

News in brief

UN's Guterres expresses 'clear commitment' to North Korea denuclearisation



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres yesterday expressed his "clear commitment" to North Korea's denuclearisation during his visit to Seoul, weeks after Pyongyang said it was "ready to mobilise" its nuclear deterrent. Guterres arrived in Seoul on Thursday following a trip to Japan, where

he gave a speech to mark the 77th anniversary of the world's first nuclear bomb attack in Hiroshima. He has also been to Mongolia. "I would like to reaffirm our clear commitment to the full, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, of the DPRK," he said at his meeting with South Korean president Yoon Suk-yeol, using North Korea's official name.

Ethiopia said yesterday it has completed the third filling of its mega-dam on the Blue Nile, a development that could raise further tensions with downstream neighbours Egypt and Sudan. The announcement comes a day after Ethiopia said it had launched electricity production from the second turbine at the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) which lies in the west of the country. "Today as you see behind me, the third filling is complete," Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said in images shown on state television from the dam site. "The Nile is a gift of God given to us for Ethiopians to make use of it."

Ethiopia says completes third filling of Nile mega-dam



Germany suspends part of Mali military mission over flight spat



Germany suspended its military reconnaissance mission in Mali after local authorities again withheld a flight clearance, a spokesperson for the defence ministry in Berlin said yesterday. "We will, at least for the time being, suspend the reconnaissance part of mission," the spokesperson said, adding that Malian authorities had not issued the clearance for a flight to rotate some staff. At the start of August, Mali had already withdrawn clearances for German flights over the country, but later reversed that decision.

Germany suspended its military reconnaissance mission

Protests broke out in Syria's rebel-held north yesterday over a call from Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu for reconciliation

between the Syrian government and opposition. "We have to somehow get the opposition and the regime to reconcile in Syria. Otherwise, there will be no lasting peace, we always say this," Cavusoglu said Thursday, in remarks to diplomats. The comments have sparked calls for protests after Friday weekly prayers in key cities that fall under the control of Turkish forces and their supporters, including in Al-Bab, Afrin and Jarabulus.

Syria rebels call for protests over Turkey's 'reconciliation' call



Justice Department seeks to unseal search warrants of Trump's home

Reuters | Washington

US federal agents were looking for documents relating to nuclear weapons when they raided former President Donald Trump's home in Florida this week, the Washington Post reported.

It was not clear if such documents were recovered at the former president's Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, the Post said. Reuters could not immediately confirm the report.

The US Justice Department asked a judge on Thursday to make public the warrant that authorized the FBI search of Mar-a-Lago, after Trump, a Republican, portrayed it as political retribution.

The request means the public could soon learn more about what investigators were looking for during the unprecedented search of a former president's home.

The search was part of an investigation into whether Trump illegally removed records from the White House as he left office in January 2021, some of which the Justice Department believes are classified.

Attorney General Merrick Garland, the top law enforcement officer and an appointee of Democratic President Joe Biden, told a news conference that he had personally approved the search. The Justice Department also seeks to make public a redacted receipt of the items seized.

"The department does not take such a decision lightly. Where possible, it is standard practice to seek less intrusive means as an alternative to a search, and to narrowly scope any search that is undertaken," Garland said.



Former President Donald Trump gestures as he departs Trump Tower

YOU KNOW WHAT

Should the warrant be released it could disclose unflattering information about the former president and about FBI scrutiny of his handling of sensitive government documents right as he prepares for another run for the White House

Not only will I not oppose the release of documents ... I am going a step further by ENCOURAGING the immediate release of those documents

DONALD TRUMP

Garland said the Justice Department made the request to make public the warrant "in light of the former president's public confirmation of the search, the surrounding circumstances and the substantial public interest in this matter."

A source familiar with the matter said the FBI retrieved about 10 boxes from Trump's property during the search.

Trump was not in Florida at the time of the search.

Late on Thursday, Trump called for the immediate release of documents related to the search.

His decision to publicly confirm the search was highly unusual. US law enforcement officials typically do not discuss ongoing investigations in order to protect people's rights. In this case, Trump himself announced the search in a Monday night statement.

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Russia and Ukraine ha

UN calls for demilitarised zone

Zelenskiy demands Russia return plant to Ukraine

Reuters | Kyiv

Ukraine and Russia accused each other yesterday of risking nuclear disaster by shelling Europe's largest nuclear power plant, occupied by Russian forces in a region expected to become one of the next big front lines of the war.

Western countries have called for Moscow to withdraw its troops from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, and the United Nations called on Thursday for it to be declared a demilitarised zone. But there has been no sign so far of Russia agreeing to move its troops out of the facility they seized in March.

The plant dominates the south bank of a vast reservoir on the Dnipro river that cuts across southern Ukraine. Ukrainian forces controlling the towns and cities on the opposite bank have come under intense bombardment from the Russian-held side.

Three civilians, including a boy, were wounded in overnight shelling of one of those towns, Marhanets, Valentyn Reznichenko, governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region, said in the latest in a string

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	94,479,779	1,061,346
2 India	44,223,557	526,928
3 France	34,169,281	152,990
4 Brazil	34,124,579	681,025
5 Germany	31,489,484	145,561
6 UK	23,420,826	186,087
7 Italy	21,455,291	173,853
8 S. Korea	21,111,840	25,499
9 Russia	18,824,282	383,011
10 Turkey	16,295,817	99,678
11 Japan	15,086,304	34,537
12 Spain	13,280,557	111,339
13 Vietnam	11,362,540	43,096
14 Australia	9,760,161	12,739

Global tally

593,578,576

Deaths

6,449,603

Recovered:

565,625,282

New cases

+558,934

New deaths

+1,013

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	515,645		24,613		442,182	48,850
Saudi Arabia	811,748	+106	9,266	+1	798,564	3,918
UAE	1,003,129	+823	2,339		981,884	18,906
Kuwait	655,854		2,562		652,250	1,042
Oman	397,231		4,260		384,669	8,302
Qatar	418,039	+649	681		411,418	5,940

Suspected Rome bank robber foiled by tunnel collapse

Reuters | Rome

An Italian man had to be rescued after becoming trapped in a collapsed tunnel near the Vatican, suspected of being part of a gang burrowing its way to a nearby bank, police said yesterday.

Firefighters spent eight hours digging him out from under a road in the west of Rome, before he was finally freed on Thursday evening and taken to hospital.

"Two people from Naples



First responders during a rescuing operation for a suspected thief who was buried under rubble for about eight hours, as he was allegedly digging a tunnel with his accomplices

were arrested for resisting a public official and two, from Rome, for damage" to public property, a police spokesman told AFP.

The rescued man, one of the two Romans, remains in hospital, he said without giving an update on his condition.

"We are still investigating, we do not exclude that they are thieves, it is one of the theories," he said.

For Italian newspapers, however, the motive was clear, noting the tunnel was found near a bank ahead of the August 15 long weekend, when residents

traditionally head out of town and much of Rome becomes empty.

"The hole gang," headlined the Corriere della Sera daily, while La Stampa said: "They dig a tunnel to rob a bank, and one of them is buried underground."

The man was brought out alive on a stretcher, after a day-long operation involving dozens of emergency service workers using mechanical diggers.

The tunnel began underneath an empty shop that had recently been rented.

YOU KNOW WHAT

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Over 150 endangered vultures poisoned to death

AFP | Johannesburg

At least 150 critically-endangered vultures were poisoned to death in separate incidents in Botswana and South Africa, conservationists said yesterday, warning the killings pushed the birds closer to extinction.

Vulture poisoning is not uncommon in wildlife-rich southern Africa, where they are targeted by poachers because they draw unwanted attention to their illegal activities.

Their heads are also used in traditional medicine, according to wildlife groups.

In the latest incidents, more than 50 white-backed vultures were found dead in Botswana's northern Chobe district yesterday, while about 100 more were discovered in South Africa's Kruger National Park Thursday, according to vulture conservation group Vulpro.

In both cases, the birds died after feeding from the carcass of a buffalo, which appeared to have been laced with poison, said Vulpro's founder Kerri Wolter.

"What makes this even more catastrophic is that it's breeding