

News in brief

◆ Europe's top rights court

said yesterday condemned Russia for failing to properly investigate the 2020 poisoning of opposition figure Alexei Navalny which the West says was an assassination bid. The Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) said Russia had notably failed "to explore the allegations of a possible political motive for the attempted murder, as well as possible involvement of state agents", unanimously finding Russia had violated the European Convention on Human Rights. It said Russia had refused to open criminal proceedings into the poisoning, which led to Navalny falling into a coma and being put on life support. Navalny was later evacuated to Germany where he recovered. He has been b. The court said the inquiry by Russia was not open to scrutiny and Navalny had not been allowed to participate. ehind bars since he returned to Moscow in early 2021.



European court condemns Russia over Navalny 2020 poisoning

◆ China, Russia conduct air patrol over Sea of Japan, East China Sea



◆ China and Russia conducted joint air force patrols over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea yesterday, as South Korea said it had deployed fighter jets in response to warplanes near its airspace. Beijing and Moscow "staged the sixth joint aerial patrol in accordance with an annual military cooperation plan between China and Russia", the Chinese defence ministry said in a statement. The statement gave no further details of the manoeuvres, which took place over waters bordering Japan, the Korean peninsula and Taiwan. South Korea said four Russian and four Chinese military aircraft had entered its air defence identification zone (ADIZ) around lunchtime on Tuesday, prompting it to scramble fighter planes.

◆ More than 30 people accused of a coup plot

have been arrested in Kyrgyzstan, the national security service said yesterday. The impoverished Central Asian country with ties to Russia and China has seen three presidents resign over political crises fuelled by corruption, nepotism and disputed votes since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The GKNB state security agency said it dismantled the preparations of a group of people planning to organise riots "in order to seize power by force", adding that more than 30 people were arrested on Monday. The arrests come just days after a visit to Kyrgyzstan by European Council President Charles Michel, during which President Sadyr Japarov pledged his "readiness to work hand in hand with the European Union".

30 arrested for 'attempted coup' in Kyrgyzstan: official

◆ Major aid group's women staff partially resume work in Afghanistan

to include Afghan women working for the United Nations. I am glad to confirm that we have been able to resume most of our humanitarian operations in Kandahar as well as a number of other regions in Afghanistan," Jan Egeland, Secretary-General of the independent Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) said Monday. "All our work is for women & men, girls & boys alike, & with equal participation of our female & male humanitarian colleagues," he said in a tweet. It comes after Egeland travelled to Kandahar -- the Taliban government's traditional stronghold -- last month where he announced that officials had said they would consider a "temporary agreement" to allow women to return to work.

◆ A leading international NGO's Afghan women staff have resumed their work in some provinces, months after the Taliban government banned them from working. Several aid groups suspended operations in protest at the order that was announced at the end of December, and later extended

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Pooch claims world record for longest tongue



Zoey, a three-year-old Labrador/German Shepherd mix from Metairie, Louisiana

The Daily Mail

Many dog owners enjoy the occasional kiss from their pet.

But one pooch's smooches are so sloppy that they could leave you needing a towel, or even a quick shower.

Zoey, a three-year-old Labrador/German Shepherd mix from Metairie, Louisiana, has

claimed the Guinness World Record for dog with the longest tongue.

Her tongue measures a whopping five inches (12.7cm) long, making it longer than a can of Coke.

The new record comes just three months after an English Setter called Bisbee broke the record with a tongue measuring 3.74 inches (9.49cm).

Destruction of frontline dam forces Ukraine evacuations

● Moscow and Kyiv traded blame for the attack

● 16,000 people living in the flooding zone

● Zelensky said the "world must react"

● Peskov accused dam attack deliberate sabotage by Ukrainia

AFP | Kherson

An attack on a major Russian-held dam in southern Ukraine yesterday unleashed a torrent of water that flooded a small city, two dozen villages and sent hundreds fleeing.

Moscow and Kyiv traded blame for ripping a gaping hole in the Kakhovka dam in what Kyiv said was an attempt by Russia to hamper Ukraine's long-awaited offensive.

People in the city of Kherson, the largest population centre in the area, headed for higher ground as water, which had been held back by the dam and a hydroelectric plant, rose in the Dnipro River.

"There is shooting, now there is flooding," said Lyudmyla, who had loaded a washing machine onto a cart that was attached to an old Soviet car.

Ukraine's interior ministry said 650 people had been evacuated as of 1000 GMT and 420 more had left the area, with a total of 24 villages flooded.

Ukrainian officials said there were a total of 16,000 people living in the "critical zone" for



The Kakhovka hydroelectric dam which was damaged in Nova Kakhovka, near Kherson



Built in the 1950s, the Kakhovka dam has strategic value as it pumps water into the North Crimean Canal, which starts in southern Ukraine and crosses the entire Crimean peninsula. This means that any problem with the dam could cause water supply problems for Crimea, which has been under Russian control since 2014.

potential flooding.

On the Russian-controlled riverbank, Vladimir Leontyev, the Moscow-installed mayor of Nova Kakhovka where the dam is located, said the city was underwater and 900 people had been evacuated.

He said 53 evacuation buses were being sent by the authorities to take people from Nova Kakhovka and two other settlements nearby to safety.

"We are organising temporary accommodation centres with hot meals," he said.

The Kakhovka dam and its power plant were seized by Russia in the first hours of the war.

'War crime'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia of blowing up the dam and said that the "world must react."

He said Russia had carried out "an internal explosion of the structures" of the plant at 2:50 am local time (2350 GMT).

Ukraine also called for a meeting of the UN Security Council and warned of a potential "ecocide" after 150 tonnes of engine oil spilled into the river as a result of the attack.

Western powers also blamed Russia for the damage to the Kakhovka dam, with EU chief

Charles Michel calling it a "war crime." NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said the dam breach was "outrageous" and "puts thousands of civilians at risk and causes severe environmental damage." Russia however said the dam was partially destroyed by "multiple strikes" coming from Ukrainian forces.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the destruction was the result of "deliberate sabotage by the Ukrainian side."

The Soviet-era dam sits on the Dnipro River, which provides cooling water for the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe. The flooding fuelled already existing fears for the safety of the Zaporizhzhia plant, under Russian control.

The plant is some 150 kilometres (about 90 miles) away from the damaged dam. Moscow and Kyiv offered conflicting versions on the safety of the facility.

Senegal arrests teacher accused of raping 27 girls

AFP | Dakar

A Senegalese Quran teacher suspected of raping 27 of his female students was arrested on Monday after several weeks on the run, a police source said.

The man is accused of assaulting the students at his school in the holy city of Touba in central Senegal, a local police official said. The suspect went missing after the accusations emerged earlier this year following a



Representative picture

complaint from alleged victims who produced medical certificates, the source added. He

was arrested on Monday "after handing himself over to the police. After questioning, he was handed over to the gendarmerie," the official said.

The source said the teacher is accused of "raping 27 students" but did not provide precise details on the dates of the alleged crimes or the age of the complainants.

Local media reported that the alleged victims were "minors", implying they were under 15,

and that the Koranic school has been closed.

The newspaper "Le Jour" wrote last week that the affair came to light when one of the girls refused to return to the school, because the teacher "had sexual relations with her and all the other girls".

Touba is considered a holy city by the Mourides, a major Islamic brotherhood in the Muslim-majority West African country.

Colombian president drawn into nanny wiretapping scandal

Bogota

Colombia's President Gustavo Petro has been drawn into a scandal involving the unlawful wiretapping of his former chief of staff's nanny, with claims of illegal financing levelled at his campaign.

Petro's chief of staff Laura Sarabia and ambassador to Venezuela Armando Benedetti are under scrutiny after Sarabia's



Colombian President Gustavo Petro

nanny allegedly fell victim to illegal surveillance following the disappearance of thousands of dollars from her employer's house. To gain access to her calls, a false police report was allegedly used to link the nanny to organized crime -- none less than the notorious Gulf Clan drug cartel, Attorney General Francisco Barbosa told a press conference last week.

The nanny, Marellys Meza, has also claimed she was subjected to illegal interrogation and a lie detector test in January at a building annexed to the presidential palace in Bogota.

Sarabia and Benedetti stepped down last week and levelled accusations against one another after prosecutors said the pair would be called to testify in a probe into Meza's allegations.