AI. Google's "DeepMind" literally taught itself to play Atari Breakout (and 50 other classic video games) in just 120 minutes...I never managed to

clear a whole level after year! More recently a DeepMind computing system called AlphaGo beat a champion player of the ancient Chinese game go by five games to nil.

It's fascinating because nobody, even its creators at Google, really knows how DeepMind plays these games so well. Previous AI champions like IBM's Watson triumphed at single games like Jeopardy after detailed human programming, but DeepMind and other deep learning systems are doing something much more mysterious. Where that might take us is truly hard to know, but for the first time the idea of an emergent AI taking over the internet and igniting a nuclear holocaust is a tentative possibility. Sadly, given the rather slower progress on robot bodies, if it wants to manifest physically like The Vision it will have to forego the spray painted body of Paul Bettany in favour of Pepper, the cutting edge of humanoid companion robots.

It seems we're still a step or two away from scientific super-powers. But here in 2016 they are steps that we are tantalisingly close to taking. And who knows what unforeseen powers technologies like drone swarms or human cloning might lead to. The real question is will they make us superheroes...or villains?

By The Guardian

Arts

FLASHY MALAYSIA FINANCIER SAID TO SELL PICASSO AT LOSS

Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho has attracted attention for his flashy lifestyle and real estate deals, as well as his connections to the prime minister's family and the government's troubled investment fund.

Now Low is once again creating buzz in the art world. Since Feb. 3, he has sold works by Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso and Jean-Michel Basquiat, according to three people familiar with the matter. They fetched about \$54 million, with unusually steep losses on at least two pieces.

The artworks consigned by Low were among the top lots at Sotheby's evening auction of Impressionist, modern and contemporary art in London this month. All three had been pledged as part of the collateral for a loan of about \$100 million from Sotheby's Financial Services, two of the people said, asking not to be named because the information is private.

Low fielded questions last year over Malaysia's government investment fund, 1Malaysia Development Bhd., whose advisory board is headed by Prime Minister Najib Razak. 1MDB has been the subject of overlapping investigations in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong amid allegations of financial irregularities. Low told newspapers that he provided informal consulting to the fund, didn't break any laws and wasn't being investigated.

Low and his representatives at Hong Kong-based Jynwel Capital, which he co-founded and leads, didn't return calls and e-mails seeking comment on the art sales. Sotheby's declined to comment.

Turning Heads

The 34-year-old financier has coveted the spotlight, partying with Paris Hilton and appearing on the red carpet with singer Alicia Keys. He also posed for a photo with Leonardo DiCaprio at the 2013 Paris premiere of "The Wolf of Wall Street," produced by a company co-founded by Prime Minister Najib's stepson Riza Aziz, a longtime friend of Low's.

Low turned heads in the art world in 2013 and 2014 with a shopping spree for trophy pieces. While he personally examined the works and negotiated prices, one of the

people said, it's unclear whether he used his own money, family money or made investments for clients.

More recently, Low has been a seller. This month, his 1935 painting by Picasso -- a portrait of the artist's lover, Marie-Therese Walter -- fetched 18.9 million pounds (\$27.6 million). Sotheby's catalog shows the unidentified seller had bought the piece at the auction house in November 2013, and auction-tracker Artnet lists the price then at 45 percent higher. Basquiat's 1982 oilstick drawing "Untitled (Head of Madman)" garnered 6.2 million pounds. It had last sold for about 33 percent more in November 2013.

The third work offered by Low, Monet's painting of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, sold for 11.6 million pounds, falling below the bottom end of the presale estimate. Sotheby's catalog shows the consignor acquired the piece from a Swiss collection. Because that transaction was private, it's hard to determine whether Low made or lost money.

'Unforgiving' Market

The losses on a Picasso and Basquiat show how quickly fortunes can change even at the top-tier of the art market. Prices have been climbing since 2010, helped by the arrival of newly wealthy investors from emerging economies seeking status symbols and more assets to hold their money. Participants now are questioning whether values will hold up amid this year's global market rout and a drop in art auction sales.

"The auction market is quite unforgiving," said David Nash, co-owner of Mitchell-Innes & Nash gallery in New York. "The buyers don't like to see things come back so quickly. They don't find the works so attractive the second time around. A lot of the resistance has to do with the fact that the work is no longer fresh. A lot of it has to do with the perception that the seller has overpaid."

Questions about Low's ties to the family of Malaysia's prime minister had surfaced in a February 2015 New York Times article. Starting in about 2010, the article said, Low used a shell company to buy a Park Laurel condo in Manhattan for about \$24 million, and then resold it to a shell company controlled by Riza, the prime minister's stepson. Low also snapped up a \$17.5 million Beverly Hills mansion and resold it to Riza. A Low shell company also bought a Time Warner Center condo for about \$31 million.

Low said the transactions were done "on an arm's-length basis" and denied "engaging in any wrongful conduct in relation to the prime minister and his family," according to a statement issued by his spokesman and cited in the article.

Sotheby's Financial Services, which offers different types of art financing, is a rapidly growing business for the company. Works pledged as collateral for loans often make their way into Sotheby's auctions. In such cases, Sotheby's can recover its principal and interest from the loan and earn a commission from the sale.

Earlier Profit

Low has been selling off art at Sotheby's since at least a year ago, the two people familiar with the matter said.

Last February, his 10-foot-tall Gerhard Richter abstract painting fetched an artist record 30.4 million pounds in London, selling to billionaire Ken Griffin, the founder of hedge fund firm Citadel. Low made money on that painting, according to a person familiar with the sale.

In May, Low's 8-foot-tall yellow and blue Mark Rothko painting sold for \$46.5 million, the top lot of Sotheby's contemporary art sales in New York. The 1954 painting, which was once owned by American socialite Rachel "Bunny" Mellon, was estimated to attract \$40 million to \$60 million.

In October, Low's black, punctured, egg-shaped canvas by Lucio Fontana fetched 15.9 million pounds in London, leading Sotheby's mid-season contemporary art sales and setting what was then an auction record for the postwar Italian artist.

Low still owns Basquiat's 6-foot-tall and 7-foot-wide painting, "Dustheads," according to a person familiar with the situation. He bought the 1982 canvas at Christie's in May 2013 for \$48.8 million. That was almost double the presale's minimum target of \$25 million. The price remains a record for the artist at auction.

By Bloomberg

Literature

HARPER LEE, *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* AUTHOR, DIES AGED 89

Writer whose 1961 novel became a defining text of 20th-century literature and of racial troubles in the American south has died in Monroeville, Alabama



Harper Lee at the Stage Coach Cafe in Stockton, Alabama, in 2001

Harper Lee, whose 1961 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* became a national institution and the defining text on the racial troubles of the American deep south, has died at the age of 89.

Lee, or Nelle as she was known to those close to her, had lived for several years in a nursing home less than a mile from the house in which she had grown up in Monroeville, Alabama – the setting for the fictional Maycomb of her famous book. The town's mayor, Mike Kennedy, confirmed the author's death.

Until last year, Lee had been something of a one-book literary wonder. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, her 1961 epic narrative about small-town lawyer Atticus Finch's battle to save the life of a black resident threatened by a racist mob, sold more than 40m

copies around the world and earned her a Pulitzer prize. George W Bush awarded her the presidential medal of freedom in 2007.

But from the moment *Mockingbird* was published to almost instant success the author consistently avoided public attention and insisted that she had no intention of releasing further works. That self-imposed purdah ended abruptly when, amid considerable controversy, it was revealed a year ago that a second novel had been discovered, which was published as *Go Set a Watchman* in July 2015.

The house where Lee lived for years with her sister Alice sat quiet and empty on Friday. The inside of the house appeared unchanged from when she lived there – antique furniture was stacked with books, audio cassettes and gift baskets.

Her neighbor for 40 years, Sue Sellers, said Lee would have appreciated the quiet. “She was such a private person,” she said. “All she wanted was privacy, but she didn’t get much. There always somebody following her around.”

In recent years Lee’s health had declined. Seller said the last time she spent any real time with Lee they went to breakfast together. “The whole way home she drove her big car in the turn lane,” she said. “She couldn’t see. I was scared to death.”

The last time she saw Lee was a few months ago at the Meadows nursing home. Sellers brought flowers. “She just hollered out: ‘I can’t see and I can’t hear!’” Sellers said. “So I just told her goodbye.”

Lee was born in Monroeville in 1926 and grew up under the stresses of segregation. As a child she shared summers with another aspiring writer, Truman Capote, who annually came to stay in the house next door to hers and who later invited her to accompany him to Holcomb, Kansas, to help him research his groundbreaking 1966 crime book *In Cold Blood*.

Capote informed the figure of the young boy Dill in *Mockingbird*, with his friend the first-person narrator Scout clearly modelled on the childhood Lee herself.

Lee was the youngest child of lawyer Amasa Coleman Lee and Frances Finch Lee. Her father acted as the template for Atticus Finch whose resolute courtroom dignity as he struggles to represent a black man, Tom Robinson, accused of raping a white woman provides the novel’s ethical backbone.

Last year's publication of *Go Set a Watchman* obliged bewildered fans of the novel to reappraise the character of Finch. In that novel, which was in fact the first draft of *Mockingbird* that had been rejected by her publisher, Finch was portrayed as having been a supporter of the South's Jim Crow laws, saying at one point: "Do you want Negroes by the carload in our schools and churches and theaters?"

Within minutes of the announcement of the novelist's death, encomiums began to flow. Her literary agent Andrew Nurnberg said in a statement: "We have lost a great writer, a great friend and a beacon of integrity."

He added: "Knowing Nelle these past few years has been not just an utter delight but an extraordinary privilege. When I saw her just six weeks ago, she was full of life, her mind and mischievous wit as sharp as ever. She was quoting Thomas More and setting me straight on Tudor history."

Michael Morrison, her publisher at HarperCollins US, said: "The world knows Harper Lee was a brilliant writer but what many don't know is that she was an extraordinary woman of great joyfulness, humility and kindness. She lived her life the way she wanted to – in private – surrounded by books and the people who loved her."

In Lee's home state of Alabama, a center of the violent upheavals over civil rights that immediately preceded the publication of *Mockingbird*, literary experts reflected on the power of the novel to shift the ingrained assumptions of white Alabamans. Jacqueline Trimble, president of the Alabama Writers' Forum that bequeaths the annual Harper Lee award for literary excellence, said that the book had a profound effect on white residents of the state.

"She was able to take the politics of the civil rights era and make them human. She showed people that this was about their neighbors, their friends, someone they knew, not just about the issues," Trimble said.

Tim Cook, the CEO of Apple, tweeted a quote from *Mockingbird*: "The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."

By The Guardian



UNDER THE MACROSCOPE

Under the Macroscopic is a weekly summary of what's happening around the world and what's worth pondering. Stay on top of international and local news with this bulletin produced by the Raffles Economics and Current Affairs Society