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This undated handout picture released by Rio de Janeiro's State Health Department shows Brazilian conjoined twins Bernardo (left) and Arthur (right) with their parents Adrieli and Antonio Lima in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos



This undated handout picture released by Rio de Janeiro's State Health Department shows Brazilian conjoined twins Bernardo (left) and Arthur (right) with their parents Adrieli (second left) and Antonio Lima, after the twins' operation at the Instituto Estadual do Cerebro Paulo Niemeyer (IECPN) hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



This undated handout photo released by Gemini Untwined shows conjoined twins Bernardo and Arthur Lima before their operation at the Instituto Estadual do Cerebro Paulo Niemeyer (IECPN) hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



This undated handout photo released by Gemini Untwined shows conjoined twins Bernardo and Arthur Lima after their operation at the Instituto Estadual do Cerebro Paulo Niemeyer (IECPN) hospital in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

# Conjoined twins separated with help of virtual reality in Brazil

Conjoined twins born in Brazil with a fused head and brain have been separated in what doctors described Monday as the most complex surgery of its kind, which they prepared for using virtual reality. Arthur and Bernardo Lima were born in 2018 in the state of Roraima in northern Brazil as craniopagus twins, an extremely rare condition in which the siblings are fused at the cranium. Joined at the top of the head for nearly four years-most of that spent in a hospital room outfitted with a custom bed-the brothers are now able to look each other in the face for the first time, after a series of nine operations

culminating in a marathon 23-hour surgery to separate them. London-based medical charity Gemini Untwined, which helped carry out the procedure, described it as the "most challenging and complex separation to date," given that the boys shared several vital veins. "It was the most difficult, complex, challenging surgery of my career," said neurosurgeon Gabriel Mufarrej of the Paulo Niemeyer State Brain Institute (IECPN) in Rio de Janeiro, where the procedure was performed. "No one believed it was possible at first. Saving them both was a historic accomplishment."

Members of the medical team, which included nearly 100 staff, prepared for the delicate final stages of the surgery on June 7 and 9 with the help of virtual reality. Using brain scans to create a digital map of the boys' shared cranium, surgeons practiced for the procedure in a trans-Atlantic, virtual-reality trial surgery executed in both Britain and Brazil. British neurosurgeon Noor ul Owase Jeelani, the lead surgeon for Gemini Untwined, called the prep session "space-age stuff." "It's just wonderful, it's really great to see the anatomy and do the surgery before you actually put the children at any risk," he told British news

agency PA. "To do it in virtual reality was just really man-on-Mars stuff." Pictures and videos released by medical staff showed the boys lying side-by-side post-surgery, little Arthur reaching out to touch his brother's hand. The boys are still recovering, and may need further procedures as they develop, doctors said. Speech is difficult for them, and Bernardo has a motor deficit on the right-hand side, Mufarrej said. "They will take some time to get to the point where we want them to be. But I believe in them," he said. — AFP

## Beyonce to remove offensive lyric after disabled community outcry

Beyonce will remove a derogatory term for disabled people from her new song "Heated," a spokesperson said Monday, after its use was condemned as offensive by campaigners. The US pop megastar will re-record the track from her latest album "Renaissance" on which she originally sang the lyrics "Spazzin' on that



In this file photo US singer/songwriter Beyonce arrives for the world premiere of Disney's "The Lion King" at the Dolby theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

a\*\*, spazz on that a\*\*." "The word, not used intentionally in a harmful way, will be replaced," a spokesperson for Beyonce told AFP via email. Co-written with Canadian rapper Drake, the dance track appears to use the word "spaz" in the colloquial sense of temporary

losing control or acting erratically. But disability campaigners noted that the word is derived from "spastic." According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, spasticity is a movement disorder involving stiff muscles and awkward movement, suffered by 80 percent of people with cerebral palsy. In June, US singer Lizzo re-recorded her song "Grrrls" to remove the same term following complaints that it was derogatory.

Australian disability campaigner Hannah Diviney said the inclusion of the word by Beyonce "feels like a slap in the face to me, the disabled community & the progress we tried to make with Lizzo." "Guess I'll just keep telling the whole industry to 'do better' until ableist slurs disappear from music," she tweeted. Beyonce's eagerly anticipated seventh solo studio album "Renaissance" was released Friday, drawing mainly positive reviews with its nods to disco and electronic dance.

Other collaborators on the album-which leaked online in the days prior to its official release-include Nile Rodgers, Skrillex, Nigerian singer Tems, Grace Jones, Pharrell and Beyonce's rap mogul husband Jay-Z. In an Instagram post published soon after the album's release, Beyonce said creating the album "allowed me a place to dream and to find escape during a scary time for the world. "My intention was to create a safe place, a place without judgment," she wrote. "A place to be free of perfectionism and over thinking. A place to scream, release, feel freedom." — AFP



## Easter Island welcomes back tourists post-pandemic

Chile's Easter Island, a popular Pacific Ocean tourist destination, officially reopened to the world Monday after more than two years of coronavirus closure. The first flight with tourists-many with bookings made before the pandemic-was due to touch down on Thursday, tourism official Veronica Kunze told reporters. "We have to open the island, but we have to do it safely," she added. Arrivals must be fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, and show a neg-

ative PCR test. The island, located 3,500 kilometers west of the coast of Chile, is world-famous for its "moais," huge stone statues in human form partially buried in the Earth. The island's main source of revenue was domestic and international tourism before flights were grounded on March 16, 2020, following the first reported cases of coronavirus in Chile. Easter Island used to receive some 160,000 tourists per year, arriving on two flights daily.

In the two years without tourists, islanders resorted to bartering and planting their own vegetable gardens, officials said. The island has reported only two coronavirus cases, with no hospitalizations or deaths. The reopening will be gradual, with some two flights a week at first, said Kunze. The local hospital had been reinforced, she added, and now boasts an isolation unit as well as a PCR laboratory. — AFP



Smoke billows from scorched earth after a fire erupted at the Cinecitta studios southeast of Rome.



Firefighters hose down a structure to extinguish a fire at the Cinecitta studios southeast of Rome. — AFP photos

## Fire destroys set at Rome's Cinecitta studios

A fire broke out on Monday at Rome's legendary Cinecitta Studios, virtually destroying a set being dismantled but causing no

injuries, emergency services and the studio said. Three teams of firefighters were on the site southeast of the Italian capital, which in its heyday was frequented by some of the country's greatest stars, from Federico Fellini to Sophia Loren. "A fire has broken out in an area where a set was being decommissioned," a spokesman for Cinecitta told AFP, adding that nobody had been injured. Firefighters said that "much of the papier-mache reconstruction has been destroyed" on the affected set,

which depicted Renaissance Florence, but that the flames were limited and under control. The fire disrupted filming of a Charlize Theron movie, the sequel to Netflix film "The Old Guard", according to production coordinator Natalia Barbosa. She told AFP the fire grew rapidly amid high winds and soaring temperatures and the set was evacuated as a precaution. "We've lost two days of filming," she said. It was not immediately clear what caused the fire, although

much of Italy is a tinderbox this summer due to a severe drought. Cinecitta suffered a major fire in August 2007, in a warehouse where the sets of television blockbuster "Rome" were stored, before spreading to other buildings in the vast complex. Cinecitta-which means "the city of cinema" in Italian-has been the backdrop of more than 3,000 films, including 51 Oscar winners. The studios were inaugurated in 1937 to churn out propaganda for the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini.

They were later used to make such classics as William Wyler's "Ben-Hur" in 1959 and Fellini's 1960 "La Dolce Vita". In recent decades, major productions have become more scarce, although the studios are planning a major makeover using money from the European Union's post-pandemic recovery fund. — AFP