

News in brief

◆ **Three Chinese** astronauts landed back on earth yesterday on board the re-entry capsule of the Shenzhou-14 spacecraft, state broadcaster CCTV reported, bringing to an end a six-month mission on China's space station. The three astronauts - commander Chen Dong and teammates Liu Yang and Cai Xuzhe - who had been overseeing the final, pivotal period of construction at the space station, which was completed in November, all said they were feeling well after landing in audio aired on CCTV. The capsule landed at the Dongfeng site in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous region at 8:09 p.m. (1209 GMT), with staff from the space agency declaring the entire mission, which began on June 5, a "complete success", CCTV reported. Staff at the landing site carried out the exhausted-looking crew one by one and by just after 9 p.m. all three had safely exited the capsule, CCTV reported. A new crew of three fellow Chinese astronauts arrived at the space station aboard the Shenzhou-15 to take over from them on Wednesday.



Chinese astronauts return to earth after 'successful' six-month mission

UK could use military to ease strikes, Conservative chairman says



◆ **Britain's government** is looking at bringing in the military to help keep public services running if key workers, including in the state-run National Health Service, take strike action, the chairman of the governing Conservative Party said on Sunday. Britain is already grappling with industrial action in a range of sectors, but now faces strikes by thousands of nurses in England and ambulance workers in England and Wales who plan to walk out later this month over pay and conditions. The government has repeatedly called on workers to halt strike action, saying it could not afford pay rises to

cover inflation and that, even if it could meet their demands, such increases would further fuel inflation. "Our message to the unions is to say 'this is not a time to strike, this is a time to try and negotiate'. But in the absence of that, it is important for the government... to have contingency plans in place," Nadhim Zahawi told Sky News.

◆ **Islamic State claimed** responsibility for an attack on Pakistan's embassy in the Afghan capital Kabul on Friday, via a statement carried by one of the militant group's affiliated channels on Telegram on Sunday. The embassy came under attack on Friday and a Pakistani security guard was wounded by gunfire in what Islamabad called an attempt to assassinate its head of mission, who was unhurt. Islamic State claimed the attack was carried out by two of its members armed with "medium and sniper weapons" and was targeting the ambassador and his guards who were present in the courtyard of the embassy. Taliban authorities have said they are investigating the attack and that the embassy compound was targeted by gunfire from a nearby building. Police said they had arrested one suspect and recovered two firearms. The attack injured at least one guard and caused damage to the building, the Islamic State said. Pakistan's foreign office said it had seen the reports of IS's claim of responsibility. "Independently and in consultation with the Afghan authorities, we are verifying the veracity of these reports," it said in a statement, adding the attack was a reminder of the risk militant activity posed to the region.

◆ **Islamic State claims responsibility for attack on Pakistani embassy in Kabul**

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Historic crown to be modified for King Charles's coronation

Reuters | London

The historic St Edward's Crown, which has been the centrepiece of the coronation of monarchs in England for more than 350 years, has been removed from the Tower of London to be modified for the coronation of King Charles III next May, Buckingham Palace said.



An undated handout photo, issued by Buckingham Palace on December 3, 2022, shows the Imperial State Crown which will be worn by Britain's King Charles on his coronation day on May 6, 2023

The crown, which usually forms part of the Crown Jewels on display at the Tower, has been used since the coronation of King Charles II in 1661 after the monarchy was restored following the 10-year republic of Oliver Cromwell.

The St Edward's Crown replaced a medieval version, thought to have dated back to the 11th Century reign of Edward the Confessor which was melted down in 1649.

Charles III will be crowned with St Edward's Crown during the solemn ceremony to be held at London's Westminster Abbey on May 6, just as his late mother Queen Elizabeth II was in 1953. He will also wear the Imperial State Crown dur-

ing the service.

The St Edward's Crown, made up of a solid gold frame set with rubies, amethysts, sapphires, garnet, topazes and tourmalines, follows its original medieval forebear in having four crosses-pattée and four fleurs-de-lis. It also has a velvet cap with an ermine band.

Protest-hit Iran abolishes

AFP | Tehran

Protesters in Iran called yesterday for a three-day strike this week, stepping up pressure on authorities after the public prosecutor said the morality police whose detention of a young woman triggered months of protests had been shut down.

There was no confirmation of the closure from the Interior Ministry which is in charge of the morality police, and Iranian state media said Public Prosecutor Mohammad Jafar Montazeri was not responsible for overseeing the force.

Top Iranian officials have repeatedly said Tehran would not change the Islamic Republic's mandatory hijab policy, which requires women to dress modestly and wear headscarves, despite 11 weeks of protests against strict Islamic regulations.

Hundreds of people have been killed in the unrest which erupted in September after the death in custody of Mahsa Amini,



An Iranian officer (R) speaks with a woman arrested for wearing 'inappropriate' clothes in Tehran, on 23 July 2007



The morality police squads were usually women clad in black chadors

BETTER YOU KNOW
The hijab became mandatory in 1983.

a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman who was detained by the morality police for flouting the hijab rules.

Protesters seeking to maintain their challenge to Iran's clerical rulers have called for a three-day economic strike and a rally to Tehran's Azadi (Freedom) Square on Wednesday, according to individual posts shared on Twitter by accounts unverified by Reuters.

President Ebrahim Raisi is due to address students in Tehran on the same day to mark Student Day in Iran.

Similar calls for strike action and mass mobilisation have in past weeks resulted in an escalation in the unrest which has swept the country - some of the biggest anti-government protests since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The activist HRANA news agen-

Indonesia's Mount Semeru erupts, forcing thousands to flee



Mount Semeru spews smoke and ash in Lumajang

AFP | Lumajang (Indonesia)

Indonesia's Mount Semeru erupted Sunday spewing hot ash clouds a mile high and rivers of lava down its side while sparking the evacuation of nearly 2,000 people exactly one year after its last major eruption killed dozens.

The burst from the highest mountain on Indonesia's main island of Java, around 800 kilometres (500 miles) southeast of the capital Jakarta, prompted authorities to raise the alert status for the volcano to the highest level.

Villages around Semeru were being battered by a mix of volcanic ash and monsoon rains. Videos shared with AFP by a local rescue group showed a huge black cloud rising from the volcano, engulfing the sky and blocking the sun.

One resident described the panic when the ash clouds descended on their village.

"It was dark, I could not see anything. It was raining water and ash," the person, who did not want to be named, told AFP.

"I didn't know where to take shelter. I had to flee."

"Hot avalanches" triggered by piles of lava at the top flooded down the 3,676-metre (12,060 feet) mountain, said Abdul Muhari, a spokesperson for Indonesia's National Disas-



A rescuer evacuates an elderly resident

ter Mitigation Agency (BNPB).

A spokesperson for Indonesia's Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation Centre (PVMBG) told broadcaster Kompas TV that the higher alert level meant local villages were in danger.

However, no casualties or injuries were reported on Sunday after the PVMBG warned nearby residents not to travel within eight kilometres (five miles) of the crater.

The geological agency said that by evening Semeru was "still in the eruption phase" though the size of the ash clouds was decreasing.

"Overall the activity is still very high," it said in a statement.

The internet in the area was down and phone signals were patchy after the eruption, according to a journalist.

Protesters storm governor's office in southern Syrian city, gunfire heard

Reuters | Amman

Dozens of demonstrators angry over worsening economic conditions in Syria stormed the governor's office in the southern city of Sweida yesterday and set fire to parts of the building amid a heavy exchange of gunfire, the authorities and witnesses said.

Earlier, more than 200 people had gathered around the building in the centre of the Druze-majority city, chanting slogans calling for the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar Assad, they said, amid spiralling prices and economic hardship.

Syrian state media said tens of "outlaws" stormed the governor's office and burned files and official papers.

Three witnesses told Reuters the governor was not in the building which was vacated before protesters stormed



People gather as they take part in a protest in Sweida, Syria

the offices.

"The governor's office was burnt completely from the inside," said Rayan Maarouf, a civic activist and editor of Suwayda 24, a local website that covers the southern region, who said several people were wounded in the exchange of gunshots.

"There was heavy gunfire," Maarouf told Reuters, saying it was not clear from where the shooting came in the heavily policed area.

You're not getting

Cute cat desperately clings on to door frame

Daily Mail

This is the sweet moment a stubborn cat clung onto a door frame so that they would not have to face the freezing temperatures outside.

The moggy defied their owner, who wanted to put them outside for a while in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China as they had grown tired of the cat's hijinks.

Footage shows the British shorthair next to their owner, who is trying in vain to lead them outside on November 20.

But the feline refuses, by getting up on its back legs and holding tightly onto the door frame with its right front paw.

The owner does not give up and keeps trying to prise the an-



Footage shows the British shorthair next to their owner

imal off.

But their strong paw remains - and the owner gets tired of trying