# The Guardian

卫报

2021.02.08 - 2021.02.10

# Headlines wednesday 10 february 2021

- Housing Ministers to announce extra billions for cladding removal
- Grenfell Ex-Arconic executive knew cladding could burn
- 'In the dark' Millions left in flats they can't sell or fix
- Guardian morning briefing 'If that's not impeachable there is no such thing'. Get up to speed quickly
- Donald Trump Senate votes to proceed with trial as objections fail
- 'He just rambled' Trump's lawyers leave Republicans unimpressed
- Analysis Democrats use trial to show symbolism is the point
- Video Democrats play footage of Capitol siege during hearing
- 'That's enough' France confronts decades of neglecting incest cases
- 'Desperate situation' Pharmacists in England considering strike action over Covid debts
- Brexit EU to seek more time to ratify UK trade deal amid tensions
- Sim-swapping UK police arrest eight over celebrity hacking
- Hong Kong China cuts off foreign consular help for dual nationals
- 'Growth market' Oil companies swap their drilling rigs for offshore windfarms
- Glass empty British pub beer sales at lowest level since 1920s

- **Pablo Escobar's hippos Drug lord's abandoned pets breeding out of control**

Housing

# UK ministers to announce billions in extra support for cladding removal

Measures under consideration include a £5bn grant for leaseholders and £2bn levy on developers

Contractors undertake work at a residential property in London as part of a project to remove and replace non-compliant cladding. Around 274,000 flats still have dangerous cladding, according to the Association of Residential Managing Agents. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

Contractors undertake work at a residential property in London as part of a project to remove and replace non-compliant cladding. Around 274,000 flats still have dangerous cladding, according to the Association of Residential Managing Agents. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

*Jessica Elgot* and *Robert Booth*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 15.09 EST

Ministers are poised to announce billions of pounds in extra support to address the cladding crisis that has left homeowners bankrupt and distraught, though key questions remain over how much leaseholders will be expected to contribute.

Robert Jenrick, the communities secretary, will announce the new measures in parliament on Wednesday after reaching a deal with the Treasury, the Guardian understands.

Ministers will be under intense pressure, including from Conservative MPs, to stop hundreds of thousands of flat owners being forced to pay vast sums to replace flammable cladding.

The measures follow more than three years of uncertainty since the fallout of the 2017 Grenfell Tower disaster, which exposed the dangerous defects in thousands of apartment blocks, and the ensuing building safety crisis rendering homes unsellable, unmortgageable and uninsurable.

The scale of new support has not been confirmed, but measures under consideration include a £5bn grant in addition to the existing £1.6bn building safety fund that leaseholders can apply to. The existing fund has been widely acknowledged as too small, as investigations uncovered a wider range of fire safety defects beyond combustible cladding.

Around 274,000 flats are estimated to have dangerous cladding, according to the Association of Residential Managing Agents, equating to more than 650,000 people, although that figure is likely to reach into the millions when those living in lower rise structures where problems have also emerged are taken into account.

One industry source told the Guardian they expected the funding to only cover the replacement of cladding rather than other safety faults. They said grants were expected to cover remediation of buildings over 18 metres and loans are likely to be offered for shorter buildings.

The charity Leasehold Knowledge Partnership said such a policy would be a “bitter disappointment for leaseholders everywhere” and it would be

“shameful to treat leaseholders differently depending on an arbitrary factor like building height”.

It said: “Leaseholders in tens of thousands of buildings less than 18 metres have been told they will pay 100% of the costs of fixing others’ mistakes. Leaseholders in buildings above 18 metres may still face ruinous costs of fixing non-cladding defects.”

The government has also considered a £2bn levy on property developers and builders over the next decade, charged at £200m a year. Discussions have reportedly been under way about boosting the amount of money available with long-term government loans to leaseholders.

Over the past two years, the government has announced a series of measures to try to fix the problem, including a £1bn building safety fund to help with the cost of removing cladding and £30m to pay for alarm systems.

The government is also keen to swerve a parliamentary defeat after more than 30 Conservative MPs signed an amendment to the fire safety bill now being passed between the Commons and Lords, which would bar building freeholders from passing the costs of removing cladding or other fire safety work on to their leaseholders.

Ministers have been under increasing pressure in parliament to act on the crisis, which leaseholders have said left them bankrupt and suicidal. Labour and a significant number of Tory backbenchers have warned ministers that not enough is being done to help leaseholders. Last month Labour called for an independent taskforce on cladding and guaranteed funding for work to make buildings safe.

'In the dark': millions left in flats they can't sell or fix due to unsafe cladding
Read more

Asked by the Conservative MP Bob Blackman last year whether he would guarantee that leaseholders did not pay “a penny piece” towards the safety measures, Boris Johnson said he did “not want to see leaseholders being forced to pay for the remediation”. Blackman told the Guardian on Tuesday that the prime minister must “stick to his promise”.

Rituparna Saha, the co-founder of the UK Cladding Action Group representing thousands of affected leaseholders, said the measures should be the full £15bn, which is the estimated cost of all required work – "a substantial proportion of that recovered from the construction companies".

Leaseholders have been hit with huge bills not just for fixing their homes, but also with soaring insurance premiums and costs such as paying for 24-hour waking watch patrols. Homes have been left unsellable and tenants and leaseholders have reported a wave of financial and mental health problems as a result of the crisis.

Saha said she feared the announcement would not go far enough: "We need once and for all substantial measures. The government has been dragged kicking and screaming into making these announcements and it is not good enough any more because people are being made bankrupt."

Labour's shadow housing secretary, Thangam Debbonaire, said: "Whatever is announced will be too late for those first-time buyers who have already gone bust. Ministers have promised 17 times leaseholders wouldn't have to pay for a crisis they didn't cause. A cladding tax on leaseholders would break that promise. The government should protect leaseholders and the taxpayer, by providing upfront funding and pursuing those responsible."

---

Grenfell Tower fire

# Former Arconic executive tells Grenfell inquiry she knew cladding could burn

Debbie French says firm provided more flammable version of panels by default as part of marketing strategy


Debbie French giving evidence to the Grenfell Tower inquiry on Tuesday. Photograph: Grenfell Tower Inquiry

Debbie French giving evidence to the Grenfell Tower inquiry on Tuesday. Photograph: Grenfell Tower Inquiry

*Robert Booth Social affairs correspondent*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 14.06 EST

The executive who sold the cladding used on Grenfell Tower knew it could burn but did not tell customers, she has admitted to the public inquiry into the fire.

Debbie French, the UK sales manager for Arconic from 2007 to 2014, said the company provided the more flammable version of the panels by default in a marketing strategy that recognised a fire-retardant version that "drastically increases fire resistance" was less likely to secure contracts on price.

The easier to burn version of Arconic's Reynobond product, which was the main cause of the rapid spread of the fire at Grenfell that claimed 72 lives, cost less. It used polyethylene [PE] sandwiched between 5mm thick aluminium sheets and French said she knew it "was and is flammable".

What has the Grenfell inquiry revealed about building materials?
Read more

During cross-examination, Richard Millett QC, counsel to the inquiry, asked the executive: "Did you ever explain to your customers, in terms, that PE would burn?"

"I don't recall specifically explaining that to them," she said. "If I had been asked the question I would have explained it."

She said she had not seen the building regulations guidance on fire safety or realised there were different rules for tall buildings such as the 24-storey Grenfell Tower.

"My knowledge on the technical side was very limited," she said. "Working for an organisation like Alcoa [as Arconic was known], it didn't even enter my head, the question of whether it was or wasn't suitable. They were a big name company and therefore it was all perfectly suitable for what it needed to do in the UK."

But the inquiry heard the company sought to "keep secret" differences between the PE and its more fire-retardant version. The inquiry saw a report from a 2004 fire test in a French laboratory of the panels fabricated into a cassette form, as deployed at Grenfell, that had to be stopped after 850 seconds because it was emitting too much heat. Millett said this was "ignored" by the company.

French said she had never been told about the failure but agreed it was a "very serious omission" and made a subsequent certificate detailing fire performance issued by the construction industry approvals body, the British Board of Agrément (BBA), "significantly misleading" for her customers.

The inquiry also heard how Claude Wehrle, Arconic's technical manager, ordered French not to release to customers information about the difference between the polyethylene-filled panels and the fire-retardant version.

When French asked Wehrle if she could share a document about the differences between the materials with Arup, a prospective client, he replied by email: "OH MY LORD!!! Where did you get that from??? For sure you're NOT allowed to diffuse to the customer those documents."

He told her to instead talk about the different fire classifications obtained by Arconic via the BBA. This BBA document stated that the panels "may be regarded as having class 0 surface", a measure of fire spread.

Millett said there had been no tests on the PE core panels that showed they met class 0 under British standards. French said she did not know this.

Wehrle, who worked for Arconic until recently, is one of three current and former employees refusing to attend to give evidence to the inquiry. They are claiming they risk prosecution under an obscure French law known as the blocking statute. The French government has said it does not believe it applies but only French courts can provide immunity.

Millett said Wehrle, Peter Froehlich and Gwenaëlle Derrendinger were not cooperating despite intervention "at the highest level between the British and the French governments". They are expected to be "empty chaired", with time likely to be set aside for key questions that they should answer to be presented.

The inquiry continues.

---

Housing

# 'In the dark': millions left in flats they can't sell or fix due to unsafe cladding

As politicians call for action on the cladding scandal, three people living in unsafe homes share their stories

Many of those who own affected flats have been presented with significant bills for remedial works or fire patrols, with some being made bankrupt, and a number have been unable to sell their properties. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Many of those who own affected flats have been presented with significant bills for remedial works or fire patrols, with some being made bankrupt, and a number have been unable to sell their properties. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

*Hilary Osborne*
Tue 2 Feb 2021 02.00 EST

Up to 11 million people may live in properties with unsafe cladding, an issue that came to prominence with the tragedy at Grenfell Tower in June 2017.

Many of those who own affected flats have been presented with significant bills for remedial works or fire patrols, with some being made bankrupt, and a number have been unable to sell their properties – a situation described as "extraordinary" by shadow housing secretary Thangam Debbonaire.

**James Currie**, 30, who lives in a flat in Manchester with his partner and 10-month-old daughter, first became aware of a problem with cladding last summer.

"We wanted to move out before she was born really, but we started thinking about it properly when she was a couple of months old," he says.

The couple started looking for a new home, then became aware that other sellers were being asked for a EWS1 form to show the building was safe. "Our building didn't have one and we found out that other flats were coming back with a nil valuation."

Worse news came in October, when residents were told that a building inspection had found safety risks, including missing internal fire breaks, and potentially dangerous wooden cladding and balconies. “The managing agents have put the work out to tender, and the figure we have seen so far is £5.6m plus VAT – £6.7m. We’ve done a rough calculation, and that’s about £42,000 per flat,” he says.

The real figure will depend on the size of each flat, and what money is available to the freeholder through government funds. “It’s a massive unknown,” Currie says. “We don’t know when a bill will arrive, what it may look like and how we will be asked to pay it … We really want to move, especially as we don’t want our daughter to live on a building site, but we can’t sell to anybody who needs a mortgage and the estate agents say we’d have to take a big cut to the price to cover the risk a buyer was taking on.”

**Brian Simpson**, 62, owns a flat in Birmingham and since 2009 has been a director of the residents’ management company. “When I volunteered I thought it would be about making sure the property was well-maintained, that our money was being used well – I didn’t imagine that years later I would be helping to manage a multimillion-pound remediation process and having to support fellow residents who are struggling both financially and with their mental health as a result of this.”

Brian Simpson outside his Birmingham flat. Photograph: Brian Simpson

Straight after the Grenfell fire the company commissioned reports and tests on the building's cladding. Although tests showed it was not the same type, they did show up problems inside and outside. Last year, leaseholders were asked to pay between £20,000 and £40,000 into a fund to meet some of the costs.

Simpson used his savings to pay in £40,000, and will have to turn to his pension if more bills arrive. Some tenants could not meet the costs, which means that even if they get the £5.4m they have applied for from the government, they may not have all of the cash they need for the work. And other costs are mounting.

"The insurance company said a couple of years ago that it couldn't cover us any more, so we ended up going out to a consortium – at that point our premium went up from £36,000 to £92,000. We just renewed in November and it's gone up to £320,000."

Leaseholders have had to pay for a waking watch and for a new alarm system, and the price of scaffolding has gone up by 50% since the initial quote for work. "We've got contractors lined up but since before Christmas we've been in limbo waiting to hear what help we might get from the government's building safety fund," he says.

**Henry Dobson**, 30, bought his flat in London in 2015 but it was only in September last year that he realised there was a problem. "I decided I wanted to move out of London – I'd been working from home for several months and I wanted to move to be near to my mother in Dorset," he says. "She's clinically vulnerable so I wanted to be near her."

Three estate agents were interested in valuing the property, but a fourth asked if he had a EWS1 certificate to show it had been inspected and told him he'd be unable to sell without one. Dobson phoned the managing agent, and found there was no certificate. Then just weeks later, he and the other leaseholders were told that inspections had found three major defects – flammable panels around the windows, wooden balconies and missing internal fire compartmentation.

A waking watch was installed days later, at a cost of £20,000 a month, and is still there. Leaseholders have been told they will face charges for a new fire alarm and other work, and they fear bills of around £15,000 each.

The building is below 18m but within the Building Safety Fund tolerance, however, they will not qualify for government help because these types of issues are excluded. “We’re completely in the dark,” he says. “We don’t know what’s happening.”

• This article was amended on 2 February 2021 to correct the spelling of Henry Dobson’s surname.

---

# Wednesday briefing: 'If that's not impeachable there is no such thing'

Trump impeachment (2021)

# Trump impeachment: Senate votes to proceed with trial

Divided chamber finds process constitutional during emotional day as Democrats recount Capitol attack

02:51

*Lauren Gambino in Washington*
*@laurenegambino*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 19.28 EST

A divided US Senate voted to proceed with the historic second impeachment trial of Donald Trump after an emotional opening day in which the prosecution argued that the former president was singularly responsible for inciting the deadly assault on the US Capitol while the defense warned that the proceedings would further cleave a divided nation.

After nearly four hours of debate in the same chamber that was invaded by pro-Trump rioters on 6 January, the senators, now seated as jurors and sworn to deliver "impartial justice", voted 56 to 44 on the question of whether there was a constitutional basis for putting an impeached former president on trial. Six Republicans joined all Democrats in an early victory for the prosecution that undermined one of the central pillars of Trump's defense.

Trump is the first president to face an impeachment trial after leaving office, and the only president in American history to be impeached twice. But the assault on the Capitol, an event that one House impeachment manager called the "the framers' worst nightmare come to life", shook the nation and the world as loyalists to the former president stormed the seat of the American government in an effort to prevent Congress from formalizing Joe Biden's victory. Though they ultimately failed, the domestic attack left five people dead and America's commitment to a peaceful transfer of power tarnished.

Analysis: Democrats use Trump impeachment to show sometimes symbolism is the point
Read more

Republicans' near-uniform opposition to holding a trial strongly suggested that there were not enough votes in the chamber to convict the de-platformed, one-term president even after he brazenly sought to overturn his election defeat with baseless claims of a stolen election. At least 17 Republicans would have to join all Democrats to find Trump guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors. A conviction would allow the Senate to disqualify him from ever again holding office.

Last month, only five Republicans joined Democrats to defeat an attempt to dismiss the impeachment charge as unconstitutional. Senator Bill Cassidy, a Republican of Louisiana, was the only member to switch his vote, leaving open the possibility that some lawmakers could yet change their minds.

Republicans have largely coalesced around the argument that the Senate did not have the authority to hold the trial because impeachment was intended to lead to a president's removal from office, a position that has allowed them to avoid weighing in on whether Trump's conduct amounted to an impeachable offense. But that view has been challenged by constitutional scholars, including the leading conservative lawyer Charles Cooper, who argued that the claims were unfounded.

Citing these scholars, writings by the nation's framers and historical precedents, the House impeachment managers warned that allowing Trump to escape punishment would establish a "January exception" for presidents to betray their oaths of office.

House Democrats opened the trial with a chilling and dramatic video of the Capitol siege that threatened the lives of the former vice-president, Mike Pence, members of Congress, and everyone working in the building that day. The video pulled from the extensive visual recordings from rioters, reporters and witnesses to create a reel juxtaposing the president's incendiary speech to supporters at a rally near the White House with scenes of mayhem and violence on Capitol Hill. There, Trump encouraged his supporters to "fight

like hell" and march to the Capitol to make their voices heard before lawmakers certified Biden's victory.

The cries and chants from the video echoed through the chamber, where just over a month ago rioters sat in the dais and swung from the balcony. It concluded with a tweet from Trump, sent only moments after the building was secured on 6 January: "These are the things and events that happen when a sacred landslide election victory is so unceremoniously & viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long. Go home with love & in peace. Remember this day forever!"

"You ask what a high crime and misdemeanor is under our constitution? That's a high crime and misdemeanor," the congressman Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the leader of the House Democrats prosecuting the case, told the silent chamber, after playing the video. "If that's not an impeachable offense, then there is no such thing."

David Schoen, attorney for Donald Trump, speaks to reporters while leaving the Capitol. Photograph: Win McNamee/EPA

In their rebuttal, Trump's defense team argued that the impeachment trial was not only unconstitutional but would "open up new and bigger wounds across the nation".

Accusing Democrats of abuse of power, Trump's lawyer David Schoen said the party was fueled by their "hatred" of Trump and their determination to see him impeached. He played a video compilation of Democratic politicians calling for Trump's impeachment as early as 2017.

"This trial will tear this country apart, perhaps like we have only seen once before in American history," he said, warning: "If these proceedings go forward, everyone will look bad."

In a meandering defense that reportedly left Trump enraged, his lead lawyer Bruce Castor denounced the Capitol assault as "repugnant", praised the senators as "patriots" and concluded by suggesting that if the former president had committed a crime, the punishment should be criminal prosecution, not impeachment.

"There is no opportunity where the president of the United States can run rampant in January at the end of his term and just go away scot free," Castor said. "The Department of Justice does know what to do with such people."

Trump's second impeachment trial: the key players
Read more

The trial will resume on Wednesday with the substantive arguments over the sole charge of "incitement of insurrection". Each side has 16 hours to present its case, and the trial is expected to stretch into the holiday weekend. Prosecutors have promised to present new evidence to prove that Trump was "singularly and directly responsible" for the Capitol attack.

Trump's lawyers have argued that the president's claims of voter fraud and his fiery rhetoric to the crowd on 6 January were not only protected under the first amendment, but similar to language used by Democrats to rally their own supporters. In pre-trial briefings, they emphasized his instruction that the crowd march "peacefully" to the Capitol.

Trump, who left Washington for his Mar-a-Lago resort on the day of Biden's inauguration, has refused a request by Democrats to testify voluntarily at his trial. It appears unlikely that the House managers will call witnesses,

appealing instead to the collective memories of the senators who lived through harrowing afternoon.

03:10

Senator Raskin breaks down recounting Capitol breach – video

Concluding the Democrats' argument for the day, Raskin offered an emotional and deeply personal account of his experience that day. Still grieving the loss of his son, who had died by suicide just days before, the former constitutional law professor brought his family to work with him, eager for them to witness "this historic event – the peaceful transfer of power in America".

When the riot erupted, they were separated. His daughter and son-in-law hid in an office, fearing for their lives, Raskin recalled, his voice quivering. When it was all over and they were reunited, his daughter said she never wanted to return to the Capitol, a place known as the People's House.

"Senators, this cannot be our future," he said through tears. "This cannot be the future of America."

---

Trump impeachment (2021)

# 'He just rambled': Republicans unimpressed by Trump's impeachment lawyers

Senators and reportedly Trump himself voice displeasure with performances from Bruce Castor and David Schoen

02:51

*Guardian staff*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 21.13 EST

The performance of Donald Trump's legal team on the first day of his second impeachment trial has drawn sharp criticism from Republican senators and other onlookers, many of whom appeared unimpressed by the at times rambling and incoherent opening statements.

Two members of the former president's legal team, Bruce Castor and David Schoen, sought on Tuesday to persuade the Senate to dismiss the trial on constitutional grounds. Castor's performance in particular drew criticism as waffling and lacking in focus.

Several Republican senators said they didn't understand the lawyers' arguments. The Louisiana senator Bill Cassidy, who voted with Democrats to move forward with the trial, said Trump's team did a "terrible job" and was "disorganized", "random" and "did everything they could but to talk about the question at hand".

Cassidy was not the only Republican who was displeased with Trump's defense team.

Analysis: Democrats use Trump impeachment to show sometimes symbolism is the point
Read more

Susan Collins, a Republican senator of Maine, said she was “perplexed” by Castor, who is Trump’s lead lawyer, saying he “did not seem to make any arguments at all, which was an unusual approach to take”.

“The president’s lawyer just rambled on and on,” said Senator John Cornyn, a Republican of Texas. “I’ve seen a lot of lawyers and a lot of arguments, and that was not one of the finest I’ve seen.”

The Texas senator Ted Cruz, one of Trump’s staunchest allies, said he didn’t think the lawyers did “the most effective job”, while praising the Maryland representative Jamie Raskin, who is acting as the Democrats’ lead prosecutor, as “impressive”.

Cornyn and Cruz both still voted to dismiss the trial, along with 42 other Republican senators. Six Republicans, including Cassidy and Collins, voted with Democrats to advance the trial.

Trump himself was also reportedly unhappy with his lawyers’ showing. Politico reported that sources close to the former president say he grew “increasingly frustrated” as he watched the day unfold. Other outlets, including CBS and CNN, also reported the president was disappointed, according to sources.

> Per @MajorCBS, "Two sources familiar with the former president's reaction to today's Senate proceedings described Trump as angry about his lawyers' lackluster performances. One source said the President "didn't sound pleased" on phone calls with close associates.
>
> — Doug Sovern (@SovernNation) February 9, 2021

> Multiple people tell me Trump was basically screaming as Castor made a meandering opening argument that struggled to get at the heart of the defense team's argument.

— Kaitlan Collins (@kaitlancollins) February 9, 2021

The trial's opening day saw Raskin deliver an emotional speech that recounted his personal experience of the Capitol attack, describing how his daughter and son-in-law were in an office in the Capitol and hid under a desk, where they sent what they thought were their final texts. Through tears, Raskin said: "This cannot be the future of America."

Castor opened his meandering presentation by praising senators as "patriots" and mentioning that he still gets lost in the Capitol. The speech included such cryptic lines as "Nebraska, you're going to hear, is quite a judicial thinking place". He spoke for 20 minutes before addressing the 6 January insurrection and failed to directly address the president's actions that day or argue against the constitutionality of the impeachment trial.

Castor concluded his opening comments by bizarrely daring the justice department to arrest Trump if the allegations at the heart of the impeachment trial were true.

David Schoen speaks during the trial. Photograph: AP

"A high crime is a felony, and a misdemeanor is a misdemeanor," Castor said. "After he's out of office, you go and arrest him ... The Department of

Justice does know what to do with such people. And so far, I haven't seen any activity in that direction."

The New York Times' Maggie Haberman said a Trump adviser had defended the performance as a "deliberative strategy" meant to distract from Raskin's emotional presentation – though critics pointed out that a master strategist wouldn't need to put out a background statement explaining their strategy.

It was a performance that left many observers befuddled, with some reporters comparing the lawyer to a college student who did not do the reading before class, joking that Castor would be fired by tweet if Trump still had access to his Twitter account.

> I have been in this government class before, where someone hasn't done the reading, napped through the first half of class, gets called on and just riffs for 15 minutes.
>
> — Abby D. Phillip (@abbydphillip) February 9, 2021

> Bruce Castor's opening speech feels a little like this. pic.twitter.com/D2j5soQ6s8
>
> — James Hohmann (@jameshohmann) February 9, 2021

> If Trump still had his Twitter account, he may Tweet-fire this lawyer on the spot.
>
> — Seung Min Kim (@seungminkim) February 9, 2021

Alan Dershowitz, who served as a member of Donald Trump's defense team during his first impeachment trial, seemed less than impressed with Castor's rambling presentation.

"There is no argument. I have no idea what he is doing," Dershowitz told the conservative outlet Newsmax. "I have no idea why he's saying what he's

saying.”

*The Associated Press contributed reporting*

---

Trump impeachment (2021)

# Democrats use Trump trial to show sometimes symbolism is the point

Analysis: faith in the US has been shaken and the impeachment trial is a test of accountability before a global audience

Jamie Raskin, the lead impeachment manager, and his team arrive at the second impeachment trial of Donald Trump. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

Jamie Raskin, the lead impeachment manager, and his team arrive at the second impeachment trial of Donald Trump. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

*David Smith in Washington*
*@smithinamerica*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 15.45 EST

The Democratic congressman Jamie Raskin stood at the lectern, faced 100 senators and removed his black face mask to begin the historic second impeachment trial of former president Donald John Trump.

Don't worry, Raskin assured them with a disarming note of humour on Tuesday. He might have been a constitutional law professor for three decades but he would not be lecturing them on the Federalist Papers. "A professor is someone who talks in someone else's sleep," he quoted from the poet W H Auden.

Instead Raskin promised "cold, hard facts" and he was as good as his word. He let the murderous mob do the talking. The congressman stood aside to a play a brutal, raw, shocking video of the insurrection at the US Capitol on 6 January.

For the senators riveted to their seats, forced to relive the nightmarish quality of that day, there was something especially spooky about watching the mob rampaging through the very building where they were sitting, smashing windows, crushing police officers in doors, waving far-right regalia and chanting "Fight for Trump!"

For Republicans, it must have been uniquely stomach-churning to see what their champion had unleashed – knowing that most of them will continue to defend them during this trial for fear of angering his "base". Never can they have been so relieved to have been wearing masks that concealed their expressions from the press gallery.

Donald Trump's second impeachment trial begins in US Senate
Read more

The video ended with a tweet from Trump from that day insisting this is what happens when an election is stolen (it wasn't stolen). He told his fans: "Go home with love & peace! Remember this day forever!"

The montage was an early indication that, whereas Trump's first impeachment trial a year ago – which turned on a phone call seeking political favours from Ukraine – was like a white-collar criminal case, this

time is more akin to a mob trial with Trump cast as the instigator of violent thugs.

Broken windows on the front door of the US Capitol after a riot by pro-Trump supporters who stormed and vandalized the building. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

It was a dramatic, roaring start to the trial that promises to plant a giant exclamation mark at the end of the Trump presidency. Raskin and his eight fellow House impeachment managers want to make sure that 6 January will become the operatic climax of America's four years of living dangerously.

They also want to send a message. They are aware that the world's faith in America has been badly shaken by the election and presidency of a reality TV star who thrives on petty insults and breaking rules. And they are aware that the 6 January riot may have been breaking point for some.

Peggy Noonan, a former speechwriter for Ronald Reagan, told the MSNBC network on Tuesday: "I have spoken to many people in foreign affairs, including ambassadors and others representing other countries, and since the events following the November election and the president's attempt to overturn it, they have been not been disappointed, they have been anguished

by this, by the sense that America is dropping the ball and can no longer function as the thing you are aiming at."

But Joe Biden likes to say that betting against America is always a bad bet. His election and orderly inauguration last month sent a signal to the world that it should not write off the young republic yet.

Democrats are aware that the trial outcome is a foregone conclusion – another Trump acquittal, barring sensational new evidence – and that the stakes are lower because he has already left office. But sometimes symbolism is the point. The impeachment trial is a test of accountability, stability and rule of law before a global audience.

So in a Capitol building where some windows remain cracked, they observed the solemn rituals and traditions, filing into the Senate chamber beneath the busts of 20 former vice-presidents gazing down from marble plinths in alcoves. This time there were no members of the public in the gallery because of coronavirus precautions.

Just before 1pm, Mitch McConnell, the Republican Senate minority leader, walked in a little unsteadily and stood at his desk. He was approached by Susan Collins, who is expected to vote against Trump and spoke to him animatedly. Then came Tom Cotton, who is expected to vote for Trump's acquittal, for another deep conversation.

McConnell remains the pivotal figure at the trial and in the coming years. For a few days after the attack on the Capitol he seemed to be ready to cut Trump loose, and persuade many colleagues to do likewise, yet he then voted to support the notion that this trial is unconstitutional. His future actions will offer clues as to whether the Republican party can shake off Trumpism without having to learn the hard way at the ballot box.

Marco Rubio sat at his desk writing with a quill pen. Bernie Sanders had an iPad resting on a folder. Some seats were empty for the opening pledge of allegiance and prayer.

Mitch McConnell walks through the Senate subway on the first day of former president Donald Trump's second impeachment trial. Photograph: Caroline Brehman/UPI/Rex/Shutterstock

The Senate president pro tempore, Patrick Leahy, presiding over the proceedings, led the chamber in reciting the pledge and gaveled in the Senate as a court of impeachment.

The prayer, from Chaplain Barry Black, included a pointed quotation from the poet James Russell Lowell: "Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide, / In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side."

Then, after a procedural vote, Raskin began his argument that the trial is indeed constitutional – a former president can be tried even after leaving office. To deny this, he said, would create a "brand new January exception", meaning that an outgoing president could act with impunity during his final weeks in the White House.

Trump's second impeachment trial: the key players
Read more

Like a criminal lawyer, Democrats are seeking to appeal to not only the head but also the heart. They are not only prosecutors but also survivors of the rampage, a point brought home with visceral force by Raskin in a closing argument that had the chamber silent and spellbound on Wednesday.

“And then there was a sound I will never forget,” he recalled. “The sound of pounding on the door like a battering ram. The most haunting sound I ever heard and I will never forget it.”

Raskin’s 25-year-old son, Tommy, a Harvard law student who struggled with depression, took his own life on New Year’s Eve. A day after Tommy was buried on 5 January, the congressman had brought his daughter and a son-in-law to the Capitol for the ratification of Biden’s victory.

He had assured them it would be safe but, after the mob stormed the building, they were hiding under a desk in a barricaded congressional office sending what they thought were final text messages to loved ones. More than an hour later, they were rescued by Capitol police.

Raskin, fighting back tears, said of his 24-year-old daughter: “I told her how sorry I was and I promised her that it would not be like this again the next time she came back to the Capitol with me. And you know what she said? She said, ‘Dad, I don’t want to come back to the Capitol.’”

At that Raskin broke down for a moment, putting fingers to his eyes before regaining his composure. “Of all the terrible, brutal things I saw and I heard on that day and since then, that one hit me the hardest. That and watching someone use an American flag pole, the flag still on it, to spear and pummel one of our police officers – ruthlessly, mercilessly tortured by a pole with a flag on it that he was defending with his very life.”

Democrats were expected on Wednesday to prosecute the case like a criminal trial with more compelling videos and graphic descriptions of that day.

But they didn’t want to overdo it. Trump is gone and Biden is facing the most daunting presidential inheritance since Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s. While this trial plays out, the new president is trying to win support

for a $1.9tn rescue package and tackle the coronavirus, economic, racial justice and climate crises.

As Biden tries spinning these plates, the last thing he needs is a rancorous impeachment trial to bring it all crashing down. But Democrats insist they can get it done. If you had a dollar or pound for every time a member of Congress insists they can “walk and chew gum at the same time”, you would be very wealthy indeed.

---

US Capitol breach

# Democrats play montage of footage from Capitol siege during Trump impeachment hearing – video

France

# France begins to confront decades of neglect of incest cases

Book alleging political scientist Olivier Duhamel sexually abused stepson has led to resignations and calls for changes to age of consent


Camille Kouchner's book La Familia Grande claims that the abuse of her brother was common knowledge in her family's social circle. Photograph: François Mori/AP

Camille Kouchner's book La Familia Grande claims that the abuse of her brother was common knowledge in her family's social circle. Photograph: François Mori/AP

*Kim Willsher in Paris*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 00.00 EST

When Camille Kouchner – daughter of a former government minister and stepdaughter to a renowned constitutional expert – wrote a book about

alleged child sexual abuse in her family it sparked another of France's periodic moral, social and political crises.

Once again, the country turned itself out to explain why another of its great and good might have abused a child, and how their equally great and good friends might have turned a blind eye – but this time the impact went much further.

In her book La Familia Grande – printed amid great secrecy last month – Kouchner, 45, the daughter of Bernard Kouchner, a former Socialist minister and co-founder of Médecins Sans Frontières, claimed that Olivier Duhamel, a constitutional expert and president of the board that oversees the prestigious Sciences Po university, had sexually abused her twin brother.

Within hours, survivors were posting their traumatic stories under the #MeTooInceste hashtag.

The book sold out within days and Duhamel, 70, resigned all his positions including regular media slots. He has made no public statements. Police announced an investigation into "rape and sexual abuse of a minor" and have interviewed Duhamel's stepson.

Within a week others had toppled like dominoes. The philosopher Alain Finkielkraut lost his regular television slot after seemingly suggesting Duhamel's alleged behaviour was not that serious because his stepson was "an adolescent". Élisabeth Guigou, a former justice minister and another Duhamel friend, resigned as president of the committee looking into paedophilia and incest while insisting she "had no idea of the serious facts".

The Île-de-France prefect Marc Guillaume, yet another Duhamel friend, quit his post on the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques (FNSP), which oversees the prestigious Sciences Po *grande école* and of which Duhamel was president.

Within a fortnight Emmanuel Macron became involved, speaking to praise the bravery of those who had broken the omertà on incest and child abuse and calling for legislative change.

Late on Tuesday, another high-profile figure became the latest casualty of the scandal. Frédéric Mion, the director of Sciences Po, who previously admitted he was informed of the accusations against Duhamel in 2018, resigned admitting he had made "errors of judgement".

Former police captain Laurent Boyet, who says he was abused as a six-year-old by an older brother, now runs an association, Les Papillons, to help youngsters speak out about incest and assault. He says Kouchner's book has dragged France to a crossroads.

"What this book and the #MeTooInceste has done is allow families to say: 'That's enough. Stop. I don't want to be part of this horror any longer. Stop inviting that uncle to weddings when you know he's an abuser.' It demands that each and every family examines its conscience," he said.

"Because of this it has given hope to the victims. Hopefully the message will spread to outside of France, because it's not just a problem here."

France's post-1968 generation adopted an intellectual position that 60s promiscuity encompassed adult sexual relations and those with youngsters. A 1977 petition supported by a group of leftwing intellectuals, including Bernard Kouchner, called for a lowering of the age of consent to 13. Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida and Simone de Beauvoir were among the signatories.

During the late 1980s, Duhamel and his wife Évelyne Pisier, a feminist writer who had a four-year affair with Fidel Castro – would invite their intellectual friends to the family estate in Sanary-sur-Mer on the French Rivièra each summer. This was "La Familia Grande". There were parties, skinny-dipping in the pool and naked drives to the seaside. The motto was "Freedom above all", Kouchner writes.

"Parents and children kissed each other on the mouth. My stepfather flirted with his friends' wives. The friends picked up the nannies. Young men were offered to older women." She wrote that her mother, who died in 2017, had explained: "There's no harm in it, my little Camille. I know what's going on."

An anecdote in the book recounts how one young, female guest to the Duhamels' estate complained to the police after a man slipped uninvited into her bed. "The young woman was repudiated, vilified by my stepfather and mother who were appalled by such vulgarity. They explained to me I had to understand: the girl had exaggerated," Kouchner, a lawyer and university lecturer, writes.

She tells how her twin, called "Victor" in the book, eventually told his mother that Duhamel had sexually abused him from the age of 13. Pisier angrily accused her son of seducing her husband. Kouchner says the abuse was no secret because "everyone knew".

A poll by Ipsos in November estimate one in 10 French people have been the victim of sexual abuse within the family as children or adolescents; 78% were female and 22% male. The poll suggested the number of incest cases has risen from 3% of the population in 2009, meaning to 2 million victims, to 10% in 2020 – 6.7 million victims.

Psychiatrist Muriel Salmona, a childhood abuse survivor and president of the association Mémoire Traumatique et Victimologie said Kouchner's book had come at a time when French society was ready to "smash the omertà surrounding incest".

"There has been a culture of impunity particularly for those in positions of privilege, power and domination over women and children," Salmona says. "These people, mostly white men, the all-powerful, are adored and feted […] This generates a sort of sexual privilege to exploit women and children with impunity.

"Nobody wants to keep hearing these old words, we have to admit that we have let something atrocious happen and make amends. We must fight this impunity. We were considered the silly women and girls who were uptight, incapable of liberating ourselves, incapable of higher thought, but now we will send them to prison."

Under French law, there is no legal age of sexual consent (last month the Senate voted for the threshold to be set at 13) and at present a victim of rape or abuse is considered consenting by default and has to prove non-consent.

New legislation proposes to criminalise sexual acts between an adult and a child under 13 – currently an “offence” and not a “crime” – with heavier prison sentences, particularly for incest, and extending the statute of limitations giving victims more time to bring legal proceedings.

Laurent Boyer says he desperately hopes the wave of outrage sparked by #MeTooInceste will not eventually break on “the sands of indifference”. Les Papillons has put letter boxes in more than a dozen schools and youth sports clubs to encourage victims to break their self-imposed silence, and hopes to install them across France.

He stressed that child sexual abuse in the family knows no social, economic or geographical boundaries. “We put a box in one day and the next we have letters from children who need help,” he says. “There are no exceptions. It can be happening in any family.”

He admits it is not just the abuse that has a “catastrophic” legacy.

“It’s not just what is done, for me it was also the 30 years of silence, fear, shame, guilt … 30 years of self-destruction and addiction. It was a non-life, of being but not being there. That’s why we have to say, Stop. Enough.”

---

Healthcare industry

# Pharmacists in England considering strike action over Covid debts

Industry association says chancellor must intervene to waive repayment of £370m of government loans

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

Pharmacies have been providing extra services during the pandemic, including Covid inoculations. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Pharmacists in England are considering strike action unless the Treasury writes off a £370m debt from a support package awarded during the pandemic, which saw many chemists help deliver vaccines.

The chair of the National Pharmacy Association urged the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, to intervene in the budget on 3 March, saying the industry did not

want to stage walkouts but many members were facing closure due to unsustainable debts.

Andrew Lane, chairman of the National Pharmacy Association, told the Guardian: “This is a desperate situation for many of our members, so it’s not surprising that you do hear people talking about some form of protest.

“But no one wants to let their patients down, so strike action is the last thing any pharmacist would want to do. Instead, we need to continue to make the evidence-based case and appeal to the government to do the right thing by the nation’s heroic pharmacists and the patients they serve.”

High street pharmacies have found themselves on the frontline of primary care during the pandemic as many GP surgeries switched to telephone consultations. Larger pharmacies are operating as coronavirus vaccination hubs, though they must commit to offering 1,000 jabs a week, which many smaller providers cannot meet.

The industry, which is said to be close to the chancellor’s heart as his mother was a community pharmacist, was offered £370m in government loans last year to help meet additional costs amid the pandemic. It now wants that debt to be waived.

An industry source told the Guardian that Steve Barclay, chief secretary to the Treasury, had ruled out writing off the whole debt in recent meetings with pharmacy leaders, though some extra cash has been offered. It “falls way short”, the source said.

The Treasury is said to have suggested the funding gap is met by the NHS. “They are batting this back to the NHS, saying the onus is on them to fund any shortfall,” the source said. “The sector now feels like community pharmacies are in effect subsidising the NHS.”

A September report commissioned by the National Pharmacy Association predicted that under current funding, 72% of community pharmacies will be in debt by 2024.

Eight out of 10 pharmacies told a parliamentary group that the government loans had not been enough to meet the extra costs of the crisis. The all-party parliamentary group on pharmacies wrote to the government in December asking that the debt be written off against the additional costs of Covid-19.

Lane said the sector had not received any bailout cash because pharmacies had to continue to operate throughout the pandemic. “While other sectors get bailouts for being closed, community pharmacies are in debt because we’ve stayed open to save lives,” he said.

“People can live without pizzas but they can die without their pills and the healthcare we provide. With each hour we stay open to provide vital services, the more money leaks from our pockets and hastens the demise of this country’s long-cherished pharmacy network. When will ministers finally make good on their commitment to meet the additional costs associated with coronavirus?”

Industry insiders said they had had to provide a huge number of additional services, including mass pre-orders of medications and increased medication deliveries and frontline care, while experiencing a drop in footfall and demand for their other products.

Pharmacies have also incurred additional costs in making their operations Covid-secure, such as introducing PPE and social distancing measures because of the higher risk of coming into contact with infected customers.

Labour’s shadow health secretary, Jonathan Ashworth, has written to the health secretary, Matt Hancock, asking him to help unblock the funding.

“Community pharmacies have played a key role in the national response to Covid and should be fully mobilised as part of the vaccination effort, especially with hard-to-reach communities,” Ashworth said. “Now many are facing financial ruin thanks to Rishi Sunak’s attempts to claw back this extra support. Ministers should be doing everything they can to support pharmacies through the Covid crisis.”

In his letter this week, Ashworth said mounting costs had been “directly incurred in the battle against Covid-19 … The repayment of this loan

threatens the future of thousands of pharmacies, coming on top of several years of reduced funding for the sector."

Ashworth said GPs have had £197.5m in costs reimbursed across 6,800 practices despite not being physically open, and NHS dentists have received permanent payments for lost income as a result of coronavirus.

"They feel there is not a level playing field between different primary care providers, and that they are being penalised for their hard work and commitment," he wrote. "They have pointed to considerable 'buck-passing' between NHS England, DHSC [Department of Health and Social Care] and the Treasury on where the decision lies to progress this or a similar solution."

Any move towards industrial action would be controversial, and one industry insider said they were doubtful all members would adhere. In 2009, pharmacists in Ireland held a crippling 10-day strike, which caused long queues for medications, over cuts in payments to pharmacists. It was eventually called off over patient safety concerns.

The Treasury and Department for Health were approached for comment.

---

Brexit

# EU to seek more time to ratify Brexit trade deal amid tensions with UK

Chief negotiator, David Frost, claims bloc struggling to get used to ‘independent actor in its neighbourhood’

Frost claimed that a resolution to strained EU-UK relations required a ‘different spirit’ from Brussels before a crunch meeting. Photograph: Stéphanie Lecocq/EPA

Frost claimed that a resolution to strained EU-UK relations required a ‘different spirit’ from Brussels before a crunch meeting. Photograph: Stéphanie Lecocq/EPA

*Ben Quinn and Rory Carroll*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 14.59 EST

The European Union is expected to ask for more time to ratify the Brexit trade deal, the UK’s chief Brexit negotiator has said as he laid the blame for

continuing UK-EU tensions at the door of Brussels.

David Frost claimed that a resolution to now strained relations required a "different spirit" from the EU, in comments made less than 48 hours before a crunch meeting between Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove and a senior European commission figure.

Appearing with Gove before the Lords European Union committee on Tuesday, Frost blamed tensions on the bloc struggling to get used to a "genuinely independent actor in its neighbourhood".

He also told the committee that the UK had been told informally that day that the EU would be seeking an extension to the ratification of the trade deal between both sides.

"We have heard informally from the commission today that we are likely to get a formal request to extend the two-month period that is in the treaty for ratification on the EU side," Frost said.

"We wait to see what that request constitutes and how long they wish to extend the process for. Obviously, it is a little disappointing given that we did discuss this only a month ago."

As well as news of the expected delay, Frost listed a series of "niggling border issues", such as Brussels' decision to place barriers on live UK shellfish exports. "I think it's been more than bumpy to be honest in the last six weeks," he said.

Gove, who is due to hold talks in London on Thursday with the European commission vice-president Maroš Šefčovič to try to resolve ongoing issues around the Northern Ireland protocol row, compared the recent difficulties with the EU to a plane taking off.

"We all know that when an aeroplane takes off, that's the point when you sometimes get that increased level of turbulence," said the minister, who is in charge of implementing the Brexit deal.

"But then eventually you reach a cruising altitude and the crew tell you to take your seatbelts off, and enjoy a gin and tonic and some peanuts. We're

not at the gin and tonic and peanuts stage yet but I'm confident we will be."

Both Gove and Frost were forced to deny that the UK was engaged in a tit for tat struggle with the EU over the recognition of diplomatic representatives after a near-year-long row about the UK's refusal to grant full diplomatic status of the EU mission to the UK. Frost accused the EU of placing restrictions on the operation of the UK's ambassador in Brussels and his team.

A vivid example of the ongoing problems surrounding the Northern Ireland protocol and its impact on movement of goods was put to Gove by Lord Faulkner, who said he had received a letter from a heritage railway in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland.

The railway was due to receive something as a gift from a counterpart in Devon and had approached several delivery firms. Of those who replied, two had said they were not accepting any deliveries between Britain and Northern Ireland any more while another provided a list of requirements.

There was no immediate reaction from the European Union to Frost's comments about the request for a delay to ratifying the trade deal.

However, it emerged separately on Tuesday that Ireland and the EU Commission are meanwhile exploring ways to create an internal EU alert mechanism to protect the Northern Ireland protocol and avert repeats of the article 16 fiasco two weeks ago.

Irish and commission officials were to meet on Tuesday to discuss mechanisms that will flag implications for Northern Ireland, intended or otherwise, in any future EU legislation, RTE reported.

The goal is to avoid any repeat of the blunder on 29 January when the commission triggered Article 16 of the protocol to try to safeguard Covid-19 vaccine supplies, apparently oblivious to the political uproar this would cause in Dublin, Belfast and London. The commission swiftly backtracked.

EU legislation is to be checked early for any implications for the movement of goods between Britain and Northern Ireland, with any concerns

channelled to Mairead McGuinness, Ireland's EU commissioner, according to RTE. The Irish government and EU commission made no immediate comment.

---

UK news

# Sim-swapping: UK police arrest eight over attacks on celebrities

US sports stars and musicians hit by scammers taking over phones or accounts to steal money and information

The investigation, which involved the US Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), discovered a network of SIM-swappers operating in Britain Photograph: Hero Images Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

The investigation, which involved the US Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), discovered a network of SIM-swappers operating in Britain Photograph: Hero Images Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

*Reuters*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 19.45 EST

British police have said they arrested eight people as part of an investigation into the Sim-swapping hijacking of US celebrities' phones.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) said sports stars, musicians and their families had been targeted by the scam in which criminals gained access to victims' phones or accounts.

This allowed them to steal money, bitcoin and personal information, as well as hack and post from victims' social media accounts, the NCA said.

The great opportunity: how Covid transformed global crime
Read more

The investigation, which involved the US Secret Service and the FBI, discovered a network operating in Britain. The British police said eight suspects, aged between 18 and 26, had been arrested in England and Scotland.

"This network targeted a large number of victims in the US and regularly attacked those they believed would be lucrative targets, such as famous sports stars and musicians," said Paul Creffield, head of operations in the NCA's cybercrime unit.

"As well as causing a lot of distress and disruption, we know they stole large sums from their victims, from either their bank accounts or bitcoin wallets."

Sim-swapping involves taking control of a victim's phone number by deactivating their Sim and switching the allocated number to a Sim belonging to one of the criminal gang. The criminals then reset passwords to gain access to victims' contacts, banking details, emails and social media accounts.

---

Hong Kong

# Hong Kong bars its dual nationals from foreign consular help

Adoption of mainland China policy sparks concern other countries will be unable to offer protection to passport holders


Dual nationals in Hong Kong will no longer be allowed consular assistance, Carrie Lam has said. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

Dual nationals in Hong Kong will no longer be allowed consular assistance, Carrie Lam has said. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

*Agence France-Presse*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 22.53 EST

Hongkongers with dual nationality are not entitled to foreign consular assistance, the city's leader has said, confirming warnings by western diplomats that authorities have begun strictly enforcing Chinese nationality regulations.

On Tuesday the Hong Kong chief executive, Carrie Lam, confirmed that while residents could have multiple passports, dual nationality was not recognised in Hong Kong under China's nationality law.

"That [law] has a very specific provision that people [who] have foreign nationality or right of abode elsewhere … are regarded as Chinese nationals in Hong Kong," Lam said. "So likewise they will not be eligible for consular protection, including consular visits," she added, unless they had received permission to renounce their Chinese nationality.

Tell us: are you a Hong Kong resident applying for a UK visa?
Read more

Canada's foreign affairs department announced last week that a dual national in prison in Hong Kong was required to make a declaration choosing a single nationality.

The revelation sent diplomats from Britain, Canada and the United States scrambling given the potential implications for hundreds of thousands of Hongkongers in the city with dual nationality, and those who travel there for business and tourism.

Beijing's top lawmaking body set the rules for implementing nationality in Hong Kong in 1996 – the year before the handover from Britain. As a result Hong Kong officials have described the move to reject consular assistance for dual nationals as nothing new.

But western diplomats say there has been a concrete policy change because they previously had no problem visiting dual nationals in custody.

No Hong Kong official, including Lam, has publicly addressed whether any order has been made to more strictly enforce nationality rules.

On Monday night Britain's consulate changed its travel advice after it said it had been informed that "Hong Kong, like other parts of China, does not recognise dual nationality".

“If you have both British and Chinese nationality you may be treated as a Chinese citizen by local authorities, even if you enter Hong Kong on your British passport,” the consulate warned. “If this is the case, the British consulate may not be able to offer you consular assistance.”

The apparent change comes amid clashes between Beijing and western nations over its crackdown in the finance hub following 2019’s widespread democracy protests.

The change is most likely to affect ethnic Chinese dual citizens in Hong Kong.

Mainland China has even stricter dual citizenship laws that stipulate people are not allowed to own another country’s passport – although many, especially wealthy elites, simply keep it secret. In January the UK began offering extended visas to holders of British National (Overseas) passports, to which all Hongkongers born before the 1997 handover are entitled.

Beijing responded by announcing it would no longer recognise the passports.

---

Business

# Why oil giants are swapping oil rigs for offshore windfarms

The fossil fuel giants need to find new ways to reduce emissions, generate growth and maintain their share price

Wind turbines of the Duddon Sands offshore windfarm with the Lake District in the background. Photograph: Rob Arnold/Alamy

Wind turbines of the Duddon Sands offshore windfarm with the Lake District in the background. Photograph: Rob Arnold/Alamy

*Jillian Ambrose*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 01.00 EST

The world's biggest oil companies are no stranger to UK waters, but by the end of the decade they will be running more offshore wind turbines than oil rigs.

BP has already made a splash with a record-breaking bid to build two giant windfarms in the Irish Sea. The company beat established renewable energy players by offering to pay the Crown Estate £900m a year to develop the sites, more than 15 times the price paid for similar deals in the past.

Queen's property manager and Treasury to get windfarm windfall of nearly £9bn
Read more

Bernard Looney, the chief executive of BP, said the winning bid, announced earlier this week, marked the company's entry into one of the world's best offshore wind markets.

"This is both important progress towards BP's transformation into an integrated energy company as well as a significant next step in our long history in the UK," Looney added.

It has also marked a new battleground between oil companies and the traditional energy utilities they hope to emulate and usurp. BP's big windfarm bet has drawn criticism from renewable energy developers which placed bids more in line with the results of previous seabed auctions – and lost. They claim that the price to be paid by BP is too steep, and the returns on investment will be too low.

"They're mad," said an employee of one windfarm developer. "Everyone is saying the same thing; these prices make no sense, and will ultimately be bad for the industry and consumer bills."

Dev Sanyal, the head of BP's renewable energy division, takes the warnings from BP's critics with a pinch of salt. "They would say that, wouldn't they?" he told the Guardian.

He said the planned Irish Sea windfarms represent a "highly advantaged" entry point into the company's future growth.

The turbines will stand in relatively shallow waters, 18 miles offshore, meaning it will be cheaper and easier to build and maintain. The two

windfarms together will be able to share resources, driving costs lower still. These factors are critical to keeping costs low and investment returns at between 8% to 10%, a level expected by BP's investors.

However, taking a wider strategic view, BP and other major oil companies are willing to pay top-dollar to join the offshore wind boom in UK waters and around the world because they need to diversify from polluting fossil fuels into cleaner renewable energy.

BP hopes to increase its portfolio of renewable energy to 50GW by 2030. The newly won option on the UK seabed follows a $1.1bn (£850m) deal to take a stake in two US offshore wind projects being developed by Norwegian state oil company Equinor. To keep growing BP will need to compete against traditional renewable energy developers – and other oil companies.

Anglo-Dutch oil company Shell is also pursuing offshore wind. It has teamed up with Dutch renewable energy company Eneco to build giant windfarms off the coast of the Netherlands. French major Total was also a winner in the UK's latest seabed auction.

Mark Lewis, the chief sustainability strategist at BNP Paribas Asset Management, a major investor in renewable energy, said "Big Oil's" big spending on offshore wind is an investment in their long-term future.

"There is an overarching imperative now, which is no longer beyond question, that the UK and Europe must reduce their carbon emissions to net zero by 2050. So any oil company operating in the UK knows two things: one, that it needs to reduce the emissions from its operations and two, that it needs to find alternatives to oil for its future growth," Lewis said.

There is also a clear message from investors writ-large across the world's stock market indices. Listed companies with a strong stable of renewable energy projects are beginning to reach market valuations many times the size of their annual earnings, while oil company share prices are grazing multi-year lows.

BP's share price only four months ago plunged to its lowest level since 1994. The 26-year low on the FTSE 100 valued the company at £40.5bn, well below the market value of the Danish offshore wind developer Orsted, which in less than two years has doubled its value on the Copenhagen stock exchange to more than £51bn.

"Happily for oil companies there are opportunities in offshore wind," Lewis said. "It is a great growth market where they already have some transferable skills because the engineering proposition is very similar. We're talking about building big infrastructure in the middle of the sea, and that's something we know oil companies do well."

Even the world's largest offshore windfarms are easily dwarfed by the scale and expense of the multibillion-dollar fossil fuel projects which are routine for major oil companies. BP believes its track record delivering giant offshore infrastructure projects, ahead of schedule and below budget, will help to reduce the cost of building offshore windfarms too.



"This is exactly what we should be doing; we're bringing our skills from the old world to the new world. That's why we think we can be a winner in the energy transition," BP's Sanyal said.

Investors have already raised questions over whether the company has overpaid, according to Lydia Rainforth, an oil and gas equity analyst at Barclays.

But she warned against comparing BP's bid to the prices offered by utility companies. For one thing, each seabed licence has different characteristics which could affect the economics of a windfarm. For another, there has been no price set for the electricity the windfarms will eventually generate, so BP's returns on the investment will remain unknown for years.

For now the upfront costs represent a "relatively small outlay" in the context of oil company spending, and an important step in moving towards a greener energy portfolio.

Rainforth said: “It does appear a price worth paying. And for now we have to trust that the company has done the work to back up the 8% to 10% return [on investment] ambition.”

---

Hospitality industry

# British pub beer sales at lowest level since 1920s

With sales down 56% British Beer & Pub Association adds to pressure on chancellor to extend Covid support

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage


Taped-up beer pumps at a pub in Wimbledon, south-west London, as lockdown continues. Pubs are usually one of the last venues to reopen when restrictions relax. Photograph: Amer Ghazzal/Rex/Shutterstock

Taped-up beer pumps at a pub in Wimbledon, south-west London, as lockdown continues. Pubs are usually one of the last venues to reopen when restrictions relax. Photograph: Amer Ghazzal/Rex/Shutterstock

*Jasper Jolly* and *Richard Partington*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 01.01 EST

Beer sales in British pubs halved last year to the lowest since the 1920s as they faced some of the toughest and longest-lasting restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic, according to industry figures.

Overall beer sales in pubs were down 56% in 2020 to about £6.1bn, a loss of £7.8bn in sales compared with 2019, said the British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA) – the lowest volume of beer sold in at least a century.

The evidence of a collapse in spending comes as the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, faces mounting pressure to take action to prevent a wave of business failures in the hospitality sector that experts say would hold back Britain's economic recovery after lockdown is relaxed.

The Resolution Foundation said more than half of hospitality firms in Britain – including pubs, cafes and restaurants – have fewer than three months' of cash reserves left due to the financial damage from multiple lockdowns and weaker demand during the pandemic.

Labour urges Sunak to extend Covid support for businesses
Read more

Calling for an expansion in government grants for firms in the hardest-hit sectors at the 3 March budget, the thinktank warned that struggling hospitality firms were more likely to shed jobs and close venues over the coming months, undermining the recovery.

UK consumers likely to hold off spending on socialising, senior Bank official predicts
Read more

Pub beer sales were 77% lower in the last three months of 2020 compared with 2019, as pubs were closed under various tier systems and an English national lockdown in November. Sales in the second quarter of 2020, during the first lockdown, were down 96% year-on-year.

The BBPA said a government stimulus package was needed, as well as a timeline for the reopening of pubs at the same time as non-essential retailers

when the mass Covid-19 vaccination programme allows the latest lockdown to ease.

The Resolution Foundation said across the UK economy total company cash holdings increased by £118bn in 2020, in stark contrast to average declines of about £40bn during each of the last four recessions. But it said firms in the hardest-hit sectors, such as hospitality, were experiencing major difficulties. It said this risked translating into widespread company failures and redundancies unless action is taken.

Jack Leslie, an economist at the Resolution Foundation, said: "While the path to recovery is now in sight, business still face huge problems ahead. Firms in social sectors like hospitality are running out of cash, and many are likely to shed staff or fold altogether unless further targeted support is provided."

Pubs across the UK have faced restrictions ranging from curfews and bans on household mixing, to requirements to only serve alcohol with "substantial meals". During the national lockdowns all pubs have been closed, and they have been among the last venues to reopen when restrictions have been relaxed.



Nick Mackenzie, chief executive of Greene King, a pub chain and brewer, said that a return to "complex and unjustified restrictions" would make it unviable for pubs to reopen. He said the sector urgently needed clarification on more support.

Great Britain lost almost 6,000 licensed venues during 2020, according to the industry analysts CGA and AlixPartners.

The BBPA said thousands more debt-laden pubs would be forced to close unless Sunak extended financial support for the sector, including extending a VAT cut and a business rates holiday. The lobby group also asked for a cut in beer duty.

Phil Whitehead, the BBPA's chair, said the uncertainty over when pubs could reopen was "not sustainable for our sector" as it faced months with zero sales.

A Treasury spokesperson said the government had invested more than £280bn during the pandemic to protect millions of jobs and businesses. "At the upcoming budget we'll outline the next stages of our Plan for Jobs to support businesses and families across the UK. That has been our priority throughout the past year and it will be the priority for the year to come."

---

Colombia

# Pablo Escobar's hippos must be culled to halt biodiversity disaster – scientists

Huge animals abandoned on Colombian drug lord's hacienda zoo are loved by locals but their sheer numbers threaten environment

Hippos in a lake at what was once the private estate of drug kingpin Pablo Escobar, where they now roam free posing a danger to indigenous wildlife. Photograph: Fernando Vergara/AP

Hippos in a lake at what was once the private estate of drug kingpin Pablo Escobar, where they now roam free posing a danger to indigenous wildlife. Photograph: Fernando Vergara/AP

*Associated Press*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 21.21 EST

Hippos imported illegally into Colombia for Pablo Escobar's private zoo have gone feral in the lush tropical countryside and must be culled before

their invasive presence starts to wipe out indigenous flora and fauna, scientists have warned.

One of the notorious drug lord's great extravagances saw him amass a collection of hippos, kangaroos, giraffes, elephants and other exotic animals in his hacienda fortress from where he established the world's biggest cocaine empire in the 1980s.

When he was hunted down and killed by police in 1993 many of the animals were rounded up or died.

Pablo Escobar's 'cocaine hippos' show how invasive species can restore a lost world
Read more

But the hippos were abandoned on the sprawling Hacienda Napoles due to the cost and logistical issues associated with transporting the huge animals and the violence that plagued the area at the time.

Government attempts to control their reproduction have had no real impact on population growth, with the number of hippos increasing in the last eight years from 35 to somewhere between 65 and 80.

A group of scientists is warning that the hippos pose a major threat to the area's biodiversity and could lead to deadly encounters with humans. They say the hippos must be culled or their numbers could reach around 1,500 by 2035.

"I believe that it is one of the greatest challenges of invasive species in the world," said Nataly Castelblanco-Martínez, an ecologist at the University of Quintana Roo in Mexico and lead author of the group's study.

The idea of culling the herd has already drawn some criticism. There was an outcry years ago when three hippos wandered from the Escobar compound and one was killed by hunters.

The local people have embraced the hippos as their own, in part because of the tourist dollars they bring in as they roam the estate turned theme park

and surrounding area.

The scientists began working on the hippo population forecast in 2020 after one of the animals chased and severely injured a farmer. Their study was published in the journal Biological Conservation in January.

'No predators, plenty to eat': New Zealand struggles with plague of peacocks Read more

Another study in 2020 by researchers at the University of California San Diego found the hippos are changing the quality of the water in which they spend much of their time and defecate. As their population continues to grow they could end up displacing native animals like Antillean manatees, Castelblanco-Martinez said.

The hippos thrive in the fertile region lying between Medellín and Colombia's capital, Bogotá. They live in the area around the Rio Magdalena – the Mississippi river of Colombia – spending the day mostly in the lakes and waterways and the night roaming endless grass pastures. Unlike in their native Africa they have no natural predators in Colombia.

"About 10 years ago we realised that we have a giant population of hippopotamuses. We began to learn how the population was constituted, to see if there was an immediate solution," said David Echeverri-Lopez, a researcher at the regional environmental agency that oversees the hippos. "We really began to realise the dimensions of the problem."

While Echeverri agreed that culling the hippos would be the best solution, he said the animals' magnetic personality and a government ban on hunting them complicated the matter.

The government has tried sterilisation but it is a complex and expensive process. First an animal must be tricked into entering a huge metal corral to be sedated. Then a team of wildlife experts must spend about three hours cutting through the animal's thick skin and trying to find its reproductive organs.

“The community keeps an eye on us to make sure that we are actually sterilising [the hippo] and not doing anything else,” said Gina Serna-Trujillo, a veterinarian who has conducted some of the sterilisations. “They love them.”

Castelblanco understands the appeal of hippos, even describing a baby hippo as “the most beautiful thing in the world” but said the discussions over their future in Colombia should not be ruled by warm feelings the animals generate.

“We have other invasive species in Colombia that have undergone normal protocols, and no one ever makes a fuss because they are fishing lionfish,” she said referring to a fish native to the Indo-Pacific that is an invasive species in the Atlantic Ocean.

“You can’t even talk about [culling hippos] because the rejection is staggering … I am being called a murderer.”

---

# 2021.02.10 - Coronavirus

- Live Coronavirus: WHO mission member says ‘don’t rely too much’ on US virus intelligence
- Vaccination Japan to discard millions of Pfizer doses because of wrong syringes
- France Europe’s oldest person survives Covid
- Vaccine Elton John and Michael Caine star in video to promote jab
- 'It's the isolation' Parents on the impact of lockdown for children
- 'Chumocracy' Care homes failed by lack of PPE during UK Covid first wave, say MPs
- Oxford/AstraZeneca The bumpy road to Covid vaccine confidence

Coronavirus live
US news

# Coronavirus live news: WHO mission member says ‘don’t rely too much’ on US virus intelligence

Japan

# Japan to discard millions of Pfizer vaccine doses because it has wrong syringes

Japan has secured 144m shots of the vaccine, but it does not have enough of the specialised syringes to be able to draw six shots from each vial

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

Japan's health minister Norihisa Tamura said Pfizer vaccine doses will be lost because it does not have enough low 'dead space' syringes. Photograph: Mehdi Fedouach/AFP/Getty Images

Japan's health minister Norihisa Tamura said Pfizer vaccine doses will be lost because it does not have enough low 'dead space' syringes. Photograph: Mehdi Fedouach/AFP/Getty Images

*Justin McCurry in Tokyo*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 23.14 EST

Millions of people in Japan will not receive Pfizer's coronavirus vaccine as planned due to a shortage of specialist syringes – an oversight that could frustrate the country's inoculation programme.

Standard syringes in use in Japan are unable to extract the sixth and final dose from each vial manufactured by the US drugmaker, according to the health minister, Norihisa Tamura.

Japan faces Olympian task with slow start to Covid vaccinations
Read more

Japan has secured 144m shots of the Pfizer vaccine – enough for 72 million people – on the assumption that each vial contained six doses.

Each recipient requires two jabs, three weeks apart, to increase the level of protection, according to Pfizer.

But a shortage of low "dead space" syringes – which have narrow plungers that can push out any leftover vaccine – means vaccinators in Japan will have to use mainly standard syringes that are capable of extracting only five doses per vial, or enough for 60 million people.

"The syringes used in Japan can only draw five doses," Tamura said, according to the Kyodo news agency. "We will use all the syringes we have that can draw six doses, but it will, of course, not be enough as more shots are administered."

The government is requesting medical equipment manufacturers to increase production of the specialist syringes.

A vial of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19. Photograph: François Mori/AP

Japan is not alone in encountering the problem. The US and European Union countries have also reported a shortage of low dead space syringes, meaning there is likely to be strong competition to quickly secure additional supplies.

A Japanese health ministry official told Jiji Press: “When the contract was made, we were not absolutely sure that one bottle could be used for six shots. We can’t deny we were slow to confirm that.”

When Japan begins its Covid immunisation programme in mid-February – several months later than many other developed economies – health workers administering the vaccine will be left with no choice but to discard the sixth and final dose.

The government has defended its cautious approach to the vaccine rollout, which is expected to begin on 17 February, pending local approval for the Pfizer vaccine two days earlier.

Japan will begin by inoculating 10,000 to 20,000 frontline health workers, whose condition will be closely monitored for any side effects, followed by another 3.7 million health workers from mid-March.

The rollout for 36 million people aged 65 and over is not expected to begin until early April.

Just over 8 million people with pre-existing health conditions and 7.5 million aged 60-64 will also be given priority. The general population – people aged 16 to 59 – won't begin receiving their jabs until around July, when Tokyo plans to host the postponed summer Olympics.

AstraZeneca requested approval for its vaccine last month, while the Moderna vaccine is not expected to receive regulatory approval until May.

In total, Japan has secured enough doses for 157 million people.

---

Coronavirus

# Europe’s oldest person survives Covid and set to celebrate 117th birthday

French nun Sister Andrée tested positive in her retirement home in Toulon but had no symptoms

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

Kim Willsher in Paris

Tue 9 Feb 2021 13.18 EST First published on Tue 9 Feb 2021 12.06 EST

Sister Andrée will celebrate her birthday on Thursday. Photograph: Gérard Julien/AFP/Getty Images

A French nun who is Europe’s oldest person has recovered from Covid-19 after it swept through a nursing home in the south of France, and will

celebrate her 117th birthday this week.

Sister Andrée, born Lucile Randon in 1904, tested positive for the coronavirus last month at the Sainte-Catherine Labouré home near Toulon where 81 of the 88 residents contracted the virus – 10 of whom died.

The nun, who will celebrate her 117th birthday on Thursday, was reported to have suffered no Covid-19 symptoms but remained confined to her room, unable to mix with other residents or attend mass. Nursing home staff told reporters her only complaint had been the "solitude".

She told Var-Matin newspaper: "I didn't even realise I had it."

David Tavella, a spokesperson for the nursing home, told the newspaper that the nun had shown no fear of the virus.

"She didn't ask me about her health but about her routine. She wanted to know for example if the meal and bed times were going to change. She showed no fear of the illness, in fact she was more worried about the other residents," Tavella said.

Asked if she was scared to have Covid, the nun told France's BFM television: "No, I wasn't scared because I wasn't scared to die … I'm happy to be with you, but I would wish to be somewhere else – join my big brother and my grandfather and my grandmother."

Cases

Tavella said Andrée was looking forward to celebrating her birthday on Thursday – with a smaller group of residents than usual because of the coronavirus infection risk. "She has been very lucky," he added.

Andrée, who is blind and in a wheelchair, worked as a governor and tutor before entering a convent in 1944, aged 40. She has been in nursing homes since 1979 and in the Toulon home since 2009.

The nun, who was born on 11 February 1904, is the world's second-oldest living person, according to the Gerontology Research Group (GRG) world supercentenarian rankings list. The oldest person is Japan's Kane Tanaka,

who turned 118 on 2 January. All 20 of the oldest people in the GRG list are all female.

Last year, Andrée said she had no idea how she had lived so long. “I’ve no idea what the secret is. Only God can answer that question,” she told French radio. “I’ve had plenty of unhappiness in life and during the 1914-1918 war when I was a child, I suffered like everyone else.”

---

Coronavirus

# Elton John and Michael Caine star in video to promote Covid vaccination

The NHS England video aims to encourage all people in high priority groups to book an appointment

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

Denis Campbell Health policy editor

Tue 9 Feb 2021 19.01 EST Last modified on Tue 9 Feb 2021 23.37 EST

The NHS is deploying a new tactic in the Covid vaccination drive – a lighthearted video by Sir Elton John and Sir Michael Caine to help persuade people to get the jab.

The singer and actor have teamed up in an attempt to reassure the public that the vaccines are safe and effective, and the best way to tackle what John calls “this wretched disease”.

In the 90-second film John pretends to audition for a part in an advertisement to promote vaccination, and acts out having a jab before starting to sing his 1983 hit I’m Still Standing. After several takes the director says: “Thanks, Elton, we will let you know.”

The singer, who has sold around 300m records, replies: “Well at this short notice you won’t find anyone bigger.”

Sir Michael Caine says in the video that the vaccination ‘didn’t hurt’. Photograph: NHS England/PA

The video then cuts to double Oscar winner Caine having the vaccine, pointing out that it “didn’t hurt” and then adding: “Not many people know that”: a reference to the words which many people – wrongly, he insists – believe to be his catchphrase.

“I wanted to take part in this film to help show people the benefits of getting vaccinated and how it helps protect ourselves and the people we love,” John said. “The more people in society who get vaccinated, the more chance there is of eradicating the national Covid pandemic. It’s really important to know that the vaccines have all been through and met the necessary safety and quality standards.”

Both John, who is 73, and Caine, who is 87, have had the vaccine. While a large majority of those aged 70 or over have been inoculated, NHS bosses and ministers are keen to encourage the 750,000 people in that age group who have still not had the vaccine to book an appointment.

The duo are the latest celebrities to help the NHS encourage the public to have one of the two vaccines that are being used in the UK. Naturalist Sir David Attenborough, chefs Prue Leith and Mary Berry, football manager

Harry Redknapp, singer Sir Tom Jones and actor Dame Judi Dench are among the well-known faces who have also had theirs.

Star of stage and screen Sir Ian McKellen said he was “euphoric” to receive his first dose in December. He tweeted afterwards: “I would have no hesitation in recommending it to anyone.”

Sir Simon Stevens, the chief executive of NHS England, said: “Well over nine out of 10 people aged 75 or over have already taken up the offer of their NHS Covid vaccination, and now we want to encourage everyone in the high priority groups to do so.”

The NHS is on course to have vaccinated or offered to vaccinate all 14 million people in the four groups deemed the highest priority by the 15 February deadline Boris Johnson has set.

The film will be hosted on Twitter and on NHS England’s website from today.

---

Parents and parenting

# 'It's the isolation': parents on the impact of lockdown on children

Four parents discuss how the pandemic and lockdowns have affected their children

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

One parent said he'd noticed a "marked difference" in his children when they've spent a lot of time on screens. Photograph: James Veysey/REX/Shutterstock

One parent said he'd noticed a "marked difference" in his children when they've spent a lot of time on screens. Photograph: James Veysey/REX/Shutterstock

*Molly Blackall* and *Tobi Thomas*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 02.00 EST

With many primary school pupils learning at home, and toddlers missing out on critical social interactions with their peers, parents of young children have concerns about the long-term impact of long periods spent at home.

## ‘This is not normal for a baby of her age’

Lucy, 35, a mother of two, in Brighton said she was concerned that her 10-month-old daughter was missing out on crucial milestones of early development, particularly surrounding social interaction and understanding facial expressions.

“My daughter doesn’t like face-masks, they really upset her. She cries if someone wearing a mask tries to talk to her, but when they don’t have a mask on, she would smile at them,” she said. “She’s at the age where that is really important. It’s a natural part of childhood development.”

Having been born during the first lockdown, Lucy is also concerned that her daughter isn’t interacting with other babies.

“She has never sat down next to another baby,” she said. “When I think back to my experience when my son was a baby, it was quite typical of all of my friends with children to get together on almost a daily basis.”

It’s a similar pattern Lucy has noticed among her friends.

“My friend’s child, for example, if we’re on a walk and you say ‘hello’ to them while they’re in their pram, they just burst into tears. Because that child, who was around 10 months old at the time, hasn’t interacted with anyone but her mother. This is just not normal for a baby of her age”.

## ‘Screen time seems to be like a drug’

Jason Kedzuch and his family. Photograph: Jason Kedzuch/Guardian Community

For Jason Kedzuch's daughter, who is nearly three, a third of her life has been spent in lockdown, and he's concerned about the impact this may have on her social development.

"While my four-year-old son thrives on interactions with other children, my daughter seems to be much more solitary and very physically connected to my partner in particular," said Kedzuch, 40, who lives in London.

"With my son, [who's in reception] my concerns are more about education and progress. It is misguided to assume this cohort of children, millions, are all going to go back to school and pick up where they left off because everyone is going to be in different places. If and when he returns and feels behind, what if he starts to resent learning?"

Kedzuch's son has also struggled with his emotions during lockdown, particularly in the latest period of stay-home orders.

"He's become emotionally unstable and has consistent mood swings. From infancy, he has always needed to be outside all of the time, but now he would rather sit on the couch," said Kedzuch."When we do walk-bys outside

to say hi, it's a double-edged sword because he wants to touch, and play, and hug his friends."

Kedzuch said that he sees a "marked difference" in his children when they've spent a lot of time on screens. "He's already on screens for school quite a bit, and video chatting with friends just increases the screen time.

"They become incredibly high energy and confrontational. Screen time seems to be like a drug. You open the door and they want more and more."

## 'My seven-year-old daughter has been far more emotional'

Rachel Hunt with her two children, 7 and 3, and her husband. Photograph: Rachel Hunt/Guardian Community

Increased levels of screen time also concerns 39-year-old Rachel Hunt, who is mother to a daughter aged seven and son aged three.

"Homeschooling is tough. Our primary school don't do face-to-face live lessons, so she's just sat on her laptop all day trying to find information," she said.

My husband helps with our three-year-old during the day and works nights, and I work full-time," she said. "I'd love nothing more than to sit with her all day, and help and engage, but we just haven't got the time."

While her three-year-old child is enjoying having his family around the house, Hunt said her seven-year-old is missing her friends and is "desperate to get back to school", having had just one term of in-person classes since March.

"My daughter has become far more emotional. She cries at the smallest things. She used to be a good sleeper, but is now having issues getting to sleep, and staying asleep, often getting up several times a night," said Hunt, who lives in Sussex. "I think it's the isolation."

Hunt is confident that her daughter will catch up with education, but has concerns about the impact on her mental wellbeing, and the adjustment back to normal life.

"I am concerned that both of my children have missed a year of their lives now, a year of social development, family contact, day trips, just life in general. It worries me that the adjustment back to 'normal', whenever that may be, will cause its own set of problems," she said.

## 'He finds it very difficult with school being at home'

Sarah Burgess with her son, 10, and daughter, 8. Photograph: Sarah Burgess/Guardian Community

For some neuro-diverse children, a lack of structure and support networks can exacerbate these problems. Sarah Burgess' 10-year-old son was diagnosed with autism last spring, and unlike her eight-year-old daughter, has found the lack of distinction between school and home particularly hard.

"When my son was at school his day was much more structured and he had more of a routine. But school being at home just seems wrong to him, as there isn't a boundary between home and school like there used to be," said Burgess, 42, in Stafford.

She added: "He finds it very difficult with school being at home, not having clear instructions as he doesn't have any live lessons as they're are all pre-recorded. He's quite studious and gets on with his work, but he finds the uncertainty of not knowing how long homeschooling will go on for quite difficult."

---

Care workers

# Care homes failed by lack of PPE during UK Covid first wave, say MPs

Report says government mishandling put lives at risk and exposes potential conflict of interests

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

The report says that decision to prioritise hospitals for PPE meant care home workers and residents were not properly protected. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

The report says that decision to prioritise hospitals for PPE meant care home workers and residents were not properly protected. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

*Kevin Rawlinson*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 19.01 EST

Care homes were left exposed and vulnerable by a lack of personal protective equipment early in the pandemic, while the government's handling of the procurement left ministers open to accusations of conflicts of interest, MPs have found.

A damning report published on Wednesday by the Commons public accounts committee (PAC) concludes that the Department of Health and Social Care's decision to prioritise hospitals for PPE meant care home workers and residents were not properly protected.

"Frontline workers were left without adequate supplies, risking their own and their families' lives to provide treatment and care," said the committee's chair, Meg Hillier. "We're at a dangerous new phase of the pandemic, in our third national lockdown with no defined end in sight. The government needs to acknowledge the errors and be better prepared."

Ministers have been accused of running a "chumocracy" after it emerged that contracts worth £1.5bn have been awarded to firms with links to the Conservative party during the pandemic.

Many contracts were awarded without proper tender processes and departments were criticised for not publishing many of the details in the usual manner.

The committee said the episode had left the government "open to accusations of poor value for money, conflicts of interest and preferential treatment of some suppliers", while a lack of transparency "undermines public trust in government procurement and the use of taxpayers' money".

The committee found also that, while the government had a plan and a stockpile of PPE in place, that proved insufficient to deal with the pandemic.

The committee said care homes only received a fraction of the PPE needed compared with the health service – and were only taken seriously after their high mortality rates became apparent.

Overall, the committee said frontline staff in both health and social care experienced shortages of PPE, with some forced to reuse single-use items as

stocks ran “perilously low”.

The findings recall complaints made by the Labour MP Nadia Whittome, who spoke out about PPE shortages after working in a temporary role as a carer during the pandemic.

Surveys by staff organisations found at least 30% of care workers, doctors and nurses reported having insufficient PPE – even in high-risk settings.

“Many workers at the frontline in health and social care were put in the appalling situation of having to care for people with Covid-19 or suspected Covid-19 without sufficient PPE to protect themselves from infection,” it said.

The committee’s findings follow on from two highly critical reports published last November by the National Audit Office (NAO).

Concern over shortages of PPE was a marked feature of the early phase of the pandemic as countries around the world scrambled for scarce supplies as the disease erupted across the globe.

The committee said the situation was particularly acute in the social care sector, which did not receive “anywhere near enough” to meet its needs.

The committee criticisms over the lack of transparency around the procurement process echoed similar made by the NAO. In particular, the MPs pointed to concerns over the so-called “high priority lane”, where orders were placed with companies on the basis of recommendations from MPs or other prominent figures rather than those with expertise in the field.

“Leads that were considered more credible were those from government officials, ministers’ offices, MPs and members of the House of Lords, but it is not clear why this assumption was made,” it said.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “We have been working tirelessly to procure, produce and deliver PPE to over 58,000 settings, protecting our health and social care staff on the frontline of this pandemic.

“As the public accounts committee recognises, the government faced significant challenges in having to rapidly procure PPE at pace in a competitive international market. Thanks to the combined effort of government, NHS, armed forces, civil servants and industry we have delivered over 8.1bn items of PPE at record speed.”

---

Coronavirus

# A series of knocks: Oxford/AstraZeneca's bumpy road to Covid vaccine confidence

From doubts about safety in older people to questions about variants, scientists have faced a battle to convince the public and regulators

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

Sarah Boseley Health editor

Tue 9 Feb 2021 09.47 EST Last modified on Tue 9 Feb 2021 15.53 EST

A nurse prepares an Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid vaccine dose at a Stevenage centre. Oxford's scientists were 'incredibly quick off the mark' in beginning work on the vaccine. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

The Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine against Covid has barely been out of the news from the moment the race to protect the world's population from the novel coronavirus began. But not always in a good way.

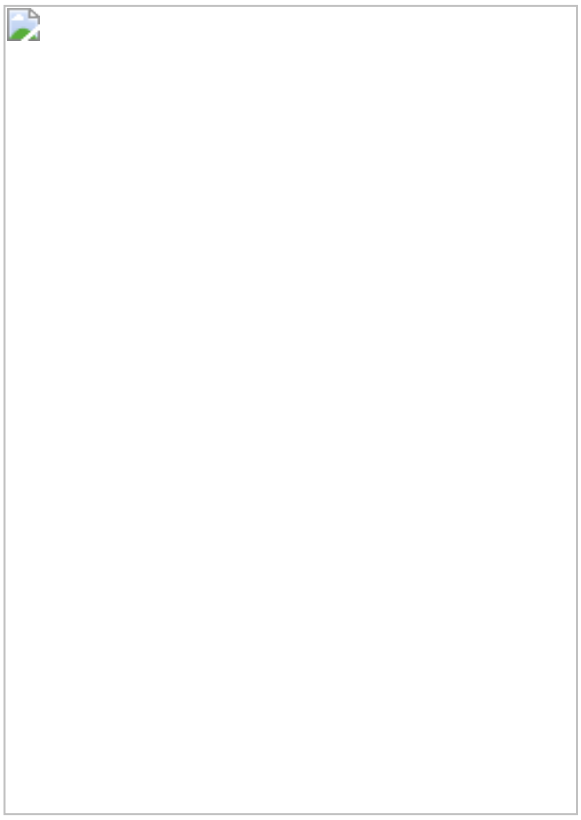
Talented scientists at the Jenner Institute at Oxford University, led by Prof Sarah Gilbert, were incredibly quick off the mark in developing a potential vaccine, as soon as the virus in Wuhan had been sequenced and made globally available by Chinese scientists on 11 January. They were using an experimental but exciting approach they had tried in Mers (Middle East respiratory syndrome), caused by a similar coronavirus.

University academics cannot run the huge trials needed, in tens of thousands of people in different countries around the world, on their own. They went into partnership in April with AstraZeneca, a large multinational pharma company that – unlike some – was willing to develop and sell the vaccine for no profit for the duration of the pandemic. Oxford made that a precondition, intent on producing a vaccine that could save lives in poor and rich countries alike.

Quick guide

**Vaccines: how effective is each one and how many has the UK ordered?**

Show Hide



**Pfizer/BioNTech**

**Country** US/Germany

**Efficacy** 95% a week after the second shot. Pfizer says it is only 52% after the first dose but the UK's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) says this may rise to 90% after 21 days.

The UK has ordered 40m doses and is rolling them out now

**Doses** Clinical trials involved two doses 21 days apart. The UK is stretching this to 12 weeks.

**Oxford/AstraZeneca**

**Country** UK

**Efficacy** 70.4% 14 days after receiving the second dose. May have up to 90% efficacy when given as a half dose followed by a full dose. No severe disease or hospitalisations in anyone who received the vaccine. There have been concerns it is less effective against the South African variant of the coronavirus.

The UK has ordered 100m doses and has begun distribution

**Doses** Two, four to 12 weeks apart

**Moderna**

**Country** US

**Efficacy** Phase 3 trial results suggest an rating of 94.1%.

The UK has ordered 17m doses, to be delivered in March or April

**Doses** Two, 28 days apart

**Novavax**

**Country** US

**Efficacy** Phase 3 trials suggest 89.3%.

60m doses ordered by the UK, with distribution expected principally in the second half of the year

**Doses** Two

**Janssen (part of Johnson & Johnson)**

**Country** US

**Efficacy** 72% in preventing mild to moderate cases in US trials but 66% efficacy observed in international trials. 85% efficacy against severe illness, and 100% protection against hospitalisation and death.

30m doses ordered by the UK

**Doses**: One, making it unique among Covid vaccines with phase 3 results so far

Photograph: Stéphane Mahé/X02520



The marriage of academic scientists and big pharma is not always an easy one. University researchers are often the inventors of vaccines and drugs against diseases, but usually the pharmaceutical company that buys up the rights takes almost complete control of the subsequent development. Time was pressing, however, and when AstraZeneca signed up in April, Oxford had already started trials.

The first hitch, which nobody could have foreseen, came in mid-September, when AstraZeneca paused its global trials because a volunteer had become ill. Later it emerged that there had been three cases of transverse myelitis, an inflammation of the spinal cord, of which only one could possibly have been linked to the vaccine. But while trials quickly restarted in the UK, they were paused for seven weeks in the US while regulators asked for more

information. US media said AstraZeneca had not told the regulators promptly enough about the cases, a claim the company denied.

The second hitch was in November, when the interim results of the phase 3 trials were announced. Efficacy was around 70%, so lower than Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna, which both scored 95%, but that was not the issue that exercised people – it was the strange finding that efficacy rose to 90% in people given a half dose followed by a whole dose of vaccine.

It was, said Sir Mene Pangalos of AstraZeneca, "serendipity". In an early trial run by Oxford researchers in the UK, supplies of the prototype vaccine had been delivered that were not the expected strength and some volunteers ended up with a half dose. It was squared with the UK regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority, which allowed both dosing regimes to continue.

But when the MHRA approved the vaccine in late December, it turned out that it was not the dosing regime that improved efficacy. It was the increased gap between the vaccines, said the regulator. Some people had received their second dose up to 12 weeks after the first, instead of four. A longer gap led to a better immune response. That laid the groundwork for the government decision to delay second doses for everyone in the UK, using any vaccine. But for many commentators, it looked messy.

The big row, however, was about the data in older people, who are most at risk from Covid, and it is not yet resolved. The Oxford researchers running the earliest trials had not wanted to recruit people over the age of 65, at higher risk from Covid, until they were certain the vaccine worked well and was safe for younger people. That meant when it came to filing for approval with regulators, there was little data on the older age group.

Neither the European Medicines Agency nor the Food and Drug Administration in the US was happy. The FDA is waiting for data from a 30,000-volunteer trial in the US before deciding whether to approve the vaccine. The German government's scientific advisers were highly critical. The EMA gave the vaccine emergency approval, but a number of countries, including France and Germany, have decided not to give it to older people.

The latest blow to the vaccine's public image has been the small trial in just over 2,000 people under age 40 in South Africa. It found "minimal protection" – later said to be 10% – against mild to moderate disease caused by the variant. South Africa announced it was pausing its rollout of the vaccine and will give it to 100,000 people step by step, watching to see if anyone ends up in hospital.

No one was severely ill, hospitalised or died, but the worry is that these were younger people, so less likely to get seriously ill. Oxford/AstraZeneca point to all the trial data showing that nobody has been seriously ill after getting their vaccine (or any of the others) and experts believe the protection is still there against the variant. Once more, however, confidence in the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is likely to take a knock, whether or not it is justified.

---

# 2021.02.10 - Spotlight

- ‘I was never meek’ Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Miss World, Modi and misogyny
- It's a Sin There is such a raw truth to it
- Belarus Lukashenko plans 'people's assembly' but reform unlikely
- Sweden Embassy in Minsk harbours two Belarusians for five months
- #QueertheBallet It's more than a man lifting a woman in a tutu
- Encryption machines and radio transmitters Relics of the cold war at auction
- Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 2 review Four months with the folding tablet-phone
- Deep dive Underwater photographer of the year 2021 – the winners
- Charming time loop romcom The Map of Tiny Perfect Things review

# ‘I was never meek’: Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Miss World, Modi and misogyny

Drama

# It's a Sin: "There is such a raw truth to it"

‘It captures the ropey pubs with dirty dancefloors, snogging boys’ … Omari Douglas (right) as Roscoe. Photograph: Ben Blackall/Channel 4

‘It captures the ropey pubs with dirty dancefloors, snogging boys’ … Omari Douglas (right) as Roscoe. Photograph: Ben Blackall/Channel 4

How well does the Russell T Davies drama capture the 1980s Aids crisis? Influential queer figures who lived through it – including Owen Jones, Rev Richard Coles, Lisa Power and Marc Thompson – give their verdicts

*Alim Kheraj*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 02.00 EST

A joyful yet devastating series centred on a group of friends whose lives are changed irrevocably by the HIV/Aids epidemic, It’s a Sin is not only the most talked-about TV show of 2021 so far, but also Channel 4’s most

watched drama series in its history. Russell T Davies's 80s-set series has started conversations around Britain about the realities, both political and personal, of living through the HIV/Aids crisis, led to an increase in people getting tested for HIV, and helped raise awareness about preventive medication (PrEP) and the effective treatment now available for people living with the condition.

To discuss these topics, we convened a roundtable discussion with influential queer figures who lived through the crisis, and those who have grown up in its wake. Taking part in the conversation are Lisa Power, a co-founder of LGBT charity Stonewall who also volunteered for Switchboard during the Aids crisis; the Rev Richard Coles, the vicar of Finedon in Northamptonshire and former member of the pop group the Communards; Marc Thompson, an HIV activist, the director of the Love Tank CIC and the co-founder of PrEPster; Guardian columnist and author Owen Jones; Omari Douglas, who plays the character Roscoe in It's a Sin; and Jason Okundaye, a writer and the co-founder of Black & Gay, back in the day, a digital archive honouring and remembering black queer life in Britain.

## For those of you who lived through the period, what memories did watching the show bring back?

**Richard Coles:** My first engagement with Aids was through the gay press – there were rumours of this "gay cancer" that was happening in America. It seemed very distant and hypothetical. Then the first person close to me who died was the activist Mark Ashton, who was a very significant person on the gay scene. Looking at It's a Sin, I was struck by how it evokes that period: it did feel like I was almost watching home movies, except with much higher production values.


**Lisa Power:** I was there when the first calls were coming in on Switchboard. That was 1981. I remember us moving through the phases: what is this thing that is killing gay men? What is it caused by? And then, how do we do something about it, and what do we do that's appropriate? Mark Ashton was on Switchboard. He wasn't our first death, but that certainly hit hard. We kept learning all the time and things kept changing – the ground was shifting under us.

**Marc Thompson:** I was diagnosed with HIV in 1986 when I was 17, before the characters in It's a Sin even have their tests. That's something that was quite triggering for me. Seeing all the death and the neglect, the responses from families … What Russell T Davies also captured was the accuracy of the gay community at the time, in the early 80s: the ropey pubs with dirty dancefloors, snogging boys.

## And for those of you who didn't, did the show add to your knowledge or understanding of that era?

**Jason Okundaye:** Yes – I think what surprised me was the lack of urgency from some of the characters. I'm 24, and looking at that period I had always thought of it as a dragged-feet response from homophobic governments. But looking at the admitted ignorance of the men who lived through that era – and that's not in a judgmental sense – made me realise what an existential threat this crisis was. Something that is said in the show [by Olly Alexander's character, Ritchie] that really moved me was about it being the perfect virus to confirm people's homophobia. I understand why it would be hard to accept the existence of something that seems to validate those beliefs.

**Owen Jones:** The series humanised what was, for me growing up, a horror story. I was born in 1984, so wrapped up in the homophobia of the playground at the time was the stigma of HIV/Aids. Being gay was conflated with the inevitability of getting HIV and dying of Aids. That was a time when section 28 was in place and there were anti-gay laws; we didn't have education about it as it was illegal to talk about LGBTQ issues in the classroom. It's a Sin injected some much-needed humanity into the crisis.

**Omari Douglas:** As an actor, I knew from the get-go that there was going to be a lot to immerse myself in. All of my engagement with the epidemic and everything I had seen had been from an American perspective. There were texts like Simon Garfield's The End of Innocence, which charts how it unfolded and how people tried to deal with it. I'm 26, and looking back I was really struck with how poorly it was dealt with and the prudishness that prevented things from becoming any better, like the way in which common sense public health messages were vetted because of censorship. It was totally astounding to me.

**MT:** Simon Garfield's book has been referenced a few times as a text which was used for research, but it's also slightly problematic. I was doing some research for a podcast and I looked at the index and searched for the word 'black'. There was one paragraph about black communities and it talked about a black HIV organisation mismanaging funds. That's the only conversation in the entire book. And black gay men were disproportionately, and continue to be disproportionately, affected by HIV.

**OD:** That's really interesting to hear Marc. In doing my research it became glaringly obvious to me that I had to dig to find any documentation of black gay life in the 80s. It opened my eyes to how we actually document black gay history. There isn't enough of it. We need more ways to immortalise the black gay experience.

## Marc, you've also spoken before about how black gay men and black African women worked together during the crisis.

**MT:** Communities across the board came together. There was this disconnect between black African communities and gay communities. Occasionally there was a rub-up and there was homophobia, racism and misogyny. But what these two groups eventually found was that HIV was a common enemy. Some of the white gay men that we worked with at the time have certainly learned a lot and are now some of the greatest champions around race issues and gender issues as well.

**LP:** There was this huge divide in the early days of the response between the gay community, which was largely assumed, completely wrongly, to be white, and the African community, which was equally inappropriately assumed to be heterosexual. There was an absolute assumption that all the black communities were equally affected, when, in fact, in the early days, it was a problem among quite specific African groups who had migrated to the UK. You also had the problem that if someone black was diagnosed with HIV, they weren't asked about whether they might be gay or have sex with men.

'I wanted to hear more from stroppy dykes' … Jill (right) with Ritchie. Photograph: Ben Blackall/Channel 4

## Was there anything you were surprised to see was included in the show?

**OJ:** I was glad that the sheer violence of the homophobia in the 80s was showcased. There's that reference by a police officer who quotes the former chief constable of Greater Manchester Police, James Anderton. He said in the mid-80s that Aids victims were swirling around in a cesspool of their own making. At the same time, the Sun printed that readers should forget the idea that ordinary heterosexual people can contract Aids and that anything

else is just homosexual propaganda. Admittedly it had to retract that and was forced to apologise by the Press Council because it was inaccurate. But it was violent, establishment-sanctioned homophobia.

**RC:** You mention the press, Owen. I can remember in 1987, Jimmy Somerville, myself and Andy Bell from Erasure were repeatedly rung up by the Sun, the Mirror and the News of the World. I remember Jimmy once got a call telling him they were going to run a story about him being HIV positive unless he could produce a negative test. That was routine.

## How do you think the show handled the political aspect of the Aids crisis?

**JO:** I think perhaps the show could have done more to acknowledge the way that the establishment response came to dominate and be seen as a singular representation of the fight of the Aids crisis. It could have been an opportunity to show the conversations that were happening that people don't know about. Some people think that MPs or rich people suddenly became really magnanimous and clued up, but where was that information coming from?

**LP:** The story with Roscoe [who sleeps with a Conservative MP] has a basis in reality. I certainly know of someone who found that he was offering services to a junior government minister and then proceeded to lecture him about safer sex and the importance of the HIV voluntary sector. The next thing I knew, I was getting a phone call from someone in the Department of Health saying: 'Why is this minister so interested in HIV all of a sudden?' The gay mafia operated fully in the 80s.

**RC:** The other thing to remember is that the activist effort concentrated itself on where it could go, and a lot of that was popular culture. Bands and musicians like Elton John played an important part. But the most weaponised person in that activist movement was the Princess of Wales. It made a huge impact when Diana visited an HIV/Aids unit and was seen touching, and being close to, people with the virus. That was enormously significant in altering perceptions.

Our panel (clockwise from top-left) … Marc Thompson, Lisa Power, Jason Okundaye, Omari Douglas, Owen Jones and Richard Coles. Photograph: The Guardian

## The relationship between mothers and their children is an important aspect of the show. How did the familial relationships that make you feel?

**MT:** I'll be straight: the first 10 minutes of Roscoe's story nearly had me throwing my tea at the telly. While I get that narrative of a black man being in a highly religious family, being rejected and being kicked out – and it does happen – it also felt like it was a trope. So I was glad to see that there was [a sense of resolution] to that storyline. I say this time and time again, but I had an incredibly supportive family and they are Jamaican. I may be an outlier, but I think these counter narratives must be told.

**OD:** Television is a powerful medium and what we see can become ingrained as our idea of what an experience is within a particular culture. But I think the circularity in that storyline is what makes it so powerful. We can tend to go down one path, but there is reconciliation and redemption for Roscoe.

## How do you think things have changed when it comes to discussions about HIV and treatment?

**MT:** We are light years from where It's a Sin ends. We have treatment, it's successful and nearly everyone who is diagnosed will lead a good life. I think there are bigger conversations happening, certainly in gay male communities, around HIV. We've seen that with U=U [Undetectable equals Untransmittable], which means that a person who is taking effective treatment can't pass the virus on. But it's not everywhere. The Terrence Higgins Trust did a survey recently that still showed significant levels of stigma for those living with HIV. The thing is, when we talk about stigma, we talk about it like it's this big scary monster, which it is, but we also need to recognise the internalised stigma – not just the stigma that we as people who are living with HIV carry, which is 30 years of PTSD – which sits within queer communities. We are also still seeing low rates of testing, and we see late diagnosis in black African communities, in heterosexual communities and with eastern European migrants.

**LP:** It's even worse outside major cities. I work in Wales and a lot of people here don't know that HIV isn't transmissible if you're on effective treatment. And although we were really quick to get PrEP [medication which eliminates the possibility of contracting the disease] in Wales, its usage outside the gay community is very rare. People don't ask for it and doctors don't think about prescribing it a lot of the time. So there is still a long way to go even in the UK.

**RC:** A couple of years ago I went to see a parishioner of mine in our local general hospital in the east Midlands. When I got there, he was on a ward but in a bed that was curtained off and I was asked to put on a gown and gloves. I asked why, and a nursing auxiliary said in front of the whole ward, "He's HIV positive." I couldn't believe it. This was 2018! I complained and took it to the top, but I was astonished that in 2018 I could, all of a sudden, be dragged back to 1985.

**JO:** I think something that also struck me about the show is something that we still don't have a good grip on now: the conversation around pleasure.

Pleasure is something that is valuable, and something that we have a right and entitlement to. One of my favourite theorists, Walt Odets, says that Aids is now called the exchange of fluids, which was once an important part of intimacy for gay men. Early episodes of the series shows Ritchie's pursuit of pleasure was important. It showed that people were allowed to pursue pleasure, but it was never reconfirmed at the end. The pursuit of pleasure was not the problem. I think sometimes we're at a risk of conflating what the actual virus is. The virus is HIV. Sex is not the virus.

'I had to dig to find any documentation of black gay life in the 80s' … Omari Douglas, who plays Roscoe. Photograph: Channel 4

## What do you make of some of the criticism the show has got for its depiction of Lydia West as Jill, and the seeming lack of lesbian characters?

**LP:** It infuriates me that a lot of coverage of the show has concentrated as Jill as the avatar of good womanhood and being this lovely, soft, supportive person. I want to hear more about the stroppy lesbian solicitor, who most people have not even managed to read as a lesbian. I want to hear it for the women, like Femi Otitoju and I who were on Switchboard, who set up the first legal response to HIV. All of the women who were getting on with

doing things, as well as being lovely and supportive. Because actually, there were a lot of stroppy dykes involved in the early days.

**MT:** We worked with so many stroppy lesbians and cis women. I was speaking to Robin Gorna, a treatment activist who wrote one of the first books on women and Aids, Vamps, Virgins and Victims: How Can Women Fight Aids?, and it was fascinating to speak to her and understand that it was a woman who came along and told the government that they needed to target specific groups with their messaging about HIV. This is when we start to get sexy and talk about the risks in black African communities and in gay communities. So hats off to those sisters who came along.

**OD:** All the things that people feel like they haven't seen just demonstrate how much there is still to be told. Russell has spoken a lot about how he imagined this show as being long-running. There are just so many stories that we can tell. This show was shelved for such a long time [Davies has said it was turned down by both the BBC and ITV] but I think because of the engagement that we've seen it's clear that these stories are worthy of being told, and need to be.

## What do you think that period can teach us about the ways in which LGBT people are treated today?

**LP:** There's a direct parallel between the tropes being used now of trans people and the ones that were used of gay people. One of the most powerful things I've seen is a cartoon of the things that people said in the 80s, and you can just swap the words gay and trans. It's exactly the same moral panic. I think you need to get it out in the open and show exactly what it is. I find it horrifying that people of my generation, people who I worked with for liberation in the 80s and 90s, are now engaging in the kind of transphobia that they were horrified about when it was homophobia. It's not acceptable.

Russell T Davies: 'I looked away for years. Finally, I have put Aids at the centre of a drama'
Read more

## What do you think the show means to people who lived through that period?

**LP:** It's a bit dangerous to binge it if you've got personal feelings from that time. But it's absolutely brilliant and everyone should try, when they feel up to it, to watch it.

**MT:** I've spoken to a few people who just can't watch it yet. They won't watch it yet. It is too traumatising. We need to ensure that there is care and support for those of us who lived through it, those of us affected and the young people who carry the stigma on their backs. It's a celebration and it's joyful, but it's triggering.

**OD:** These are fictionalised characters and yet there's such a raw truth in it. We're shining a spotlight on stories that have been pushed aside for so long. That's the power of storytelling. It's an overwhelming thing to take in. Hopefully we've honoured those people in that sense.

**OJ:** One thing I really got from it was the gratitude that we owe to those of you who struggled and fought through a really grim episode in the history of LGBTQ communities. We stand on the shoulders of giants, and three of you are here today. Life would be much harder for all of us if it wasn't for the traumas and the struggles you went through. That gratitude is something that we can never repay. I'm glad that a show like this can emphasise that.

• It's a Sin is available as a box set on All 4, and airs on Fridays at 9pm on Channel 4. The Terrence Higgins Trust's Can't Pass It On campaign aims to end stigma and transmissions of HIV

---

Belarus

# Lukashenko plans 'people's assembly' but Belarus reform unlikely

President who won rigged election last August has backing of Putin and has resumed attacks on dissent

Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, who last autumn promised a transition to a parliamentary system of government. Photograph: Tut.by/AFP/Getty

Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, who last autumn promised a transition to a parliamentary system of government. Photograph: Tut.by/AFP/Getty

*Shaun Walker* *Central and eastern Europe correspondent*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 00.00 EST

Nearly six months after huge street protests over a rigged presidential election were met with a ruthless, violent crackdown by his riot police, the

Belarusian autocrat Alexander Lukashenko is still clinging on to power, and appears more determined than ever to prevail in his standoff with much of the country's population.

A set-piece gathering this week, at which Lukashenko had initially promised to make genuine concessions and maybe even negotiate a route out of power, is now expected to be a loyal assembly that will rubber-stamp the president's plan to stay on at the helm. The so-called All Belarusian People's Assembly, planned for Thursday, is unlikely to result in any real political change, say observers.

"Lukashenko has apparently decided that he has already won and can now backtrack on some of his promises," said the Minsk-based political analyst Artyom Shraibman. "For now, it looks more like a routine gathering of loyalists. But we cannot exclude the possibility that Russia will insist on something more."

At the height of protests last August, Lukashenko's days appeared numbered, as hundreds of thousands of protesters across the country demanded new elections, and backed the idea of a transitional government led by Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the wife of a jailed presidential hopeful who had stood against Lukashenko in the vote.

Lukashenko saw off the immediate threat with violence, arrests and the harassment of protest organisers, and won grudging backing from the Kremlin, which appeared to believe he was a better option than acquiescing to the power of the street.

00:52

Belarus police fire stun grenades at peaceful protesters – video

After a meeting with the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, Lukashenko said he would proceed with constitutional reform to ensure a smooth transition to a parliamentary system of government, but after some months of semi-conciliatory rhetoric, he has reverted to form in recent weeks, threatening a new wave of violence.

“Many have already understood that we will act firmly to defend the country. And the rest will come to understand … I will defend the country whatever it costs me, whether it’s on a tank or with a machine gun in my hands,” he said at a government meeting last week. A recording was also leaked in which a deputy interior minister speaks about building a prison camp for protesters.

The riot police and KGB, which have stayed loyal to Lukashenko, have embarked on a scorched earth policy against all involved in organising protests. Hundreds of people remain in jail while thousands have left the country, with many politically active Belarusians now based in Warsaw or Vilnius. The vast weekly rallies of autumn have become a thing of the past, with only smaller, local outbreaks of protest.

“The dynamic has changed since September and October, but we still see the process of the system rotting. We are trying to stimulate this process and to build channels to increase the number of defections,” said Franak Viačorka, an adviser to Tikhanovskaya.

But the inner circle round Lukashenko has proved to be loyal, and willing to crack down against both protesters and journalists covering the grim events. Dozens of Belarusian journalists have been targeted by authorities while foreign journalists have mainly been denied accreditation.

Tut.by, the biggest independent Belarusian news portal, has been stripped of its legal status as a media outlet, while one of its journalists, Katerina Borisevich, has been in prison since November. She faces jail time for the alleged crime of leaking medical data, after she disclosed that a protester who was beaten to death by regime-linked thugs was not, as the official version claimed, drunk at the time.

“It sounds like a theatre of the absurd, but it is happening to us in reality,” said Maryna Zolatava, editor-in-chief of Tut.by.

In the months since she left Belarus, Tikhanovskaya has met numerous western politicians and been treated as the country’s legitimate leader. She declared 7 February a “day of international solidarity” with Belarus, but as time goes on she has struggled to retain influence inside the country. Most of

the leaders of the “coordination council” she set up to oversee a transition of power have either been jailed or forced to flee.

While Tikhanovskaya has the backing of most of the EU, Moscow does not yet seem ready to ditch its troublesome ally Lukashenko. The Kremlin is wary of revolutionary change, especially now it faces its own protest wave after the return to Russia of Alexei Navalny, and has accused the west of meddling in Belarusian affairs by embracing Tikhanovskaya.

“We are trying to show that the coordination council is still a better option for Russia, and are fighting the fears of Moscow. We are trying to explain the situation is not about geopolitics but, unfortunately, month after month it’s becoming more about geopolitics,” said Viačorka.

---

Belarus

# Swedish embassy in Minsk harbours two Belarusians for five months

Father and son sought refuge after protests but are becoming a diplomatic issue for Sweden


The Swedish embassy in Minsk is not Swedish territory, Sweden's foreign minister said. Photograph: Vasily Fedosenko/Reuters/Alamy

The Swedish embassy in Minsk is not Swedish territory, Sweden's foreign minister said. Photograph: Vasily Fedosenko/Reuters/Alamy

*AFP in Stockholm*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 18.16 EST

Two Belarusians who sought refuge in the Swedish embassy in Minsk in September are still there five months later, Sweden's foreign ministry has announced, in a case turning into a diplomatic headache.

A father and son, Vitaly and Vladislav Kuznechiki, tried to enter the Swedish embassy in the capital of Belarus on 11 September to seek asylum in the midst of widespread protests disputing the election of President Alexander Lukashenko.

Finding the front door closed, the pair managed to jump a fence to the diplomatic compound's car park.

"The two individuals are still on the premises of the embassy," a spokesperson for the Swedish foreign ministry told AFP.

"We are acting as the situation requires, including with regard to safety and security. We have a dialogue with the individuals," the spokesperson said, declining to comment further on what measures had been taken.

According to Belarusian media reports, both men are being investigated after a clash between demonstrators and police during a protest in the north-eastern city of Vitebsk in early September. They could face up to six years in prison on charges of violence against police officers.

Swedish diplomats are keeping a low profile "for humanitarian reasons", a source close to the case told AFP. "They don't want to provoke the Belarusian authorities or force them to react, they don't want to draw attention. This problem is very unexpected for Sweden, there have been very few similar examples in history."

Sweden's foreign minister, Ann Linde, said in November the father and son had entered the embassy "unlawfully", and noted that the Minsk embassy was not Swedish territory. Nevertheless, the two man have stayed there and are sharing a room.

Video shows taxi driver helping protester escape police in Belarus
Read more

"They [Swedish diplomats] don't want to hand them over to the Belarusian police, of course. But at the same time, they don't want to create a situation where a lot of other people could come to the embassy and ask for asylum,"

said Martin Uggla, chair of Östgruppen, a Swedish human rights organisation.

He said the embassy could try to get guarantees from Belarusian authorities that the pair would not be arrested, or the men could be accompanied to the Lithuanian or Polish borders.

“I think the Swedish embassy will never chase them away without these types of security guarantees, because this could lead to severe criticism here in Sweden,” Uggla said.

---

Ballet

# The #QueertheBallet movement: 'it's more than a man lifting a woman in a tutu'

Adriana Pierce is empowering queer female and non-binary performers whose relationships have been excluded from classical dance

‘I want to show people an authentic, complex relationship between two women through ballet’ ... Adriana Pierce. Photograph: Alejandro Gonzalvez

‘I want to show people an authentic, complex relationship between two women through ballet’ ... Adriana Pierce. Photograph: Alejandro Gonzalvez

*Emily Dixon*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 01.00 EST

Shortly after Adriana Pierce joined Miami City Ballet, someone watched her train and made an assessment: “Is Adriana a lesbian? Because she looks like

one." The comment propelled Pierce into exacting self-scrutiny: "I was like, does my dancing look gay? Do I look different? I *am* different – is that OK?"

Pierce, who left the company after seven seasons to focus on choreography and musical theatre, has rarely felt represented as a queer woman in the ballet world but with her new movement, #QueertheBallet, she hopes to inspire change. Her first project is a pas de deux en pointe choreographed on the American Ballet Theatre dancers Remy Young and Sierra Armstrong, which she is developing during a dance residency at the Bridge Street theatre in Catskill, New York. "I want to show people an authentic, complex relationship between two women through ballet," Pierce explains. "I want people to see that ballet can be more than a man lifting a woman in a tutu."

Although queer men are also largely cast in heteronormative partnerships, while facing well-documented homophobic stigma, the crucial difference for Pierce is visibility. "Queer women aren't even on the radar in our spaces. I sometimes do experience overt homophobia, but the worst of it is the micro-aggression. I'm just never considered," she says. "The idea that a woman might deviate from the image we expect as a professional ballet dancer is just not even a thought people have."

Sierra Armstrong performs her contemporary variation during the final of the 43rd Prix de Lausanne in Switzerland, 2015. Photograph: Valentin Flauraud/EPA

Without visible exemplars, many queer women and non-binary people question their own place within the art form. “Growing up, I felt like I was the only one,” says Kiara DeNae Felder, a queer, non-binary dancer with Montreal’s Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. “I felt like, ‘Maybe there’s a reason I don’t see other people like me.’”

In ballet, the gender binary is encoded not only in partnerships but in movement. “Men are trained to jump higher and they’re allowed to show effort a bit more. Women are supposed to look like they just happen to be tossed in the air by a breeze. It’s not coming from your own power or your own strength,” says Katy Pyle, who founded ballet company Ballez in 2011 to create a space for queer, trans, and gender non-conforming dancers. As a young dancer, Pyle, a genderqueer lesbian, was pushed out of ballet and towards contemporary dance: “My movement and my body were considered to be too strong,” they say.

Other queer dancers still feel compelled to prove they can perform ballet’s swan queens and princesses. “People have this preconceived notion that if a female identifies as queer then there’s something less feminine about them,” says Felder. “I feel like I need to prove I can still be a feminine dancer, but also that I have multitudes of ways to express my gender through movement.”

‘My movement and my body were considered to be too strong’ ... Katy Pyle. Photograph: Julie Mack/They Bklyn

With #QueertheBallet, Pierce plans not only to boost the visibility of queer female and non-binary dancers, but also to disrupt ballet’s gendered movement system altogether, tossing out some traditional aspects of the male-female pas de deux while reinventing others. Overhead lifts, she says, won’t play a part in her choreography. “If someone on stage is lifting another person above their head, the point is that not everybody can do that. In my mind, that makes the movement incredibly gendered,” she says. “It makes me feel like one of those partners does not have as much agency.”

Dancing en pointe is also used as a “gender qualifier” in ballet, Pierce acknowledges. “If you have a man and a woman on stage together, and the woman is en pointe, that sets her apart. She is en pointe to be manipulated and turned.” But Pierce hopes to redefine pointe work through her choreography. “I want to use it not as something that sets the women apart but as a skill,” she says. “With two women dancing together it can be less a novelty and more of an equaliser. They’re in the same space on the same level.”

Remy Young attends the 2018 American Ballet Theatre Spring Gala. Photograph: Roy Rochlin/Getty Images

Working with American Ballet Theatre's Young and Armstrong, Pierce aims to "develop specific partnering vocabulary for two women en pointe," she says. "I want to see what two bodies en pointe who probably wouldn't be able to just deadlift the other one can do." Both dancers were drawn to Pierce's project by the opportunity for experimentation. "There's going to be a physical difference in terms of strength and what is required of each of us," Young says. "I'm going to be required to use my body in a different way."

The residency is a rare opportunity for them to perform, as theatres remain shut amid the Covid-19 pandemic. "In this time, what's really exciting is to have a project to do, since we're not rehearsing or performing anything," Armstrong says.

Pierce has imagined her audience's reaction when her pas de deux is live-streamed later this month. "I would love for people to see it and be like, 'Yeah, beautiful, that's ballet, that's what ballet is,'" she says. Through #QueertheBallet, she hopes to empower other queer women and non-binary people who feel invisible in their own art form. "I don't want anyone to feel like they can't advocate for themselves because no one can even consider

that they exist," Pierce says. "Ballet needs to know that we do exist and we are here."

- #QueertheBallet by Adriana Pierce is streamed from 25-28 February.

---

From the agencies

# Relics of the Cold war - at auction

Hundreds of historical artefacts from the Cold war era are offered for sale at auction.

Samsung

# Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 2 review: four months with the folding tablet-phone

After 4,500 folds the screen is pristine, the device is useful and the wow factor hasn't worn off

Samsung's cutting-edge phone-tablet hybrid is not just a proof of concept, standing the test of time and proving the case for folding-screen devices in our near future. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Samsung's cutting-edge phone-tablet hybrid is not just a proof of concept, standing the test of time and proving the case for folding-screen devices in our near future. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

*Samuel Gibbs* *Consumer technology editor*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 02.00 EST

Are phones that unfold into tablets really the future of mobiles? And is flexible screen technology really ready for prime time? I spent four months

with the £1,800 Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 2 to find out.

The second iteration of Samsung's smartphone that unfolds into a tablet was impressive on first inspection, reinventing what it meant to be a premium, cutting-edge device.

But as with any piece of brand-new technology, particularly those that involve delicate moving parts, durability is a worry.

After four months of folding and unfolding it about 30 times a day, I can report that the screen is still pristine and everything still works as well as it did fresh out of the box. But I've also learned more about what works and what doesn't, and how Covid-19 has changed the way I use devices.

# The screen

There's still something quite magical about having an uninterrupted screen that simply folds in half. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The screen has survived four months of use without a scratch, despite being made of softer, potentially scratch-prone material. I didn't leave it open on a table in the same way I might a tablet, as shutting it away felt satisfying and natural. Closed, it is fully protected on a table or in your pocket. The lips

around the edge of the screen prevent any ingress of dirt or fluff, despite the USB-C port attracting the usual pocket lint just like any other phone.

The internal screen is a fingerprint magnet and requires frequent cleaning. That's because unlike the screen on the outside of the Z Fold 2 or that on a regular smartphone, the internal display isn't constantly being cleaned the fabric of a pocket or similar. A quick buff-up with a lens cloth was enough to restore the tablet screen's pristine look.

The crease remained the same: it's visible when the screen is off or when viewing dark content with overhead glare from lights, but was easily forgotten even when touched with your thumb. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Apart from Samsung's and a few third-party apps, not many have a full tablet-sized interface on the internal screen when held in portrait. However, many more websites and apps do resize properly to the big screen when the device is held in landscape. That's because the screen is taller than it is wide. When flipping it on its side, many apps and sites, including the Guardian, recognise the width as being beyond phone-size and give you a larger display meant for a tablet or laptop.

# General use

With the device closed it works just like a regular phone. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

I used the Fold 2 as a standard phone with the big screen closed more often than expected. The outside screen is large enough to get most phone things done, from messaging people to checking my abysmal Fantasy Premier League performance. I often started searches on the outside screen and then opened up the Fold 2 to see an image or map on the inside screen.

But using it closed highlighted an issue with the fingerprint scanner. It is small and suffers more from getting dirt and grease on both it and your fingers than larger sensors. I often had to clean it with my jumper for it to recognise my thumb. The issue is compounded by the fact you cannot register a fingerprint when the main screen is closed, only when it is open. Given that I almost always unlock the device before opening it, I have to try to guess roughly where my finger would naturally land when registering it. Recording my thumbprint twice helped, but the fingerprint sensor is a weak point of the phone.

Keep the fingerprint scanner clean and it works a treat, but frequent alcohol hand gel applications and grease quickly gummed it up. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The continuing Covid-19 pandemic is also changing the way I use devices. Being stuck at home means I open the internal screen less, primarily because there are larger screens in the form of tablets, laptops and TVs always within reach. Even though foldable devices are clearly the future, the two-in-one benefit of the Z Fold 2 is somewhat lost at the moment.

Frequent but careful cleaning of the device with Dettol wipes has yet to cause an issue, despite the lack of water resistance. You need a good, strong car mount to hold it on a dashboard; the phone's 282g weight will be too much for some.

Using two apps side-by-side on the internal screen proved to be useful for chats and watching the football scores, but less so for watching video as the picture was just too small. The battery holds up well, comfortably still outlasting the day. Samsung recently released One UI 3 (Android 11) for it, which is good.

All in all, after four months, the novelty of the Z Fold 2 has yet to wear off. It still feels like an incredibly special device, as it should when it costs

£1,800, but one you can easily live with day to day and use to its full extent.

Nothing else quite has the wow factor. I'm not saying everyone should buy one – this is a device purely for the well heeled – but if you do, you'll be richly rewarded. And for the rest of us, it proves that devices like the Z Fold 2, which can fill more than one role and still fit in your pocket, can and will be in our futures once the price comes down to more acceptable levels.

Fluff might collect in the USB-C port like a regular smartphone, but nothing got stuck in between the two halves of the screen. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

---

# Underwater photographer of the year 2021 winners – in pictures

British underwater photographer of the year 2021, British waters wide angle category winner and My Backyard category winner: While You Sleep by Mark Kirkland (UK). Photograph: UPY 2021

Film

# The Map of Tiny Perfect Things review – charming time loop romcom

Two irresistible performances buoy a fantastical teen film about an endless day and the wonder that lives within it

Kyle Allen and Kathryn Newton. Photograph: Dan Anderson/Courtesy of Amazon Studios

Kyle Allen and Kathryn Newton. Photograph: Dan Anderson/Courtesy of Amazon Studios

*Adrian Horton*
*@adrian_horton*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 15.00 EST

One can only dream of having a morning routine as breezy, efficient, and cheeky as seventeen-year-old Mark (Kyle Allen) in the opening scene of

Amazon's The Map of Tiny Perfect Things, a soothing romcom, buoyed by excellent lead performances, that glides on seamless choreography as much as its romantic hijinks. Mark, a prototypical white American teen with a backwards hat, sunglasses and iPod headphones, sails through the film's unbroken, eye-catching first montage, nailing every mark as if he's rehearsed it a thousand times: toss a snack to a jogger, snatch a coffee from the top of a car, swing his bike into a just-emptied parking spot, hop into a pick-up bed, give directions to the cute girl on the corner without her needing to ask where, or how.

Bliss review – epically bad acting in tiresome sci-fi fantasy
Read more

The hook of watching someone command an ordinary day with panache, knowing the rhythm of finite time like the back of one's hand, is one of the early pleasures of the film directed by Ian Samuels (2018's Sierra Burgess is a Loser) and written by Lev Grossman based on his short story of the same name. The control, it's soon clear, derives from Mark's peculiar predicament: he has rehearsed this dozens of times, because he's stuck in a time loop, reliving the same summer day over and over again.

Mark's grooved, cyclical existence is upended by the arrival of Margaret (Big Little Lies' Kathryn Newton), the only other person mired in what the two mutually call their "temporal anomaly". Given that they are the only two with free will to change their day, Mark and Margaret quickly strike up a barbed, compelling friendship of mutual appreciation. Mark is the directionless artist immediately smitten with the mysterious blonde, liable to disappear without warning yet warm to his fascinations with the minutiae of The Day. Margaret is the enigma, a beauty with a dream of becoming a Nasa mission specialist, who will ramble about the unknown fourth dimension – "I'm just glad that Stephen Hawking isn't here to see this because it totally violates all known science," she says of the loop – but loathe to discuss any details of friends and family.

With infinite time at 17, the pair embark on an endearingly cheesy mission: to observe, appreciate, and "collect" ("kinda like Pokemon," Mark says) all the tiny, usually unseen, "perfect" moments in their small town (location

unclear – Margaret has a Kentucky area code, though it was filmed on location in Alabama). The film's middle section is a fluid, understated ode to pristine mundanity; the pair observe an elderly woman's perfect hand of cards, traffic stop for a tortoise, the improbably alignment of a car logo's wings with a sitting pedestrian, the clouds form a question mark, the little things that trip one's daily focus from the step ahead to awe.

It's obvious, given that they're the same age, attractive, and the only two people trapped in a time flux, that Mark and Margaret will end up together, and that doing so may hold the key to escape; the protraction of the romance is a genre staple, one the film enjoyably milks for mystery, remaining coy on Margaret's hesitance for romance or a future beyond The Day until late in the second half. Mark, meanwhile, channels his frustration into some useful lesson for a 17-year-old boy: be less self-obsessed, goddammit. It's unclear how Mark's refocused, newly generous attention – asking his dad (Josh Hamilton) how his book project is going, asking his sister Emma's (Cleo Fraser) opinion – can bend some of the concrete outcomes of The Day but it doesn't really matter; it's a charming, small-scale revelation, in line for a film whose heart lies in the micro joys of ordinary, under-appreciated moments.

Though its hard not to laugh at some cliched lines – "we're not like other people," Mark tells Margaret – Grossman's script for the most part threads the difficult needle between endearing, casual teen banter and fantastical concept, a pleasing tone heightened by Allen and Newton's disarming, grounded performances. (I can't decide if Allen, 26, physically looks like a 17-year-old, but he certainly conveys the live-wire emotion of one; Newton's performance, deadpan delivery with a cherubic face, keeps Margaret from straying too far into manic-pixie-dream girl territory).

There are holes in this fictional time-loop fabric – is there a butterfly effect? – which the film minimizes by staying almost entirely within the confines of its town and established romcom terrain (longing, art school dream v practical reality, the specter of loss to illness). Though the script includes several pop culture references, larger, darker themes that refract through any day in America – politics, racial injustice, any tie to the frenzied news cycle that changes by the hour – are absent here.

Which is not so much a gripe as a consequence of the film's aim to please. The Map of Tiny Perfect Things holds a contained, idealized world – a trove of romcom enjoyment and small treasures I had no problem looping through.

- The Map of Tiny Perfect Things is available on Amazon from 12 February

---

# 2021.02.10 - Opinion

- Central banks aren't what they used to be - and the better for it
- The culture war between Gen Z and millennials is on. The first battle? Side partings
- Wealthy vaccine cheats prove we were never all in this together
- Ten years for breaking Covid travel rules? Borders are the latest Boris Johnson fail
- Cartoon Steve Bell on the Queen and Treasury's windfarm windfall
- Ocado may lose out despite its lockdown-aided sales rise

Project Syndicate economistsBusiness

# Central banks aren't what they used to be - and the better for it

Barry Eichengreen

Banks now tackle diverse issues, be it Covid-19, climate change or inequality. Purists may disagree but there's no other option

The Federal Reserve building in Washington DC. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

The Federal Reserve building in Washington DC. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

Wed 10 Feb 2021 01.00 EST

We are used to thinking about the remit of central banks as focusing narrowly on price stability, or at most as targeting inflation while ensuring the smooth operation of the payment system. But with the global financial crisis of 2008 and now Covid-19, we have seen central banks intervening to

support a growing range of markets and activities, using instruments that extend well beyond interest rates and open market operations.

An example is the US Federal Reserve's Paycheck Protection Program Liquidity Facility, under which the Fed provides liquidity to lenders who extend loans to small businesses in pandemic-related distress. This, clearly, is not your mother's central bank.

Now we hear calls to broaden this ambit still further. European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde and Fed board member Lael Brainard have each urged central banks to tackle climate change. Against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter movement, US Representative Maxine Waters of California has pushed Fed Chair Jerome Powell to do more about inequality, including specifically racial inequality.

The $2,000 stimulus cheques alone won't work – the US needs better infrastructure
Read more

Such calls horrify central-banking purists, who warn that charging central banks with these additional responsibilities risks diverting them and their policy instruments from their primary objective of inflation control. They caution that monetary policy is a blunt instrument for tackling climate change and inequality, which can be more effectively addressed by taxing carbon emissions or strengthening equal housing laws.

Above all, the critics worry that pursuing these other objectives will jeopardise central banks' independence. Central banks enjoy operational independence in order to pursue a specific mandate, because there is a consensus that the mandated objectives are best taken out of elected officials' hands. But independence does not mean central bankers are unaccountable to politicians and public opinion. They must justify their actions and explain how their policy decisions advance the mandated objectives. Their success or failure can be judged by whether or not the central bank achieves its independently verifiable targets.

With a greatly expanded mandate, the relationship between policy instruments and targets would become more complex. Justifications for

policy decisions would be harder to communicate. Success or failure would be more difficult to judge. Indeed, insofar as monetary policy has only limited influence over climate change or inequality, targeting such variables would be setting up the central bank to fail. And frustration over failure might lead politicians to rethink the central bank's operational independence.



These arguments are not without merit. At the same time, central bankers cannot snooze quietly in their bunks in the face of an all-hands-on-deck emergency. Calls for central banks to address climate change and inequality reflect an awareness that these problems have risen to the level of existential crises. If central bankers ignored them, or said, "These urgent problems are best addressed by someone else," their response would be seen as a haughty and perilous display of indifference. At that point, their independence would truly be at risk.

So, what to do? Central banks as regulators have tools with which to address climate change, and their responsibility for ensuring the integrity and stability of the financial system gives policymakers the mandate to use them. They can require more extensive climate-related financial disclosures. They can impose stricter capital and liquidity requirements on financial institutions whose asset portfolios expose them to climate risk. Such tools will discourage the financial system from underwriting brown investments.

The challenge of understanding the risks to financial stability from climate change is that climate events are irregular and nonlinear. When modeling them, it will be important for central banks to avoid the mistakes they made in modeling Covid-19. Those problems arose because economists and epidemiologists worked in their separate silos. So, one might ask advocates like Lagarde and Brainard: How many climate scientists have central banks hired? When will they start?

Can central banks keep holding off the Covid economic crisis? | Mohamed El-Erian
Read more

When it comes to inequality, some central banks already have the relevant mandate. In the United States, the Community Reinvestment Actof 1977 tasks regulators, including the Fed, with ensuring that low- and moderate-income families have adequate access to credit. The Fed has delegated this responsibility to its 12 regional reserve banks, each of which fulfills it in different ways. Stronger guidance from the Federal Reserve Board on exactly how to ensure equal access to credit, with explicit attention to racial disparities, would reinforce existing efforts.

It would be a departure for other central banks, such as the ECB, to address the credit access of minority and underprivileged groups. But the European Parliament can so instruct it. And the ECB Board can work with the national institutions that make up the European System of Central Banks in meeting that call.

Monetary policy has implications for issues beyond inflation and payments, including climate change and inequality. It would be disingenuous, even dangerous, for central bankers to deny those connections, or to insist that they are someone else's problem. The best way forward for central bankers is to use monetary policy to target inflation, while directing their regulatory powers at other pressing concerns.

• *Barry Eichengreen is professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, and a former senior policy adviser at the IMF.*



---

Opinion Life and style

# The culture war between Gen Z and millennials is on. The first battle? Side partings

Arwa Mahdawi

Gen Z – or zoomers – have taken to belittling millennials over everything from their hairstyles and skinny jeans to how they use emoji. Meanwhile, Gen Xers wryly observe the strife

Gen Z … too cool for school. (Posed by models) Photograph: We Are/Getty Images

Gen Z … too cool for school. (Posed by models) Photograph: We Are/Getty Images

Wed 10 Feb 2021 02.00 EST

Millennials of the world: unite! In these polarised times, I, an Elderly Millennial, ask that we put our differences aside and unite against a common enemy: Gen Z. Which, to be clear, is the umbrella term for the generation aged somewhere between 16 and 24. They're also known as zoomers (a nickname that, funnily enough, has nothing to do with the video conference platform) or TikTok teens. While Gen Z is famous for belittling boomers, they have now turned their attention to millennials and everything we hold dear.

You know those skinny jeans you used to live in pre-pandemic? They're officially over, according to Gen Z. The cool kids wear flared leggings now. Do you part your hair on the side? Evidence you're ancient: Gen Z parts its hair in the middle. The most damning sign you're over the hill, however, is expressing laughter via a face-with-tears-of-joy emoji. According to our new zoverlords, amusement should be expressed by indiscriminately smashing letters on your keyboard. Sjkalfjksjfkdsjal is the new lol. Don't ask why.

Look, the kids are alright – even if their opinions on skinny jeans are all wrong, and they have been known to eat laundry detergent pods for clout on social media. But I do think it's a bit funny that Gen Z is serving up fashion advice to those of us in our 30s because, I mean, have you seen how these kids dress? They dress like millennials did in the 90s and early 00s! We invented their whole look!

What I find fascinating about the generational wars is how Gen X, the Switzerland of generations, has managed not to get involved in all this nastiness. While boomers, zoomers and millennials are at each other's throats, Gen X just stands in the background, smoking cigarettes and wryly observing the strife. As a wise Gen Xer would probably tell you, what goes around comes around. Give it 10 years and Gen Z are going to be up in arms about Gen Alpha cutting them off with: "OK, zoomer."

- Arwa Mahdawi is Guardian columnist

---

Opinion Vaccines and immunisation

# These wealthy vaccine cheats prove we were never all in this together

Arwa Mahdawi

The rich and powerful are using their influence to get early inoculations. And there’s nothing we can do about it

‘The mark of someone who has really made it isn’t having the means to cheat the system, it’s being invited to cheat by the system ...’ Photograph: Posed by models/Getty/iStockphoto

‘The mark of someone who has really made it isn’t having the means to cheat the system, it’s being invited to cheat by the system ...’ Photograph: Posed by models/Getty/iStockphoto

Tue 9 Feb 2021 11.25 EST

Mo’ money, mo’ problems? More like mo’ money, mo’ vaccines. In news anyone could have predicted, it seems well-off and well-connected people around the world are finding nefarious ways to skip to the front of the coronavirus vaccine line.

Exhibit one: Stacey Griffith, a celebrity SoulCycle instructor who has trained Madonna. In New York, you’re now eligible for a vaccine if you’re an “educator”. Who falls under that definition, exactly? Griffith, who yells motivational quotes at her clients from an exercise bike, decided she did. So off she went to Staten Island to get a shot, documenting the adventure on social media like the modern wellness guru that she is. Bless her healthy heart, she appeared to be genuinely surprised at the backlash she received. “It saddens me that people go so dark and mean,” Griffith told the Daily Beast. “I’m really just trying to do the right thing and be safe.” So were a lot

of schoolteachers – however, as Griffith was getting inoculated, the United Federation of Teachers estimated thousands of its members had vaccine appointments cancelled because of supply shortages.

Then there is the Canadian casino executive Rod Baker and his wife. The millionaire couple recently broke quarantine and flew to a remote Indigenous community where they posed as local motel employees to get their jabs. I would ask how people like this sleep at night, but I already know: they sleep in fancy neighbourhoods in fancy houses in fancy sheets. They sleep just fine.

The mark of someone who has really made it, of course, isn't having the means to charter a plane to cheat the system – it's being invited to cheat by the system. A number of hospitals in the US are under fire for offering early vaccine access to trustees, donors and board members. Meanwhile, moneyed Brazilians are trying to formalise a system where you can pay to skip the line. Private health clinics are negotiating directly with an Indian pharmaceutical company to secure vaccines for their wealthy clients and President Jair Bolsonaro has said he won't interfere with these plans. You can always trust Bolsonaro not to do the right thing.

Remember how, at the beginning of the pandemic, everyone used to chirp "we're all in this together!"? You don't hear much of that any more because it's embarrassingly obvious we're not. Watching wealthy people, who have the means to shield from the virus, being vaccinated before many essential workers is infuriating. Even worse is the fact that there's not much we can do about it. Making it harder to get a vaccine helps no one: better a few undeserving people slip through the net than a single precious vaccine goes to waste.

As for shaming the vaccine queue-hoppers, numerous studies show the "upper class" are more likely to lack empathy and engage in unethical behaviour. In one example, researchers put a jar of sweets in front of people and attached a note stating the candy was to be taken to a child-research laboratory. Participants who thought of themselves as wealthy took twice as many sweets as those who thought of themselves as poor.

As experts keep telling us, no one is safe until we're all safe. How many highly contagious mutant viruses is it going to take for the wealthy world to realise that? I really don't want to find out.

- Arwa Mahdawi is a Guardian columnist

---

OpinionCoronavirus

# Ten years for breaking Covid travel rules? Borders are the latest Boris Johnson fail

Marina Hyde

The government’s new quarantine restrictions sound tough – but they’re exactly one year too late

A Qatar Airways Boeing 777 lands at Heathrow. Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

A Qatar Airways Boeing 777 lands at Heathrow. Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 9 Feb 2021 10.57 EST

Yesterday's news that the government had still yet to sign a single contract with a hotel for its quarantine scheme felt puzzling. Traditionally, politicians have been experts at booking cheap hotel rooms in a hurry. Maybe they've been disincentivised in this case by the absence of a sex worker tapping her watch.

Today, however, Minister for Everything Matt Hancock confirmed hotel quarantine would come into effect on Monday, but only for arrivals from the 33 red-listed countries, and for a very British 10 days, not the safer standard of 14. Anyone lying about coming from a red-list country "could face 10 years in jail" – the magic number also notionally applied to those found illegally streaming football matches, or damaging war memorials. It's always 10 years.

Even so, borders are starting to look like Boris Johnson's next big Covid mistake. Actually, "next" implies a linear quality to Johnson's coronavirus

cock-ups, when really we experience them cyclically. Perhaps even rhythmically. Today's breaking news of compulsory Covid tests for international travellers isolating after arrival felt … somewhat belated? At this point in February 2021, it's like we've fallen through some tear in the space-time continuum, and are now experiencing February 2020 as we should have done. And not as we did.

Unfortunately, February 2021 is happening concurrently. Today's Daily Express front page features a righteously emotional woman – surprisingly, I'm not talking about Princess Di – who this week flew into the UK from South Africa (via Qatar) and claimed to have walked through Heathrow in 10 minutes, without a single check. "I was in tears," she told the paper. "I just couldn't believe what happened."

You know things are bad because a lot of ministers can be found fighting their way to TV cameras and radio mics to explain that actually the responsibility for the quarantine plan is Matt Hancock's. Because really, what isn't? Johnson's failure to split the health secretary role into three or four more manageable briefs is one of the biggest delivery howlers of the pandemic.

It's fair to say Matt Hancock has spent the last year seemingly having quite a lot on. But what are most of the rest of them doing? The other day there was a Commons debate concerning the ongoing scandal of flammable cladding, a full three-and-a-half years after 72 people died in the Grenfell Tower fire. Yet instead of 3D-printed cabinet minister Robert Jenrick gracing the discussion with a personal appearance, two junior ministers – one of whom had been in post a full 15 days – were sent instead.

Where is Jenrick? Is he in Dubai or something? That's starting to feel like the only explanation that makes sense – and would also shed light on why the government dragged its feet so painfully over hotel quarantine. No cabinet influencer left behind.

In the meantime, at least 10 ministers are currently secretary of state for saying, "yeah, that's actually Matt Hancock's responsibility". I note that every now and then, foreign secretary Dominic Raab breaks cover to tweet

something sympathetic about a natural disaster or something. But then again, so do junior Hollyoaks actors.

We do get the occasional glimpse of the prime minister, who was wheeled out this week for a visit to Derby, where we were given yet another opportunity to see Boris Johnson dressed up in a white coat. I think he's supposed to appear medical and scientific, but only ever succeeds in looking like he's got a lovely bit of pork cheek he can do you for £3.50. It was while he was offering to chuck in some beef liver – just because you're looking so lovely today, my darling – that the prime minister explained that there was no point closing borders. As he put it: "They are most effective, border controls, when you've got the rate of infection down in your country."

Given that we've been hearing this one for almost a year, we have to ask: if not now, then when is the right time? Other than "later – much later". It was never the right time. Last summer, Johnson spent the bit where we'd got the infection rate down suggesting there wasn't going to be a second wave and that everything would be back to normal by Christmas.

Time and again the government has shown a desperate unwillingness to take swift decisions upfront, evidently preferring to pay in lost freedoms and much longer economic damage at the other end. Closing borders for a period buys time. But with new and potentially vaccine-resistant variants the big unknown quantity, what a bizarre series of conditions needs to be in complex alignment for us to consider not giving any number of them a deadly head start. Infections must be down, testing must be up, Mercury must be in retrograde, and the beam of sunlight must hit the ancient crystal at precisely the right angle at precisely the right hour.

Only then can the influencers and the luxury holidaymakers and the business travellers be informed that, actually, this probs doesn't count as an essential trip. Otherwise, apparently, you might as well shut Shergar's stable door as this one.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

Guardian Opinion cartoon
Wind power

# Steve Bell on the Queen and Treasury's windfarm windfall – cartoon

Economics viewpointOcado

# Ocado may lose out despite its lockdown-aided sales rise

Larry Elliott

Online supermarket will at some point be asked to pay to help prevent the death of the high street


Ocado is still making a loss due to investment in another part of the business. Photograph: Ocado/PA

Ocado is still making a loss due to investment in another part of the business. Photograph: Ocado/PA

Tue 9 Feb 2021 14.43 EST

Ocado is a company that delivers groceries to people's homes. Off and on for the last year the public have been subject to a form of house arrest. So you don't need to have studied Adam Smith or John Maynard Keynes to work out why the business is doing well.

Covid-19 has taken a trend that has been evident for the past decade or so and accelerated it. The backdrop to Ocado's 35% sales increase is the massive increase in market penetration of online retailers during the Covid pandemic. The British Retail Consortium has said online shopping accounted for 63% of non-food sales in January, more than double the 31% a year earlier.

Ocado is, of course, an online supermarket but even so a 35% jump in revenues is not to be sniffed at. It would have been still higher had the company not run into capacity constraints, a problem now being addressed.

What may surprise some Ocado customers is that even in the most benign conditions imaginable the company is still making a loss. That, though, has more to do with investment in the part of the business that involves selling the company's tech abroad. Investors in Ocado have been a bit like those in Amazon: they have had to learn to be patient and wait for the profits to roll in.

There is another sense, too, in which Ocado is like Amazon: neither retailer is at all keen on the idea of a digital sales tax. Tim Steiner, Ocado's chief executive, said the company's growth was due to consumer choice and it was not appropriate to penalise a business simply because it operated from different premises or because they were more efficient.

In the short term, Steiner has nothing to fear. Rishi Sunak is not about to clobber Ocado and other digital retailers with a pandemic windfall tax in his March budget. Longer term, though, it is likely to be a different story. The Treasury cannot simply write off Britain's high streets, putting their demise down to creative destruction in action. Pressure to help bricks-and-mortar retailers is sure to intensify. And, whether through a digital sales tax, higher business rates, or some other method, companies such as Ocado will rightly end up paying more.

Guardian business email sign-up

## Andrew Bailey has a memory problem

Dame Elizabeth Gloster is a former high court judge who, like all members of the judiciary, chooses her words carefully. So when she says she disagrees with the testimony the governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, gave this week to a Treasury committee hearing into the collapse of London Capital & Finance, alarm bells started to clang at the Bank.

The issue is not whether the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) – which Bailey ran at the time – made a total mess of LC&F because there is no dispute that it did. Rather, it is whether Bailey sought to have his name taken out of Gloster's report on the scandal. Gloster said he did; Bailey told MPs he didn't and there had been a fundamental misunderstanding about what he was trying to do.

Gloster has now written to the committee saying she “disagreed” with Bailey that he was merely asking for a distinction to be drawn between personal culpability and responsibility. To rub it in, she said there had been no fundamental misunderstanding. Gloster is not accusing Bailey of lying, but she is saying that his testimony to the committee was – in her view – not entirely accurate.

The governor, who would dearly like to get on with doing his day job, is sticking to what he told MPs. The danger, though, is that he will be seen as the man who should have done more to stop small investors getting fleeced and then tried to avoid being personally embarrassed over the FCA’s failings. The Treasury committee will have to decide what and who it believes. Its report, not due out until May, has the potential to cause Bailey serious grief.

---

# 2021.02.10 - Around the world

- Myanmar Protesters return to streets of capital despite police violence
- Amnesty UK failing to protect human rights defenders abroad, says charity
- Pakistan Family of girl, 12, forced to marry abductor condemn authorities
- Human rights Chinese publisher who spoke up for dissident academic is jailed for three years
- Data protection DNA privacy fears in 23andMe deal with Branson
- Minnesota Multiple people shot at health clinic, police say
- 'Cum-ex' scandal Ex-banker Paul Mora put on Interpol wanted list in German fraud inquiry
- Germany Man, 100, charged over 3,518 Nazi concentration camp murders
- Cryptocurrencies Rise in popularity in world's conflict zones
- Canada Inuit hunters blockade iron mine in freezing temperatures over expansion

Myanmar

# Myanmar protesters return to streets in huge numbers amid police defections

Protests swell across country, with dozens of police officers choosing to join protesters in call for reversal of coup

The United States and United Nations have condemned the use of force against protesters in Myanmar. Photograph: Linn Htet/AP

The United States and United Nations have condemned the use of force against protesters in Myanmar. Photograph: Linn Htet/AP

*A reporter in Yangon, and Reuters*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 22.08 EST

Protesters have turned out in huge numbers across Myanmar, a day after police instigated the most violent scenes yet in demonstrations against a military coup that removed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

An estimated 100,000 people gathered in the commercial capital Yangon on Wednesday, according to witnesses, with many more marching across the country.

A day earlier, tens of thousands demonstrated in major cities and smaller towns in defiance of a ban on gatherings in some areas, with police using water cannon, rubber bullets and live rounds against them. One woman remains in a critical condition after being shot in the head in the capital Naypyidaw.

In Loikaw, the state capital of Kayah, about 40 police joined protesters on Wednesday and held a banner saying: "Members of Myanmar police force (Kayah state) stand with civilians."

Other officers waved posters that read: "We do not need military dictatorship" and raised three-finger salutes, a symbol of resistance against the military.

At a separate protest in the city of Mawlamyine, a single officer moved to join protesters. On Tuesday, about 20 police switched sides at four different sites – at Pathein, Naypyidaw, Myeik and Magway.

Protesters in Yangon have largely adhered to a curfew imposed from 8pm to 4am under section 144 of Myanmar's colonial-era Penal Code – turning instead to pot and pan banging from the safety of their homes – but have defied the ban on large gatherings.

The United States and United Nations condemned the use of force against protesters, who demand the reversal of the coup and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other detained leaders of her National League for Democracy (NLD) and activists.

00:59

Myanmar: gunfire heard as police and protesters clash – video

"We cannot stay quiet," youth leader Esther Ze Naw told Reuters on Wednesday. "If there is blood shed during our peaceful protests, then there will be more if we let them take over the country."

In Naypyitaw, hundreds of government workers marched in support of a civil disobedience campaign that has been joined by doctors, teachers and railway workers, among others.

Protesters were also hurt in Mandalay and other cities, where security forces used water cannon as well. State media reported injuries to police during their attempts to disperse protesters, who were accused of throwing stones and bricks.

The US State Department said it was reviewing assistance to Myanmar to ensure those responsible for the coup face “significant consequences“.

“We repeat our calls for the military to relinquish power, restore democratically elected government, release those detained and lift all telecommunication restrictions and to refrain from violence,” spokesman Ned Price said in Washington.

The United Nations called on Myanmar’s security forces to respect people’s right to protest peacefully. “The use of disproportionate force against demonstrators is unacceptable,” Ola Almgren, the UN representative in Myanmar, said.

Three-finger salute: Hunger Games symbol adopted by Myanmar protesters
Read more

The protests are the largest in Myanmar for more than a decade, reviving memories of almost half a century of direct army rule and spasms of bloody uprisings until the military began a process of withdrawing from civilian politics in 2011.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said nearly 60 people were arrested across Myanmar on Tuesday.

Myanmar’s army took power citing unsubstantiated allegations of fraud in a 8 November election that Aung San Suu Kyi’s NLD party won in a landslide. The electoral commission had dismissed the army’s complaints.

Protesters wave red National League For Democracy (NLD) flags and raise three-finger salutes in Yangon Photograph: Getty Images

Late on Tuesday, police raided the NLD's headquarters in Yangon during the hours of a military-imposed curfew. The raid was carried out by about a dozen police, who forced their way into the building in the commercial capital after dark, elected lawmakers said.

Aung San Suu Kyi's party had been due to start a second term on the day of the coup.

Alongside the protests, a civil disobedience movement has affected hospitals, schools and government offices. Staff from the electricity and power ministry in Naypyitaw were among the latest to join the civil disobedience movement on Wednesday.

'We're not brainwashed': a week of turmoil in Myanmar
Read more

Protesters' demands now go beyond reversing the coup.

They also seek the abolition of a 2008 constitution drawn up under military supervision that gave the generals a veto in parliament and control of several ministries, and for a federal system in ethnically diverse Myanmar.

Aung San Suu Kyi won the Nobel peace prize in 1991 for campaigning for democracy and spent nearly 15 years under house arrest.

The 75-year-old faces charges of illegally importing six walkie-talkies and is being held in detention until 15 February. Her lawyer said he had not been allowed to see her.

Aung San Suu Kyi remains hugely popular at home despite damage to her international reputation over the plight of the Muslim Rohingya minority.

---

Human rights in focusGlobal development

# UK failing to protect human rights defenders abroad, says Amnesty

New report finds lawyers, journalists and health workers at risk during pandemic have struggled to get help from embassies

- Coronavirus – latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage


Protesters march to commemorate international human rights day on 10 December 2020 in Manila, the Philippines. Photograph: Jes Aznar/Getty

Protesters march to commemorate international human rights day on 10 December 2020 in Manila, the Philippines. Photograph: Jes Aznar/Getty

Supported by


About this content
*Sarah Marsh*
*@sloumarsh*
Wed 10 Feb 2021 02.15 EST

The UK government has failed in its pledge to help those on the frontline of the global fight for human rights during the pandemic, according to a new report.

Amnesty International said health workers, lawyers, journalists and rights activists from around the world who were living under constant threat during the Covid-19 pandemic struggled to get support or funding from British embassies.

The group's researchers interviewed 82 human rights defenders from seven countries: Egypt, Colombia, Russia, Zimbabwe, the Philippines, Afghanistan and Libya, and 94% said the government had offered them very little help in response to threats or attacks against them.

In its report, the organisation found that only 40% had been in contact with the UK within the past two years; 70% were in contact with embassies of

other countries. Additionally, 76% did not know how to contact someone at their closest British embassy and 75% had never received UK funding.

Amnesty director Kate Allen said these individuals were "holding governments to account for their Covid-19 response plans" and "shining a light on the impact of this deadly disease".

But instead of being "recognised for their bravery, many have been targeted and are experiencing attacks", she said, and faced "reduced protection and draconian repression disguised as emergency responses".

Allen added that the UK government had pledged to stand up for those putting their lives at risk to help others, but said "words" needed to be "turned into action".

In several countries, health workers and journalists who spoke out about Covid-19 during the pandemic were attacked. In Egypt, health workers and human rights defenders who spoke out were charged with spreading "false news".

UK sourced PPE from factories secretly using North Korean slave labour
Read more

One told Amnesty: "We have been victims of a smear campaign that even targeted us personally. The news published false information about me, alleging that because I was meeting a lot of foreigners, I had contracted Covid-19 and I was spreading it."

As journalists and critics continue to face arrest, Amnesty found that those already in prison were excluded from government measures to release prisoners in response to coronavirus outbreaks.

In Turkey, measures explicitly excluded those in pre-trial detention, and those who are on remand for or have been convicted of offences under Turkey's anti-terrorism laws. They include political and human rights activists, journalists and academics.

Iranian authorities temporarily released 85,000 prisoners – but excluded many human rights defenders held in poor conditions on politically motivated charges.

In the Philippines, Cristina Palabay, secretary general of rights group Karapatan, said: “Covid has shrunk the space for LGBTQI+ people and community in the Philippines to express their identity.”

The report suggests how the government can prioritise human rights defenders in foreign policy, calling for a strategic approach to better support those under attack and push back against the global trend towards repression.

A Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office spokesperson said: “From equipping human rights defenders with digital skills to funding essential security training, the UK provides millions of pounds every year backing initiatives which defend democratic values and the rule of law.

“The UK leads calls for stronger protections for human rights defenders with our international partners and has set out clear guidance for NGOs on how our posts can best support them.”

---

Women's rights and gender equality

# Family of girl, 12, forced to marry abductor condemn Pakistan authorities

Criticism follows release of 29-year-old who kept girl chained in cattle pen, in latest case highlighting abuses of religious minorities

Girls from Pakistan’s Christian community protest after the kidnapping and forced conversion of a 13-year-old in Hyderabad last year. Photograph: Newscom/Avalon

Girls from Pakistan’s Christian community protest after the kidnapping and forced conversion of a 13-year-old in Hyderabad last year. Photograph: Newscom/Avalon


About this content

*Haroon Janjua* *in Islamabad*
*@JanjuaHaroon*

Wed 10 Feb 2021 00.30 EST

The family of a 12-year-old girl in Pakistan who was chained up in a cattle pen for more than six months, after allegedly being kidnapped and forced to marry her abductor, have attacked the authorities for refusing to act.

The case is among those now being examined by a government inquiry into the forced conversions of religious minority women and girls, after police released the man, saying they believed the girl had married him of her own free will.

The child was taken from her home in Faisalabad last June and had been held at the home of 29-year-old Khizer Hayat, where she was made to work clearing animal dung. Her family are angry that no further action has been taken against the man.

Police investigators initially held Hayat but then released him, saying there was no evidence the girl had not consented to the marriage and that a medical report said she was 16.

Kidnap, torture, murder: the plight of Pakistan's thousands of disappeared Read more

"The case has been taken up by the parliamentary committee of human rights in the Senate of Pakistan and police are attending the committee's hearings. She confessed before the magistrate … that she married Khizer Hayat of her own free will and she wants to live with him," said Musaddiq Riaz, a detective with Faisalabad police.

The father of the girl – who is not being named to protect her identity – told the Guardian that the police had discovered his daughter at a house in Hafizabad, 110km (68 miles) from her home.

"They repeatedly raped my daughter. She was in trauma after being subjected to physical and mental torture. They had forcibly converted her to Islam. She was kept as a slave and forced to work having a chain attached to her ankles. Police were not registering my complaint and threatened me [for] being a minority Christian and used discriminatory remarks," he said.

"She was brought to the police station after negotiations with her abductors and she was bandaged at the police station," he said. "She was traumatised and I still can't believe she testified in favour of her kidnappers."

He disputed the court report and showed his daughter's birth certificate along with photographs of deep cuts and sores on her ankles. According to a 2019 report by the human rights commission of Pakistan, an estimated 1,000 Christian and Hindu women are abducted and forcibly married every year. Many of the victims are minors. Sexual assaults and fraudulent marriages are used by perpetrators to entrap victims, and authorities rarely intervene.

Pakistan's tiny Christian population of about 2.5 million in the Muslim majority country of 223 million faces frequent discrimination. In 2020 a 14-year-old Catholic girl from Faisalabad was kidnapped at gunpoint and forced to "marry" her 45-year-old kidnapper. She managed to escape and is in hiding with her parents after a court ruled she must return to her abductor.

Lala Robin Daniel, an activist based in Faisalabad, said of the recent case: "Despite the parliamentary Senate committee for human rights hearings, I

am not hopeful that justice will be served to the poor family. She was injured and in a state of trauma.

“Teenage girls from religious minority groups are often targeted for forced conversions and marriages due to certain gaps in the law and weak laws. Police and judiciary make fun of the parents seeking justice,” she said.

John Pontifex, of Catholic organisation Aid to the Church in Need, said the British government should be looking at the issue: “This case should sound a warning shot to the UK government, questioning the efficacy of its aid strategy, which for years prioritised funding to Pakistan. Given the institutionalised nature of abuse of young girls of minority faith backgrounds, we should in good conscience ask: is UK aid to Pakistan being used wisely? Is it aiding the girls or abetting the problem?”

He added: “We receive reports every week of incidents in which girls of minority faith backgrounds are abducted, gang-raped, forcibly converted and who are made to marry their abductor.

“And it seems the state is complicit by failing to investigate cases, failing to bring the perpetrators to justice and sanctioning child marriages.”

In December, Pakistan’s prime minister Imran Khan ordered an inquiry into the forced conversions of religious minority women and girls.

Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Khan’s special representative for religious harmony, said: “We are aware of the incident and the state of Pakistan is fully committed to ensure justice to minorities whether it’s forced marriage or forced conversion.

“We will not tolerate these acts. We will pursue the case, no one is above the law and we will take serious action against the culprits … We are working on the formulation of interfaith harmony councils at the local level to ensure minority protection and to resolve such cases promptly.”

---

China

# Chinese publisher who spoke up for dissident academic is jailed for three years

Geng Xiaonan guilty of publishing illegal titles after she made comments backing Beijing critic Xu Zhangrun

A poster of Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Wuhan. A publisher has been jailed for three years for speaking up for professor Xu Zhangrun who was critical of the president. Photograph: Ng Han Guan/AP

A poster of Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Wuhan. A publisher has been jailed for three years for speaking up for professor Xu Zhangrun who was critical of the president. Photograph: Ng Han Guan/AP

*Helen Davidson in Taipei*
*@heldavidson*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 23.46 EST

A Chinese publisher who spoke out in support of a dissident academic has been jailed for three years in Beijing after she pleaded guilty to illegal business operations.

Geng Xiaonan, 46, and her husband Qin Zhen, were arrested in September on suspicion of publishing thousands of illegal titles. According to reports, Geng told the court she was guilty of the charges against her, that she was the primary decision maker, and asked it to show leniency to her husband and staff who were just following instructions. She also asked for leniency for herself, because she was sole carer to her ailing father.

Qin was given a suspended sentence of two-and-a-half years.

‘This may be the last piece I write’: prominent Xi critic has internet cut after house arrest
Read more

The court proceedings were streamed live and reportedly viewed more than 80,000 times before the recording was taken offline, according to local media. The South China Morning Post said several dissidents and supporters had been prevented from attending the hearing.

Geng had spoken in support of Xu Zhangrun, a Beijing law professor who has been a vocal critic of Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist party, when he was detained in July last year for six days.

Reuters reported at the time that police had told his wife that he was being detained for allegedly soliciting prostitution during a trip to Chengdu, but at least two friends dismissed that allegation as character assassination.

In October, Xu said Geng had been arrested for a crime she hadn’t committed. “The authorities are prosecuting her using illegal business operations as an excuse,” he said.

Chinese Human Rights Defenders said Geng had also tried to raise awareness about the disappearance of citizen journalist, Chen Qiushi, and said it was another example of the Chinese government criminalising dissent. Her jailing is the latest in a string of crackdowns on prominent

people who have criticised the party, including academic Xu Zhiyong, and businessman Ren Zhiqiang.

---

Data protection

# Fears over DNA privacy as 23andMe plans to go public in deal with Richard Branson

Genetic testing company with 10 million customers' data has 'huge cybersecurity implications'

Richard Branson's company is joining forces with 23andMe through what is known as a 'blank-check company'. Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

Richard Branson's company is joining forces with 23andMe through what is known as a 'blank-check company'. Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

*Kari Paul in San Francisco*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 16.52 EST

The genetic testing company 23andMe will go public through a partnership with a firm backed by the billionaire Richard Branson, in a deal that has raised fresh privacy questions about the information of millions of customers.

Launched in 2006, 23andMe sells tests to determine consumers' genetic ancestry and risk of developing certain illnesses, using saliva samples sent in by mail.

Privacy advocates and researchers have long raised concerns about a for-profit company owning the genetic data of millions of people, fears that have only intensified with news of the partnership.

"The question in all situations like this is where the data is going and why these different companies and investors have a financial interest in your genetic data," said Jennifer King, a privacy specialist at the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence who has studied 23andMe.

23andMe and Branson's company will team up through a special purpose acquisition company (Spac), also known as a blank-check company. Such firms are created by investors with the sole purpose of raising capital as an alternative to the traditional IPO process, in which capital is raised before a company goes public. The acquisition is expected to close in the second quarter, after which the company will begin trading on the New York stock exchange under the ticker symbol ME.

Branson and Anne Wojcicki, the 23andMe CEO and co-founder, each donated $25m to the $250m Spac fund. The merger valued the company – with its 10 million-customer genome database – at $3.5bn, including debt. According to a spokesperson, 23andMe shareholders are retaining 81% ownership of the combined company and its research program will continue to be overseen by an independent institutional review board.

Your DNA is a valuable asset, so why give it to ancestry websites for free? | Laura Spinney
Read more

In a presentation by the Virgin Acquisition Group announcing the deal, the firm said research and health treatments offered by 23andMe represented the largest long-term value to its investors. The group cited the "vast proprietary dataset" of DNA that would allow Virgin to "unlock revenue streams across digital health, therapeutics, and more".

The presentation also noted that products like a subscription service with health insights could be the future of 23andMe.

That shift from ancestry testing to health tests at 23andMe has been under way for a while. Wojcicki told the Wall Street Journal last week that the core ancestry testing line of their product had weakened in recent years. "There is absolutely that slowdown," she told the newspaper regarding 23andMe's shift into the health market. "We have always seen health as a much bigger opportunity."

The company has also shared user data with GlaxoSmithKline for use in developing drugs. And as of 2018, 23andMe was under investigation by the FTC for its privacy practices. It is unclear where the case stands as the FTC does not comment on ongoing investigations.

A spokesperson from 23andMe told the Guardian all its DNA samples were processed in the US and it did not share customer data with any third parties "without the separate, explicit consent of the customer". Customers could opt to have their DNA sample destroyed or stored at the 23andMe lab, and they could close their accounts at any time.

"No customer data is shared with Virgin or anyone else as part of the proposed transaction," the spokesperson said.

23andMe claims user data is only shared outside the company through opt-in agreements (80% of users opt in to research) and says data is only shared when anonymized and in aggregate. The company's privacy statement notes that in the event of a merger, customer data "would remain subject to the promises made in any pre-existing privacy statement".

The explosion in access to DNA testing has had a number of unintended privacy effects, including outing family secrets, uniting the children of

previously anonymous sperm donors, and solving decades-old cold cases. Some DNA companies have reportedly shared data with the FBI. Pentagon leadership has encouraged military personnel not to take 23andMe tests due to privacy concerns. By the nature of DNA, a user who takes a test also shares insights into their ancestors and children.

Even if 23andMe does prioritize consumer privacy, the risk of others accessing the data in a security breach could be catastrophic, said Greg Touhill, a professor of cybersecurity at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College.

Incidents at other DNA companies show this risk is not theoretical: in 2019 a breach of one genetics website exposed the DNA data of more than 1 million people.

"The cybersecurity implications regarding the safeguarding of this data are huge," said Touhill. "If your computer is hacked, you can change your passwords. You can't change your DNA."

23andMe takes a number of intensive security measures to keep data secure, its spokesperson said. Its information management system has been certified under three different independent security standards and all data is encrypted in transit. The company also stores personal, identifiable customer information (such as name and email) separately from DNA data.

---

Minnesota

# Minnesota shooting: five wounded at Buffalo health clinic, police say

- Police report shooting at Allina Clinic Crossroads campus
- Local man, 67, taken into custody, Buffalo authorities say

Law enforcement personnel and first responders gather outside the Allina Health clinic. Photograph: David Joles/AP

Law enforcement personnel and first responders gather outside the Allina Health clinic. Photograph: David Joles/AP

*Associated Press in Minneapolis*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 16.59 EST

Five people were shot and wounded at a health clinic in Minnesota on Tuesday and a local man was taken into custody, police said.

The shooting happened at the Allina clinic in Buffalo, a city of about 15,000 people roughly 40 miles north-west of Minneapolis, said Kelly Prestidge, an office manager for the Buffalo police department.

The alleged shooter was identified as 67-year-old Gregory Paul Ulrich, of Buffalo.

The Wright county sheriff, Sean Deringer, said Ulrich had been well known to authorities before the attack.

“We have had several calls for service dating to 2003,” Deringer said.

Public online court records for Ulrich list a handful of arrests and convictions for drunk driving and possession of small amounts of marijuana from 2004 through 2014, mostly in Wright county, including two convictions for gross misdemeanor drunk driving that resulted in short jail sentences.

The Buffalo police chief, Pat Budke, said the attack did not appear to be an instance of domestic terrorism, though he did not elaborate.

Minnesota’s governor, Tim Walz, said at an earlier news conference that “some improvised explosive devices” were part of the attack, though he did not say whether any were detonated.

“At this time it appears it was a single individual,” Walz said. “Again, too early to tell motives.”

Budke earlier told the TV station KSTP the shooting happened inside the Allina Clinic Crossroads campus. He said the situation was contained shortly before noon and that there was no further threat to the public’s safety.

A North Memorial Health spokesperson, Abigail Greenheck, said multiple victims had been brought to its hospital in Robbinsdale. She did not say how many or what condition they were in.

An Allina Health spokesman, Timothy Burke, declined to say if any victims had been brought to its Buffalo hospital.

An FBI spokesman, Kevin Smith, said agency bomb technicians were on their way to the scene, but he could not confirm media reports about a possible bomb or explosion at the clinic.

Members of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' enforcement group and special agents from the state bureau of criminal apprehension were also headed to the scene, spokespeople for the agencies said.

The clinic is set off at the edge of Buffalo near an old red barn with flaking paint. Dozens of emergency vehicles and men carrying guns were on the scene, setting up a perimeter. TV footage showed little activity at the clinic itself, but several shattered plate-glass windows could be seen. At least two windows were shattered a nearby motel.

A state department of public health spokesperson said he did not immediately know if the clinic had been administering Covid-19 vaccinations. An Allina spokesman referred all questions to the Buffalo police and the Wright county sheriff's office.

---

Germany

# Ex-banker Paul Mora put on Interpol wanted list in German fraud inquiry

Arrest warrant issued over alleged role in cum-ex trades that defrauded the state of million of euros

Ex-London banker Paul Mora is wanted over a scheme said to be ‘the greatest tax robbery in German history’. Photograph: Bka Handout/EPA

Ex-London banker Paul Mora is wanted over a scheme said to be ‘the greatest tax robbery in German history’. Photograph: Bka Handout/EPA

*Philip Oltermann in Berlin*
*@philipoltermann*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 13.00 EST

Interpol has added New Zealand citizen Paul Mora to its list of most wanted criminals, after German authorities issued an international arrest warrant

over the former London banker's alleged involvement in a multimillion euro tax fraud scheme.

Mora, 53, is one of six people charged in 2017 by Frankfurt prosecutors over the "cum-ex" scandal, a complex derivatives juggling act that siphoned taxpayer's money from German state coffers, causing estimated damages of more than €113m.

Described by one prosecutor as "the greatest tax robbery in German history", the scheme involved trading shares at high speed on or just before the dividend record date – the day the company checks its records to identify shareholders – and then claiming two or more refunds for capital gains tax which had in fact only been paid to the state once.

Two British bankers who worked on Mora's team first at HypoVereinsbank and later his own investment vehicles Ballance Capital and Arunvill were handed suspended jail terms and one a €14m fine for tax evasion by a court in Bonn last year.

Former London bankers convicted after Germany's 'greatest tax robbery'
Read more

At the start of January, a regional court in Wiesbaden ruled that Mora, a former employee of investment bank Merill Lynch, should stand trial in Germany.

"Mora is suspected of having played a decisive role in the development and planning of cum-ex deals," according to a poster by Germany's federal police poster to be displayed at international airports. "He is presumed to be staying abroad."

While Germany and New Zealand do not have an extradition treaty, Interpol's red notice arrest warrant will in effect stop Mora's ability to travel outside his home country.

Mora has said he reserves his full rights to remain in New Zealand, with his lawyers telling Bloomberg in a statement: "He is not a 'fugitive' and these public steps are therefore wholly unnecessary." He has told New Zealand

media that all his trades were “approved by legal experts and undertaken in accordance with advice”.

Born in New Plymouth, Mora had a background in tax law before moving into investment banking in the City of London, where former colleagues recall his penchant for rugby and Hawaiian shirts.

He is understood to have invested in property in Christchurch, where he in 2014 purchased the 17-storey Forsyth Barr building that was badly damaged in the earthquake two years later.

In London, Mora was until 2015 listed as director of the Cinnamon Club, an Indian restaurant located in a Grade II-listed Victorian building next to the Department for Education and popular with politicians and business people. According to German newspaper Die Zeit, the restaurant was where cum-ex deals were contrived and later celebrated, with one insider referring to it as the “cum-ex lounge”.

Mora’s current whereabouts are unclear.

---

Germany

# Man, 100, charged in Germany over 3,518 Nazi concentration camp murders

Man is alleged to have been Nazi SS guard at Sachsenhausen camp between 1942 and 1945

The former Nazi concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, north of Berlin, where the accused is alleged to have been a guard. Photograph: Tobias Schwarz/AFP/Getty Images

The former Nazi concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, north of Berlin, where the accused is alleged to have been a guard. Photograph: Tobias Schwarz/AFP/Getty Images

*Associated Press in Berlin*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 11.45 EST

German prosecutors have charged a 100-year-old man with 3,518 counts of accessory to murder on allegations he served during the second world war as

a Nazi SS guard at a concentration camp on the outskirts of Berlin.

The man is alleged to have worked at the Sachsenhausen camp between 1942 and 1945 as an enlisted member of the Nazi party's paramilitary wing, said Cyrill Klement, who led the investigation of the centenarian for the Neuruppin prosecutors' office.

The man's name was not released, in line with German privacy laws. Despite his advanced age, the suspect is considered fit enough to stand trial, though accommodations may have to be made to limit how many hours a day the court is in session, according to Klement.

The Neuruppin office was handed the case in 2019 by the special federal prosecutors' office in Ludwigsburg tasked with investigating Nazi-era war crimes, Klement said.

It comes after prosecutors in the northern town of Itzehoe announced accessory to murder charges last week against a 95-year-old woman who worked during the war as the secretary of the SS commandant of the Stutthof concentration camp. That case and the charges against the 100-year-old man both rely on recent legal precedent in Germany establishing that anyone who helped a Nazi camp function can be prosecuted for accessory to the murders committed there.

That was established in 2011 with the conviction of the former Ohio autoworker John Demjanjuk as an accessory to murder on allegations that he served as a guard at the Sobibor death camp in German-occupied Poland. Demjanjuk, who denied the allegations, died before his appeal could be heard.

They were at the death camp at the same time. Now the survivor sees the SS guard meet his fate
Read more

A federal court subsequently upheld the 2015 conviction of the former Auschwitz guard Oskar Gröning achieved with the same line of reasoning, solidifying the precedent. Before that, German courts had required

prosecutors to justify charges by presenting evidence of a former guard's participation in a specific killing, often a near-impossible task.

"The core of this case follows the decision [in the cases] of Demjanjuk and Gröning, that being part of the functioning of this machinery of death is sufficient for an accessory to murder conviction," Klement said.

The court has not yet set a date for the trial.

---

Bitcoin

# Cryptocurrencies rise in popularity in world's conflict zones

Libya, Palestine and Syria near top in online searches for bitcoin and other digital forms of money, analysis finds

Tesla’s purchase of $1.5bn in bitcoin has raised the currency’s profile. Photograph: Chesnot/Getty Images

Tesla’s purchase of $1.5bn in bitcoin has raised the currency’s profile. Photograph: Chesnot/Getty Images

*Phillip Inman*
*@phillipinman*
Tue 9 Feb 2021 14.05 EST

People in the world’s major conflict zones are turning to cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin as soaring values and the backing of super-rich investors make them more attractive.

Online searches for bitcoin, ethereum and dogecoin have increased in Libya, Syria and Palestine, pushing aside the usual focus of interest in stock markets and safe-haven investments in gold and property.

Publicity surrounding the new breed of digital currencies has spread across the world since the pandemic struck and meant users have also looked to them as a way to borrow when banks have become reluctant to lend money.

Tesla's owner, Elon Musk, is among the most high-profile supporters, adding his tweets of approval to other celebrity backers including the actor Gwyneth Paltrow, the rapper Snoop Dogg, and the billionaire former Microsoft chair Bill Gates.

Last week Tesla bought $1.5bn in bitcoin in a move that propelled the currency to a high of almost $43,500. It has since increased again to almost $48,000 before falling back on Tuesday to $46,250, an increase of more than 300% since February last year.

Digital currencies, unlike the pound, dollar and euro, are not backed by a central bank that can print money to meet growing demand. There are a fixed number of bitcoins and they are traded and registered on a ledger that is not part of the banking system or visible to regulators.

Analysis by TradingView, one of the top 100 most-visited websites in the world, found that countries that rank at the bottom of the Human Freedom Index, or that are politically turbulent for other reasons, appear in the top 10 countries for online digital currency searches.

Guardian business email sign-up

Using data from 27m search inquiries from its 100 million users between November 2020 and January 2021, the firm found that when searches were calculated as a percentage of all inquiries, more than half in Cuba (50.4%) were made about cryptocurrency assets, an increase of 12.2% on last year.

Online inquires made up 42.2% of the total in Libya, 41.9% in Ukraine and 38.7% in Palestine, putting them all in the top five for cryptocurrency searches while Syria at 36.9% was 10th, suggesting that countries with high

levels of instability are proportionally more interested in digital assets than more developed nations.

James Maddison, the UK head of TradingView, said he could only speculate about why digital currencies were becoming popular in less developed countries, but a switch away from hard currencies was likely to be popular in areas of the world where it was difficult to access foreign currency, hoarding cash was subject to crime, and restrictions on lending by high-street banks and the closure of branches were common.

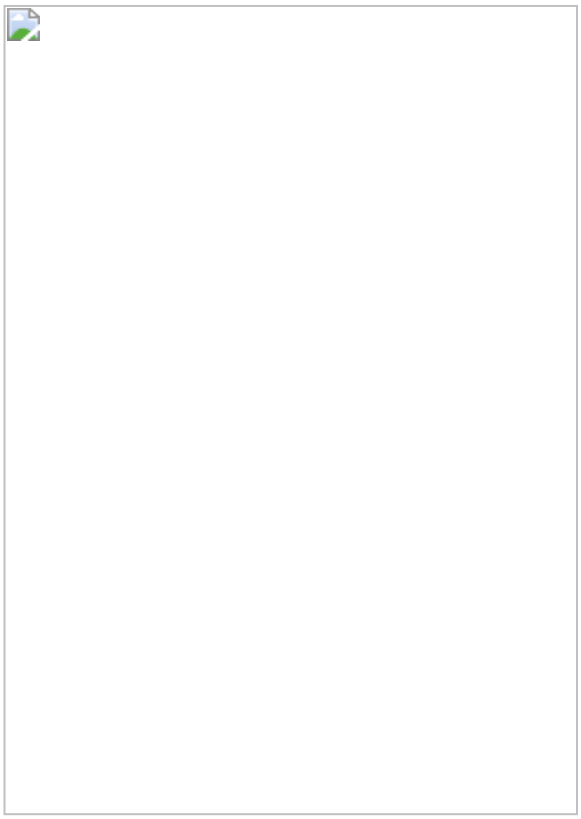
---

This land is your land
Canada

# Inuit hunters blockade iron mine in freezing temperatures over expansion

Standoff exposes tensions between large Inuit organizations with power to approve permits and residents of small communities

Supported by



About this content

Leyland Cecco in Toronto

Tue 9 Feb 2021 15.10 EST Last modified on Tue 9 Feb 2021 15.12 EST

Hunters prepare to hunt narwhal after a pod was spotted entering the sheltered bay near Clyde River. Photograph: Leyland Cecco

A group of Inuit hunters have braved nearly a week of freezing temperatures to blockade a remote iron mine in northern Canada, in protest over an expansion plan they say will harm local wildlife.

The blockade, which has prompted solidarity rallies in other Nunavut communities, has also exposed growing tensions between large Inuit organizations with the power to approve development permits – and residents of the small communities where the impact of such projects is felt.

Since 5 February, seven hunters have created a makeshift barrier of snowmobiles and sleds to block the airstrip and service road of the Mary River ore mine, halting operations. Temperatures in recent days have dipped to the low -30sC.

At issue are controversial plans drawn up by the mine's operator Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation to double output. To bring 12m tonnes of iron ore to market, the mine has said it needs to build a railway to a port near the community of Pond Inlet.

But hunters have pushed back over fears that the expansion could threaten the populations of caribou and narwhal – two key sources of food – if

approved.

map

“Baffinland is making money and we are given very little money and we know that money will not bring back wildlife,” Tom Naqitarvik said in an Inuktitut language video posted to Facebook, reported CBC News.

As the standoff enters its fifth day, 700 workers are stranded at the Mary River site, and according to the company, the blockade on the airstrip means food supplies cannot be delivered.

“Baffinland personnel have had numerous meetings with organizers, both at the blockades and in Pond Inlet, imploring the protesters to relocate off the airstrip and allow runway maintenance to take place and flights to resume,” the company said in a statement. “So far, these discussions have not yielded any progress.”

Baffinland says that expansion of the mine is critical for its operations in the region to stay profitable. It has tried to ease concerns over the project, saying it is confident wildlife will not be affected by increased ore shipments The company has also touted more than C$2bn in royalties paid to Inuit over the mine’s 30-year lifespan.

Hunters pull up the carcass of a hunted narwhal a few miles from the hamlet of Clyde River. The small whale provides food for the community, which is heavily reliant on hunting as the main source of food. Photograph: Leyland Cecco

Under the landmark 1993 Nunavut Agreement, which established a number of key rights Inuit on their lands, Baffinland is required to negotiate a benefit agreement with the Inuit groups that represent residents of the territory.

But the protest has also drawn attention to long-simmering tensions between remote Inuit communities and those organizations, which some residents say have lost touch with the challenges of living in remote communities.

After years of feeling overlooked and ignored by decision-makers in the territorial capital of Iqaluit, northern communities are looking to form their own, legally recognized association, said Jerry Natanine, mayor of Clyde River. This new group would have the power to negotiate royalty payments and have greater say over projects that could affect their communities, he said.

“The decision comes from years of disappointment from Inuit organizations that don’t look out for our behalf,” he said. “We’ve been dreaming about the possibility of creating something that could help us benefit from the development that is happening and running our own government.”

Jerry Natanine, mayor of Clyde River. Photograph: Leyland Cecco

Many of the groups opposed to the project are not opposed to all mining in the region. “My brother and cousins work at the mine. I don’t want them to lose their jobs,” said Natanine. “But the mine doesn’t consider our ideas. We told them to change the railway location and we would accept it. We told them, ‘Take this route instead.’ But they just shoved us off.”

Despite demands from those at the blockade for a new royalty structure, Baffinland has said it has no legal authority to negotiate with community groups.

Residents of Clyde River plan to bring supplies to the Mary River protesters in the coming days, a journey that could take three days by snowmobile and requires travellers to brave mountain valleys and perilous sections of ice.

“At the end of the day, the expansion project was imposed on us. Even so, we’ve been clearly and repeatedly telling the mine that their plans were unacceptable. And they haven’t listened to any of our suggestions,” Natinine said. “So now we’re left fighting for our culture and way of life.”

---

# Table of Contents

- France Europe’s oldest person survives Covid
- Vaccine Elton John and Michael Caine star in video to promote jab
- 'It's the isolation' Parents on the impact of lockdown for children
- 'Chumocracy' Care homes failed by lack of PPE during UK Covid first wave, say MPs
- Oxford/AstraZeneca The bumpy road to Covid vaccine confidence

2021.02.10 - Spotlight

- ‘I was never meek’ Priyanka Chopra Jonas on Miss World, Modi and misogyny
- It's a Sin There is such a raw truth to it
- Belarus Lukashenko plans 'people's assembly' but reform unlikely
- Sweden Embassy in Minsk harbours two Belarusians for five months
- #QueertheBallet It's more than a man lifting a woman in a tutu
- Encryption machines and radio transmitters Relics of the cold war at auction
- Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 2 review Four months with the folding tablet-phone
- Deep dive Underwater photographer of the year 2021 – the winners
- Charming time loop romcom The Map of Tiny Perfect Things review

2021.02.10 - Opinion

- Central banks aren't what they used to be - and the better for it
- The culture war between Gen Z and millennials is on. The first battle? Side partings
- Wealthy vaccine cheats prove we were never all in this together
- Ten years for breaking Covid travel rules? Borders are the latest Boris Johnson fail

Cartoon Steve Bell on the Queen and Treasury's windfarm windfall
Ocado may lose out despite its lockdown-aided sales rise

2021.02.10 - Around the world

Myanmar Protesters return to streets of capital despite police violence
Amnesty UK failing to protect human rights defenders abroad, says charity
Pakistan Family of girl, 12, forced to marry abductor condemn authorities
Human rights Chinese publisher who spoke up for dissident academic is jailed for three years
Data protection DNA privacy fears in 23andMe deal with Branson
Minnesota Multiple people shot at health clinic, police say
'Cum-ex' scandal Ex-banker Paul Mora put on Interpol wanted list in German fraud inquiry
Germany Man, 100, charged over 3,518 Nazi concentration camp murders
Cryptocurrencies Rise in popularity in world's conflict zones
Canada Inuit hunters blockade iron mine in freezing temperatures over expansion