

## News in brief

## COURTS

## Two men guilty of Tube sex charge

An adult film actor who filmed himself and his former partner having sex with a third man on a busy London Underground train has been fined £1,000.

George Mason, 35, and 24-year-old Nicholas Mullan had a threesome with an unknown third man between Leicester Square and Waterloo stations, Westminster magistrates heard. A video was later posted online.

Mason, of Southwark, admitted outraging public decency. Mullan, of Belfast, was told to pay £170 costs and carry out a 12-month community order.

## TELEVISION



## 'Line of Duty' plot a secret, says star

Vicky McClure says the plot for the new series of the popular *Line of Duty* BBC TV series is such a closely guarded secret that she has not even shared any details with her family.

The actress, who plays DC Kate Fleming, said the new series finished filming at the end of last year. McClure (above) said the plot lines remained a mystery. "I haven't told my other half - I haven't even told my parents and I tell them everything."

McClure, 35, has been making a documentary, *Vicky McClure: My Dementia Choir*, to air this year on the BBC.

## NATURE

## Tractor helps to revive rare plant

A tiny rare plant has been brought back from the brink - by running over it with a tractor.

Marsh clubmoss resembles a tiny spruce tree and is found on heathlands. It has seen declines of 85 per cent in the past 85 years as its habitat has vanished.

As the species thrives on bare, damp ground that has recently been disturbed, the Dorset Heathlands Heart project drove over thousands of the plants in a five-ton tractor.

The conservation team said the number of plants had since quadrupled in the area.

## FOCUS

## Shops of the future

As retailers abandon the high street, why is Ikea moving in? This is not a sign of faith in bricks and mortar

Tottenham Court Road is a little-loved street of furniture stores in central London, made even more drab by boarded-up shops and sale signs plastered across the windows. But since October a new type of outlet has brought in some Lewis Carroll-like magical realism. Through vast glass windows, passers-by gaze in on a kitchen so tall it looks like part of Wonderland. Inside are no tills; indeed nothing is sold there. It belongs to Ikea, a Swedish furniture retailer, which also seems tony-turvy; Ikea is famously a staple of suburbia.

It may seem as if Alice has stepped through the looking-glass. But there is method in the madness. As other retailers are driven off the high street, partly because of competition from big-box stores like Ikea, the company is heading into the heart of London, Paris and New York as part of an expansion into 30 city centres. It is not only examining where it puts its shops. Though Ikea woke up late to the importance of e-commerce, it is using the shock as an opportunity to rethink its business model; the internet will become more central to its future. Many of its competitors still see digital commerce as just one retail channel among many. They are making a big mistake. Unless they face reality, more will join the ranks of struggling

E-commerce has upended this arrangement. Strip out items that are not widely bought online, such as cars, fuel and meals, and the internet's share of total retail sales last year rose above 17 per cent in Britain, 16

## The Economist

retailers such as Sears, JC Penney and Macy's in America, and Debenhams in Britain - especially if consumer spending turns down.

Retailing is not an industry prone to reinvention. Far from it. As Mark Pilkington, a former lingerie executive, explains in a new book, *Retail Therapy*, its two great innovations happened long ago, when shops grew into supermarkets, department stores and malls, and when merchandise moved out from behind the counter. The big stores became vast distribution systems, benefiting from oodles of capital and high barriers to entry. Meanwhile, customers bought the merchandise and walked out with it; the retailer saw little reason to engage with them beyond advertising and pretending to listen to their complaints.

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Ikea has opened its first 'planning studio' in the UK and Ireland at Tottenham Court Road in central London

per cent in America and 15 per cent in Germany, according to the Centre for Retail Research, a British consultancy. Above 15 per cent, says Mr Pilkington, is the point at which legacy retailers, with their high cost of stores and staff, struggle to survive, posing huge risks to jobs, the commercial-property business, lenders and investors.

Not bearing such costs or capacity constraints, e-retailers can offer a wider range of goods, at better prices, with a more personalised, data-driven service. E-commerce also changes the distribution system. Retailing used to be cash-and-carry, with shoppers taking their merchandise home with them. Now they often travel by different routes, unencumbered by shopping bags. So in addition to sales, retailers have to factor in delivery. That is where Ikea is devoting lots of attention.

Though Tolga Öncü, Ikea's head of retail, explains this with a wad of Swedish snus, or smokeless tobacco, beneath his upper lip, he appears more excited than nervous about the transition. The company's strong brand and balance sheet give it freedom to have a "test-and-fail" approach, rather than "being in a panic to do something", he says. It has three big tasks ahead: redefining sales measures, logistics and the whole concept of the store.

Start with sales measures in stores. These will remain crucial; online sales make up at most 10 per cent of the total, and stores are still the best way of attracting customers. But the idea that Ikea's success can be measured only by how much it sells per square foot is outdated. As it ships more of its

## Ingvar Kamprad The man who built an empire from a kitchen table

Ikea's founder Ingvar Kamprad (inset) was born in Småland in southern Sweden in 1926 and grew up on a farm near the village of Agunnaryd.

Kamprad had an entrepreneurial spirit even as a boy, and sold matches to his neighbours from the age of five. Even long after he became a business magnate, Kamprad lived a low-key



life. He continued to visit Ikea branches across the world until his death last January, aged 91, but he reportedly insisted on flying economy class.

He called employees "co-workers" and was said to have driven an old Volvo.

Kamprad was married twice. He had one daughter from his first marriage, and three sons from his second. Katie Grant, i

"touch and feel" items they have seen online. That means stores can keep less inventory. Meanwhile, space is freed for displays of kitchens and other rooms, with staff on hand to offer home-furnishing advice.

This switch to more personalised service will be particularly evident in the city centres. In Tottenham Court Road, the outlet is a "planning centre", where no money or goods change hands. This is aimed at online shoppers who need humans to talk to about design without having to travel to suburbia. This spring Ikea will open a different type of store in Paris, selling goods across a fairly small floor space. Its aim will be to attract local visitors more frequently, offering frequent range changes, fresh food and events.

Both store formats respond not just to online pressure, but to generational trends like urbanisation, demand for sustainability and reduced car use. Ikea is lucky. Shoppers already treat going to its stores as an "experience" - albeit not one for all tastes. In an online world, it is vital to build on this to keep customers interested.

Ikea is by no means safe. Its recent results show falling profits as it invests in new formats, but at least it has lots of cash on its balance sheet. Others have less freedom to experiment, especially retailers who have over-expanded, been leveraged to the hilt by private-equity owners, and paid dividends out of sale-and-leaseback property deals that expose them to rising rents. Many are only just realising that their business model is bust. It may be too late.

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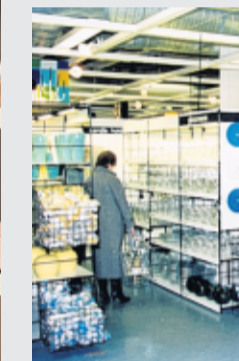
## Timeline

1943 Ingvar Kamprad, then 17, founds Ikea using money given to him by his father for performing well in his studies. The store sells pens, wallets, jewellery and stockings.

1948 Ikea begins selling furniture produced by local manufacturers.

1953 Its first furniture showroom opens in Älmhult, Sweden.

1956 Ikea begins designing flat-pack furniture.



1963 The first Ikea outside of Sweden opens, in Norway.

1987 The first UK store opens in Manchester. Katie Grant, i

## ENVIRONMENT

## Hole 'almost as big as Manhattan' found in Antarctic glacier

By Josh Gabbatiss

An enormous cavity has opened up beneath a remote glacier in Antarctica, spelling bad news for future sea levels. The space, which is big enough to contain 14 billion tons of ice and covers an area two-thirds the size of Manhattan, was spotted by Nasa on a mission to measure the region's disintegrating ice.

Scientists made several "disturbing" discoveries while examining Thwaites Glacier, and while they expected to find gaps between the ice and bedrock they were surprised by the scale.

The cavity also appears to have grown very rapidly, with most of the ice melting within the past three years. Cavities underneath glaciers can exacerbate ice loss as they allow relatively warm seawater to lap against the underside, driving further melting.

Thwaites glacier is thought to be

responsible for around 4 per cent of global sea level rises, but the new results gathered by the researchers suggest this is an underestimate.

Nasa uses ice-penetrating radar from planes flying over the region to build up a picture of what is going on below.

"We have suspected for years that Thwaites was not tightly attached to the bedrock beneath it," said Dr Eric Rignot, of Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. "Thanks to a new generation of satellites, we can finally see the detail."

The scientists are concerned about the "grounding line" where the glacier connects with the land-mass underneath.

As ice on top of the glacier melts, it makes the overall mass lighter, meaning it floats higher on the water, pushing the grounding line further back and exposing more of the ice to warm water.

THE INDEPENDENT

## ITALY

## Feeling poorly? The robot doctor will see you now

By Oliver Barnes

Humanoid robots are about to make their debut in an Italian hospital.

A two- to three-year pilot scheme will take place at the clinic in the town of San Giovanni Rotondo, in the southern province of Foggia. If successful, it will then be extended to other Italian and French hospitals, sources told Ansa news agency.

One of the semi-humanoid Pepper robots (right), created by the Japanese company SoftBank Robotics, will control wards, alerting doctors to emergencies. Another type of robot, the

RI, will have "dialogue" with patients to gauge their emotions and make initial diagnoses.

"We decided to trial both robots because they have different characteristics," said Francesco Puja, of the Konica Minolta laboratory in Rome. "RI is a research robot, while Pepper is already a commercial robot."

The RI robot was a collaboration between the Italian Institute of Technology and Japan's Konica Minolta, the long-established camera company which now also creates artificial intelligence.

Tests on "socially intelligent" robots began in US hospitals last year. Moxi, created by Texas-based Diligent Robotics, aims to relieve nurses of the stress of logistical tasks.



## MEDIA

## Mail Online warning 'downgraded'

By Kenneth Li

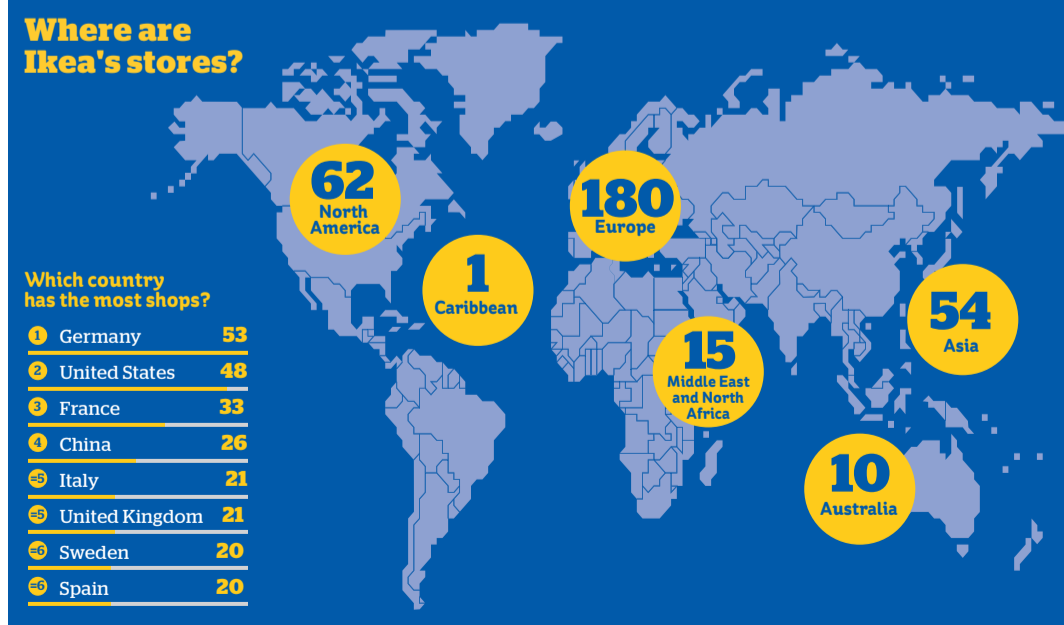
A web browser warning that appeared next to news stories on the MailOnline website has been downgraded, the company behind the credibility ratings system has said.

NewsGuard said it had downgraded the warning on the Daily Mail's digital platform to indicate

that it "generally maintains basic standards of accuracy and accountability" after discussions with a representative from the Daily Mail.

Previously, a warning appeared suggesting that the publication failed to meet these standards.

NewsGuard is software that displays a red or green labels when a user is browsing websites. REUTERS



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