



3 Vaccinated Kuwaiti travelers to UK exempt from mandatory PCR tests



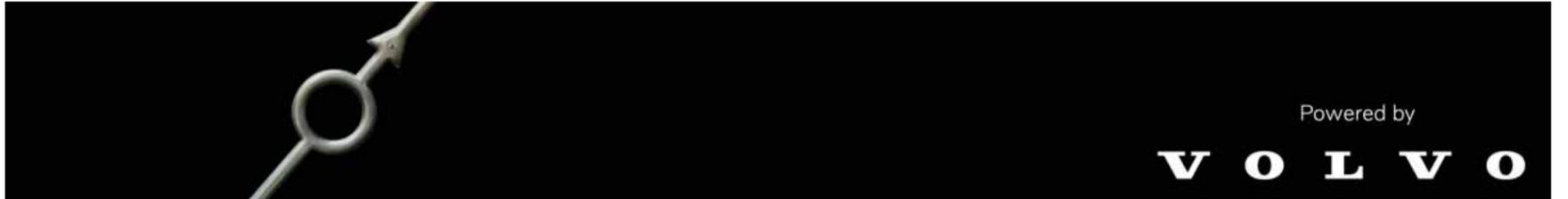
5 Houthis execute 9 over political leader's killing



11 Gun-toting Taliban mingle with families and kids at Kabul Zoo



15 Pakistan battling isolation after New Zealand pull out



Furious France recalls envoys to Australia, US

Row escalates after Canberra scraps French submarine deal

Kuwait marks World Cleanup Day



KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Alina L. Romanowski takes part in a cleanup campaign at Ushairej beach to mark World Cleanup Day yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

PARIS: France on Friday recalled its ambassadors to the United States and Australia in a ferocious row over the scrapping of a submarine contract, an unprecedented step that revealed the extent of French anger against its allies. President Emmanuel Macron recalled the envoys after Canberra ditched a deal to buy French submarines in favor of US vessels, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said.

Le Drian said that the decision was made to "immediately" recall the two French ambassadors due to "the exceptional seriousness of the announcements made on Sept 15 by Australia and the United States". The abandonment of the ocean-class submarine project that Australia and France had been working on since 2016 constituted "unacceptable behavior among allies and partners," the minister said. "Their consequences affect the very concept we have of our alliances, our partnerships, and the importance of the Indo-Pacific for Europe," he added.

US President Joe Biden announced the new Australia-US-Britain defense alliance on Wednesday, extending US nuclear submarine technology to Australia as well as cyber defense, applied artificial intelligence and undersea capabilities. The pact is widely seen as aimed at countering the rise of China. The move infuriated France, which lost a contract to supply conventional submarines to Australia that was worth Aus\$50 billion (\$36.5 billion) when signed in 2016.

A White House official expressed "regret" over the French envoy's recall but added "we will continue to be engaged in the coming days to resolve our differences, as we have done at other points over the course of our long alliance." State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a tweet that Washington understood France's position and was in "close contact" with Paris. He added that the issue would be discussed "at the senior level", including at the United Nations General Assembly next week, which both Le Drian and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will attend.

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby meanwhile acknowledged that telephone talks earlier between US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and French counterpart Florence Parly showed "that there is still much work to do in terms of our defense relationship with France".

The French ambassador recalls from the United States and Australia - key allies of France - are unprecedented. Withdrawing envoys is a last resort diplomatic step taken when relations between feuding countries are plunged into crisis but highly unusual between allies. "I am being recalled to Paris for consultations," France Ambassador to the US Philippe Etienne wrote on Twitter. "This follows announcements directly affecting the vision we have of our alliances, of our partnerships and of the importance of the Indo-Pacific for Europe."

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US admits strike in Kabul killed 10 civilians

WASHINGTON: A top general admitted the United States had made a "mistake" when it launched a drone strike against suspected Islamic State militants in Kabul, killing 10 civilians including children instead during the frenzied final days of the US pullout from Afghanistan last month.

The strike, a macabre coda to the 20-year US war in Afghanistan, was meant to target a suspected IS operation that US intelligence had "reasonable certainty" aimed to attack the Kabul airport, said US Central Command commander General Kenneth McKenzie. "The strike was a tragic mistake," McKenzie told reporters after an investigation.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin apologized to the relatives of those killed in a statement. "I offer my deepest condolences to surviving family members of those who were killed," Austin said in a statement. "We apologize, and we will endeavor to learn from this horrible mistake," he said. McKenzie said the government was studying on how payments for damages could be made to the families of those killed.

The general said that on Aug 29 US forces had tracked a white Toyota for eight hours after seeing it at a site in Kabul that intelligence had identified as a location from which Islamic State operatives were believed to be preparing attacks on the Kabul airport. Intelligence reports had led US forces to watch for a white Toyota Corolla that the group was allegedly using, he said.

"We selected this car based on its movement at a known target area of interest to us," McKenzie said. "Clearly our intelligence was wrong on this particular white Toyota," he said. The drone strike killed 10 people, including seven children, according to McKenzie, none of whom ultimately were linked to IS. McKenzie defended the US operation as in "self-defense strike" amid concerns about an attack on the airport in the last days of the chaotic evacuation.

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Algeria ex-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika dies aged 84

ALGIERS: Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who ruled Algeria for two decades before resigning in 2019 as huge protests engulfed the country, has died aged 84, public television announced. The former strongman had left office in April 2019 under pressure from the military, following weeks of demonstrations over his bid to run for a fifth term in office. After quitting, he had stayed out of the public eye at a residence in western Algiers.

The announcement of his death late Friday evening triggered little reaction in the North African country, reflecting how his absence had stamped him out of public interest. A statement from his successor Abdelmajid Tebboune noted Bouteflika's past as a fighter in the war for independence from France and said flags would be lowered to half mast for three days to honor him.

But on the streets of the capital Algiers, many residents told AFP the once-formidable president would not be missed. "Bless his soul. But he doesn't deserve any tribute because he did nothing for the country," said greengrocer Rabah. Malek, a telecoms employee, said Bouteflika "was incapable of reforming the country despite his long rule".

Even state broadcasters limited their coverage to the news of his death, without running special bul-

letins on his legacy. Sabqpress news website said the funeral would take place today at the El-Alia cemetery east of the capital where his predecessors and other independence fighters are buried. There was no immediate confirmation from authorities.

Bouteflika became president of Algeria in 1999 as the former French colony emerged from a decade of civil war that killed nearly 200,000 people. He went on to be elected for three more consecutive five-year

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Abdelaziz Bouteflika

Philippine nurses face burnout

MANILA: Exhausted nurses in the Philippines are struggling to care for patients as colleagues contract COVID-19 or quit a profession that was dangerously understaffed even before the pandemic. The country is enduring a record rise in infections, fueled by the Delta variant, with the health department reporting a nursing

shortfall of more than 100,000 - forcing those left to work long hours for little pay on often precarious short-term contracts.

"They are tired and burned out," nursing director Lourdes Banaga, at a private hospital south of Manila, told AFP. "At the start of the pandemic we had almost 200 nurses," said Banaga, director for nursing services at the Lipa Medix Medical Center in Batangas province. "By September that will reduce to 63." Official figures show 75,000 nurses are working in public and private Philippine hospitals but roughly 109,000 more are needed.

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MANILA: This photo taken on Sept 1, 2021 shows health workers staging a protest to ask the government for hazard pay and benefits outside the department of health office. — AFP

Spoons become new symbol of 'freedom'

JERUSALEM: The humble spoon has taken its place alongside traditional flags and banners as a Palestinian resistance symbol, after prisoners were said to have carried out one of the Zionist entity's most spectacular jail breaks with the utensil. When the six Palestinian militants

escaped through a tunnel on Sept 6 from the high security Gilboa prison, social networks shared images of a tunnel at the foot of a sink, and a hole dug outside.

A hashtag, "the miraculous spoon", suggested how the Hollywood-style feat might have occurred. But whether or not the utensil had really been involved or its role was cooked up was at first unclear. Then on Wednesday a lawyer for one of the fugitives who has since been recaptured told AFP that his client, Mahmud Abdullah Ardah, said he had

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GAZA: An artist works on a mural yesterday glorifying six Palestinian prisoners who escaped from the Zionist Gilboa prison almost two weeks ago. — AFP