

## IN BRIEF

**R. Kelly arrested again on federal sex charges**

WASHINGTON  
Singer R. Kelly, 52, already facing sexual abuse charges, was arrested in Chicago on Thursday on a federal grand jury indictment listing 13 counts, including sex crimes and obstruction of justice. The Grammy winner was arrested in February on 10 counts in Illinois involving four women, three of whom were minor at the time. AP

**Volkswagen rolls out final edition of Beetle**

PUEBLA  
German auto giant Volkswagen launched the final edition of its iconic "Beetle" car from its Mexican factory at a ceremony accompanied by a Mariachi band. The bug-shaped sedan rolled off the production line to rapturous applause on Wednesday, the last iteration of a model first manufactured in the late 1930s in Germany and 1954 in Mexico. AFP

**Passengers ejected from seats on turbulent flight**

HONOLULU  
An Air Canada flight from Vancouver to Sydney made an emergency landing in Honolulu after 37 people were injured, nine seriously, during a sudden loss of altitude that sent people flying into the luggage compartments and aisles of the aeroplane. AP

## Warming threatens Greenland's archaeological sites, says study

Changes in soil characteristics affect organic elements, ruins of Viking settlements

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
COPENHAGEN

In Greenland, climate change is not just a danger to ecosystems but also a threat to history, as global warming is affecting archaeological remains, says a study.

There are more than 1,80,000 archaeological sites across the Arctic, some dating back thousands of years, and previously these were protected by the characteristics of the soil.

"Because the degradation rate is controlled by the soil temperature and moisture content, rising air temperatures and changes in precipitation during the frost-free season may lead to a loss of organic key elements such as archaeological wood, bone and ancient DNA," the report, published in the scientific journal *Nature*, stated.



Researchers investigating the material found at an archeological site in Greenland; a bone point, right. ■ AFP

The team behind the study, led by Jorgen Hollesen, has been examining seven different sites around the vast Arctic territory's capital Nuuk, since 2016.

In addition to organic elements, such as hair, feathers, shells and traces of flesh,

some of the sites contain the ruins of Viking settlements.

Projections used in the study, which are based on different warming scenarios, predict that average temperature could increase by up to 2.6 degrees Celsius, leading to "higher soil temperatures,

a longer thaw season, and increased microbial activity within the organic layers".

"Our results show that 30 to 70% of the archaeological fraction of organic carbon (OC) could disappear within the next 80 years," Mr. Hollesen said. This means that these remains, some of which provide a glimpse into the lives of the first inhabitants of Greenland from around 2,500 BC, are at risk.

When findings were compared with previous surveys, they found evidence of ongoing degradation. "At some sites, we did not find any intact bones or pieces of wood, suggesting that these have disintegrated within the last decades," he said. In regions such as Alaska, ancient artefacts are emerging as the permafrost thaws due to rising temperatures.

## Google to probe leak of private conversations

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
SAN FRANCISCO

Google said it was conducting an internal review after it discovered confidential audio had been leaked by a contractor of private conversations with its digital assistant.

The U.S. internet giant acknowledged "misconduct" in the leak of the Dutch language conversations by one of its language experts contracted to help refine its Google Assistant, the artificial intelligence-powered system for voice interactions.

Google made the announcement on Thursday following a report by Belgian broadcaster VRT that it

could access fragments of conversations from smart speakers and other Google devices in Belgium and Netherlands.

The leak appeared to be from one of the language experts Google uses to help it refine its program. "We just learned that one of these language reviewers has violated our data security policies by leaking confidential Dutch audio data," Google product manager David Monsees said in a blog post.

"Our security and privacy response teams have been activated on this issue, are investigating, and we will take action. We are conducting a full review of our safeguards."

## Taking in the view



**Bare necessities:** A black bear peers over a railing on the veranda of a resort in New Hampshire, U.S., just after sunrise. After an employee made some noise, the bear climbed down the stairs and returned to the woods. ■ AP/SAM GEESAMAN

## David Bowie gets his barbie

In honour of 50th anniversary of his song *Space Oddity*

JULIA JACOBS

On Thursday, the world learned that Barbie is a Bowie fan.

With its release of a doll dressed as David Bowie's glittering alter ego Ziggy Stardust, Mattel said it was celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Space Oddity*, released in 1969.

The new Barbie doll wears a body-hugging metallic "spacesuit," calf-high red platform boots and silver earrings with dangling stars. Her dark red hair is slicked back like Ziggy Stardust's, and daubed on her forehead is the golden circle he wore. Her nails are painted black.

### Male celebrities

It's a notably androgynous look for a doll that epitomised the stereotypes of feminine appearance in its earlier iterations.

In more recent years, however, male celebrity depictions have not just been re-



A Barbie doll modelled on Ziggy Stardust, an alter ego of David Bowie. ■ NYT

Bowie was known for his gender-bending style and sexual fluidity, and Ziggy Stardust was one of the most memorable experiments. He debuted the persona in 1972 with the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*.

Author Christopher Sandford wrote in his 1998 biography, *Bowie: Loving the Alien*, that the alter ego was more than just playing dress-up. During an interview in 1972, Bowie asked American critics to call him Ziggy, and eventually he admitted that the character was taking over his personality.

Bowie, who died in 2016, has described Ziggy as a rock star who communicates with extraterrestrial beings in the face of a coming apocalypse on earth.

Ziggy's last public appearance was at a concert in 1973, which was filmed and released as a documentary later. NY TIMES

## Shoes may give art a run for its money at auction

First-of-a-kind sale of sneakers

REUTERS  
NEW YORK

Sotheby's in New York announced on Thursday its first-ever auction dedicated to sneakers, underlining their fast-growing status as collectibles able to command tens of thousands of dollars.

Sotheby's is teaming up with streetwear marketplace Stadium Goods to auction 100 pairs of the rarest sneakers ever produced, including a sample of one of the first Nike Inc running shoes with a pre-sale high estimate of \$1,60,000.

The Nike Moon Shoe is one of only 12 pairs created.



The Nike Mags sneaker. ■ REUTERS

It was designed by Nike founder Bill Bowerman.

Other shoes in the online sale, ending on July 23, include sought-after and limited-edition sneakers produced by Adidas, Air Jordan and rapper Kanye West's Yeezy collection.

## 'Robot umpires' debut in U.S. baseball league

Umpire wears an earpiece connected to iPhone and relays the call upon receiving it from a computer system



Umpire Brian deBrauwere, left, wearing an earpiece connected to an iPhone, which relays calls from a computer. ■ AP

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
YORK

"Robot umpires" have arrived. The independent Atlantic League became the first American professional baseball league to let a computer call balls and strikes on Wednesday night at its All-Star Game.

Plate umpire Brian deBrauwere wore an earpiece connected to an iPhone in his pocket and relayed the call upon receiving it from a

TrackMan computer system that uses Doppler radar.

"Until we can trust this system 100%, I still have to go back there with the intention of getting a pitch correct because if the system fails, it doesn't pick a pitch up or if it registers a pitch that's a foot-and-a-half off the plate as a strike, I have to be prepared to correct that," Mr. deBrauwere said.

It didn't appear Mr. deBrauwere had any delay re-

ceiving the calls at first but players noticed a big difference. "One time I already had caught the ball back from the catcher and he signalled strike," said pitcher Daryl Thompson, who didn't realise the technology was being used until after he disagreed with a call.

The umpires have the ability to override the computer, which considers a pitch a strike when the ball bounces and then crosses the zone.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
WASHINGTON

Artificial intelligence programs have bested humans in checkers, chess, Go and two-player poker, but multi-player poker was always believed to be a bigger ask. Mission: accomplished.

Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, working with Facebook's AI initiative, has announced that their program defeated a group of top pros in six-player no-li-

mit Texas hold 'em game.

The program, Pluribus, and its big wins were described in the journal *Science*.

"Pluribus achieved super-human performance at multi-player poker, which is a recognised milestone in artificial intelligence and in game theory," said Tuomas Sandholm, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon.

According to the creators

of Pluribus, the technology could be used to solve a "wide variety of real-world problems" that, like in poker, involve actors who bluff, or hide key information.

First, the program practiced against itself, learning little by little how to use poker moves to best advantage. Surprises cropped up. "Its major strength is its ability to use mixed strategies," said Darren Elias, who played 5,000 hands against it.

## Firm says \$32 mn missing in cryptocurrency hack

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
TOKYO

A Tokyo-based cryptocurrency exchange said on Friday it had halted all services after losing cryptocurrency worth more than \$32 million in the latest hack.

Remixpoint said its subsidi-

ary BITPoint Japan discovered overnight that about \$32.3 million in various digital currencies had gone missing. The apparent hack was discovered after an error appeared in the firm's outgoing funds transfer system on Thursday night.