



In this Nov. 19, 2020, file photo, EMT Giselle Dorgalli, third from right, performs chest compression on a patient who tested positive for coronavirus in the emergency room at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center in the Mission Hills section of Los Angeles.

Associated Press

Daily COVID-19 deaths in US reach highest level since May

Associated Press

The surging coronavirus is taking an increasingly dire toll across the U.S. just as a vaccine appears close at hand, with the country now averaging over 1,300 COVID-19 deaths per day — the highest level since the calamitous spring in

and around New York City. The overall U.S. death toll has reached about 254,000, by far the most in the world. Confirmed infections have eclipsed more than 11.8 million, after the biggest one-day gain on record Thursday — almost 188,000. And the number

of people in the hospital with COVID-19 hit another all-time high at more than 80,000. With health experts deeply afraid Thanksgiving travel and holiday gatherings next week will fuel the spread of the virus, many states and cities are imposing near-lockdowns or

other restrictions. California ordered a 10 p.m.-to 5-a.m. curfew starting Saturday, covering 94% of the state's 40 million residents. The Texas border county of El Paso, where more than 300 people have died from COVID-19 since October, is advertising jobs for

morgue workers capable of lifting bodies weighing 175 pounds (79 kilograms) or more. Officials are offering more than \$27 an hour for work described as not only physically arduous but "emotionally taxing as well."

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 Green Beans SAVE \$2.86 \$3.99 Per KG	 BBQ Chicken Breast SAVE \$1.45 \$5.71 Per KG	 Beyond Meat Beef Free Beyond Burger 8oz SAVE \$3.45 \$11.42 Per KG	 Ponche Caribe 750ml SAVE \$1.14 \$13.14 Each
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*Offer is valid from 20 Nov - 26 Nov 2020 and while supply lasts. All prices are in US dollars (\$)

Daily COVID-19 deaths in US reach highest level since May



In this Nov. 19, 2020, file photo, healthcare workers process people waiting in line at a United Memorial Medical Center COVID-19 testing site in Houston.

Continued from Front

The county had already begun paying jail inmates \$2 an hour to help move corpses and has ordered at least 10 refrigerated trucks as morgues run out of room. COVID-19 deaths in the U.S. are at their highest level since late May, when the Northeast was emerging from the first wave of the crisis.

They peaked at about 2,200 a day in late April, when New York City was the epicenter and bodies were being loaded onto refrigerated trucks by forklift.

Amid the bleak new statistics, Pfizer said Friday it is asking U.S. regulators to allow emergency use of its COVID-19 vaccine, setting in motion a process that could make the first, limited shots available as early as next month, with health care workers and other high-risk groups likely to get priority.

But it could take months before the vaccine becomes

widely available. Pfizer has said the vaccine appears 95% effective at preventing the disease.

In Texas, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has ruled out another shutdown and singled out El Paso county leaders for not enforcing restrictions already in place. The state's attorney general, Ken Paxton, likened the county's chief administrator to a "tyrant" after Paxton won an appeals court ruling blocking local leaders from shutting down gyms and other nonessential businesses.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, also a Republican, failed to persuade leaders of the GOP-controlled legislature to reject a bill that would limit his administration's power to deal with the crisis.

At issue is a Senate bill that would ban the state health department from issuing mandatory quarantine orders enforced against people who are not sick or exposed to disease — such as the order announced by

the governor Tuesday setting a 10 p.m. curfew.

DeWine said he will veto the bill when it reaches his desk.

Republicans in both the House and Senate have enough votes to override the veto if they choose.

"This bill is a disaster," DeWine said Thursday. "This is not a bill that can become law."

In California, the curfew will be in place in 41 of the state's 58 counties. Its impact will depend heavily on voluntary compliance. Sheriffs of some counties said they won't enforce it. Under the rules, people who are not on essential errands must stay home after 10 p.m.

The curfew is less strict than the near-total ban on non-essential business and travel that Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom imposed in March and which he credited with flattening the rate of COVID-19 cases.

Rocco Temasamani, who was selling jewelry Friday at San Diego's Ocean Beach,

said the curfew will do little to curb the coronavirus and will instead anger people who consider it government overreach.

He thinks the order will particularly rankle supporters of President Donald Trump who are already agitated by the president's claims of election fraud and back his hands-off approach to regulating behavior during the pandemic.

"It's really, really throwing gasoline on a fire," said Temasamani, 52, who was skeptical that police will enforce the curfew.

Michael Maring, an auto mechanic from El Centro, California, who was visiting San Diego, said he will obey the curfew, despite his fondness for 2 a.m. bike rides, because he doesn't want any trouble with police.

Like Temasamani, he thinks authorities will be reluctant to enforce the new measure.

In Kansas, new cases have risen to an average of over 2,700 per day, nearly four

times higher than a month ago.

"Our hospitals are overwhelmed with coronavirus patients. Health care workers are burned out," Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly said Friday.

In rural western Kansas, the number of people seeking testing at a Kearny County clinic doubled over the past week to about 80 per day, said Dr. Lane Olson, a family practice doctor.

He said nurses had to make multiple calls this week before the University of Kansas Hospital, about 360 miles (580 kilometers) away in Kansas City, Kansas, agreed to take one of his coronavirus patients whose oxygen levels were falling. Then several more calls were needed to find an air transport company that could fly her there.

In the state capital, Topeka, the emergency department at Stormont Vail Hospital has taken over a back hallway and a waiting room, with some patients waiting hours to be moved to a regular room. The crunch has area officials considering opening a field hospital.

In Arizona, four Democratic mayors urged Republican Gov. Doug Ducey to impose a statewide requirement for people to wear masks in public. The move came as health officials reported more than 4,000 additional COVID-19 cases for the second consecutive day.

Ducey's chief of staff, Daniel Scarpinato, pushed back on the request, saying the mayors are doing little to enforce their own mask ordinances or ensure that existing safety measures put in place by the governor are being enforced. □



Trump makes late-term bid to lower prescription drug costs

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Trying to close out major unfinished business, the Trump administration issued regulations Friday that could lower the prices Americans pay for many prescription drugs.

But in a time of political uncertainty, it's hard to say whether the rules will withstand expected legal challenges from the pharmaceutical industry or whether the incoming Biden administration will accept, amend or try to roll them back entirely.

"The drug companies don't like me too much. But we had to do it," President Donald Trump said in announcing the new policy at the White House. "I just hope they keep it. I hope they have the courage to keep it," he added, noting pressure from drug company lobbyists.

The two finalized rules, long in the making, would:

— tie what Medicare pays for medications administered in a doctor's office to the lowest price paid among a group of other economically advanced countries. That's called the "most favored nations" approach. It is adamantly opposed by critics aligned with the pharmaceutical industry, who liken it to socialism. The administration estimates it could save \$28 billion over seven years



President Donald Trump speaks during a news conference in the briefing room at the White House in Washington, Friday, Nov. 20, 2020.

Associated Press

for Medicare recipients through lower copays. It would take effect Jan. 1.

— require drugmakers, for brand name pharmacy medications, to give Medicare enrollees rebates that now go to insurers and middlemen called pharmacy benefit managers. Insurers that deliver Medicare's "Part D" prescription benefit say that would raise premiums. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates it would increase taxpayer costs by \$177 billion over 10 years. The Trump administration disputes that and says its rule could potentially result in 30% savings for patients. It would take effect Jan. 1,

2022.

The industry is considering "all options to stop this reckless attack on the companies working around the clock to beat COVID-19," the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America said in a statement.

Trump came into office accusing pharmaceutical companies of "getting away with murder" and complaining that other countries whose governments set drug prices were taking advantage of Americans.

As a candidate in 2016, Trump advocated for Medicare to negotiate prices. As president, he dropped that

idea, objected to by most Republicans. Instead Trump began pursuing changes through regulations.

He also backed a bipartisan Senate bill that would have capped what Medicare recipients with high bills pay for medications, while generally limiting price increases. Ambitious in scope, the legislation from Sens. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., did not get a full Senate vote.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, a former drug company executive, said the rules will "break this model where patients suffer, where prices increase every year,"

while corporate insiders enrich themselves.

Addressing the prospect of legal battles, Azar said "we feel that both regulations are extremely strong and any industry challenging them is declaring themselves at odds with American patients and President Trump's commitment to lowering out-of-pocket costs."

The international pricing rule would cover many cancer drugs and other medications delivered by infusion or injection in a doctor's office.

It would apply to 50 medications that account for the highest spending under Medicare's "Part B" benefit for outpatient care. Ironically, the legal authority for Trump's action comes from the Affordable Care Act, the Obama-era health care overhaul he's still trying to repeal.

The rule also changes how hospitals and doctors are paid for administering the drugs, in an effort to try to remove incentives for using higher cost medications.

Relying on international prices to lower U.S. costs is an approach also favored by Democrats, including President-elect Joe Biden. But Democrats would go much further, authorizing Medicare to use lower prices from overseas to wrest industry concessions for all expensive medications, not just those administered in clinical settings. □

Lieutenant gov's flags fly in the face of some PA lawmakers

By MARC LEVY

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania's lieutenant governor, Democrat John Fetterman, may have gotten under somebody's skin. A provision slipped into lame-duck budget legislation Friday would ban flags not approved by lawmakers from flying at the state Capitol — such as the pro-marijuana legalization and LGBTQ- and transgender-rights flags that Fetterman hangs from his second-floor outdoor balcony that overlooks the building's broad front steps.

In an interview, the irreverent Fetterman said he hadn't known about the provision until told by a reporter Friday.

But, he said, he had no intention of taking them down — unless lawmakers pass legislation to legalize marijuana for recreational use and make it illegal for employers and others to discriminate against someone because of the sexual orientation or gender identity.

"I would be delighted to take them down if they give us that," Fetterman said. "That's the reason I'm

flying them." The Republican-controlled Legislature has blocked legislation on both fronts. Fetterman's marijuana flag flies year-round, while he flies LGBTQ- and transgender-rights flags during Pride Month in June.

"Are they going to send the gay pride police to come and seize them? I didn't know we had that division in the state police," Fetterman said. A spokesperson for House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff, R-Centre, would not say whether it had anything to do with Fetterman's flags, only that



In this Thursday, Jan. 24, 2019 file photo, Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. John Fetterman speaks at a news conference in the governor's Capitol reception room in Harrisburg, Pa.

Associated Press

"it has to do with providing for uniformity and decorum

for what is displayed on the outside of the Capitol." □

Georgia governor certifies presidential electors for Biden

By KATE BRUMBACK

Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia's governor and top elections official on Friday certified results showing Joe Biden won the presidential race over Republican President Donald Trump.

The certification brings the state one step closer to wrapping up an election that has been fraught with unfounded accusations of fraud by Trump and his supporters.

Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger certified results reported by the state's 159 counties following a meticulous hand count of the 5 million ballots cast in the race. The results show Biden with 2.47 million votes, President Donald Trump with 2.46 million votes and Libertarian Jo Jorgensen with 62,138. That leaves Biden leading by a margin of 12,670 votes or 0.25%. Later Friday, Republican Gov. Brian Kemp certified the state's slate of 16 presidential electors, his spokesman Cody Hall said. At a news conference, Kemp did not clearly endorse the results. Instead he stated that the law requires him to "formalize the certification, which paves the way for the Trump campaign to pursue other legal options and a separate recount if they choose."

The Republican governor hasn't stepped forward to



Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger speaks during a news conference on Friday, Nov. 20, 2020, in Atlanta.

defend the integrity of this year's elections amid attacks by Trump and other members of his own party, who claim without evidence that the presidential vote in Georgia was tainted by fraud. Kemp has neither endorsed Trump's fraud claims nor backed Raffensperger in his assertion that the election was conducted fairly.

The hand tally stemmed from an audit required by a new state law and wasn't in response to any suspected problems with the state's results or an official recount request. The audit was meant to confirm that the

voting machines correctly tabulated the votes.

"Working as an engineer throughout my life, I live by the motto that numbers don't lie," Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger said during a news conference at the state Capitol. "As secretary of state, I believe that the numbers that we have presented today are correct. The numbers reflect the verdict of the people, not a decision by the secretary of state's office or of courts or of either campaign."

Raffensperger's office stumbled earlier in the day when it prematurely an-

nounced the certification while it was still unfinished. Forty minutes afterward, a corrected news release was sent out saying that the results would be released later. The momentary slip was yet another moment of drama in a race that has been fraught with accusations.

Biden is the first Democratic presidential nominee to carry the state since 1992. Now that the results are certified, Trump's campaign will have two business days to request a recount since the margin is within 0.5%. That recount would be done using scanning ma-

chines that read and tally the votes and would be paid for by the counties, the secretary of state's office has said.

The hand count produced some slight differences from the previous machine tally, but no individual county showed a variation in margin larger than 0.73%, and the variation in margin in 103 of the state's 159 counties was less than 0.05%, the secretary of state's office said. During the audit, several counties discovered previously uncounted ballots and had to recertify their results.

It is the totals certified by the counties, not the results of the hand tally, that were certified by the state.

"It's quite honestly hard to believe that during the audit thousands of uncounted ballots were found weeks after a razor-thin outcome in a presidential election," Kemp said. "This is simply unacceptable."

Raffensperger also said Friday that he plans to propose legislative changes aimed at increasing trust in the results, including allowing state officials to intervene in counties that have systemic problems in administering elections, requiring photo ID for absentee voting and adding stricter controls to allow for challenges to voters who might not live where they say. □

Illinois teen charged in protest slayings posts \$2M bail



This undated booking photo from the Antioch (Illinois) Police Department shows Kyle Rittenhouse, who has been charged with fatally shooting two men and injuring a third during protest in Kenosha, Wis., in late August.

Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — A 17-year-old from Illinois who is charged with killing two

people during a protest in Wisconsin and whose case has become a rallying cry

for some conservatives posted \$2 million bail Friday and was released from custody.

Kyle Rittenhouse is accused of fatally shooting Joseph Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber and wounding Gaige Grosskreutz during a demonstration Aug. 25 that followed the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha. He posted bond through his attorney at about 2 p.m., Kenosha County Sheriff's Sgt. David Wright said.

Rittenhouse, of Antioch, Illinois, told police he was attacked while he was guarding a business and that he fired in self-defense.

He faces multiple charges, including intentional homicide, reckless endangerment and being a minor in possession of a firearm. Wisconsin law doesn't permit minors to carry or possess a gun unless they're hunting. He is due back in court on Dec. 3 for a preliminary hearing.

His case has taken on political overtones. Supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement have painted Rittenhouse as a trigger-happy white supremacist. Conservatives upset over property destruction during recent protests have portrayed him as a patriot exercising his right to bear

arms during unrest. A legal defense fund for him has attracted millions of dollars in donations, and his mother got a standing ovation from women at a Waukesha County GOP function in September.

Huber's father, John Huber, asked Kenosha County Circuit Court Commissioner Loren Keating during a hearing Nov. 2 to set Rittenhouse's bail between \$4 million and \$10 million. Huber said Rittenhouse thinks he's above the law and noted the effort to raise money on his behalf. He also suggested militia groups would hide him from police if he were released. □

APEC leaders, including Trump, agree on free trade

By EILEEN NG

Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia

(AP) — Leaders from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, including U.S. President Donald Trump, pledged Friday to work toward free, open and non-discriminatory trade and investment to revive their coronavirus-battered economies.

The leaders cast aside differences to issue their first joint statement since 2017, in which they agreed to further deepen regional integration by working toward a massive free trade agreement involving the 21 APEC economies.

This year's host, Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, told a news conference that the U.S.-China trade war that had hampered talks in the past has "been eclipsed" by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With growth in the Asia-Pacific region expected to slump 2.7% this year, from a 3.6% growth in 2019, he said APEC's focus was on accelerating economic recovery and developing an affordable vaccine.

"The health risks and its impact on the global economic ecosystem has been the major priority agenda for all APEC economies this year," he said.



Monitor display showing U.S. President Donald Trump, center, together with other leaders attending the first virtual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' summit, hosted by Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Friday, Nov. 20, 2020.

APEC, whose members account for 60% of global GDP, has also "pledged to refrain from backtracking and resorting to protectionist measures to keep markets and borders open," he added.

The APEC leaders' meeting was the first since 2018 after last year's host, Chile, canceled the annual summit due to violent domestic protests. But at the Papua New Guinea summit in 2018, APEC leaders failed to issue a joint statement

for the first time amid a U.S.-China row over trade policies. Trump's participation Friday, his first since 2017, came as a surprise as he challenges the outcome of the U.S. presidential election, won by Joe Biden. Last weekend, Trump skipped the East Asia Summits and withdrew from speaking at an APEC CEO meeting earlier Friday.

Trump, whose "America First" policy has alienated trading partners, addressed the meeting but his

speech wasn't immediately available.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, in his remarks, urged countries to "defend multilateralism" and called for the establishment of an "Asia-Pacific free trade zone at an early date."

He told the meeting that Beijing would also "actively consider" joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement that includes Japan, Canada, Mexico

and other regional economies but not the United States. Trump pulled out of the CPTPP's predecessor, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which never took effect. Xi's comments came just after Beijing and 14 Asian nations inked the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade agreement.

If China were to join the CPTPP, that would make Xi's government a member of the Asia-Pacific region's two biggest trade arrangements, while Washington is part of neither.

APEC leaders adopted the Putrajaya Vision 2040, a new 20-year growth vision to replace the Bogor Goals named after the Indonesian town where leaders agreed in 1994 to free and open trade and investment.

They pledged to build an "open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful region" by 2040, and tasked officers to draw up implementation plans by next year.

"We recognize the importance of a free, open, fair, non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable trade and investment environment to drive economic recovery at such a challenging time," according to the joint statement. □

Associated Press

Dutch government unveils coronavirus vaccination plans

By MIKE CORDER

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — The Dutch government will prioritize people aged over 60, those in health risk groups and front-line health care workers for coronavirus vaccinations when the shots become available, the health ministry announced Friday.

Outlining its strategy to protect people against the pandemic that has killed more than 1.36 million people worldwide, the ministry said vaccinations will be free and voluntary.

Dutch health authorities already have bought 25 million syringes and extra freezers for vaccines that need to be stored at very low temperatures, the min-

istry said. "Luckily, the Netherlands has experience with large vaccination campaigns," Health Minister Hugo de Jonge said. "When vaccines are delivered, everything is ready. That will probably be in the first months of 2021. But if vaccine makers succeed in delivering in December, we can get to work straight away." The ministry said that based on recent reports from producers working on vaccines, it expects to be able to vaccinate around 3.5 million people in the first quarter of 2021.

The government will begin by offering vaccinations to the approximately 155,000 people who live in care homes, and those who live in psychiatric institutions as

well as the staff. Without the cost of the vaccine shots themselves, the expected cost of the vaccination operation in the country of just over 17 million people is expected to be between 900 million euros and 1 billion euros (\$1.1-1.2 billion).

The health ministry said that the Netherlands is playing "an active role" in European Union negotiations with five vaccine developers and the country has contracts in place for nearly 50 million shots, enough for nearly 28 million people. Negotiations are still underway with Moderna for a further 3.1 million shots. The total cost of the vaccines is expected to be around 700 million euros. "The vaccine is our greatest asset to over-



In this file photo dated Friday, April 24, 2020, a police officer is silhouetted as he passes a mural by artist Casper Cruse, showing a woman with a face mask holding a heart in the colors of the Dutch flag in support for those suffering from the effects of the coronavirus, in The Hague, Netherlands.

Associated Press

come this crisis, to put the pandemic behind us," De Jonge said, urging people to get vaccinated "not just

for yourself, but for each other. We all have a responsibility to protect one another." □

Death on eve of Brazil's Black Consciousness Day sparks fury

By DAVID BILLER
Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A Black man died after being beaten by supermarket security guards in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre on the eve of Friday's Black Consciousness Day observations, sparking outrage as videos of the incident circulated on social media. A short clip showed one guard restraining João Alberto Silveira Freitas just outside the doors of a Carrefour supermarket while the other pummeled him with repeated blows to the face. A store employee stood to the side filming. Other clips, shot afterward, showed a guard kneeling atop Freitas' back.

Dozens of protesters entered a Carrefour in Brazil's capital, Brasília, on Friday morning, chanting "Black lives matter!" One held a sign reading: "Don't shop at Carrefour. You could die." Protests were called for additional cities Friday afternoon.

Carrefour released a statement lamenting Freitas' "brutal death," and said it will "adopt the appropriate measures to hold the people responsible for this criminal act." It also said it will end its contract with the security company, fire the store manager who was on duty and close the store out of respect for the



Holding the Portuguese message "Black Lives Matter," activists demonstrate against the murder of Black man João Alberto Silveira Freitas, which occurred the night before at a different Carrefour supermarket, on Brazil's National Black Consciousness Day in Brasília, Brazil, Friday, Nov. 20, 2020. Associated Press

victim.

The men who beat Freitas have been detained and are being investigated for homicide due to the victim's asphyxiation and his inability to defend himself, said Nadine Anflor, the civil police chief for the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, where Porto Alegre is capital. One of the men was a temporary military police officer who was off-duty, said Rodrigo Mohr, head of the state's military police.

The two spoke on a Twitter video posted by Gov. Edu-

ardo Leite, who highlighted recent state policies enacted to combat racial intolerance.

"Unfortunately, on this day in which we should be celebrating those public policies, we come across scenes that leaves us all indignant due to the excessive violence that caused the death of a Black citizen at the supermarket," he said.

Black Consciousness Day is observed as a holiday in many parts of Brazil, where Black and mixed-race people account for about 57%

of the population but constitute 74% of victims of lethal violence, according to the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety, a nongovernmental organization. The percentage is even higher, 79%, for those killed by police.

Local online news site G1 reported that last night's incident at the Carrefour in Porto Alegre followed a confrontation between Freitas and a supermarket employee, who then called security. Both guards were white, G1 reported.

After the death of George

Floyd earlier this year in the U.S., Black Lives Matter protests drew hundreds of thousands to the streets around the world. They resonated in Brazil, too, where demonstrators turned out to demand justice for a 14-year-old boy killed by police in Rio de Janeiro.

Protesters in Brasília also gathered Friday outside a governmental institution that promotes Black culture to denounce its chief, Sergio Camargo. Camargo, who is Black, has denied the existence of structural racism in Brazilian society and called the Black Lives Matter movement "lefty garbage."

The French supermarket chain has found itself in controversy before in Brazil. In August, a man died within a Carrefour in northeastern city Recife; his body was covered by umbrellas and the supermarket continued operating for several hours. Carrefour apologized in a statement and said it was changing its protocols to close locations when deaths occur.

In 2018, a security guard at a Carrefour in Sao Paulo state beat a stray dog to death with a metal bar. The dog had been well known in the area, and Carrefour agreed to pay 1 million reais (\$188,000) to a fund for the protection of animals. □

Pompeo visits Israel museum honoring Christian Zionists



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, center, poses for a photo with Daniel Voiczek, left, general manager and CEO of the Friends of Zion Museum, and Nir Kimhi, the museum founder's representative in Israel, as he arrives for a tour of the Friends of Zion Museum, Friday, Nov. 20, 2020, in Jerusalem. Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

wrapped up a trip to Israel on Friday with a visit to a

museum in Jerusalem that honors Christian Zionists and was founded by a prominent evangelical adviser to the Trump administration. The museum visit came a day after Pompeo became the first secretary of state to visit an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank. He also announced a new policy allowing settlement products exported to the U.S. to be labeled "made in Israel" and a new initiative to combat the Palestinian-led international boycott movement.

Christian Zionism is a belief by some Christians that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and the establishment of the state of

Israel in 1948 were in accordance with biblical prophecy. The Friends of Zion Museum was founded by Mike Evans, a prominent evangelical supporter of Israel. Evangelical Christians are among President Donald Trump's most loyal supporters and have hailed his unprecedented support for Israel. They would also be an important constituency should Pompeo pursue elected office following Trump's presidency.

Pompeo did not deliver any public remarks at the museum and departed Israel midday.

The Trump administration has broken with decades of U.S. policy to support

Israel's claims to territory seized in war and to isolate and weaken the Palestinians.

It moved the U.S. Embassy to contested Jerusalem, adopted the position that settlements are not contrary to international law, recognized Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights — which Pompeo also visited on Thursday — and released a Mideast plan that overwhelmingly favored Israel and was rejected by the Palestinians. It has also adopted a "maximum pressure" campaign against Israel's archenemy Iran while brokering normalization agreements with Arab nations. □

In multiple countries, alarm over hunger crisis rings louder

By EISSA AHMED, TAMEEM AKHGAR AND SAMY MAG-DY

Associated Press

ABS, Yemen (AP) — The twin baby boys lay on a bed of woven palm leaves in a remote camp for displaced people in Yemen's north, their collar bones and ribs visible. They cried loudly, twisting as if in pain, not from disease but from the hunger gnawing away at them.

Here, U.N. officials' increasingly dire warnings that a hunger crisis is growing around the world are becoming reality.

U.N. agencies have warned that some 250 million people in 20 countries are threatened with sharply spiking malnutrition or even famine in coming months.

The United Nations humanitarian office this week released \$100 million in emergency funding to seven countries most at risk of famine — Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Congo, and Burkina Faso.

But David Beasley, head of the World Food Program, says billions in new aid are needed. Without it, "we are going to have famines of biblical proportions in 2021," he said in an Associated Press interview last week. In multiple countries, the coronavirus pandemic has added a new burden on top of the impact of ongoing wars, pushing more people into poverty, unable to afford food. At the same time, international aid funding has fallen short, weakening a safety net that keeps people alive.

In Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, Zemaray Hakimi said he can only give his children one meal a day, usually hard, black bread dunked in tea. He lost his work as a taxi driver after contracting COVID-19 and now waits daily on the street for day laborer work that rarely comes.

When his children complain of hunger, he said, "I tell them to bear it. One day maybe we can get something better."

South Sudan may be closer than any other country to



A malnourished girl Rahmah Wathaeq receives treatment at a feeding center at Al-Sabeen hospital in Sanaa, Yemen, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020.

Associated Press

famine, as crisis after crisis wears on a population depleted by five years of civil war. The U.N. projected earlier this year that a quarter of the population of Jonglei State, home to more than 1.2 million, would reach the brink of famine.

Now cut off from much of the world by flooding that has affected some 1 million people, many South Sudanese have seen farming and other food-gathering activities ripped apart. The challenges are so numerous that even "plastic sheets are not available, as they had largely been used for the previous flood response," the U.N. humanitarian agency said this week.

COVID-19 has restricted trade and travel. Food prices rose. Post-war unrest remains deadly; gunmen recently fired on WFP boats carrying supplies.

"The convergence of conflict, macroeconomic crisis, recurrent flooding as well as the indirect impacts of COVID create a 'perfect storm,'" the country director for the CARE aid group, Rosalind Crowther, said in an email. "Flooding and violence have led to massive displacement, low crop production and loss of livelihoods and livestock."

In the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is on a "countdown to catastrophe," Beasley, of

the WFP, warned the U.N. Security Council last week. "Famine is truly a real and dangerous possibility and the warning lights are ... flashing red — as red can be," he said.

For years, Yemen has been the center of the world's worst food crisis, driven by the destructive civil war between Iranian-backed Houthi rebels who in 2014 took over the north and the capital, Sanaa, and a Saudi-led coalition backing the government in the south. International aid pulled it from the edge of famine two years ago. But the threat has surged back this year, fueled by increasing violence and a currency collapse that put food out of reach for growing numbers of people.

Donors have been wary of new funding because of corruption and restrictions that Houthis have put on humanitarian workers. The U.N. had to cut in half the rations it gives to 9 million people — and faces possible cuts to another 6 million in January.

The 18-month-old twins, Mohammed and Ali, weigh only about 3 kilograms, or 6.6 pounds, less than a third of the weight they should be, according to their doctor. Their father, Hassan al-Jamai, was a farmer in northern Hajjah province near the border with Sau-

di Arabia. Soon after their birth, the family had to flee fighting to a displaced camp in the district of Abs. "We are struggling to treat them," said Mariam Hassam, the twins' grandmother. "Their father took them everywhere."

Two-thirds of Yemen's population of about 28 million people are hungry. In the south, U.N. data from recent surveys show cases of severe acute malnutrition rose 15.5% this year, and at least 98,000 children under five could die of it.

By the end of the year, 41% of the south's 8 million people are expected to have significant gaps in food consumption, up from 25%. The situation could be worse in Sanaa and the north, home to more than 20 million people. The U.N. is currently conducting a similar survey there.

Sanaa's main hospital, al-Sabeen, received over 180 cases of malnutrition and acute malnutrition in the past three months, well over its capacities, according to Amin al-Eizari, a nurse. At least five children died at the hospital during that period, with more dying outside, he said.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday urged parties with influence in Yemen to take action to "stave off catastrophe" or risk a tragedy with

"consequences that will reverberate indefinitely into the future."

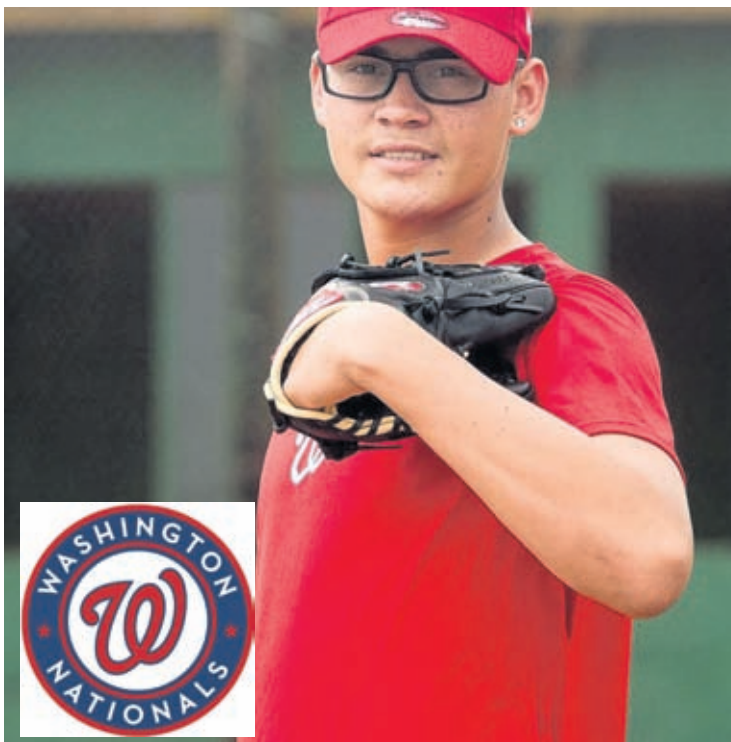
Yemen is "now in imminent danger of the worst famine the world has seen for decades," he said.

In Afghanistan — like Yemen, crippled by war — the pandemic has meant further losses of jobs and mounting food prices. The poverty rate is expected to leap this year from 54% of the population of some 36 million to as high as 72%, according to World Bank projections.

Some 700,000 Afghan workers returned from Iran and Pakistan this year, fleeing coronavirus outbreaks. That halted millions of dollars in remittances, a key income for families in Afghanistan, and returnees flooded the ranks of those needing work. Markets in Kabul seem full of food items. But shop owners say fewer customers can afford anything. More people are experiencing major gaps in their food — expected to rise to 42% of the population by the end of the year, from 25%, according to U.N. figures.

In the Bagrami displaced camp in the mountains surrounding Kabul, Gul Makai sat beside her mud-brick hut. She had spent the night shoveling out water and mud after the roof leaked in a recent snow. With early snows this year, temperatures have dropped below freezing. Her 12 children, all 10 or younger, sat with her, hungry and shivering in the cold breeze. They were all thin. One daughter, Neamat, around 4, had the withered look that suggests malnutrition. Makai fled seven months ago from her home in southern Helmand province after her husband was killed in a crossfire between government forces and the Taliban. By begging, she scrounges up enough rice or hard bread to give her kids one meal a day. She eats every other day. "The weather in winter will get colder," she said. "If I don't get help, my children may get sick, or God forbid, I may lose any of them. We are in a bad condition." □

LOCAL



Aruban pitcher signs with Washington Nationals

ORANJESTAD — Baseball team Washington Nationals will sign up with the young Aruban pitcher Jefrem Leon. Under guidance of scout David Lee he will follow his dream to become a professional pitcher. On Aruba Leon played for baseball team CBN at Noord and he participated in international competitions where he represented Aruba. Leon is not the first but the second Aruban who will be playing for the Washington Nationals.

The Washington Nationals are an American professional baseball team based in Washington, D.C. The Nationals compete in Major League Baseball

as a member club of the National League East division. From 2005 to 2007, the team played in RFK Stadium while their permanent stadium was being built. □

Results for the third quarter of the year 2020:

Business sentiments remain pessimistic

ORANJESTAD — The Central Bank of Aruba (CBA) recently concluded its Business Perception Survey (BPS) for the third quarter of 2020. The BPS assesses the economic perceptions and sentiments of local businesses as well as the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on economic conditions and business activities.

After a small improvement in the second quarter, the Business Perception Index (BPI), comprising the current and short-term economic conditions, declined by 0.7 index point to 93.3 during the third quarter of 2020. The overall BPI indicates a slight decrease in business sentiments compared to last quarter (See Chart 1). The change in sentiments resulted from a reduction in both current and short-term future economic conditions.

The current economic condition index noted a contraction of 0.2 index point to 92.3, down from 92.5 in the second quarter of 2020. The short-term future economic condition index fell by 1.5 index points, i.e., from 96.4 in the second quarter of 2020 to 94.9 in the third quarter of 2020 (See Table 1). The percentage of respondents expecting negative economic growth in the next 12 months decreased by 16.6 percentage points to 70.2 percent.

In terms of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the expanded Business Perception Survey also assessed the expected impact on business sales, the need for applying for emergency business funds, and the expected economic impact.

Roughly 42 percent of business respondents (41.5 percent) pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on their business sales; 8.0 percentage points less when compared to 49.5 percent in the second quarter. Approximately 65 percent of business respondents (64.9 percent) expect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Aruban economy to last more than 12 months. As for the need for applying for emergency business funds provided by the Government of Aruba, 33.0 percent of the respondents applied for this funding during the third quarter, compared to 41.8 percent that applied during the second quarter. The complete report of the Business Perception Survey is available on the website of the CBA (<https://www.cbaruba.org/>). □




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Paseo Herencia is always fun and exciting to visit

PALM BEACH — Paseo Herencia offers a variety of shopping, dining and entertainment options in an outdoor center located in the heart of Palm Beach.

Shopping

The Paseo Herencia stores offer a great collection in beach wear, clothing, perfume, shoes, jewelry, souvenirs and much more. Pamper yourself by visiting Maggy's and enjoy their salon services and shop for your favorite beauty products. Aruba Aloe has that perfect gift to bring back home, all made with natural ingredients. Other brand favorites are Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Aldo, Carmen Steffens, Quiksilver, Pandora and many more.

Restaurants

Start with a breakfast meal at Chill Out Island Café for a fluffy souffle pancake with your choice of toppings, breakfast sandwiches or acai bowls plus your

favorite bubble tea. TGI Fridays offers the popular American breakfast on Saturday and Sundays. Special includes eggs, toasts, buttermilk pancakes with your choice of sausage or bacon and free coffee refills. Go Argentinian style at Che Bar and try their delicious omelet with chorizo/ham, mozzarella, onions, peppers, and tomatoes served with skillet potatoes and toast.

These restaurants are also open for lunch and dinner and will delight you with

unique tastes. Choices run from Argentinian dishes to, Asian/Caribbean, International and Mexican at amongst others Iguana Cantina. Sip and have a good time at the Bulldog Aruba located in the center of the Plaza. Open till 9pm.

VIP Cinema

Visit the one-of-a-kind Caribbean Cinemas VIP on the second floor of Paseo Herencia and enjoy your favorite movies with the latest projection and 7.1 Dol-



by surround sound with a delicious bag of popcorn.

Entertainment

Kids can enjoy the Paseo kids' activities, carousel & kiddie train, every day from 6pm to 10pm and do not forget to catch the nightly water shows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm and 9:30pm. Another fun activity is the The Range Airsoft Experience located behind The Lazy Turtle. Snap Instagramable pictures at the Angel Wings located between Pandora and Quiksilver and another one in front of TGI Fridays.

Catch a live Show on Friday by violinist Angela Flores and Saturday by the acrobatic group Ritmo Cubano at 8pm on the Plaza Padu. With any purchase at Paseo Herencia you will receive FREE parking in the parking garage. Paseo Herencia has implemented all COVID protocols according to the Aruba Health & Happiness code. It is required to wear face masks when shopping or visiting the mall to ensure a safe environment. To learn more, visit the Paseo Herencia Facebook or Instagram page. □

Cas di Cultura Aruba & Arts Connection presents: The Miami New Media Festival 2020 Censorship - XV Edition



ORANJESTAD — The Miami New Media Festival is a multimedia platform held in Miami by Arts Connection Foundation, since 2006. Aruba's national theatre will show a selection of nine video artworks by artists from different countries. This 15th edition also includes a special guest, Olga Gabrielle (Aruba) with recent artwork entitled SOTAVENTO.

Under the representation for the Insular and Continental Caribbean Jimmy Yáñez International Official Curator & Museographer, the following artists were selected:

- Hernando Urrutia (Portugal)
- José Cruzio & Isabel Pérez del Pulgar (Portugal)
- María Beatriz Granero (Brazil)
- David Anthony Sant (Australia)
- Challet Comellas-Baker (USA)
- Rina Momose (Japan)
- Daniela Lucato (Italy)
- Andrea Leoni (Italy)

The festival promotes art through the exploration of new technologies and interactive narratives, such as video art, animation, digital art, and interactive mapping. The festival also presents exhibitions in cities in Latin America,



The Caribbean, Italy, France, and Spain. Since its creation, this festival has presented more than 210 artists from 15 countries, 400+ videos, installations, 3D digital art pieces, and performances.

You may join the presentation at Cas di Cultura Thursday, November 26th at 6 pm.

For more information please consult their Facebook page Cas di Cultura. □

Dutch singer Odillia and Foundation Trampolin pa Trabou: Watch and join a great fundraising event supporting Aruban community

ORANJESTAD — Odillia (24) is a Dutch rapper and singer. For her latest song 'Break it down' she collaborated with not the least name in the music industry: the one and only Snoop Dogg. The video for the song was

shot on Aruba. The singer is organizing a fundraising event coming Sunday to support local community. You are most welcome to enjoy live presentations through Facebook and on TV of local artists like

Atanero y su banda Bambu, Eltienne Yarzagaray, Karla Kingz and the Popcorn Dancers from 4.30pm to 8pm.

The goal is to raise funds in different ways, it can be money, food, clothing or other donations, everything that is of help to the foundations. On Odillia's last visit in Aruba in July she realized she didn't had enough time to stay on the island but she fell in love with the island and the people. She wanted to come back to Aruba to know more and give back to the community. Odillia is organizing the event in collaboration with the Foundation Trampolin pa Trabou. She visited several foundations, her intention is to empower the clients and at the same time create awareness about the great work these foundations do. "I received so much love from the people on this island when I record-

ed the video for the song with Snoop Dogg that I wanted to come back and give back. My message to the foundations' clients is to follow your dreams, to not give up on your idea of life."

The event coming Sunday is broadcasted live by Aruba TV channel 49 and is to be seen live on Facebook Aruba.TV. MC of the event is Bryan D of CoolFM and Lee Croes will be the DJ. All funds raised during this event will go to the foundations. If you wish to contribute please contact Trampolin pa Trabou, at phone number +297 582 9485, address is Pavia 13E.

About Odillia

Ever since she was young, Odillia has had a dream: she wants to earn a living by making music. That was initially disappointing: Odillia - who in real life is called Frederique; she uses her

middle name as a stage name - got a lot of rejections. But she did not give up. "Eventually I got to know my current manager through a friend," she says. That manager put her in touch with Snoop Dogg. "He's been in the music industry for twenty years and knows a lot of people. He's also friends with Snoop." So from one day to the next she found herself sitting across from Snoop Dogg. "I was allowed to visit him to let him hear my new song. He thought the beat was really dope. He went all out bouncing when I played it. He also liked the nineties vibe very much." Then something happened she never dared dream: "He went into the booth to do his own thing with the song. Very unreal. At one point he looked at me and sang: Odillia, I adore you. Well, I blushed completely. It suddenly became very real." □



Mnuchin denies trying to hinder incoming administration

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER** and
CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AP Economics Writers
WASHINGTON (AP) —

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin denied that he is attempting to limit the choices President-elect Joe Biden will have to promote an economic recovery by ending several emergency loan programs being run by the Federal Reserve.

Mnuchin said his decision was based on the fact that the programs were not being heavily utilized. He said Friday that Congress could make better use of the money by re-allocating it in another direction to support grants to small businesses and extended unemployment assistance.

"We're not trying to hinder anything," Mnuchin said in a CNBC interview. "We don't need this money to buy corporate bonds. We need this money to go help small businesses that are still closed."

However, critics saw politics at play in Mnuchin's decision, saying the action would deprive the incoming administration of critical support the Fed might need to prop up the economy as coronavirus infections spike nationwide.

"There can be no doubt, the Trump administration and their congressional toadies are actively trying to tank the U.S. economy," Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, said in a prepared statement Friday. "For



This Aug. 24, 2020 file photo shows Treasury Secretary Stephen Mnuchin at the White House in Washington.

months, they have refused to take the steps necessary to support workers, small businesses and restaurants. As the result, the only tool at our disposal has been these facilities."

Mnuchin on Thursday had written Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell announcing his decision not to extend some of the Fed's emergency loan programs, which had been operating with support from the Treasury Department. The decision will end the Fed's corporate credit, municipal lending and Main Street Lending programs as of Dec. 31.

The decision drew a rare rebuke from the Fed, which

said in a brief statement Thursday that the central bank "would prefer that the full suite of emergency facilities established during the coronavirus pandemic continue to serve their important role as a backstop for our still-strained and vulnerable economy."

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce also criticized the move. "A surprise termination of the Federal Reserve's emergency liquidity program, including the Main Street Lending Program, prematurely and unnecessarily ties the hands of the incoming administration and closes the door on important liquidity options for businesses at a time when

they need them most," said Neil Bradley, the chamber's executive vice president, in a prepared statement.

Private economists argued that Mnuchin's decision to end five of the emergency loan facilities represents an economic risk.

"While the backstop measure have been little used so far, the deteriorating health and economic backdrop could shine a bright light on the Fed's diminished recession-fighting arsenal and prompt an adverse market reaction," said Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics.

Under law, the loan facilities required the support of

the Treasury Department, which serves as a backstop for the initial losses the programs might incur.

In his letter to Powell, Mnuchin said that he is requesting that the Fed return to Treasury the unused funds appropriated by Congress.

He said this would allow Congress to re-appropriate \$455 billion to other coronavirus programs. Republicans and Democrats have been deadlocked for months on approval of another round of coronavirus support measures.

After meeting Friday with Mnuchin, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he supported Mnuchin's decision to let the loan programs expire at the end of this year and use the money that had been allocated in the March virus relief measure for other purposes.

"There is an obvious right use for these hundreds of billions of dollars of already allocated but unused funds," McConnell said in a statement.

"Congress should repurpose the money toward the kinds of urgent, important and targeted relief measures that Republicans have been trying to pass for months."

In public remarks Tuesday, Powell made clear that he hoped that the loan programs would remain in effect for the foreseeable future. □

Associated Press

Universal strikes another deal with a major theater chain

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

Another major movie theater chain has struck a deal with Universal Pictures to allow for shorter exclusive theatrical windows. Canada's Cineplex has agreed on a multiyear "dynamic window" agreement, the film exhibitor and Universal Filmed Entertainment Group said Friday.

Like the deal struck with Cinemark earlier this week and AMC Theaters before that, Universal and Focus Features films will have at least three weeks of theatrical exclusivity before hit-

ting premium video on demand services.

Titles that have an opening weekend of \$50 million or more in North American theaters will be guaranteed at least five weeks in theaters.

The \$50 million mark is just theoretical at this point, however. In normal times, a \$50 million launch is not uncommon for Universal's biggest franchises like "Fast & Furious" and "Jurassic World." But no films have done that kind of business during the pandemic.

"With audience fragmentation accelerating due to

the rise in digital, streaming and cord cutting, as well as the unprecedented issues our industry is facing right now, our relationship with exhibition had to evolve and adapt to the changing distribution landscape," said Donna Langley, chairman of Universal Filmed Entertainment Group. "Giving consumers the flexibility to view content on their terms is more important than ever to help expand moviegoing."

Theater owners have long adhered to a strict 90-day theatrical exclusivity window, but the devastating



A shopper walks past a closed AMC movie theater Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020, in Santa Monica, Calif.

Associated Press

effects of the pandemic on the movie business have forced many to adapt and compromise. □

Health experts clash over use of certain drugs for COVID-19

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE
AP Chief Medical Writer

Health officials around the world are clashing over the use of certain drugs for COVID-19, leading to different treatment options for patients depending on where they live.

On Friday, a World Health Organization guidelines panel advised against using the antiviral remdesivir for hospitalized patients, saying there's no evidence it improves survival or avoids the need for breathing machines.

But in the U.S. and many other countries, the drug has been the standard of care since a major, government-led study found other benefits — it shortened recovery time for hospitalized patients by five days on average, from 15 days to 10. Within the U.S., a federal guidelines panel and some leading medical groups have not endorsed two other therapies the Food and Drug Administration authorized for emergency use — Eli Lilly's experimental antibody drug and convalescent plasma, the blood of COVID-19 survivors. The groups say there isn't enough evidence to recommend for or against them.

Doctors also remain uncertain about when and when not to use the only drugs known to improve survival for the sickest COVID-19 patients: dexamethasone or similar steroids.

And things got murkier with



In this Thursday Oct. 15, 2020 file photo, A bottle containing the drug Remdesivir is held by a health worker at the Institute of Infectology of Kenezy Gyula Teaching Hospital of the University of Debrecen in Debrecen, Hungary.

Associated Press

Thursday's news that the anti-inflammatory drug tocilizumab may help. Like the key WHO study on remdesivir, the preliminary results on tocilizumab have not yet been published or fully reviewed by independent scientists, leaving doctors unclear about what to do. "It's a genuine quandary," said the University of Pittsburgh's Dr. Derek Angus, who is involved in a study testing many of these treatments. "We need to see the details."

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, infectious disease chief at Massachusetts General Hospital, agreed.

"It's really hard to practice medicine by press release," she said on a podcast

Thursday with a medical journal editor. Until the National Institutes of Health's guidelines endorse a treatment, "I'm really reluctant ... to call that standard of care."

Angus said there are legitimate questions about all of the drug studies.

"It's not unusual for professional guidelines to disagree with each other, it's just that it's all under the microscope with COVID-19," he said.

The rift over remdesivir, sold as Veklury, by Gilead Sciences Inc., is the most serious.

The WHO guidelines stress that the drug does not save lives, based heavily on a WHO-sponsored study that

was larger but much less rigorous than the U.S.-led one that found it had other benefits.

The drug is given through an IV for around five days, and its high cost and lack of "meaningful effect" on mortality make it a poor choice, the WHO panel concluded.

Gilead charges \$3,120 for a typical treatment course for patients with private insurance and \$2,340 for people covered by government health programs in the U.S. and other developed countries. In poor or middle-income countries, much cheaper versions are sold by generic makers.

This week, the Institute for Clinical and Economic Re-

view, a nonprofit group that analyzes drug prices, said remdesivir should be priced around \$2,470 for hospitalized patients with moderate to severe disease because of the cost savings from fewer days of care. However, it's worth only \$70 for patients hospitalized with milder disease, the group concluded.

Price also may be driving lower demand. In October, U.S. health officials said that hospitals had bought only about one-third of the doses of remdesivir that they were offered over the previous few months, when the drug was in short supply. Between July and September, 500,000 treatment courses were made available to state and local health departments but only about 161,000 were bought.

In a separate development, the FDA on Thursday gave emergency authorization to use of another anti-inflammatory drug, baricitinib, to be used with remdesivir.

Adding baricitinib shaved an additional day off the average time to recovery for severely ill hospitalized patients in one study. Lilly sells baricitinib now as Olumiant to treat rheumatoid arthritis, the less common form of arthritis that occurs when a mistaken or overreacting immune system attacks joints, causing inflammation. An overactive immune system also can lead to serious problems in coronavirus patients. □

U.S. adult smoking rate looks unchanged, vaping rate higher



This Dec. 17, 2019 photo shows a group of cigarettes in New York. About 14% of U.S adults were cigarette smokers last year, for the third year in a row.

Associated Press

By MIKE STOBBE
AP Medical Writer
NEW YORK (AP) —

The U.S. decline in cigarette smoking could be stalling while the adult vaping rate appears to be rising, according to a government report released Thursday.

About 14% of U.S adults were cigarette smokers last year, the third year in a row the annual survey found that rate.

But health officials said a change in the methodol-

ogy make it hard to compare that to the same 14% reported for 2017 and 2018. The adult smoking rate last saw a substantial drop in 2017, when it fell from 16% the year before. The new figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention mean there are more than 34 million adult smokers in the U.S. Meanwhile, about 4.5% of adults were counted as current e-cigarette users last year — about 11

million people.

That rate appears to be up from 3.2% in 2018 and 2.8% in 2017. But again, officials said that comparing 2019 with earlier years is difficult because of the survey change.

The CDC figures are based on responses from about 32,000 people.

Health officials have long called tobacco use the nation's leading cause of preventable disease and death. □

U.S. safety agency seeks input on autonomous vehicle rules

DETROIT (AP) — The U.S. government's road safety agency is asking for public comment on how it should regulate safe deployment of self-driving vehicles.

Seeking public comment is an early step in drawing up possible regulations, but that process takes years and could be changed by the incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden. About 60 companies are already testing autonomous vehicles, some on public roadways without human backup drivers. One, Alphabet Inc.'s Waymo, is running a limited fully autonomous ride-hailing service in the Phoenix area. So far the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has taken a voluntary approach to autonomous vehicles without standards and regulations. That has brought criticism from the National Transportation Safety Board and safety advocates for being too hands-off.

NHTSA said Thursday that it wants public input on a proposed regulation of autonomous vehicle sensors, how the vehicles detect other road users and infrastructure, how they plan routes and how they carry out that plan.

"This rulemaking will help address legitimate public concerns about safety, security and privacy without hampering innovation in the development of automated driving systems," said Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, whose department includes NHTSA.

The agency says in documents that a new generation of motor vehicle safety standards should give manufacturers of vehicles, sensors, software and other autonomous vehicle technology "sufficient flexibility to change and improve without the need for frequent modifications to the regulations."

Last year the NTSB blamed lax regulation in part for a 2018 crash involving an Uber autonomous test vehicle in which a pedestrian was killed. "There's no requirement. There's no

evaluation. There's no real standards issued," NTSB member Jennifer Homendy said at the time.

While NHTSA is looking at standards, it said in the proposed rulemaking documents that it will address unreasonable safety risks by using its existing defect-investigation and remediation powers. It said any regulations must be supported by data on safety needs without stifling innovation. Jason Levine, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, called the request for public input strange because it comes at the end of the Trump administration. His organization petitioned NHTSA seek-



In this Jan. 8, 2017, file photo a Chrysler Pacifica hybrid outfitted with Waymo's suite of sensors and radar is displayed at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

ing autonomous vehicle regulations two years ago but heard nothing, he said. The 60-day comment period, he said, will expire about the time of Biden's

Associated Press
scheduled inauguration, he said. □

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James Taylor on how he takes a song and makes it his own

By **MARK KENNEDY**

AP Entertainment Writer

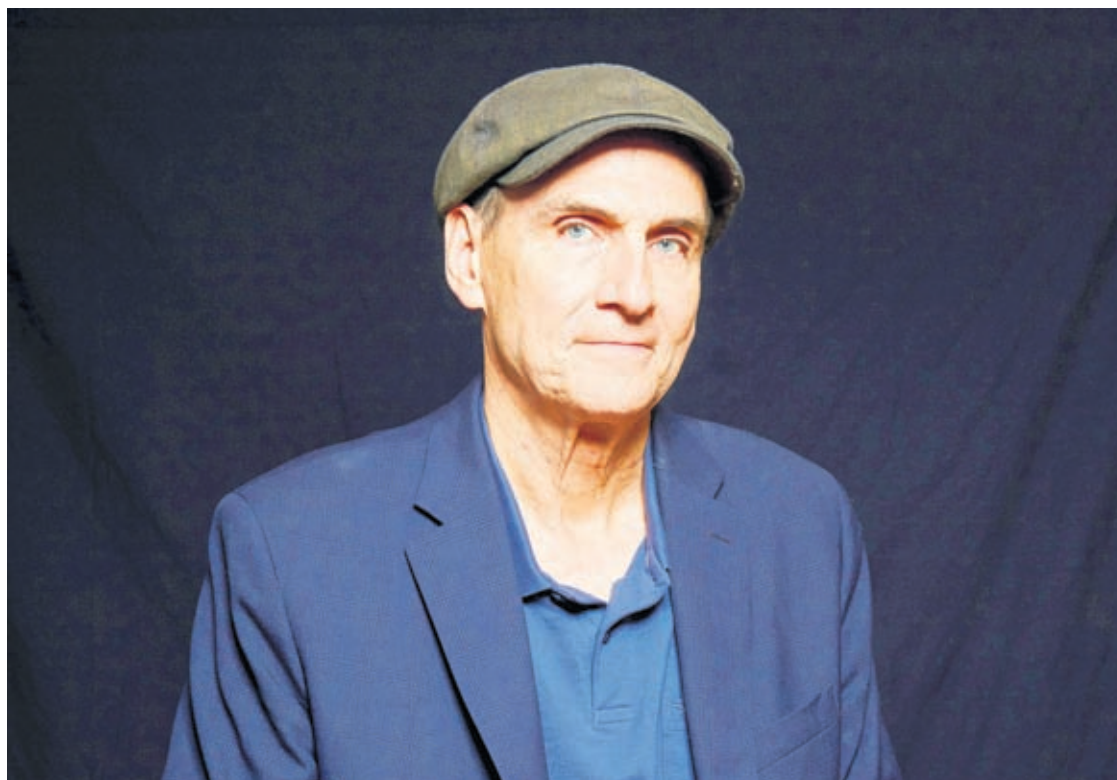
NEW YORK (AP) — Something happens when James Taylor covers a song. It gets all James Taylor-y.

"People often tell me, 'It sounds like you wrote that song' or 'That sounds like a James Taylor song.' And that's because basically it's been translated into my language," the singer-songwriter told The Associated Press in an interview this week.

"Not all songs work in my language, but the ones that do — if they're interesting or worthy of being recut — it's because it's nice to hear them in James Taylor." Fans are getting more classics translated into James Taylor on Friday with the digital release of three songs — "Over The Rainbow" from "The Wizard of Oz," "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" from "My Fair Lady" and "Never Never Land" from "Peter Pan." The trio of tunes never made it to Taylor's "American Standard" album earlier this year, which contained such covers as "Sit Down, You're Rockin' the Boat" and "God Bless the Child."

Instead of leaning on a piano, they are guitar-led reinterpretations, often wistful and airy.

Taylor, 72, says he was intimately familiar with the



Singer-songwriter James Taylor appears during a portrait session in New York on May 13, 2015.
Associated Press

songs picked for the album and new EP, having first heard many of them from his parents' record collection growing up in North Carolina.

"I'd just try them on for size," he says. "It was so easy and natural to pick up an instrument and start learning songs and reinterpreting songs and developing a sort of a simple guitar technique."

The new batch of songs lean heavily on Broadway musicals, like the songwriting teams Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, as well as Frederick Loewe

and Alan Jay Lerner. "I think they had a profound effect on my songwriting. They basically are my teachers," says Taylor.

During the interview, Taylor was effortlessly thoughtful, moving easily from topics like the gentrification of Boston's suburbs to what a revelation Chartres Cathedral must have been to a peasant hundreds of years ago. He's well versed in Thomas Mann and Tolstoy. Several times he noted that his guitar skills were somewhat limited and that his natural tendency to James Taylor a song is to lean on

his own influences: Latin music, bossa nova and Afro Cuban. "It's interesting to put songs into that vocabulary," he says.

He is modest about his own songwriting, saying he usually sits down with a guitar and plays until he finds a melody — or "catching an idea," as he puts it — and maybe a scrap of lyric. That is how masterpieces like "Carolina in My Mind" and "Fire and Rain" came about.

"There have been a few tunes that I just thought of while I was driving the car and I would reach for my

phone and put down the line of lyric or melody — that has happened, too. But my feeling is that when that's happening, I'm still inhabiting that place that I discovered and built by sitting down playing the guitar." The "American Standards" batch of recordings reunited Taylor with master guitarist and producer John Pizzarelli. The two had worked on Taylor's 2002's album "October Road" and his 2006 Christmas album. Pizzarelli, who also has worked with Paul McCartney, Michael McDonald and Rosemary Clooney, calls Taylor an amazing guitar player and a talented harmonizer. "When you listen to the collection, he really James Taylor-ized them and not at the expense of the songs. He makes the songs better."

Taylor says he recorded the covers, many at his barn studio in Washington, Massachusetts, not only to honor them but also to educate — reminding some younger listeners who might be looking for the next good thing of sonic past triumphs.

"I've got four kids and they're all musical to a greater or lesser extent. So I'm constantly saying, 'Go listen to Lee Dorsey, listen to Ry Cooder, listen to Neil Sedaka,'" he says.

"I am always recommending them." □

Dylan papers, including unpublished lyrics, sell for \$495K



Musician Bob Dylan performs with The Band at the Forum in Los Angeles on Feb. 15, 1974.

Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A long-lost trove of Bob Dylan documents including the singer-songwriter's musings about anti-Semitism and unpublished song lyrics has sold

at auction for \$495,000. Boston-based R.R. Auction said Friday the collection privately held by the late American blues artist Tony Glover, a longtime Dylan

friend and confidante, was sold Thursday to a bidder whose identity was not made public. The collection included transcripts of Glover's 1971 interviews with Dylan and letters the pair exchanged. The interviews reveal that Dylan had anti-Semitism on his mind when he changed his name from Robert Zimmerman, and that he wrote "Lay Lady Lay" for Barbra Streisand. Dylan, 79, was close with Glover, who died last year. The two men broke into music in the same Minneapolis coffeehouse scene. Glover's widow, Cynthia Nadler,

put the documents up for auction online. The reclusive Dylan won the Nobel Prize in literature in 2016 after giving the world "Blowin' in the Wind," "Like a Rolling Stone," "The Times They Are a-Changin'" and other anthems of the turbulent 1960s. Included in the auctioned items were lyrics Dylan penned after visiting folk legend Woody Guthrie in May 1962. The lines, never made public until last month, read: "My eyes are cracked I think I been framed / I can't seem to remember the sound of my name / What did he teach you I heard

someone shout / Did he teach you to wheel & wind yourself out / Did he teach you to reveal, respect, and repent the blues / No Jack he taught me how to sleep in my shoes." □

SOLUTION SUDOKU

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Wilson throws for 2 TDs, Seahawks hold off Cardinals 28-21

By **TIM BOOTH**
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — It was a flashback performance for the Seattle Seahawks, and coach Pete Carroll enjoyed the show.

A bruising running game. Russell Wilson making plays without being asked to do everything. And the Seahawks defense coming through in key moments to shut down Kyler Murray and the Arizona Cardinals for a 28-21 win Thursday night.

Wilson still did his part, throwing for two touchdowns and rebounding from his worst performance of the season just a few days ago. But he had help in the form of Carlos Hyde rushing for 79 yards and a touchdown, and a defense that sacked Murray three times, including Carlos Dunlap's clinching play inside the final minute.

"Our guys really wanted to turn things and get back on track," Carroll said. "And even with all of the situations, with all the guys in and out in the lineup and all that, it just didn't matter. Guys played really well across the board."

Wilson was flawless, erasing the mistakes from the past four weeks when Seattle dropped three of four, including losses in the past two weeks to Buffalo and the Los Angeles Rams. The



Seattle Seahawks running back Carlos Hyde (30) rushes as Arizona Cardinals free safety Jalen Thompson (34) attempts the tackle during the first half of an NFL football game, Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020, in Seattle.

skid left Seattle in a tie atop the NFC West with the Rams and Cardinals.

For a few days at least, Seattle (7-3) will be back on top alone until the Rams play on Monday night against Tampa Bay.

It was an important victory for the Seahawks heading into the softest part of their schedule, with four upcoming games against teams with a combined 8-28-1 record.

Wilson was 23 of 28 for 197 yards and TD passes of 25 yards to DK Metcalf and

11 yards to Tyler Lockett in the first half. Wilson had committed 10 turnovers in the previous four games combined, a stretch that started with Seattle's 37-34 overtime loss to Arizona in Week 7.

Lockett, who had 15 catches for 200 yards and three TDs in the first meeting with Arizona, had another nine catches for 67 yards.

But the biggest boost for Seattle was the return of its run game. Hyde had a 2-yard TD run in the third quarter, and Seattle finished with

165 yards rushing.

"It helped balance our offense out today," Hyde said. "We were able to hit passes, run the ball, move down the field. You know, how we play."

Murray and DeAndre Hopkins couldn't rekindle the magic from their last-second touchdown to beat Buffalo last Sunday. Murray was 29 of 42 for 269 yards and two TDs, but Seattle was able to get the kind of pressure on the QB that was missing from the first meeting.

"They definitely played for me in certain situations but like I said, we put up 21, had a chance to win the game at the end, but throughout the game, we started slow and kept shooting ourselves in the foot," Murray said.

And that pressure came through in the closing seconds. On fourth-and-10 at the Seattle 27 with 38 seconds left, Dunlap got around the edge and tackled Murray for his second sack of the night.

Seattle finished with three sacks and seven QB hits after not touching Murray in the first meeting.

"(Pete) was fired up. He almost tackled me on the sideline. That was crazy to see a head coach that involved," Dunlap said.

Arizona (6-4) closed to 23-21 with 13:19 left when Murray capped a 15-play, 90-yard drive with a 3-yard TD pass to Chase Edmonds. The Cardinals defense held, but backed up near their goal line. J.R. Sweezy was called for holding on L.J. Collier in the end zone, giving Seattle a safety with 9:12 left.

Arizona almost didn't get the ball back. Seattle ran nearly seven minutes off the clock and Jason Myers' 41-yard field goal gave the Seahawks a 28-21 lead with 2:19 to go. □

Associated Press

Djokovic beats Zverev, advances to semifinals at ATP Finals

LONDON (AP) — Novak Djokovic reached the semifinals at the ATP Finals and eliminated Alexander Zverev on Friday by beating the German 6-3, 7-6 (4), ensuring the top four players in the world advanced at the season-ending event for the first time since 2004. The top-ranked Djokovic set up a match against Dominic Thiem on Saturday as he goes for a record-tying sixth title at the tournament, and a first since 2015. Rafael Nadal will take on Daniil Medvedev in the other semifinal match.

Djokovic pulled out some big serves in the important moments in an empty O2 Arena to reach the semifinals for the ninth time,

notably in the tiebreaker when he recovered from a 2-0 deficit.

"Contrary to the last match against Daniil," said Djokovic, referring to a straight-set loss to Medvedev on Wednesday, "I managed to find the right shots at the right time."

Djokovic broke Zverev to take a 2-0 lead in the first set when his opponent double-faulted on the second break point. He then saved two break points at 4-2 before clinching the set with a backhand down the line as he closed in on the net following a serve out wide.

Zverev's groundstrokes and powerful serve posed more problems for Djokovic in

the second set, and the German gained an early advantage in the tiebreaker by reaching a drop shot before hitting an unreturnable smash to lead 2-0.

Djokovic then won five of the next six points and, on his first match point, found the baseline with a penetrating forehand which Zverev could only slice into the net on the stretch.

"It really was anyone's game," Djokovic said. "In the tiebreaker, again I served well when I needed to close out the match."

Thiem, the U.S. Open champion, won a third-set tiebreaker to beat Djokovic in group play last year, helping to eliminate the Serb before the semifinals.



Alexander Zverev of Germany reacts as he plays against Novak Djokovic of Serbia during their singles tennis match at the ATP World Finals tennis tournament at the O2 arena in London, Friday, Nov. 20, 2020.

Associated Press

"It was really a thrilling match," Djokovic said, "so hopefully we can have another great match, this time with a different outcome."

Medvedev will be going for a third straight group victory when he plays already-eliminated Diego Schwartzman in the late match. □

NBA's offseason sprint continues with free agency starting



In this Oct. 9, 2020, file photo, Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis shoots past Miami Heat forward Jimmy Butler during the second half in Game 5 of basketball's NBA Finals in Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

NBA free agency is usually a weeklong frenzy. Deals get struck, then teams and players must wait a few days before they can sign those contracts. And from there, a few more months often pass before the player goes to work with his new club. Not this year.

What promises to be a chaotic free-agent window opens in the NBA at 6 p.m. Eastern on Friday, just a couple days after the NBA draft, a mere 42 hours before signings can begin and about a week and a half before training camps around the league open. Asked what the player-movement landscape might look like in such a compressed timeframe, Philadelphia 76ers President Daryl Morey — looking exhausted early Thursday as the draft was winding down — offered a blunt prediction. He may be right. Deals are expected to start coming quickly Friday evening, and the NBA is investigating whether one — a widely reported sign-and-trade move that would have sent Bogdan Bogdanovic from Sacramento to

Milwaukee — happened earlier than league rules allow. A person with knowledge of the matter told The Associated Press on Thursday that the league is probing whether such an agreement existed, because if it did free-agent negotiations with Bogdanovic would have clearly started earlier than permissible.

The person spoke with AP on condition of anonymity because neither the teams nor the league acknowledged the investigation publicly. The New York Times first reported that an investigation had been opened.

Some deals likely won't take long to get done without raising league ire. Anthony Davis of the NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers is the biggest name on the free agency board; he turned down his option for this season with the Lakers but isn't expected to go anywhere else.

A likely scenario for Davis is to accept a three-year deal worth that would start at \$32.7 million this season and grow each year afterward, with the last year at his option. That way, when he completes his 10th year

of service in 2021-22, he can cash in again for an even higher percentage of the salary cap than he would command now.

Gordon Hayward declined his \$34 million option for this season with Boston, a person with knowledge told AP on Thursday, and could potentially now be another big name on the move.

More than 100 other NBA players are unrestricted free agents; another 75 or so can be restricted free agents. That's a lot of players, who might be doing a lot of moving, with a season coming up very quickly — and only a few teams have plenty of available salary-cap space to sign players easily.

Plus, teams are still figuring out coronavirus protocols for training camp. Nobody has seen the NBA schedule for a regular season that starts Dec. 22. Preseason games start Dec. 11; those haven't even been announced yet.

It's already hectic, and now free agency will ramp up the fever several more levels. "With free agency starting as quickly as it does, we have some targets in mind there and we've got some

other trade conversations going on as well," said David Griffin, New Orleans' executive vice president of basketball operations.

Really, things have already started. Plenty of names are already on the move, and the trade market is always an option for the teams that can't just go sign a player into nonexistent cap space.

The Lakers already have a new point guard in Dennis Schroder, acquired in a trade with Oklahoma City. The Thunder sent point guard Chris Paul in a trade to Phoenix, and with a brief stopover-on-paper-only in Oklahoma City, Ricky Rubio wound up leaving the Suns and ending up where his NBA career began in Minnesota. A trade has been agreed to that would send Jrue Holiday from New Orleans to Milwaukee, where he'll play with two-time reigning MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo, but had not been announced publicly as of Thursday evening. Antetokounmpo also could sign a supermax extension in the coming days or weeks; five years for somewhere around \$225 million, a deal that would begin in

2021-22.

Al Horford was traded by Philadelphia to the Thunder. The Mavericks got Josh Richardson from the 76ers, in a deal that sent Seth Curry to Philly — where he'll play for new 76ers coach Doc Rivers, who just happens to be Curry's father-in-law.

Houston's star backcourt of scoring champion James Harden and former MVP Russell Westbrook have been mentioned in trade talks, though it would surely take a massive haul for the Rockets to part with either or both of those players. And Golden State may be very active on the trade market now, with the Warriors getting word Thursday that Klay Thompson — who missed last season with a torn ACL — will miss this season with a torn Achilles.

The Warriors have a \$17.2 million trade exception that will soon expire. It could be a handy chip for general manager Bob Myers, especially if Golden State — which plunged to the bottom of the NBA last season with Thompson, Stephen Curry and Draymond Green out for most of all of the season — decides it needs to make a big move quickly.

Some players have even announced their free-agent plans: Udonis Haslem is going to re-sign with Miami for an 18th season, even though the Heat can't talk to him about that until Friday. The Eastern Conference champions will be awaiting decisions from several key players, including point guard Goran Dragic, forward Jae Crowder and center Meyers Leonard. And Heat President Pat Riley hasn't hidden his intention: He wants to bring the team from last season back as intact as possible.

"I have great faith in our guys. I think we have great chemistry. I think they have the same feeling themselves," Riley said. "But now we're getting down to the business side of things. And I totally get it. I totally understand what free agency means to players." □