

News in brief

Bus crash in rugged Nepal district leaves 28 dead



At least 28 people died yesterday in western Nepal after the bus they were on skidded off a mountain road and fell hundreds of meters (yards) into a gorge, authorities said. The accident in the remote and rugged Mugu district also left at least 15 injured, local administrator Rom Bahadur Mahat said. It is not clear what caused the crash or how many passengers were on board. Officials feared that the death toll could rise as rescue operations were still underway.

A probe into the catastrophic Beirut port explosion was frozen yesterday for the second time in less than three weeks after two politicians wanted for questioning filed a new complaint against the lead investigator Judge Tarek Bitar.

Beirut blast probe suspended as judge issues arrest warrant



The investigation has been facing obstacles since Bitar sought to question some of the most powerful people in Lebanon on suspicion that they knew about the chemicals but did nothing to avert the disaster. Bitar is under enormous pressure from groups that have accused his probe of political bias and mounting a smear campaign against him.

Strong quake rattles Crete, minor damage but no casualties



A powerful earthquake rattled Crete yesterday, causing minor damage on the Greek island in the Mediterranean, and the tremor was felt as far away as Cyprus. There were no immediate reports of casualties after the magnitude 6.3 tremor, which the Athens Geodynamic Institute said was centred at sea about 23 km (14 miles) east of the village of Zakros in eastern Crete.

Greenpeace activists protested outside the headquarters of one of France's state-owned nuclear companies, calling for the country to stop all exporting and plans to export its reprocessed uranium to Russia.

Greenpeace protests against France's uranium exports to Russia



Environmental activists sat in hazmat suits beside dummy radioactive waste containers in front of Orano's offices just south of Paris, in a photo Greenpeace shared on Twitter.

New Austrian leader under fire in parliament, mocked as Kurz's puppet

Opposition parties attacked Austria's new

Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg yesterday over his ties to his predecessor Sebastian Kurz, who quit over corruption allegations, while activists outside parliament mocked him as Kurz's puppet. Kurz, 35, quit as chancellor under pressure from his junior coalition party, the Greens, after prosecutors placed him and nine others including close aides under investigation on suspicion of various degrees of bribery, corruption and breach of trust.

15 dead after heavy rain, floods in China coal region

Heavy rains in province known for coal mining come amid mounting concern over energy supplies as the country heads into winter



An overflowing Yellow River near the Lianbo Village in Hejin City, northern China's Shanxi Province

Reuters | London

At least 15 people have died during unseasonably heavy rain and flooding in north China's Shanxi province earlier this month, local officials said yesterday, after the normally dry region received three months' rain in one week.

The flooding hit the coal-rich landlocked region during a nationwide energy crunch, and after record floods killed more than 300 people in central Henan province in July.

At least 60 coal mines in the province -- one of China's top coal-producing regions -- had temporarily closed due to the floods, but now all but four have returned to normal operation, local emergency management official Wang Qirui said at a press conference.

Wang said around 19,000 buildings were destroyed by the extreme weather, with 18,000 others "seriously damaged".

"Fifteen people died due to the disaster, and three people remain missing," he added.

At least 1.75 million residents across the province have been affected by the floods, with 120,000 safely evacuated, according to Wang.

Photos published yesterday by local state newspaper Shanxi Evening News showed traffic police carrying school-

YOU KNOW WHAT

At least 1.75 million residents across the province have been affected by the floods, with 120,000 safely evacuated

119.5mm

was the average rain in the province between October 2 and 7, according to the provincial meteorological bureau

children on their backs while wading through waist-deep water after multiple vehicles got trapped.

Shanxi received more than three times the average monthly rainfall for October in just five days last week, with the provincial government saying precipitation had broken records in multiple localities.

Several regions across China have been hit by unprecedented flooding this year.

Thousands were evacuated in the Hubei and Sichuan provinces this summer because of torrential rain.

And more than 300 people were killed in central China's Henan province last month after record downpours -- a year's worth of rain in three days.

Experts say freak weather events such as heavy floods and punishing droughts are becoming increasingly common because of climate change.

11 dead in Philippines storm

AFP | Manila

At least 11 people were killed and seven others were missing after heavy rain across the Philippines flooded villages and triggered landslides, authorities said yesterday.

Severe Tropical Storm Kompasu drenched swathes of the most populous island of Luzon on Monday as it swept across the archipelago nation towards the South China Sea.

Six people were killed and two missing in landslides in the landlocked mountainous province of Benguet, and one person drowned in the province of Cagayan, the national disaster agency said.

Four people were killed as flash floods hit two towns on



Rescuers evacuate residents from their homes near a swollen river following heavy rains brought about by Tropical Storm Kompasu in Gonzaga town, Cagayan province, north of Manila

the western island of Palawan, where five other people are still missing, officials added.

The coast guard said its personnel involved in the rescue effort also recovered three other bodies in the northern province of Ilocos Sur, but the disaster agency could not immediately confirm if the deaths were related to the storm.

"Eleven municipalities were flooded but it subsided this morning," Cagayan provincial information officer Rogelio Sending told AFP.

Major highways and bridges were flooded, he said, but the water was retreating yesterday as the storm bore down on the

Asian mainland. "Around seven to eight barangays (villages) are still flooded... due to clogged drainage or lack of drainage," said Earl Timbancaya, a disaster officer in the city of Puerto Princesa on Palawan.

"But it's subsiding now." The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons every year, which typically wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure in already impoverished areas.

Because a warmer atmosphere holds more water, climate change increases the risk and intensity of flooding from extreme rainfall.

YOU KNOW WHAT

The Philippines, an archipelago of more than 7,600 islands is hit by about 20 storms or typhoons annually, bringing heavy rains that trigger deadly landslides

North Korea is 'root cause'

Kim Jong Un says US,

North Korean leader says Pyongyang is only increasing its military as 'war deterrence' and not to start a conflict

Reuters | Washington

North Korean leader Kim Jong has blamed the United States for tensions on the peninsula and accused the South of hypocrisy, state media reported yesterday, as he opened an exhibition showcasing his nuclear-armed country's weapons.

The US is the "root cause" of instability, he said in an address to the "Self-Defence 2021" display, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

Pyongyang is under multiple international sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, which have made rapid progress under Kim.

In 2017, it tested missiles that can reach the whole of the continental United States and carried out its most powerful nuclear explosion to date, and Pyongyang says it needs its arsenal to protect itself against a US invasion.

Analysts say North Korea is seeking to normalise its status as a nuclear power.

The Biden administration has repeatedly stated that it has no hostile intent towards Pyongyang, but Kim said: "I am very curious if there are people or countries who believe that."

"There is no basis in their ac-

Cleric Sadr wins Iraq

Reuters | London

Shi'ite Muslim cleric Moqtada Sal-Sadr's party was the biggest winner in an Iraqi election on Monday, increasing the number of seats he holds in parliament, according to initial results, officials and a spokesperson for the Sadrist Movement.

Former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki looked set to have the next largest win among Shi'ite parties, initial results showed.

Iraq's Shi'ite groups have dominated governments and government formation since the U.S.-led invasion of 2003 that toppled Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein and catapulted the Shi'ite majority

BETTER YOU KNOW

Sadr has increased his power over the Iraqi state since coming first in the 2018 election where his coalition won 54 seats

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

| Country | Total cases | Total deaths |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 USA | 45,327,525 | 734,801 |
| 2 India | 34,000,392 | 451,219 |
| 3 Brazil | 21,582,738 | 601,266 |
| 4 UK | 8,231,437 | 137,944 |
| 5 Russia | 7,832,964 | 218,345 |
| 6 Turkey | 7,508,975 | 66,605 |
| 7 France | 7,063,511 | 117,150 |
| 8 Iran | 5,729,785 | 123,081 |
| 9 Argentina | 5,266,275 | 115,491 |
| 10 Spain | 4,977,448 | 86,827 |
| 11 Colombia | 4,973,325 | 126,655 |
| 12 Italy | 4,704,318 | 131,384 |
| 13 Germany | 4,338,093 | 95,138 |
| 14 Indonesia | 4,229,813 | 142,763 |

Global tally

239,303,783

Deaths

4,877,149

Recovered:

216,556,048

New cases

+282,121

New deaths

+4,583

Middle East

Figures as of closing

| Country | Total cases | new cases | Total deaths | New Deaths | Total recovered | Active cases |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Egypt | 313,259 | | 17,726 | | 264,345 | 31,188 |
| Saudi Arabia | 547,704 | +55 | 8,751 | +3 | 536,724 | 2,229 |
| UAE | 738,026 | +136 | 2,115 | +1 | 731,469 | 4,442 |
| Kuwait | 412,121 | | 2,455 | | 409,046 | 620 |
| Oman | 303,999 | +21 | 4,103 | +1 | 299,334 | 562 |
| Qatar | 237,579 | +96 | 607 | | 236,006 | 966 |