

Seven children killed, scores hurt in Kenya school collapse

NAIROBI: Seven children died and scores were injured early yesterday when a school building collapsed in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, in an accident blamed on shoddy construction. "We can confirm that we have seven fatalities," said government spokesman Cyrus Oguna. Education Minister George Magoha said in a statement that 64 pupils had been admitted to Kenyatta National Hospital, most of them with minor injuries, but two others required "more attention".

Hundreds of angry residents of Dagoretti, a poor suburb where many live in makeshift homes, thronged the site where rescuers picked through the rubble until the search for victims ended in the afternoon. An AFP reporter at the site said books and desks were strewn through the debris of the two-storey building, a semi-permanent structure made of concrete, iron sheeting and timber.

"I had just dropped my son to school, and heard screams on my way back, and that is when I found people assisting them out to hospital," said Margaret Muthoni at Kenyatta National Hospital, whose four-year-old son was injured. "I am just lucky my son survived with injuries. It is a very unfortunate incident because some children have died," said Muthoni. Kephah Otieno said he had lost his five-year-old daughter. "I just can't believe. It is too hard for me and the family," he said. The school was a private institution with around 800 registered pupils, said Magoha, adding that it would be closed for the next four days.

Dagoretti MP John Kiarie told KTN television that it appeared the first floor had collapsed on children on the ground floor. However details were sketchy. Kiarie said the area had no land on which to construct a proper public school. He said the disaster highlighted the lack of "regulation of educational institutions, especially those in informal settlements... regulations that pertain to the construction and stability of educational institutions. "It is the highest level of irresponsibility and greed when you look at this structure that came down, and even the ones standing. It is another disaster waiting to happen," said Shadrack Okelo, a local resident.

Moses Nyakiongora, an official with the National Building Inspectorate said at the scene: "This school was not properly constructed. It is totally substandard." Magoha visited the site and vowed to build a public school in the area. "What has happened here today is regrettable but investigations have been launched," he said. "I have inspected the rest of the classrooms and they look stable. "But the one that collapsed was substandard, it should not have been allowed to be there."

Numerous buildings have collapsed in Nairobi and other Kenyan towns with deadly results in recent years, as the country experiences booming growth in the construction industry. Corruption has allowed contractors to cut corners or bypass regulations. In April 2016, 49 people were killed in the collapse of a six-floor building in the north-east of the capital. — AFP



NAIROBI: People stand on debris where a classroom block collapsed at Precious Talents primary school in Nairobi's Dagoretti constituency yesterday. — AFP

'How dare you?' Thunberg asks leaders at UN

UNITED NATIONS: A visibly angry Greta Thunberg berated world leaders at a UN climate summit yesterday, accusing them of betraying her generation by failing to tackle greenhouse gas emissions and asking "How dare you?" The impassioned speech set the tone for the meeting, called by UN chief Antonio Guterres to reinvigorate the faltering Paris agreement, which 66 countries have responded to with vows to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

It comes as mankind is releasing more emissions into the atmosphere than at any point in history, triggering global weather hazards from heat waves to intense hurricanes to raging wildfires and rapidly acidifying oceans. Yet the gap between carbon reduction targets

demand by scientists to avert catastrophe and actions thus far taken is only widening.

"I shouldn't be up here. I should be back at school on the other side of the ocean," said Thunberg, 16, who has become the global face of a growing youth movement against climate inaction that mobilized millions in a worldwide strike on Friday. "You come to us young people for hope. How dare you?" she thundered, her voice at times breaking with emotion. "We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is the money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"

In a surprising turn of events, President Donald Trump made a brief unscheduled appearance yesterday at the UN climate summit, which he had been expected to skip entirely. Trump, who has repeatedly expressed doubt about the overwhelming scientific consensus on manmade causes of global warming, spent a few minutes in the hall of the General Assembly where he applauded Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech then left.

Earlier, opening the summit, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "The climate

emergency is a race we are losing, but it is a race we can win." French President Emmanuel Macron invited his counterparts from Chile, Colombia and Bolivia to a meeting where \$500 million in extra funds were pledged by the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and non-profit Conservation International to protect the world's rainforests. Fewer than half the 136 heads of government or state in New York this week to attend the UN General Assembly were present yesterday.

Among those absent are President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, under whose leadership the Amazon rainforest is continuing to burn at record rates, and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison whose government has pursued an aggressively pro-coal agenda. China, the world's biggest carbon emitter by far but also a leader in renewables, was represented by foreign minister Wang Yi who called on developed countries to lead by example in reducing emissions - but also said China was respecting its climate change promises. — AFP



NEW YORK: Youth Climate activist Greta Thunberg speaks during the UN Climate Action Summit yesterday at the United Nations Headquarters. — AFP

600,000 tourists stranded as Thomas...

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The UK government said yesterday it had hired planes to fly home British tourists, in a mass repatriation plan codenamed Operation Matterhorn which began immediately. Launching Britain's "largest repatriation in peacetime history", Transport Secretary Grant Shapps added that the government and UK Civil Aviation Authority had hired dozens of charter planes to fly home Thomas Cook customers. "All customers currently abroad with Thomas Cook who are booked to return to the UK over the next two weeks will be brought home as close as possible to their booked return date," the government said.

Both a tour operator and an airline, the travel giant's key destinations were in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean but it offered also holidays in Asia, North Africa and the Caribbean. "It is a matter of profound regret to me and the rest of the board that we were not successful," said Thomas Cook chief executive Peter Fankhauser. "This marks a deeply sad day for the company," he added. As well as grounding its planes, Thomas Cook has been forced to shut travel agencies, leaving the group's 22,000 global employees - 9,000 of whom are in Britain - out of a job.

Chinese peer Fosun, which was already the biggest shareholder in Thomas Cook, had agreed last month to

inject £450 million into the business as part of an initial £900 million rescue package. In return, Fosun was to acquire a 75 percent stake in Thomas Cook's tour operating division and 25 percent of its airline unit. "Fosun is disappointed that Thomas Cook Group has not been able to find a viable solution for its proposed recapitalisation with other affiliates, core lending banks, senior noteholders and additional involved parties," it said yesterday.

Cabinet maker Thomas Cook created the travel firm in 1841, transporting temperance supporters by train between British cities. It soon began arranging foreign trips, being the first operator to take British travellers on escorted visits to Europe in 1855, followed soon after by destinations further afield. The tour operator grew into a huge operation but fell into massive debt despite recent annual turnover of £10 billion from transporting about 20 million customers worldwide.

The company's failure comes just two years after the collapse of Monarch Airlines that prompted the British government to take emergency action and return 110,000 stranded passengers, costing taxpayers £60 million on hiring planes. Thomas Cook's demise caps a dramatic fall from grace for a company which was demoted from London's FTSE 100 shares index in 2010 - and from the second-tier FTSE 250 last year. Its shares are worthless and now suspended.

"It ultimately is management's fault - whether they should have taken debt on (and) whether they should have had such a big high street portfolio," said Helal Miah, analyst at The Share Centre. "Maybe they should have thought about offloading that a lot earlier. They didn't have the foresight of changing the business structure around," he said. — AFP

"For 19 years if you have not been able to succeed, you're not going to be able to succeed in another 19 years," Khan said in an address to the Council on Foreign Relations. Khan - whose government has sought to use its influence with the Taliban - admitted that Trump's snapping off diplomacy caught him off-guard. "We read it in the paper. It should have been at least been discussed with us," he said.

Khan, a former cricket star who has long criticized military operations against extremists, discounted the possibility that the internationally recognized government would be toppled by the Taliban if US troops pulled out. "I don't think the Taliban will be able to control the whole country. I think there will be a settlement," he said. "I honestly believe that this is not the Taliban of 2001. There are lots of things that happened and I believe they will be more accommodating," he said.

The Taliban imposed an austere version of Islam on most of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, banning music and girls' education and giving refuge to Al-Qaeda. On Sunday, Trump held an unusual joint rally in Texas with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a Hindu nationalist. — AFP

CBK: Global uncertainty...

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Moreover, they don't face the same regulations and associated costs that banks do," Hashel pointed out.

Meeting the evolving needs of customer expectations in the fast-paced global environment further adds to the weight of the need for change, and all of this is further exacerbated by heightened geopolitical tensions and trade disputes. To meet these challenges, Hashel laid out a strategy of attack that focuses on five key areas - customer loyalty, value, efficiency, resilience and talent. He also called for greater proactivity on the part of regulators and the banking industry.

MoH imposes new fees for sick leaves...

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ads for health-related products and KD 100 for licensing ads about companies or health facilities. The ministry also imposed fees for analysis at drug registration laboratories for medicines, health products, food supplements and medical supplies. Analysis of a registered product will cost KD 15 and KD 50 for non-registered products. The fee for reanalysis for the first time is KD 30 and KD 60 when the request is repeated.

The ministry approved a KD 30 fee for issuing import and export licenses for narcotic and psychoactive drugs and KD 100 for issuing licenses to trade in narcotic or psychoactive drugs, in addition to KD 10 for the narcotic and psychoactive prescription book for every 50 prescriptions and KD 5 for every 400 pages of the psychoactive drug register.

Australia resumes live sheep exports...

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Australia state, for Kuwait by today. It is expected to be the first of many to depart in the coming months, much to the chagrin of animal welfare campaigners. New guidelines introduced in 2018 required exporters to significantly increase cargo space for sheep and to

"We the regulators must also consider how we should operate in the future. We need to take a proactive and dynamic approach to promote innovation, and act as a catalyst for the industry. We need to promote collaboration and share our experiences with each other to develop frameworks that will fit the needs of our societies. And we need to focus on capacity building to ensure that our staff can meet the future challenges of the industry," he said.

Held under the patronage of H.H. the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and attended by Acting Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, the conference brought together central bank chiefs from around the region, banking executives, chief economists and leaders in the industry to discuss what the future holds for banking, the impact of fintech and how banks can better collaborate, cooperate and shape a sustainable future for all.

The ministry approved fees to issue certificates and their translation - a "good conduct" certificate will cost KD 10 per certificate, in addition to KD 10 for a "to whom it may concern" certificate and KD 10 for translating the license into English. The fees included charges for medical operations - permission to conduct a one-day surgery will be KD 200 per year, and its renewal will be for four years. Fees of KD 200 will be collected for issuing in-vitro fertilization permission and for freezing embryos.

The fees for registering medicines and pharmaceutical companies at the medical and plant medicines registration department are KD 500 for registering a company that has marketing rights and registering a new medicine - be it for humans or animals - and vaccines, besides KD 25 for registering a health product and medical device.

A KD 100 will be collected for registering a food supplement and issuing a certificate for free trade of medical and cosmetic products, KD 10 to register a cosmetic product and KD 150 for sound manufacturing practices for local manufacturing companies. KD 50 will be collected for duplicates or additional copies of a product, company or manufacturing site. — Al-Anbaa

ensure independent observers travel on all ships carrying live animals, with penalties for non-compliance including fines and jail time.

But activists argue that the measures will do little to mitigate the animals' heat stress and the trade should be further restricted. The resumption of shipments was welcomed by the Australian Livestock Exporters' Council, which said the moratorium had meant "competitors have entered some of our markets". Lifting the ban means "renewed stability and food security" for consumers, they argued. Live sheep, goat and cattle exports are worth about Aus\$2 billion (\$1.35 billion) each year to Australia's economy, according to the lobby group. — AFP

Khan presses Trump on Taliban...

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On Afghanistan, Trump said it was "ridiculous" that the United States had been fighting there for 19 years. However he made no promises about restarting peace talks with the Taliban, saying only "we'll see."

Trump has frequently called for an end to America's longest war, launched after the September 11, 2001 attacks. A senior US diplomat reached a deal to pull troops after a year of negotiating with Taliban militants. Trump abruptly ended talks earlier this month, revealing on Twitter that he had invited Taliban leaders to the United States but canceled their visit after a bombing in Kabul killed a US soldier.

Khan said just before meeting Trump that he would be underlining that "there's not going to be a military solution" in Afghanistan, which also neighbors Pakistan.