

Quick Read

US FDA declines to approve GSK drugs division's long acting HIV injection



REUTERS: GlaxoSmithKline's HIV drugs division ViiV Healthcare said on Saturday that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration declined to approve its long acting HIV injection. ViiV, in which Pfizer and Shionogi have small stakes, said it received a so-called complete response letter (CRL) from the FDA in which the regulator questioned the treatment's chemistry, manufacturing and controls process, but not its safety. The monthly injection to suppress the virus that causes AIDS was aimed as an alternative to daily pills. The unit of the British drugmaker, which is challenging HIV drug market leader Gilead Sciences, said it will work with the FDA to determine the next steps for the new drug application. A GSK spokesman said it was not yet clear by when ViiV would be able to address the FDA's concerns. The CRL for the Cabenuva injection, containing two active ingredients cabotegravir and Janssen's rilpivirine, follows U.S. market approval in April for its once-a-day pill Dovato, also a two-drug combination. The injection has previously proven to be as effective as standard daily pills with three active ingredients when administered monthly and also once every two months. US drugmaker Gilead dominates the HIV market and it will keep up the pressure with fast-growing Biktarvy, which was approved early last year. —Reuters

Colombia orders Uber to suspend app services

BOGOTA: Uber has been told to immediately suspend its ride-sharing services in Colombia, the industry and commerce authority announced Friday, citing unfair competition laws. The US tech giant has around two million active users in the country, and roughly 88,000 drivers. The ruling, which is subject to an appeal, follows a lawsuit by a group of taxi drivers who accuse the company of unfair business practices. The head of the Industry and Commerce department - which regulates the market - said that the company must cease operation immediately, citing "unfair competition" and a "significant advantage" over older and more traditional taxi services. The "effects (of the measure) are immediately fulfilled," they added. In a statement, the US firm regretted and rejected the ruling, which it "appealed immediately." Although Uber was allowed to operate in Colombia by the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications and pays tax as a result, the use of drivers to transport passengers is illegal and the police are able to sanction drivers using the app.

Uber - founded in 2009 - arrived in Colombia in 2013 but taxi owners and unions have repeatedly protested in the streets against Uber and similar competitors, who they claim steal their work. Protests have also been held in other cities, where pressure has even led to the withdrawal of these applications. For example, Uber does not operate in Catalonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Denmark and northern Australia. —AFP

Anti-Asian assaults a 'neglected' plight in France

VITRY-SUR-SEINE, France: Ming was getting off the bus in the Paris suburbs when a masked man attempted to rip her handbag from her. When she resisted, the attacker threw her to the ground and beat her unconscious. The ordeal left her with two fractures and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. She could not work for three weeks. Campaigners fear such attacks are part of an under-reported wave of racially targeted violence against French people of Asian origin, fuelled by racist stereotypes and mistaken beliefs about "rich" tourists. Ming, who gave a pseudonym because she continues to fear for her safety, lost her bag, containing a few dozen euros and her ID cards

COURT NOTICE

In the court of Mukhtar Ahmed, Naib Tehsildar, Sarai Alamgir Suit for partition: Fazal Hussain VS Altaf Hussain etc Notice to Shakoor Allah Ditta, Rafiq Ullah (sons), Bashir Ahmed, Ashfaq Hussain S/O Said Ali R/O Dandi Arain THE Sarai Alamgir, Distt Gujrat. This ad is being issued for you to appear in this court on 04-01-2020, otherwise one-sided proceeding would be conducted and after that no excuse or objection would be accepted.

Australia's volunteer firefighters battle fatigue, injury and loss

DARGAN, Australia: After six exhausting weeks battling massive bushfires that are ripping through rural Australia, volunteer firefighter Andrew Moyle wishes for just two things: Rest and rain. "Rain would be best," said Moyle, who juggles firefighting shifts of up to 18 hours with running his own maintenance business and managing a family cattle station. The colossal task of fighting New South Wales' unprecedented bushfires falls largely to people like Moyle - a band of doctors, farmers and factory workers who at 70,000-strong are the world's largest volunteer fire service.

For weeks the 57-year-old and his crew have toiled in searing temperatures and thick acrid smoke as they try to curb a "mega-blaze" that has turned a swathe of national park near

Sydney to ash. "People are really tired," Moyle said, describing the service as "very stretched". "As you get older like me it's hard, it's very tiring. It takes a toll on everybody here."

The risks are enormous and the sacrifice is immense. Two volunteer firefighters have died and some have had their homes destroyed while they were out saving other people's properties. Gary Stokes, a veteran firefighter who last week spent 80 hours volunteering, said fatigue was affecting his whole brigade. Crew have toiled in searing temperatures and thick acrid smoke as they try to curb a 'mega-blaze' that has turned a swathe of national park near Sydney to ash.

"I was sitting having a cup of tea yesterday and a little old lady came up to me and sort of gave me a hug and I actually had tears," he said. "You just need people knowing what you're doing, we're just trying to do our best."

Australia is no stranger to bushfires, but even among veterans there is a sense that this year's climate change-fuelled blazes are different. Bushfires have been raging along Australia's east coast for months, burning three million hectares (7.4 million acres) - equivalent to the size of Belgium - and razed more than 800 homes in worst-hit New South Wales alone. "Last time, you'd be on the job for a couple of days. This time you're on the job week after week after week," said the 63-year-old airline pilot. "It's an emotional thing, because you've got to be on top of the game all

the time, or someone will get hurt."

Stokes worries about the strain on his family, and his wife is concerned about the dangers he faces. "I don't know when to say, for myself, enough's enough, I can't just keep going day after day after day after day. But we have to at this stage."

Scientists say Australia's fire seasons are beginning earlier and burning with more ferocious intensity due to climate change. Much of the country's east is also gripped by a prolonged drought - that has worsened fire conditions. Retired NSW Fire and Rescue commissioner Greg Mullins, a leader of ex-fire chiefs advocating for climate action, has predicted the season could stretch into May - months beyond its typical endpoint - and pile more pressure on volunteers. —AFP



DARGAN: Australia is no stranger to bushfires, but even among veterans there is a sense that this year's climate change-fuelled blazes are different. —AFP

Pope, UN chief for environmental, religious tolerance

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres jointly appealed for religious tolerance and environmental protection. After a meeting at the Vatican, the pair released a video message. "It is good that this meeting of ours takes place in the days leading up to Christmas," the Argentinian Pope said in his native Spanish with Guterres by his side. "We cannot, we must not look the other way when believers of various faiths are persecuted in different parts of the world," the Pontiff added. "It is a time of peace and goodwill and I am sad to see that Christian communities - including some of the oldest in the world - cannot safely celebrate Christmas," the UN Secretary-General said. "Tragically we see Jews being murdered in synagogues, their gravestones defaced with swastikas. —AFP

Man with narwhal tusk recounts fight with London Bridge attacker

LONDON: A man who used a narwhal tusk to fight a knifeman on a fatal rampage in London last month has spoken of how he and others carried on grappling with the attacker even after seeing that he was wearing what looked like an explosive suicide vest. Darryn Frost, who appeared in video footage of the fight between the attacker and members of the public on London Bridge on Nov 29, told the PA newswire that he was attending an event in a building nearby when he heard a disturbance downstairs. The 38-year-old said he grabbed the narwhal tusk that was mounted on a wall while another man used a wooden chair to fend off the attacker, Usman Khan, a convicted terrorist who had been released early from prison. 'Heroic' Londoners praised for tackling knifeman. "He had knives in both hands and, upon seeing me with the narwhal tusk, pointed at his midriff," said Frost, a government worker who moved to Britain from South Africa 14 years ago. "He turned and spoke to me, then indicated he had an explosive device around his waist. At this point, the man next to me threw his chair at the attacker, who then started running



towards him with knives raised above his head." Frost told PA he passed the tusk to the man who had thrown the chair and ran upstairs to get another one. On his return, he saw the first tusk shattered on the floor and people fleeing. "Along with others, I pursued the attacker, tusk in hand, on to the bridge," he said. "We called out to warn the public of the danger and, after a struggle, managed to restrain him to the ground. At that point I was

trying to isolate the blades by holding his wrists so that he could not hurt anyone or set off the device." UK vows review as convicted terrorist named in London attack Police shot Khan dead moments later. The vest was found to have been a fake. Two people died from stab wounds, namely Jack Merritt, 25, and Saskia Jones, 23, both former students active in a programme on prisoner rehabilitation. —Reuters

Eyeing combat in outer space, US creates Pentagon Space Force

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump signed legislation to create a full-fledged Pentagon force for combat in outer space - the first new military service in seven decades. Capping an ambitious order Trump issued in June 2018, the US Space Force officially came into being when Trump signed the annual military budget, the US\$738 billion National Defense Authorization Act. The legislation will create the Department of Defense's sixth force, a coequal of the five existing forces - the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. "Our reliance on space-based capabilities has grown dramatically, and today outer space has evolved into a war-fighting domain of its own," said Secretary of Defense Mark Esper. "Maintaining American dominance in that domain is now the mission of the United States Space Force." The new organisation builds on the US Space Command, already operating under the Air Force since it was created in August. And, like the Marines, which operate within the umbrella of the Navy, the Space Force will be under the Air Force. The Space Command will focus on war fighting - akin to the Pentagon's regional commands like CentCom - while the Space Force will encompass broader missions like training, procurement, long-term planning and other functions. The Space Force will be comprised of about 16,000 Air Force and civilian personnel, some already taking part in the Space Command, according to Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett. It will have its own uniform, shoulder patches and even, eventually, its own song, just like the other branches. "The US Space Force will protect America's national interests by its singular focus on space. The United States has the best space acumen in the world," Barrett said. A staff of 16,000 would make it much smaller than the other forces, but Barrett said the technology-centric nature of the work requires fewer people. "It's a different sort of portfolio than what we might be thinking of when we generally think about warfighting machines," she said. Leading the Space Force will be Air Force General Jay Raymond, who currently runs SpaceCom. "With the establishment of the United States Space Force, we're elevating space commensurate with its importance to our national security and the security of our allies and our partners," said Raymond. —AFP

ICC to probe 'war crimes' in Palestinian territories

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor said Friday (Dec 20) she wanted to open a full investigation into alleged war crimes in the Palestinian territories, sparking a furious reaction from Israel and condemnation from the United States. The Palestinians welcomed the move by the ICC as a "long overdue step" following a nearly five-year preliminary probe by the prosecutor into the situation since the 2014 war in Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the decision made the Hague-based court, which Israel has refused to sign up to since its creation in 2002, a "political tool" against the Jewish state. "I am satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation into the situation in Palestine," ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said in a statement. "In brief, I am satisfied that war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip," she added, without specifying the perpe-

trators of the alleged crimes. She said that before opening a full probe, she would ask the ICC to rule on the territory over which it has jurisdiction because of the "unique and highly contested legal and factual issues attaching to this situation". "Specifically, I have sought confirmation that the 'territory' over which the Court may exercise its jurisdiction, and which I may subject to investigation, comprises the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza." The prosecutor added however that she did not require any authorisation from judges to open a probe as there had been a referral from the Palestinians, who joined the court in 2015. "We firmly oppose this and any other action that seeks to target Israel unfairly," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said of Washington's top ally in the region. "We do not believe the Palestinians qualify as a sovereign state, and they therefore are not qualified to obtain full membership, or participate as a state in international organizations, entities, or conferences, including the

ICC." The issue is highly sensitive, with former White House national security adviser John Bolton threatening last year to arrest ICC judges if they moved against Israel or the United States. Both countries have refused to sign up to the court, which was set up in 2002 to be the only global tribunal trying the world's worst crimes, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Bensouda launched a preliminary probe in January 2015 into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Israel and the Palestinian territories, in the wake of the 2014 Gaza war. A full ICC investigation could possibly lead to charges against individuals. States cannot be charged by the ICC. "Palestine welcomes this step as a long overdue step to move the process forward towards an investigation, after nearly five long and difficult years of preliminary examination," the Palestinian statement said. Netanyahu however lashed out at what he called a "dark day for truth and justice". —AFP

**EIA REPORT - NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

This notice is published for the information of all stakeholders and general public that EPA Punjab has admitted the application of the following project to accord Environmental Approval required under Section 12 Punjab Environmental Protection Act 1997.

Name of Project	Location	District
Home Appliances Manufacturing Unit by M/s Sigma Refrigeration Limited*	Plot # 385-390, Sundar Industrial Estate	Lahore

2. All stakeholders and general public are invited to submit their comments for/against the grant of Environmental Approval. The comments may be submitted to Director EIA, EPA, Punjab, National Hockey Stadium (Qaddafi Stadium), Ferozpur Road, Lahore within a period of 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. Copy of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report submitted by the proponent of the project is available at the following locations for review of stakeholders/ general public.

- EPA Library, National Hockey Stadium / Qaddafi Stadium, Lahore
- O/o Deputy Director (Environment) 34-Shah Jamal, Lahore.
- O/o Sigma Refrigeration Limited, Lahore

3. The Public Hearing will be conducted as per following Schedule:-

Date	Day	Time	Location
25-01-2020	Saturday	11:00 AM	Green Chill Restaurant and UFC Fast Food, Near Sunder Industrial Estate, Gate No.1, Village Mall, Lahore. 042-37860028

4. All stakeholders and the general public are invited to attend the hearing proceedings to share their proposal / concerns / suggestions.

<b>Director General</b> Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Hockey Stadium / Qaddafi Stadium, Lahore Ph# 042-99232230	<b>Mr. Khurram Qaiser</b> Proponent, M/s Sigma Refrigeration Limited Ph# +92-42-35298401-8 042-35298400
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