

News in brief

Firefighters tackle blaze at 19-storey London tower block



Firefighters in London were tackling a blaze at a 19-storey block of flats in the east of the city, with smoke emerging from parts of the 8th, 9th and 10th floors and ambulances treating people in the area. A witness said by 1000 GMT the fire appeared to be out. Around 100 firefighters had been working on the building while paramedics and police also attended the scene. The London Ambulance Service said it had dispatched ambulance crews, clinical team managers and support vehicles to the area.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said the process of removing all contractors from Afghanistan working with the United States was under way as part of President Joe Biden's withdrawal of forces from the country.

Pentagon chief says removal of all contractors from Afghanistan under way

The remarks are the clearest indication yet that Biden's April order to withdraw all US forces from Afghanistan by Sept. 11 extended to US-funded contractors. As of April, there were nearly 17,000 Pentagon contractors, including about 6,150 Americans, 4,300 Afghans and 6,400 from other countries.



UK PM Johnson's party win election for parliament seat



Conservative Party won an election for a new member of parliament in the northern English town of Hartlepool, breaking Labour's decades-long hold and tightening the prime minister's grip on traditional opposition-supporting areas. Conservative candidate Jill Mortimer beat the Labour candidate by 15,529 votes to 8,589, securing what less than a decade ago would have been seen as impossible feat of dislodging the main opposition Labour Party from one of its heartland seats in northern England.

Australia will lift a ban on its citizens returning from COVID-ravaged India next week, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said, as state officials reported that an outbreak in Sydney appeared to be contained. Morrison stood by his decision to impose a biosecurity order last month barring all travel to and from India, a policy that drew heavy criticism from lawmakers, expatriates and the Indian diaspora.

Australia to reopen door to India



Britain withdrew its Royal Navy vessels from the waters off Jersey but said it would remain on standby to support the Channel island after a dispute with France over post-Brexit fishing rights escalated rapidly. France and Britain both deployed maritime patrol vessels to the area after a flotilla of French trawlers sailed in protest to Jersey's main harbour and a French minister suggested earlier in the week that Paris might cut electricity to the island.

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	33,378,060	594,162
2 India	21,880,583	238,129
3 Brazil	15,009,023	417,176
4 France	5,728,090	105,850
5 Turkey	4,998,089	42,187
6 Russia	4,863,514	112,246
7 UK	4,431,043	127,583
8 Italy	4,092,747	122,263
9 Spain	3,567,408	78,726
10 Germany	3,497,527	84,970
11 Argentina	3,095,582	66,263
12 Colombia	2,951,101	76,414
13 Poland	2,824,425	69,445
14 Iran	2,627,094	74,241

Global tally: 157,301,031
Deaths: 3,277,737
Recovered: 134,615,145
New cases: +686,603
New deaths: +8,370

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	234,015		13,714		175,117	45,184
Saudi Arabia	424,445	+1,039	7,045	+13	407,650	9,750
UAE	532,710	+1,766	1,607	+3	513,068	18,035
Kuwait	281,772		1,621		265,530	14,621
Oman	199,344		2,083		181,696	15,565
Qatar	210,070	+600	496	+3	199,444	10,130

Girl shoots three at US school

Girl in 6th grade detained after Idaho school shooting

The girl was disarmed by a teacher at Rigby Middle School

Reuters | Washington



Police tape marks a line outside Rigby Middle School following a shooting

A sixth-grade girl pulled a handgun from a backpack at her eastern Idaho school on Thursday and opened fire, hitting two fellow students and a member of school staff and inflicting non-life-threatening injuries on them, officials said.

The girl was disarmed by a teacher at Rigby Middle School in Rigby, Idaho, a remote community about 270 miles (435 km) east of Boise, and held until law enforcement arrived, Jefferson County Sheriff Steve Anderson said. Her name and exact age weren't immediately released.

"She fired multiple rounds inside of the school and out," Anderson said at a news conference. "We don't have a lot of details of why. That is being investigated."

Students were sent home with their parents immediately after the shootings and classes will be cancelled yesterday, Jefferson School District Superintendent Chad Martin said.

"This is the worst nightmare any school district could ever face," said Martin. "We prepare for it and we're never truly

ready for it." Several law enforcement agencies are involved in the investigation of the shooting, which happened shortly after 9 a.m. local time, Jefferson County Sheriff Anderson said. Local media had previously reported that a male student was taken into custody after the shooting. Depending on the outcome of the investigation, Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney Mark Taylor said charges against the girl could include three counts of attempted murder.

None of the gunshot wounds were life-threatening, Michael Lemon, trauma director at Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center said.

"They could be so much worse," Lemon said. "We feel absolutely blessed."

The school staff member was treated and released for his injury, while the two students were being kept overnight for observation, he said.

Idaho Governor Brad Little issued a brief statement shortly after the incident.

"Thank you to our law enforcement agencies and school leaders for their efforts in responding to the incident," Little said on Twitter. "I am staying updated on the situation."

China says 'extremely low' risk of damage from rocket debris

Reuters | Beijing

Most debris from a large Chinese rocket expected to plunge back through the atmosphere this weekend will be burned up on reentry and is highly unlikely to cause any harm, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said yesterday.

The US military said on Wednesday what it called an uncontrolled re-entry was being tracked by US Space Command.

The Long March 5B rocket blasted off from China's Hainan island on April 29, carrying the unmanned Tianhe module, which contains what will become living quarters on a permanent Chinese space station.

The location of the rocket's descent into Earth's atmosphere as it falls back from space "cannot be pinpointed until within hours of its reentry", which is projected to occur around May 8, US Space Command said.

Harvard-based astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell told Reuters this week there was a chance that pieces of the rocket could come down over land such as in May 2020, when pieces from another Chinese Long March 5B rocket rained down on the Ivory Coast, damaging several buildings.

He said potentially dangerous debris would likely escape



A Long March 5B rocket carrying China's Tianhe space station core module lifts off from the Wenchang Space Launch Center (file photo)

given that 70% of the world is covered by ocean.

Speaking in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said China was closely following the rocket's reentry into the atmosphere, and that most of its components would be burned up upon re-entry.

"The probability of this process causing harm on the ground is extremely low," he said.

Debris from the Long March 5B is likely to fall in international waters, China's Global Times reported on Wednesday.

Based on its current orbit, the debris trail is likely to fall somewhere as far north as New York, Madrid or Beijing and as far south as southern Chile and Wellington, New Zealand, or anywhere in between, McDowell said.

YOU KNOW WHAT

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Maldive after as

Hospital says Mohamed injuries to his head, ch

Nasheed has undergone 16 hours of life-saving operations

AFP | Male

Former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed was in a "critical" condition yesterday following an assassination attempt, doctors said.

Nasheed, 53, the Maldives' first democratically elected president and still an important figure in the island nation's murky politics, was rushed to hospital after an explosion late Thursday.

Since then he has undergone 16 hours of life-saving operations in the capital Male for injuries to his head, chest, abdomen and limbs.

The private ADK hospital said yesterday evening that Nasheed was "in a critical condition in intensive care".

In a televised address to the nation, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih announced that a team from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) would arrive Saturday to help with the investigation into the blast.

Solih described the attack as an assault on the fledgling democracy, promising the perpetrators "would face the full force of the law".

Police said officials from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime have also been asked to assist in the investigation.

Maldivian police said they were treating Thursday's bomb attack

Amnesty International conscience' status to R

Reuters | Moscow

Amnesty International will next week announce it is reversing a decision to strip jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny of its "prisoner of conscience" status, a top aide said.

The human rights group announced on Feb. 24 that it would stop referring to Navalny as a prisoner of conscience on the grounds that in the past he had made comments that qualified as advocacy of hatred.

Navalny's chief of staff Leonid Volkov, speaking in English to Canadian legislators, accused Russia of carrying out a series of dirty tricks to blacken the politician's

They (Amnesty) told me just yesterday that they will issue a press release on May 12 after they have examined how the Russian disinformation campaign managed to influence them

NAVALNY'S CHIEF OF STAFF LEONID VOLKOV