

1521

Spanish conquistadors under Hernán Cortés capture Aztec Emperor Cuauhtémoc in Tenochtitlan marking the end of the Aztec Empire

1642

Dutch astronomer Christiaan Huygens discovers Mars' southern polar cap



1788

Prussia joins Anglo-Dutch alliance to form Triple Alliance to prevent spread of Russo-Swedish War of 1788-90

1942

The 'Manhattan Project' commences, under the direction of US General Leslie Groves; its aim - to deliver an atomic bomb

Ukraine, Russia trade blame for risk of nuclear disaster at frontline plant

Ukraine and Russia have traded blame over fresh shelling at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear complex as fears of a potential disaster rise



A view shows the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in the course of Ukraine-Russia conflict outside the Russian-controlled city of Enerhodar in the Zaporizhzhia region

of similar reports.

Kyiv has said for weeks it is planning a counteroffensive to recapture Zaporizhzhia and neighbouring Kherson provinces, the largest part of the territory Russia seized after its Feb. 24 invasion still in Russian hands. Moscow has installed regional officials who say they intend to stage votes to join Russia.

Ukraine's Energoatom agency, whose workers still operate the plant under Russian occupation, said the power station was struck five times on Thursday, including near where radioactive materials are stored. Both sides blamed each other for the blasts and Reuters could not verify either account.

Russia says Ukraine is recklessly firing at the plant. Kyiv says Russian troops struck it them-

selves, and are also using the plant as a shield to provide cover while they bombard nearby Ukrainian-held towns and cities.

"The Ukrainian Armed Forces do not damage the infrastructure (of the plant), do not strike where there may be a danger on a global scale. We understand that the invaders are hiding behind such a shield because it is not possible to strike there," Natalia Humeniuk, spokesperson for Ukraine's southern military command, told Ukrainian national television.

The UN Security Council, where Russia wields a veto, met on Thursday to discuss the situation. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on both sides to stop all fighting near the plant.

"The facility must not be used as part of any military operation. Instead, urgent agreement is

"The facility must not be used as part of any military operation. Instead, urgent agreement is needed at a technical level on a safe perimeter of demilitarisation to ensure the safety of the area"

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES

needed at a technical level on a safe perimeter of demilitarisation to ensure the safety of the area," Guterres said in a statement.

At the Security Council meeting, the United States backed the call for a demilitarised zone and urged the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to visit the site.

Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said the world was being pushed "to the brink of nuclear catastrophe", comparable in scale with the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in then-Soviet Ukraine. He said IAEA officials could visit the site as soon as this month.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy demanded Russia return the plant to Ukraine's control.

"Only a full withdrawal of the Russians ... and the restoration of full Ukrainian control of the situation around the station can guarantee a resumption of nucle-

BETTER YOU KNOW
Russia says Ukraine is recklessly firing at the plant. Kyiv says Russian troops struck it themselves, and are also using the plant as a shield to provide cover while they bombard nearby Ukrainian-held towns and cities

ar security for all of Europe," he said in a video address.

France echoed Zelenskyy's demand and said Russia's occupation of the site endangered the world.

"The presence and actions of the Russian armed forces near the plant significantly increase the risk of an accident with potentially devastating consequences," the French foreign ministry said in a statement.

Devastation at Russian base

The main Ukrainian front lines have been comparatively static in recent weeks, but fighting has been intensifying lately in anticipation of what Ukraine says is a planned counter-offensive in the south.

Ukraine's General Staff yesterday reported widespread shelling and air attacks by Russian forces on scores of towns and military bases, especially in the east where Russia is trying to expand territory held on behalf of separatist proxies.

Pavlo Kyrylenko, governor of the eastern Donetsk region, said on Telegram seven civilians had been killed and 14 wounded in the past 24 hours.

Kyiv hopes that by acquiring new missiles capable of striking Russian logistics deep behind the front lines, it can turn the tide of the conflict in coming weeks.

Satellite pictures released on Thursday showed devastation at an air base deep in Russian-annexed Crimea, struck on Tuesday in what appeared to be some form of attack, although Kyiv has not claimed responsibility or explained how it was carried out.

Images from independent satellite firm Planet Labs showed three nearly identical craters in buildings at Russia's Saki air base. The base, on the southwest coast of Crimea, suffered extensive fire damage with at least eight destroyed warplanes visible.

Russia has denied aircraft were damaged and said explosions at the base were accidental. Kyiv neither confirmed nor denied any role in the blasts, but noted that the initial explosions took place simultaneously hundreds of metres apart, which would appear to rule out an accident.

Endangered vultures die in southern Africa



The carcass of a vulture is seen at a farm in Southern Africa (file photo)

season now," Wolter told AFP, explaining chicks will not survive without their parents.

Park officials in South Africa said they were investigating the incident, adding some of the carcasses appeared to have been harvested for their body parts.

"Given the critical status of vultures globally, poisonings at this scale place the species at increasing risk of extinction," Yolán Friedmann, the head of the Endangered Wildlife Trust conservation group, said in a statement on the Kruger incident.

Mexican officials say close to accessing trapped miners

Reuters | Mexico City

Mexican authorities said yesterday they are in a position to enter the flooded coal mine where 10 workers have been trapped for more than a week.

"We have all the conditions to go down there today... to search for and rescue" the miners, said Laura Velazquez, the civil defense national coordinator, during President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's morning press conference.

Velazquez said the rescue operation will become possible once "97 percent of the water" has been extracted from the 50-meter deep mine in the town of Agujita in the northern Coahuila state.

"The necessary resources for the search and rescue have been prepared," she added.

The water level in one of the three wells in which rescuers will try to enter has been brought down to just 70 centimeters (27 inches), from a high of 30 meters (98 feet) the day after the accident that flooded the mine, Defense Minister Luis Cresencio Sandoval said.

The other two wells still have 3.9 and 4.7 meters of water.

Authorities consider 1.5 me-



Volunteers drain water from a flooded and collapsed coal mine

BETTER YOU KNOW
Five miners managed to escape following the initial accident, in which workers carrying out excavation activities hit an adjoining area full of water

ters to be an acceptable water level to gain access to the crudely constructed El Pinabete mine.

"In any case, we're going to continue pumping... The process is slow but we don't want to take any risks," added Velazquez.

Since the August 3 accident, there have been no signs of life from the 10 miners trapped inside.

Five miners managed to escape following the initial accident, in which workers carrying out excavation activities hit an adjoining area full of water.

Several hundred rescuers, including soldiers and military scuba divers, are taking part in efforts to save the miners, whose relatives held a vigil Thursday night for those trapped underground.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



I thank President Yoon Suk Yeol for his kind invitation and the rich discussions on non-proliferation, the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula & climate action. The Republic of Korea's strong commitments are a solid contribution to peace among nations & peace with nature.

@antonioguterres

02



Happy International #YouthDay! Let's celebrate and recommit to empowering younger generations to help us create a brighter future for everyone, everywhere. @WHO is highlighting the top health issues we need to address to improve the health of young people

@DrTedros

03



Thousands of heroic firefighters are working tirelessly against wildfires raging across our continent. EU has mobilised help for Portugal, Slovenia, Czechia, Albania & France via #rescEU.

@vonderleyen

04



No American should have to make a decision between putting food on the table and going to the doctor. The Inflation Reduction Act will lower health insurance costs for 13 million Americans covered under the Affordable Care Act.

@POTUS

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)



The white-backed vulture is listed on the IUCN's 'red list' of critically-endangered bird species