

# Placido Domingo insists 'I have never abused anyone'

**F**amed Spanish opera singer Placido Domingo, accused by multiple women of sexual misconduct, denied the allegations yesterday in an interview in which he talked about getting over coronavirus. "I've changed. I am no longer afraid. When I found out I had COVID, I promised myself that if I made it out alive I would fight to clear my name," he said in an interview with the Italian newspaper Repubblica. "I never abused anyone, I'll repeat that as long as I live," he said. Domingo, 79, had said in March he had been hospitalised for coronavirus in Acapulco, Mexico. "It was a miracle to find my voice again... Two or three months ago I wasn't sure I would be able to sing again," he said. He said the time at home with his family had been "an extraordinary moment, useful for reflecting on our lives, our choices" but it was time to "get back to normal". "Our lives have changed. And as you know, it's even more difficult for me because of the accusations that have been made against me," he said.

The Spanish icon, who won worldwide acclaim in the 1990s as

one of the Three Tenors alongside Jose Carreras and Luciano Pavarotti, has been engulfed in a sexual harassment and assault scandal since August 2019 when allegations against him first surfaced. He is accused of forcibly kissing, grabbing and fondling women over a period of more than 30 years. In February Domingo apologized for "the hurt" caused to his accusers, saying he accepted "full responsibility" for his actions. But just two days later he issued another statement saying that apology had given a "false impression" and he had "never behaved aggressively with anyone" or done anything to obstruct their careers. The allegations "have hurt me more than the virus," he told the Repubblica. "All that remains for me to do is to take note of the fact that for the moment I will not be able to sing in certain parts of the world, such as the United States and Spain, my country." But that will not be because the public is against him, for people "are constantly sending me messages of solidarity", he said. — AFP



Spanish opera singer Placido Domingo.



People prepare to release green sea turtles on Kuta beach.

## Bali sea turtles set free after poachers arrested

**A**round two dozen green turtles were released back to the wild in Bali on Wednesday after the endangered creatures were rescued from poachers on the Indonesian holiday island. Marine officials carefully guided the giant reptiles as they thrashed their flippers in the sand to propel themselves toward the water. The turtles were among 36 seized after a raid last month that saw the arrest of several suspected traffickers—who could face five years behind bars if convicted under Indonesia's wildlife protection laws.

"Hopefully these 25 turtles will survive so that they can lay their eggs again," said Bali conservation agency chief Agus Budi Santosa, adding that 11 others rescued at the time would be freed later. The turtles, which can grow to more than a metre (three feet) in length and weigh upwards of 300 kilograms (700 pounds), are under threat due to poaching and habitat destruction. Their eggs are considered a delicacy and they are also slaughtered for their meat, skin and shells.— AFP



Marine police prepare to release green sea turtles on Kuta beach near Denpasar on the Indonesian resort island of Bali on Wednesday, after police arrested seven people on the Serangan waters for allegedly attempting to smuggle 36 green sea turtles. — AFP photos



Green sea turtles make their way after being released on Kuta beach.

## Italian police track down hot-footed statue toe snapper

**P**olice hunting for a mystery vandal who broke the toes off an Italian statue have identified an Austrian tourist who fled after lying on it to snap that perfect photograph. Three toes were damaged on the right foot of a plaster statue of a reclining Pauline Bonaparte, by Italian neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova, at the Gypsoteca Museum in Possagno, northern Italy, police said in a statement sent to AFP Wednesday.

The plaster cast was the original for a final marble version—which portrays the sister of French Emperor Napoleon as Venus—now housed in Rome's Galleria Borghese. Apparently hoping to imitate the pose captured in the plaster model, which was made in 1804, the tourist sprawled on top of it while his wife took a picture. In video surveillance footage, he can then be seen standing up, spotting the damage, and hesitating, before quickly walking away. Police said they had been able to track down the couple through their online ticket reservation.

Contacted by telephone, the man's wife broke down into tears and confessed that her husband was responsible, the statement said. The 50-year-old man sent an email to the police shortly afterwards to apologize. He has offered to pay for the repair to the statue, according to several Italian media reports. The museum houses the original plaster cast models of Canova, Italy's most famous 18th century sculptor, who died in 1822. —AFP