

News in brief

◆ **The Omicron-adapted** COVID-19 vaccine booster developed by Pfizer Inc (PFE.N) and BioNTech SE (22UAY.DE) sharply reduced hospitalizations among older patients, Israeli researchers said on Monday, in some of the first evidence of the jab's real-world effectiveness. The study by researchers from healthcare provider Clalit, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Sapir College has not yet been peer reviewed. It found an 81% reduction in hospitalizations among people aged 65 and older who had received the booster against those who had previously received at least two COVID vaccinations, but not the Omicron-adapted shot. The study was carried out from the end of September until mid-December and looked at 622,701 people aged 65 and over who were eligible for the bivalent booster. Among them, 85,314, or 14%, had received it.

◆ **Pope Francis** yesterday privately met Archbishop Georg Ganswein, former Pope Benedict's closest aide, who has rattled the Vatican with a book describing what he says were the strains while two men wearing white lived within its ancient walls. The Vatican's daily bulletin listed Ganswein in the pope's schedule of audiences but as is customary gave no details. Hours after Benedict was buried on Thursday, an Italian publishing house

**Pope Francis meets Benedict's top aide as memoir rattles Vatican**

sent some news outlets including Reuters advance copies of Ganswein's 330-page "Nothing But The Truth - My Life Beside Benedict XVI". Ganswein, 66, was Benedict's personal secretary from 2003, when Benedict was still Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and remained as his side for nearly 20 years until his death on Dec. 31. He was also Francis' gatekeeper until the two had a falling out. The main question now facing Francis is what position to give Ganswein. Many are waiting to see if he will get another job in the Vatican or be assigned somewhere else in the world.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Prince Harry says UK royals got into bed with tabloid press 'devil'

Reuters | London

Prince Harry has said he had made public his rifts with the British royal family and taken on the press to try to help the monarchy and change the media, the latter described by his father King Charles as a "suicide mission".

In the first of a series of TV interviews broadcast on Sunday ahead of the launch of his memoir, Harry accused members of his family of getting into bed with the devil - the tabloid press - to sully him and his wife Meghan to improve their own reputations.

He told Britain's ITV he had fled Britain with his family for California in 2020 "fearing for our lives" and said he no longer recognised his father or his elder brother Prince William, the heir to the throne.

"After many, many years of lies being told about me and my family, there comes a point where, going back to the relationship between certain members of the family and the tabloid press, those certain members have decided to get in the bed with the devil ... to rehabilitate their image," he said.

"The moment that that rehabilitation comes at the detriment of others, me, other members of my family, then that's where I draw the line."

In the ITV interview, Harry repeated and elaborated on accusations that he and Meghan have made since they left royal duties; that the royals and their aides not only failed to



protect them from a hostile and sometimes racist press, but actively leaked stories about them via anonymous sources.

"The saddest part of that is certain members of my family and the people that work for them are complicit in that conflict," he said, indicating that included both Charles and Camilla.

So far, there has been no comment from Buckingham Palace. Harry said he didn't think his father or brother would read his book.

An unnamed friend of William told the Sunday Times that the Prince of Wales was "burning" with anger, but would not respond "for the good of his family and the country".

Harry told ITV he wanted reconciliation with his family members but said they had shown no interest, giving the impression it was better to keep him and Meghan as villains.

"I genuinely believe, and I hope, that reconciliation between my family and us will have a ripple effect across the entire world. Maybe that's lofty, maybe that's naive," he said.

Harry, in an interview with CBS' "60 Minutes" that aired later on Sunday, said the ball was in his family's court to heal the rupture.

"This all started with them briefing, daily, against my wife with lies to the point of where my wife and I had to run away from our count-- my country," he said.

Brazilian troops clear ex-prez Bolsonaro supporters' camp after capital st

● **Lula promises justice for those behind Sunday's riots**

● **Bolsonaro, in Florida, says protesters 'crossed the line'**

● **Biden and other world leaders condemn 'outrageous' act**

● **Lula took office in January after narrow October win**

Reuters | Brasilia

Brazilian soldiers backed by police dismantled a camp of supporters of far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro in the capital yesterday, a day after rioters launched the worst attack on state institutions since the country's return to democra-



Supporters of Brazil's far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro gather outside Brazil's Congress after protesters had invaded the building as well as the presidential palace and Supreme Court, in Brasilia, Brazil

cy in the 1980s. After thousands of Bolsonaro's backers stormed Congress, the Supreme Court and the presidential palace on Sunday, police in riot gear amassed at the pro-Bolsonaro camp outside Brasilia's army headquarters, while troops took down tents, Reuters witnesses said. The protesters were dispersed. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Bolsonaro's

leftist rival who took office on Jan. 1 after a narrow October election win, promised to bring those responsible for the violence to justice, after demonstrators broke windows and furniture, destroyed art work and stole guns and artifacts.

Lula, who was back at work at the Planalto presidential palace,

met with his defense minister and the armed forces commanders to discuss the attacks that recalled the assault on the U.S. Capitol two years ago by backers of former President Donald Trump.

U.S. President Joe Biden joined other world leaders in condemning Sunday's riots, calling them "outrageous," while Bolsonaro, who is now in Florida, denied inciting his supporters and



Police cars are pictured amidst tear gas after being pushed off the road by supporter of Brazil's far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro

said the rioters had "crossed the line."

Pro-Bolsonaro truckers, who have caused havoc on Brazil's highways for weeks, held more protests through the night.

A toll road operator for the BR 163 highway that cuts through

Ukraine bolsters defences in east as Russia sends waves of :

Reuters | Kyiv/Kramatorsk, Ukraine

Ukraine said it was strengthening its forces around Bakhmut in the eastern Donbas region and repelling constant attacks there by Russian mercenary group Wagner, whose leader has vowed to capture the area's vast underground mines.

Kyiv had sent reinforcements to Soledar, a small town near Bakhmut where the situation was particularly difficult, Ukrainian officials said.

"The enemy again made a desperate attempt to storm the city of Soledar from different directions and threw the most professional units of the Wagnerites into battle," Ukraine's military said in a



A firefighter works at a site of a market hit by Russian missiles, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in the town of Shevchenkove, Kharkiv region

statement.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of the Wagner mercenary group, has

been trying to capture Bakhmut and Soledar for months at the cost of many lives on both sides. He

said on Saturday its significance lay in the network of mines there.

"It not only (has the ability to hold) a big group of people at a depth of 80-100 metres, but tanks and infantry fighting vehicles can also move about."

Military analysts say the strategic military benefit for Moscow would be limited. A US official has said Prigozhin, a powerful ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, is eyeing the salt and gypsum from the mines.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in nightly video remarks on Sunday that Bakhmut and Soledar were holding on despite widespread destruction after months of attacks.

"Our soldiers are repelling constant Russian attempts to ad-

A child or youth died once ev

● **Another 1.9 m babies were tragically stillborn during the same period, according to a separate UN report.**

New York | Geneva | Washington DC

An estimated 5 million children died before their fifth birthday and another 2.1 children and youth aged between 5-24 years lost their lives in 2021, according to the latest estimates released by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME).

In a separate report also released today, the group found that 1.9 babies were stillborn during



Julien, 8 months, received his vaccines against polio and measles at a health centre in As-Sweida city, south Syria

the same period. Tragically, many of these deaths could have been prevented with equitable access

and high-quality maternal, newborn, adolescent and child health care.



The roll-out of the Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine (TCV) to children between 15 months to 15 years at the Ambrosia Ideal Secondary School in Kathmandu, Nepal

"Every day, far too many parents are facing the trauma of