

NEWS IN BRIEF

Three female media workers shot to death in Afghanistan

Three female media workers were shot and killed in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad yesterday, their TV network said, in what appeared to be the latest targeted killing to rock the war-torn country.

All 279 kidnapped Nigerian students released: governor

All 279 girls kidnapped from their boarding school in northern Nigeria have been released and are on government premises, the local governor told AFP yesterday.

One in four will have hearing problems by 2050: WHO

One in four of the world's population will suffer from hearing problems by 2050, the World Health Organization warned yesterday, calling for extra investment in prevention and treatment.

Navalny poisoning: US slaps sanctions on Russia

The United States yesterday imposed sanctions on seven senior Russian officials as it said its intelligence concluded that Moscow orchestrated the near fatal poisoning of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

World won't vanquish virus this year: WHO

Global cases up for first time in 7 weeks; Pfizer, AZ jabs 'highly effective' in elderly

AFP, Geneva

The number of new coronavirus infections globally rose last week for the first time in seven weeks, as the World Health Organization said it is unrealistic to think the world will be done with the Covid-19 pandemic by the end of the year.

WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said it might however be possible to take the tragedy out of the coronavirus crisis by reducing hospitalisations and deaths.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said new case numbers rose last week in Europe, the Americas, southeast Asia and the eastern Mediterranean mainly due to people letting down their guard.

He welcomed Monday's first injections of doses delivered through the Covax, which were administered in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

Meanwhile, official data showed that the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines have been "highly effective" in reducing infections and severe illness among elderly people in Britain.

In the over 80s, a single dose of either vaccine is more than 80 percent effective at preventing hospitalisation around three to four weeks after the jab, according to a Public Health England real-world study that has gathered data since January.



Protesters react to tear gas as they clash with police during a demonstration against the military coup in the northwestern town of Kale, Myanmar, yesterday. Security forces fired live rounds and tear gas at protesters again yesterday, leaving at least three people critically injured a day after at least 18 people were killed.

PHOTO: AFP

'Death sentence' for Yemenis!

UN fears famine as donors pledge 'disappointing' \$1.7b

REUTERS, New York

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said a "disappointing" \$1.7 billion had been pledged by countries on Monday for humanitarian aid in Yemen - less than half the \$3.85 billion the world body was seeking for 2021 to avert a large-scale famine.

"For most people, life in Yemen is now unbearable. Childhood in Yemen is a special kind of hell. Yemeni children are starving," Guterres said as he opened the pledging conference.

Some 16 million Yemenis - more than half the population of the Arabian Peninsula country - are going hungry, the United Nations says. Of those, 5 million are on the brink of famine, UN aid chief Mark Lowcock said.

"This does not solve the problem," Lowcock said after the pledging conference. "It's going to be impossible with such limited resources to prevent a large-scale famine."

Among the commitments on Monday were Saudi Arabia with \$430 million, the United States with \$191 million, the United Arab Emirates with \$230 million and Germany with \$240 million.

In 2018 and 2019, the United Nations prevented famine due to a well-funded aid appeal. In 2020 the world body only received just over half the

\$3.4 billion it needed. More than six years of war in Yemen - widely seen as a proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran - have sent the impoverished country spiraling into what the United Nations describes as the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

Some 80% of Yemenis need help, with 400,000 children under the age of 5 severely malnourished, according to UN data. For much of its food, the country relies on imports that have been badly



disrupted over the years by all warring parties. Despite promises from both sides to end the war, skirmishes on the ground continues yesterday. A munition fired by Yemen's Huthi rebels wounded five civilians in a border village in southern Saudi Arabia, state media reported, the kingdom's latest casualties from cross-border fire.

Advertisement for COAST Trust and COAST Foundation. It features logos and text: 'Change for Future', 'with its all experience and achievements is now', 'participation in survival strategies of coastal poor', 'Details www.coastbd.net'.

A large official notice from the Bangladesh Police regarding a public procurement process. It includes the title 'গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার' and 'বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ'. It details the procurement of uniforms and other supplies, listing items like 'মহাপত্র/বিভাগ', 'সংস্থা', 'দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান', etc. It also includes a table with columns for 'ক্রমিক', 'আইটেম', 'পরিমাণ', 'দরপত্রের মূল্য (টাকা)', 'নিরাপত্তা জামানত (টাকা)', and 'কাজ সম্পন্ন করার সময়'.

CO2 pollution bounces back

Says IAE, warns climate goals at risk as countries open up economies

AFP, Paris

Global CO2 emissions have returned to pre-pandemic levels and then some, threatening to put climate treaty targets for capping global warming out of reach, the International Energy Agency said yesterday.

Energy-related emissions were two percent higher in December 2020 than in the same month a year earlier, driven by economic recovery and a lack of clean energy policies, the IEA said in a report.

"The rebound in global carbon emissions toward the end of last year is a stark warning that not enough is being done to accelerate clean energy transitions worldwide," IEA executive director Fatih Birol said in a statement.

"If governments don't move quickly with the right energy policies, this could put at risk the world's historic opportunity to make 2019 the definitive peak in global emissions."

A year ago, the intergovernmental agency called on governments to put clean energy at the heart of economic stimulus plans, but the appeal appears to have fallen on deaf ears for



the most part. "Our numbers show we are returning to carbon-intensive business-as-usual," Birol said.

In China, carbon pollution last year exceeded 2019 levels by more than half a percent despite a draconian, though brief, lockdown to halt the virus' spread.

China -- which accounts for more than a quarter of global CO2 output -- was the only major economy to grow in 2020.

Other countries are also now seeing emissions climb above pre-Covid crisis levels, the report found. In India, they rose above 2019 levels from September as economic activity increased and

Covid restrictions relaxed. The rebound of road transport in Brazil from May drove a recovery in oil demand, while increases in gas demand toward the end of 2020 pushed emissions above 2019 levels in the final quarter.

US emissions fell by 10 percent in 2020, but by December were approaching levels from the year before.

Global emissions plunged by almost two billion tonnes in 2020, the largest absolute decline in history. More than half of that decline was due to lower use of fuel for road transport and aviation.

The 2015 Paris Agreement enjoins nations to cap the rise in global temperatures "well below" two degrees Celsius compared with preindustrial levels. Earth's surface is already 1.1C warmer on average, enough to increase the frequency and intensity of deadly heatwaves, droughts and superstorms made more destructive by rising seas.

In May, the IEA is to publish its first global road map on how the energy sector can reach net-zero by 2050.

'Pawri' power

5-second social media clip pulls India, Pakistan closer

REUTERS, Karachi

A 19-year-old Pakistani student who shot to fame after her five-second video went viral on social media across the subcontinent, hopes numerous renditions of her monologue will translate into more dialogue between rival neighbours India and Pakistan.

The short video shot by Dananere Mobeen in the Nathaigali mountains of northern Pakistan and uploaded onto Instagram shows a group of youngsters enjoying themselves by a roadside.

Swinging around the device she is filming on, Mobeen gestures behind her and says in Urdu, "This is our car, this is us, and this is our party taking place."

Seemingly innocuous, she deliberately mispronounces the English word "party" as "pawri" to poke fun at South Asians who adopt Western accents. It immediately struck a chord in both India and Pakistan, sparking top trending hashtags on social media, and garnering millions of views and hundreds of spin-offs.

"It was the most random video" Mobeen said, expressing surprise at how viral it had gone.

"Pawri" monologue renditions have been used by police in India and the Delhi Commission for Women in their social media outreach campaigns.

In one video, two Indian soldiers deployed in snowy mountains give it their own spin with "This is us, this is our gun, and we are patrolling here", while popular Bollywood actors Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone each did a version that also went viral.

RSF sues Saudi crown prince over Khashoggi

US urges Saudis to disband force behind killing

AFP, Paris, Washington

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) yesterday said that it had filed a criminal case in a German court against Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for "crimes against humanity" in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The complaint, which seeks an inquiry by prosecutors under Germany's international jurisdiction laws, accuses Saudi Arabia of persecuting Khashoggi -- who was murdered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018 -- as well as dozens of other journalists.

It comes after the United States released last week a declassified intelligence report which determined that Prince Mohammed approved the 2018 killing of Khashoggi, a US-based contributor to The Washington Post. US imposed sanctions and travel ban on Saudi officials and entities, but spared the crown prince.

Saudi officials denounced the report, insisting that Khashoggi was killed in a "rogue operation" that did not involve the

crown prince. But RSF said it had gathered evidence of a "state policy to attack and silence journalists" which it had submitted to the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe, Germany, on Monday.

Its report details the cases of 34 other journalists who have been jailed in Saudi Arabia, including the blogger Raif Badawi, who has been imprisoned in his home country since 2012 on charges of "insulting Islam".

"No one should be above international law, especially when crimes of humanity are at stake," Christophe Deloire, secretary-general of RSF, said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the United States on Monday urged Saudi Arabia to disband an elite unit controlled by the crown prince that Washington sanctioned over the killing of Khashoggi. It also urged the kingdom to "take additional steps to lift travel bans on those released to commute sentences and resolve cases such as those of women's rights activists and others".

