

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nigeria steps up hunt for 39 kidnapped students

Nigerian security forces stepped up efforts yesterday to rescue dozens of students who were abducted from their hostels in northwestern Kaduna state in the latest attack on schools, police and officials said. Gunmen stormed the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation in Mando at the outskirts of the state capital, Kaduna city, late Thursday and took 39 students away while the military rescued 180 after a fierce battle. The Kaduna college was said to have some 300 male and female students – mostly aged 17 or older – at the time of the attack. Heavily-armed gangs in northwest and central Nigeria have stepped up attacks in recent years, kidnapping for ransom, raping and pillaging.

Rudy Giuliani earns Razzie nominations for 'Borat'

Rudy Giuliani didn't even know he was appearing in "Borat Subsequent Moviefilm," but that hasn't stopped him landing two acting nominations – from the tongue-in-cheek Razzies. The annual list of the year's most dreadful movies is the one award show no Hollywood star wants to feature in, but Donald Trump's lawyer Giuliani bagged two spots in nominations Friday. The satirical film sequel about a fictional Kazakh journalist saw Giuliani tricked into a fake hotel room "interview" with Borat's attractive and flirtatious young daughter, played by Maria Bakalova. The scene ended with Giuliani apparently reaching into his trousers, oblivious to the hidden cameras, although he later insisted he was tucking in his shirt. Giuliani is up for worst supporting actor, and worst screen combo along with Bulgarian actress Bakalova, who was nominated for a Golden Globe and is tipped for Oscars recognition for her role.

Bolivia ex-president Anez arrested in 'coup' probe



Bolivia's former interim president Jeanine Anez was arrested yesterday on terrorism and sedition charges over what the government claims was a coup attempt against her predecessor and political rival Evo Morales. Police were also rounding up former ministers who backed the conservative politician's caretaker government, which was in place for a year after Morales fled the country in November 2019 amid disputed elections, media reports said. The arrests came months after Morales returned to Bolivia from exile on the back of a fresh election victory in October 2020 for the leftist Movement for Socialism (MAS) party he founded. Both the presidency and congress are now under the control of MAS. Anez tweeted a copy of the warrant with the response: "The political persecution has begun."

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



The sister of Chit Min Thu, a protester who died during a demonstration against the military coup on March 11, cries as she makes the three-finger salute during her brother's funeral in Yangon, yesterday. *Inset*, A wounded protester receives treatment in Mandalay.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

End Hong Kong 'oppression'

G7 powers urge Beijing; UK says China now 'non-compliant' with Hong Kong joint declaration

REUTERS, London

Foreign ministers in the G7 group of nations including the United States and Britain have expressed grave concerns at what they said was China's decision to fundamentally erode democratic elements of the electoral system in Hong Kong.

The G7 released a statement that was tweeted by British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, saying the recent decision to change Hong Kong's electoral system indicated that authorities in China were determined to eliminate dissenting voices and opinions in Hong Kong.

"We also call on China and the Hong Kong authorities to restore confidence in Hong Kong's political institutions and end the unwarranted oppression of those who promote democratic values and the defence of rights and freedoms," it said.

In a follow-up statement on Saturday, Raab said Britain now considered China "to be in a state

of ongoing non-compliance with the Joint Declaration", referring to the 1984 agreement between Britain and China to ensure certain political freedoms in Hong Kong after its return to Chinese control in 1997.

"China must act in accordance with its legal obligations and respect fundamental rights and freedoms in Hong Kong," Raab added.

China's parliament approved on Thursday a draft decision to change Hong Kong's electoral system, further reducing democratic representation in the city's institutions and introducing a mechanism to vet politicians' loyalty to Beijing. The measures are part of Beijing's efforts to consolidate its increasingly authoritarian grip over the Asian financial hub following the imposition of a national security law in June 2020, which critics see as a tool to crush dissent.

The European Commission and the High Representative noted in an annual report on Friday that there has been an

"alarming political deterioration in Hong Kong", citing the imposition of the national security law, the arrest of dozens of pro-democracy activists in January, and Beijing's move this week to overhaul the city's politics.

"China is consciously dismantling the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle in violation of its international commitments and the Hong Kong Basic Law," EU High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell said.

Separately, Australia and New Zealand said they are deeply concerned, urging Hong Kong and China to allow "genuine avenues" for the city's people to participate in their governance, and to protect the role of the Legislative Council.

In Hong Kong, the government said in a statement late on Friday it strongly opposed the EU's remarks and that the report's questioning of China's willingness to uphold the "one country, two systems" principle was a "groundless accusation".

Floyd's family receives \$27m settlement from Minneapolis

REUTERS

The city of Minneapolis on Friday agreed to pay \$27 million to settle a lawsuit by the family of George Floyd over his death in police custody, a case that stirred national protests over racial injustice and police brutality.

Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, died in May as Derek Chauvin, a white Minneapolis police officer, knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes. Floyd's dying pleas for help were captured on widely viewed bystander video, sparking one of the largest protest movements ever seen in the United States.

Benjamin Crump, an attorney for the Floyd family, said the agreement was the largest pre-trial settlement of a wrongful death lawsuit in US history. The size signifies that a Black person's death at the hands of police "will no longer be written off as trivial, unimportant or unworthy of consequences," Crump said at a news conference where he was joined by Floyd's relatives, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey and other officials.

The trial of Chauvin, who was fired by the police force, began earlier this week in Hennepin County's district court on charges of murder and manslaughter. Chauvin has pleaded not guilty and said he properly followed his police training.

Chauvin was helping arrest Floyd on the evening of May 25 on suspicion of his using a counterfeit \$20 bill to buy cigarettes at the Cup Foods grocery store at the intersection. The other three officers are due to go on trial later this year on charges of aiding and abetting Chauvin in Floyd's death, which was ruled a homicide by the medical examiner.



'Bigger than Neymar'

Pandemic propels Brazil doctor to fame

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

She still gets surprised when people want to hug her at the supermarket, but her studious media appearances analyzing the pandemic have suddenly made Dr. Margareth Dalcolmo famous in coronavirus-ravaged Brazil.

Dalcolmo, a 65-year-old pulmonologist and researcher at public health institute Fiocruz, was little-known to the general public when Covid-19 arrived in Brazil in February 2020.

But the soft-spoken expert has since made hundreds of media appearances on the health crisis, emerging as a comforting, almost motherly source of information in a country where disinformation and science-bashing are spreading as fast as the virus.

It all started in March last year, when Dalcolmo made a short video summarizing a crisis-response meeting she had just attended in the capital, Brasilia. "I knew nothing about social media at that point. But it got 1.5 million views," she said.

She has since become omnipresent on Brazilian TV and other media, one of the most listened-to voices on the pandemic in a country where more than 270,000 people have died of Covid-19 -- the world's second-highest death toll, after the United States.

Radiating calm authority with her red horn-rimmed glasses, she preaches the



gospel of face masks, social distancing and vaccines, while denouncing mismanagement and corruption by health officials.

She has also pulled no punches in criticizing "absurd, inept" views, such as arguments against vaccines or in favor of the medication hydroxychloroquine.

That has placed her squarely opposite a powerful figure who has repeatedly made both claims: far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

Dalcolmo has made 440 media appearances in all, giving her the name recognition typically reserved for, say, a superstar footballer.

"People are talking more about Margareth Dalcolmo than Neymar," columnist Zuenir Ventura wrote in newspaper Globo last month.



Survivor Farid Ahmed arrives for the National Remembrance Service for the 2019 Christchurch Mosques terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand, yesterday. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told an emotional memorial service marking two years since the Christchurch mosque attacks that the country had "a duty" to support its Muslim community. Hundreds of people turned out for the service, held amid tight security, to remember the 51 people killed and dozens wounded when a heavily armed gunman opened fire in two mosques on March 15, 2019. PHOTO: REUTERS



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