

News in brief

Macron calls for talks to end conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray

◆ French President Emmanuel Macron called for the opening of talks to end



hostilities in Ethiopia's northern region of Tigray, the Elysee Palace said. The statement came after calls Macron held earlier in the day with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Sudanese counterpart Abdalla Hamdok. Macron also said all restrictions should be lifted to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid in Tigray, where thousands of children could suffer life-threatening malnutrition, according to the United Nations children's agency.

◆ Mali's transitional government is

Mali's interim government is mindful of fixed election timeline - PM

conscious of its commitment to a fixed deadline for arranging elections to restore democracy after last year's coup, Prime Minister Choguel Maiga said. Since a junta toppled President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in August 2020, political factions in Mali and foreign partners have been watching to see if the military-led interim authorities will stick to a promise to hold elections within 18 months.



Malaysia extends emergency rule in Sarawak state to stop polls

◆ Malaysia extended a state of emergency in the eastern state of Sarawak



until February 2022 to suspend regional elections amid the COVID-19 pandemic, state news agency Bernama reported. Malaysia is under emergency rule nationally to prevent the spread of COVID-19 but that is set to expire on Sunday. The emergency in Sarawak, however, will be extended until Feb. 2, Bernama reported, citing the government gazette.

◆ The mastermind behind a 2019 attack that killed 40 Indian

Mastermind behind 2019 Kashmir attack killed in shootout

paramilitary troops has been killed in a shootout with security forces, Indian police in Kashmir said. Mohammad Ismail Alvi, the commander of militant organization Jaish-e-Mohammad was killed south of the regional capital Srinagar, Vijay Kumar, the police chief of Kashmir said.



11 killed as India's monsoon death toll swells

◆ Eleven people were killed in eastern India after torrential rains swept away homes and triggered landslides, officials said, taking the country's monsoon death toll above 230. Rainstorms that have swept across the nation lashed the eastern state of West Bengal causing widespread destruction.



COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	35,689,184	629,072	198,259,318
2 India	31,619,573	423,965	
3 Brazil	19,880,273	555,512	
4 Russia	6,265,873	158,563	
5 France	6,103,548	111,824	
6 UK	5,856,528	129,654	
7 Turkey	5,704,713	51,253	
8 Argentina	4,919,408	105,586	
9 Colombia	4,776,291	120,432	
10 Spain	4,447,044	81,486	
11 Italy	4,350,028	128,063	
12 Iran	3,871,008	90,630	
13 Germany	3,775,579	92,165	
14 Indonesia	3,409,658	94,119	

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	284,215		16,518		229,712	
Saudi Arabia	525,730	+1,146	8,237	+11	506,089	+1,086
UAE	680,858	+1,537	1,949	+6	658,198	+1,518
Kuwait	397,098		2,314		382,826	
Oman	295,857		3,814		278,195	
Qatar	226,239	+162	601		223,732	+141

US sanctions top Cuban police for suppressing protests

AFP | Washington

The US slapped fresh sanctions on Cuban police for suppressing anti-government demonstrations this month, with President Joe Biden warning additional punitive measures were in store if the communist-ruled nation does not undertake sweeping reforms.

Thousands of Cubans took to the streets earlier in July, shouting "Freedom," "Down with the dictatorship" and "We're hungry" in the biggest protests since the revolution that brought Fidel Castro to power in 1959.

Hundreds of people were arrested and many face charges of contempt, public disorder, vandalism and propagation of the coronavirus pandemic for marching without face masks.

"There will be more unless there is some drastic change in Cuba, which I don't anticipate," Biden told reporters before hosting a group of Cuban-American leaders at the White House.

Earlier in the day the US Treasury named National Revolutionary Police Director Oscar Callejas Valcarce and Deputy Director Eddy Sierra Arias to its sanctions blacklist, which freezes any property they might have in the United States and bars US transactions with them.

"The Treasury Department will continue to designate and call out by name those who facilitate the Cuban regime's involvement in serious human rights abuse," said Andrea Gacki, director of the Treasury's main sanctions unit, the Office of Foreign Assets Control.

"Today's action serves to further hold accountable those responsible for suppressing the Cuban people's calls for free-



A man is arrested during a demonstration against the government of Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel in Havana (file photo)

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JOE BIDEN

dom and respect for human rights," Gacki said.

Cuba strenuously rejected the inclusion of the NRP and its directors on "spurious lists" by the United States, tweeted Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez.

"These arbitrary measures add to disinformation and aggression to justify the inhumane blockade against Cuba," he wrote, referring to Washington's embargo against Havana that has been in place since 1962.

Shoulder to shoulder

The Treasury said the NRP was the main unit of the Interior Ministry deployed to stifle the demonstrations and was responsible for beating a number of peaceful protesters.

On July 24 a government official said about 60 Cubans had

been prosecuted for participating in the demonstrations.

Biden on Friday stood shoulder to shoulder with Cuban American leaders at a White House meeting.

"We hear your voices. We hear the cries of freedom coming from the island," the president said.

Biden has come under fire from Republicans who criticize what they say is his weak stance against Havana.

"Biden's lack of leadership is a disgrace and undermines the cause of freedom in Cuba and around the world," the Republican National Committee said in a statement.

The White House issued a forceful defense of the president, saying Biden has been watching developments on the island closely.

"He's made clear that Cuba is led by a failed and repressive regime, and that communism is a universally failed ideology," White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said.

On Thursday, the European Union called on Cuba to release people arrested "arbitrarily" during the protests.

Trump to declare

Notes obtained by Hou falsely claim the electi

● "Leave the rest to me" and to congressional allies, the former president is said to have told top law enforcement officials

AP | Washington

President Donald Trump purged senior Justice Department officials to declare the results of the 2020 election "corrupt" in a December phone call, according to handwritten notes from one of the participants in the conversation.

"Just say the election was corrupt and leave the rest to me and the R. Congressmen," Trump said at one point to then-Acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen, according to notes taken by Richard Donoghue, who was then Rosen's deputy and who was also on the call.

The notes of the Dec. 27 call, released Friday by the House Oversight Committee, underscore the lengths to which Trump went to try to overturn the results of the election and to elicit the support of senior government officials in that effort. Emails released last month show Trump and his allies in the last weeks of his presidency pressured the Justice Department to investigate unsubstantiated claims of widespread election fraud, forwarding them conspiracy theories and even a draft legal brief they hoped would be filed with the Supreme Court.

Turkey evacuates panicked tourists by boat from

AP | Istanbul

Panicked tourists in Turkey hurried to the seashore to wait for rescue boats yesterday after being told to evacuate some hotels in the Aegean resort of Bodrum due to the dangers posed by nearby wildfires, Turkish media reported.

Coast guard units were leading the operation and authorities asked private boats and yachts to assist in evacuation efforts from the sea as new wildfires erupted. Video showed plumes of smoke and fire enveloping a hill close to the seashore.

The death toll from wildfires raging in Turkey's Mediterranean towns rose to six yesterday after two forest workers were killed, the country's health minister said. Fires across Turkey since Wednesday have burned down forests and some settlements, encroaching on villages and tourist destinations and forcing people to evacuate.

The minister of agriculture and forestry, Bekir Pakdemirli, said yesterday that 88 of the 98 fires that broke out amid strong winds and scorching heat have been brought under control. Neighbor-



A man walks toward wildfires in Kacarlar village near the Mediterranean coastal town of Manavgat, Antalya, Turkey

hoods affected by the fire in five provinces were declared disaster zones by Turkey's emergency and disaster authority.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the area yesterday, inspecting the damage from a helicopter.

Speaking from the town of Manavgat, Erdogan announced that the Turkish government would cover the rents for people affected by the fire and rebuild their homes. He said taxes, social security and credit payments would be postponed for those



Aerial view of the wildfires in Kacarlar village

yond wishing the mercy of God for the lives we have lost but we can replace everything that was burned," he said.

Erdogan said the number of planes fighting the fires had been increased from six to 13, including planes from Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran, and that thousands of Turkish personnel as well as dozens of helicopters and drones were assisting the firefighting efforts.

At least five people have died from the fires in Manavgat and one died in Marmaris. Both towns are located on the Mediterranean and are tourist destinations. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca

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RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

affected and small businesses would be offered credit with zero interest. "We cannot do anything be-