

The Washington Post

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Mostly sunny 83/64 • Tomorrow: Mostly sunny 81/62 88

Democracy Dies in Darkness

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CDC loosens covid-19 guidance

New strategy pivots from wide approach to a focus on the most vulnerable

BY LENA H. SUN
AND JOEL ACHENBACH

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday loosened many of its recommendations for battling the coronavirus, a strategic shift that puts more of the onus on individuals, rather than on schools, businesses and other institutions, to limit viral spread.

No longer do schools and other institutions need to screen apparently healthy students and employees as a matter of course. The CDC is putting less emphasis on social distancing — and the new guidance has dropped the “six foot” standard. The quarantine rule for unvaccinated people is gone. The agency’s focus now is on highly vulnerable populations and how to protect them — not on the vast majority of people who at this point have some immunity against the virus and are unlikely to become severely ill.

The new recommendations signal that the Biden administration and its medical advisers have decided that the lower fatality rate from covid-19 in a heavily vaccinated population permits a less demanding set of guidelines.

“The current conditions of this pandemic are very different from those of the last two years,” CDC epidemiologist Greta Massetti said Thursday in a briefing for reporters.

The virus has killed more than
SEE VIRUS ON A4

Schools: CDC suggests relaxing quarantine, testing protocols. **A4**

FBI searched for nuclear documents



SUSAN WALSH/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Attorney General Merrick Garland on Thursday defended FBI agents as “dedicated, patriotic public servants.” His praise follows claims by former president Donald Trump and many of his allies that the bureau’s search of Mar-a-Lago reflects a politically motivated malice.

SOURCES SAY FILES WERE CLASSIFIED

Garland signed off on search of Trump home

BY DEVLIN BARRETT,
JOSH DAWSEY,
PERRY STEIN
AND SHANE HARRIS

Classified documents relating to nuclear weapons were among the items FBI agents sought in a search of former president Donald Trump’s Florida residence on Monday, according to people familiar with the investigation.

Experts in classified information said the unusual search underscores deep concern among government officials about the types of information they thought could be located at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Club and potentially in danger of falling into the wrong hands.

The people who described some of the material that agents were seeking spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. They did not offer additional details about what type of information the agents were seeking, including whether it involved

SEE TRUMP ON A7

Cincinnati score: Gunman slain after incident at FBI field office. **A2**

As U.S. prepares for climate action, planet isn’t waiting around

BY CHRIS MOONEY,
BRADY DENNIS
AND SARAH KAPLAN

For residents of the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, the United States’ recent success in clinching a major piece of climate change legislation may feel like too little, too late.

Over the past 40 years, as the world’s largest historical emitter of greenhouse gases repeatedly failed to take significant action on

the climate, the region surrounding Svalbard has warmed at least four times as fast as the global average, according to significant research published Thursday.

The study suggests that warming in the Arctic is happening at a much faster rate than many scientists had expected. And while U.S. lawmakers this summer hashed out the details of a massive bill to speed their nation’s shift toward cleaner energy — the culmination of months of deliberations — the

new findings were just the latest visceral reminder that the planet’s changing climate isn’t waiting around for human action.

Recent studies on subjects including tree mortality in North America and evidence of weakening ice shelves in Antarctica, combined with a stream of extreme weather events that include last month’s European heat wave and torrential floods of late in Kentucky and South Korea, are providing steady evidence of global

warming’s intensifying impact on the planet.

The Arctic is where some of the shifts are most severe.

Svalbard, a cluster of Arctic islands famed for populations of polar bears, experienced its hottest June on record. A record 40 billion tons of ice from the archipelago had melted into the ocean by the end of July. Melting permafrost and unstable mountain slopes are threatening homes.

And that’s just a sampling from a region that has warmed at an astounding rate — roughly 3 degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) since 1979.

“It’s a really vulnerable environment in the Arctic, and seeing these numbers, it’s worrying,” said Antti Lipponen, a scientist with the Finnish Meteorological

SEE PLANET ON A5

GOP-linked ads: Liberal lawmakers are urged to reject climate bill. **A14**

Under Kabul’s veneer of routine, a balancing act

As Taliban walks a fine line with world, Afghans do same with new rulers

BY PAMELA CONSTABLE

KABUL — An uneasy calm has settled over the Afghan capital this summer, a wary detente between the country’s stern religious rulers and a deflated, worried populace that is struggling to survive but also relieved that the punishing 20-year war involving foreign troops is over.

Both sides have been trying to maintain a precarious balancing act. The Taliban regime, hoping not to further alienate foreign donors, has been sending out muddled signals rather than ironclad orders on controversial topics, especially women’s rights. The citizenry, hoping to get through another hard day without crossing an unpredictable red line, is mostly lying low.

But as the first anniversary of the Taliban’s return to power approaches next week, the balancing

act has become harder to sustain. A series of violent attacks in the capital have belied the regime’s assertions that it can keep the public safe, while the Taliban’s shifting explanations for keeping teenage girls out of school have left thousands of families frustrated and angry.

In poor city neighborhoods, life seems to go on as normal. The summer nights are hot, and the power fails often. Men sit on concrete stoops and stroll toward corner mosques when the evening call to prayer wafts through the muggy air. Children chase one another in the streets. Burqa-covered women huddle beneath bakery windows, begging for a piece of bread.

But gradually, the capital that had swelled to 4 million just two years ago is hollowing out. Downtown, choice parking spots sit empty and clusters of drug addicts are taking over the sidewalks. Gone are the traffic jams that once inched ahead while small boys darted among cars like

SEE AFGHANISTAN ON A11

Refugees: A center in Virginia has housed thousands of Afghans. **B1**

In Charlottesville, a firing exposes old fault lines

As police chief, RaShall Brackney hoped to help the city heal. She says opposition came from within.

BY JUSTIN JOUVENAL

The final meeting of the day left Charlottesville’s police chief stunned and fearing for her safety, so RaShall Brackney unholstered her gun and held it by her side as she left headquarters one night in June 2021.

The first Black woman to head the department wasn’t worried about protesters who were a frequent presence outside or street crime. The threat she perceived was uncomfortably close: a handful of officers who served under her.

A deputy had just briefed her on an internal probe of the SWAT team. It found widespread issues, including officers making crass racial remarks and one apparently showing a trainee how to hide misconduct, according to the internal report obtained by The Washington Post.

In a text, one disgruntled member wrote they should “take out” command staff, a comment Brackney took seriously but some officers felt was just blowing off steam.

Brackney had been hired in the wake of the infamous “Unite the Right” rally. **SEE BRACKNEY ON A6**



ZACK WAJSCRAJ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

RaShall Brackney, the first Black woman to head Charlottesville’s police force, has filed a lawsuit against the city that alleges her firing was retaliation for her efforts to root out problematic potting.