

MORE NEWS

Asean envoy to Myanmar in talks with junta for visit

The Brunei diplomat appointed by a Southeast Asian regional bloc as its special envoy to Myanmar said he is still negotiating with the military on the terms of a visit to the country and he has sought access to ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has been trying to end the violence that erupted in Myanmar after the military overthrew Suu Kyi and took power in February, and has sought to open a dialogue between the military rulers and their opponents. Asean tasked Erywan Yusof, Brunei's second foreign affairs minister, last month with leading these efforts. "There is an urgent need to go now to Myanmar. But I think before all that, I need to have assurances," Erywan told Reuters in an interview.

US judge rejects bid for patent by AI 'inventor'

A US judge has ruled that artificial intelligence can't get a patent for its creations, ruling that such a privilege is reserved for people. District court judge Leonie Brinkema backed a decision by the US patent office to turn away applications made on behalf of a "creativity machine" named DABUS. Brinkema issued a ruling on Thursday saying that "the clear answer is 'no'" to the question of whether an AI machine qualifies as an inventor under patent law. "As technology evolves, there may come a time when artificial intelligence reaches a level of sophistication that might satisfy accepted meanings of inventorship," Brinkema said in the ruling. "But that time has not yet arrived and, if it does, it will be up to Congress to decide how, if at all, it wants to expand the scope of patent law." Stephen Thaler had applied for patents on behalf of his DABUS machine in 2019, only to have US patent officials conclude the AI didn't qualify because it isn't an individual, according to court documents.



Thai PM Prayuth survives no confidence vote

Thailand's Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and five cabinet ministers comfortably survived a vote of no confidence in parliament yesterday as activists planned more protests against the government. Prayuth received 264 votes in favour and 208 against. Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and four other cabinet ministers also survived the censure motion in similar fashion. The opposition needed 242 of the 482 parliamentary votes to oust the prime minister. Lawmakers over four days accused his government of mishandling the pandemic and criticised him for the severe economic impact, taking aim at the government's slow vaccine rollout as a result of not making advance vaccine orders and deciding not to join the international COVAX vaccine-supply scheme.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



People stand on a queue outside a bank to withdraw money at Shar-e-Naw neighborhood in Kabul, yesterday. Inset, An Afghan vendor prepares weapons and ammunition to display for sale while waiting for customers in his shop at a market in Panjwai district of Kandahar province yesterday.



Quotes of the day



Washington must understand that it has no other choice but to abandon its addiction to sanctions and show respect, both in its statements and in its behaviour, towards Iran.

IRAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN SAEED KHATIBZADEH TELLS REPORTERS A DAY AFTER THE US TREASURY ANNOUNCED SANCTIONS AGAINST FOUR IRANIANS ACCUSED OF PLANNING THE KIDNAPPING IN THE US OF AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST OF IRANIAN DESCENT

When Biden sounded like Trump

After debacle, Biden says Afghan exit to end US global cop role

AFP, Washington

"America is back," goes President Joe Biden's catchphrase, but his unapologetic exit from Afghanistan shows America won't be back to business as usual.

Beyond the trauma of the Kabul evacuation, Biden is pitching a much broader retreat: a halt to using vast military resources to impose order and US values around the planet.

"This decision about Afghanistan is not just about Afghanistan," Biden said in what many see as a historic speech on Tuesday. "It's about ending an era of major military operations to remake other countries."

"Human rights will be at the center of our foreign policy but the way to do that is not through endless military deployments," he said. "Our strategy has to change."

Benjamin Haddad, director of the Europe Center at the Atlantic Council and an expert on transatlantic relations, called the speech "one of the most eloquent repudiations of liberal

internationalism by any US president in the last decades."

For those Americans fond of imagining their country to be a unique, invincible superpower -- winner of the Cold War, then awesome military interventionist everywhere from Iraq to Africa ever since -- this is a shock.

For most, though, polls show Biden's pivot is likely to be popular.

Biden's presidency is usually seen as a repudiation of the Donald Trump administration.

It's true that a lot -- from things like White House decorum to re-entering the Paris climate accord -- changed the moment Biden walked into the Oval Office on January 20.

But Biden's abandonment of open-ended US military adventures -- what detractors call being "the world's policeman" -- is Trumpian.

When Biden announced "it's time to end this forever war," about Afghanistan, "it could just as easily be Trump," said Charles Franklin, a

Marquette Law School professor and director of the Marquette opinion poll.

Today "the public is not committed to a large international role, certainly not of the sort the US played in the 1950s-1990s," Franklin told AFP.

Regarding Afghanistan in particular, polls show strong backing for exiting -- 77 percent, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll -- even if Biden is taking a battering for the chaotic manner of the withdrawal.

Where Biden differs sharply from isolationist Trump is in enthusiasm for building alliances. The United States may not be a swaggering global cop, the Biden theory goes, but it can be a friendly community leader.

His administration moved quickly to put US back at the center of tortuous negotiations between major powers and Iran over its nuclear policy, the climate accord, and alliances like Nato.

However, some political analysts said that US withdrawal from Afghanistan or greater Middle East is only to focus on its main rival: China.

Biden orders release of secret 9/11 documents

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden on Friday ordered declassification over the next six months of still secret documents from the government investigation into the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Biden is responding to pressure from families of some of the approximately 3,000 people killed by Al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001. They have long argued that the classified documents might contain evidence that the government of Saudi Arabia, a close US ally, had links to the hijackers who flew into the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

"Today, I signed an executive order directing the Department of Justice and other relevant agencies to oversee a declassification review of documents related to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's September 11th investigations," Biden said in a statement.

Declassification must take place "over the next six months." "We must never forget the enduring pain of the families and loved ones of the 2,977 innocent people who were killed during the worst terrorist attack on America in our history," Biden said.

The move comes ahead of the 20th anniversary of the attack, which spurred then-president George W Bush soon after to order the invasion of Afghanistan, where the Taliban sheltered al-Qaeda's leadership.

The official 9/11 Commission, which was set up by Congress, said there was "no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded" Al-Qaeda.

That phrasing has been interpreted by some as suggesting that unofficial or lower ranking Saudi figures might have played a role. Some of the investigation may still be deemed too sensitive to release.



Demonstrators take part in a protest over the Thai government's handling of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and to demand Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha's resignation, in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

STUDY ON COVID-19'S EFFECT ON CHILDREN
Delta variant doesn't cause more severe illness

AFP, Washington

US pediatric Covid hospitalizations have surged since Delta became predominant, but a new study that offers a first look at the relevant data suggests that fears the variant causes more severe disease are unfounded.

The paper by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also found that between June 20 and July 31, 2021, unvaccinated adolescents were more than 10 times more likely to be hospitalized than those who were vaccinated.

The health agency analyzed hospital records from across an area covering around 10 percent of the US population, between March 1, 2020 and August 14, 2021.

This covered the period before the emergence of Delta, the most contagious strain to date, and after it became dominant, from June 20 onwards.

Weekly hospitalizations of children aged 0-17 were at their lowest between June 12 and July 3, at 0.3 per 100,000, before rising to 1.4 per 100,000 in the week ending August 14 -- a 4.7-fold increase.

Pediatric hospitalizations reached their

all-time peak of 1.5 per 100,000 in the week leading up to January 9, when the US experienced its winter wave that was driven by the Alpha variant.

Consistent with prior research, children aged 12-17 and 0-4 are at higher risk of Covid hospitalization than those aged 5-11.

After examining 3,116 hospital records from the period before Delta, and comparing them to 164 records during the Delta period, the percentage of children with severe indicators was found to not differ greatly.

Specifically, the percent of hospitalized patients admitted to intensive care was 26.5 pre-Delta and 23.2 post; the percent placed on ventilators was 6.1 pre-Delta and 9.8 post; and the percent who died was 0.7 pre-Delta and 1.8 post.

These differences did not rise to the level of statistical significance.

The finding comes with the important caveat that because the number of hospitalizations in the post-Delta period is small, more data will need to accrue for scientists to gain greater confidence about the conclusion.



SEPTEMBER 0

1905 - The Treaty of Portsmouth (New Hampshire) was signed, ending the Russo-Japanese War. Russia ceded Port Arthur to Japan.

1972 - During the Olympic games, Arab guerrillas attacked an Israeli dormitory in the Olympic village at Munich, killing two members of the Israeli team. Nine more Israelis, five guerrillas and a West German policeman later died in a shoot-out at Munich airport.

1997 - Mother Teresa, 87, died of a heart attack in Calcutta.

SOURCE: WEBSITES

MALL STABBING ATTACK

New Zealand to criminalise terror attack planning

REUTERS, Wellington

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern yesterday vowed to tighten counter-terrorism laws this month after a knife-wielding militant known to the authorities stabbed and wounded seven people in a supermarket.

Police shot dead the 32-year-old attacker, a Sri Lankan national who had been convicted and imprisoned for about three years before being released in July, moments after he launched his stabbing spree on Friday.

Ardern said earlier the man was inspired by the Islamic State militant group and was being monitored constantly but could not be kept in prison by law any longer.

"I am committing that as soon as Parliament resumes, we will complete that work -- that means working to pass the law as soon as possible, and no later than by the end of this month," Ardern told a news

conference.

The Counter Terror Legislation Bill criminalises planning and preparation that might lead to terror attack, closing what critics have said has been a loophole allowing plotters to stay free.

But Ardern said it would not be fair to assume that the tighter law would have made a difference in this case.

Ardern said the attacker came to the attention of the police in 2016 because of his support for a violent ideology inspired by Islamic State.

Police were following the man when he went into the Countdown supermarket in New Lynn mall in Auckland. They said they had thought he had gone in to do some shopping but he picked up a knife from a display and started stabbing people. Police said they shot him within a minute of the start of the attack.

Facebook mistakenly labels black men 'primates'

AFP, San Francisco

Facebook on Friday said it disabled its topic recommendation feature after it mistook Black men for "primates" in video at the social network.

A Facebook spokesperson called it a "clearly unacceptable error" and said the recommendation software involve was taken offline.

Facial recognition software has been blasted by civil rights advocates who point out problems with accuracy, particularly it comes to people who are not white.

Facebook users in recent days who watched a British tabloid video featuring Black men were show an auto-generated prompt asking if they would like to "keep seeing videos about Primates," according to the New York Times.

The June 2020 video in question, posted by the Daily Mail, is titled "White man calls cops on black men at marina."

While humans are among the many species in the primate family, the video had nothing to do with monkeys, chimpanzees or gorillas.

A screen capture of the recommendation was shared on Twitter by former Facebook content design manager Darci Groves. "This is egregious," he said.

SHANG-CHI

LEGEND OF THE TEN RINGS

QUIZ CONTEST

The Daily Star | STAR CHALLENGE

10 WINNERS EVERYDAY! 2 PREMIUM TICKETS FOR EACH WINNER

Email your answer to starquiz@outlook.com by 4.00 pm today with your name, DOB, mobile number and address. The winners of the quiz will be announced tomorrow in this newspaper and through email.

Winners are requested to follow the instructions given in email

QUIZ - 01

"Who is Shang's father?"