

News in brief

◆ **Russia's president said**

Europe was to blame for its energy crisis with policies that starved the oil and gas industry of investment and said price caps would make it worse, as EU states tried to forge a deal on ways to contain soaring energy costs. Worries about the security of energy supplies were heightened on Wednesday when a leak in Poland on the Druzhba pipeline from Russia reduced the flow of oil to Germany. Poland said the leak was probably caused by an accident but it came as European Union nations are seeking to wean themselves off a reliance on Russian energy in response to the invasion of Ukraine in February. The Nord Stream gas link to Germany is now out of action after a leak last month that both Russia and the West have blamed on sabotage, without identifying who was behind it.

◆ **Desperate to avoid military** call-up to fight in Ukraine, more than 20 Russians have sailed in yachts down the North Pacific coast to South Korea, but most were refused entry, a South Korean lawmaker said yesterday. There has been an exodus of conscription-age men from Russia since President Vladimir

Russians fleeing Putin's call-up sail to S.Korea, most denied entry

coast guard data. The others "were rejected because their purposes were unclear and they did not have sufficient documents," the lawmaker said in a statement.

◆ **A major exhibition** of impressionist art opened yesterday at the Louvre Abu Dhabi, featuring works from masters such as Cezanne, Degas, Manet, Monet, Pissarro and Renoir. Billed as one of the most significant exhibitions on the 19th century art movement ever held outside France, it features

more than 150 works on loan from the Musee d'Orsay in Paris. Claude Monet's "Women in the Garden" is among the masterpieces on show from the movement characterised by rapid dabs and brushstrokes that explore the transient effects of light and colour. "Impressionism: Pathways to Modernity", to run until February 5, marks five years since the opening of the art museum in the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

◆ **A cargo ship traffic** jam stretched as far as the eye could see off Istanbul, where a key deal to get Ukraine grain to market has translated into major hold-ups. Dozens of vessels were waiting Tuesday to clear the meticulous inspection process required under the Turkey and UN-backed accord aimed at

Ukraine grain ships stuck in Istanbul traffic jam

easing fears of a global food crisis. Some vessels spend days at anchor for a procedure that officials said they were trying to speed up, amid growing desperation among some crews to get through. On board the Barbados-flagged black-and-white Nord Wind ship, the relief was palpable when a team of inspectors arrived.



Putin blames Europe for energy crisis as EU works on remedies



Louvre Abu Dhabi marks five years with major Impressionism show

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

	Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1	USA	98,608,431	1,088,471	627,903,264
2	India	44,618,533	528,835	
3	France	35,970,379	155,620	
4	Brazil	34,773,515	687,016	
5	Germany	34,257,916	150,919	
6	S. Korea	25,025,749	28,723	
7	UK	23,735,273	190,888	
8	Italy	22,944,496	177,719	
9	Japan	21,610,500	45,615	
10	Russia	21,248,603	388,509	
11	Turkey	16,919,638	101,203	
12	Spain	13,441,941	114,468	
13	Vietnam	11,489,881	43,155	
14	Australia	10,280,150	15,389	
+53				

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	818,236	+203	9,374	+2	804,955	3,907
UAE	1,031,837	+337	2,346		1,010,843	18,648
Kuwait	660,667		2,564		657,113	990
Oman	398,424		4,260		384,669	9,495
Qatar	459,798	+676	682		455,898	3,218

Putin moots gas hub in Turkey with Nord Stream supplies

Reuters | Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russia could redirect supplies intended for the damaged Nord Stream pipelines to the Black Sea to create a European gas hub in Turkey, or even use the one intact part of Nord Stream 2 to supply the EU.

An investigation is under way into explosions last month that ruptured the Russian-built Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines on the bed of the Baltic Sea.

Putin said it was possible to repair the pipelines and that Russia and Europe should decide their fate.

"We could move the lost volumes from the Nord Streams along the bottom of the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea region and thus make the main routes for the supply of our fuel, our natural gas to Europe through Turkey, creating the largest gas hub for Europe in Turkey," he told an energy conference in Moscow.

"That is, of course, if our partners are interested in this. And economic feasibility, of course."

The problem is that European Union countries are trying to end their reliance on Russian oil and gas after Putin sent troops into Ukraine as part of what he calls a special military operation.

Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Donmez, speaking at the same conference in Moscow, said the idea was new to him but should be discussed.



Saudi foreign minister says efforts to extend the truce in Yemen still stand

Reuters | Cairo

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said that the efforts to extend the truce in Yemen still stand, *Al Arabiya* TV reported yesterday, after an initial UN-brokered pact between a Saudi-led coalition and the Houthi movement expired early this month.

The kingdom, the coalition and the Riyadh-backed Yemeni government are "keen on extending the truce," the Saudi-owned TV quoted Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud as saying.

The United Nations is pressing for an extended and expanded truce that would build on the two-month one that expired on Oct. 2 after being rolled over twice, and which has brought the longest stretch of relative calm in the seven-year conflict.

US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking headed back to region on Tuesday to support the UN-led negotiations



Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan

with Yemeni parties, according to the State Department.

Lenderking last week called on the Iran-aligned Houthis, de facto authorities in the north, to show more flexibility in the negotiations, specifically on the United Nations' proposed mechanism to pay public sector wages.

The Saudi-led coalition intervened in March 2015 after the Houthis ousted the internationally recognized government from the capital, Sanaa. The group says it is fighting a corrupt system and foreign aggression.



A general view of a meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group during a NATO defense conference in Brussels, Belgium

Ukraine's Western allies promise more air defence weapons

Biden says Putin "rational actor who has miscalculated"

Air raid sirens blare for third day but no big wave of strikes

Oil pipeline leaks as EU discusses response to energy crisis

Reuters | Kyiv/Brussels

More than 50 Western countries met yesterday to promise more weapons for Ukraine, focusing on its need for air defences after Moscow launched its most intense missile strikes since the start of the war.

Ukraine had shifted the momentum in the conflict since September with "extraordinary" gains, but would need more help to keep fighting, he said.

"These victories belong to Ukraine's brave soldiers. But the Contact Group's security assistance, training, and sustainment efforts have been vital," Austin said.

Russian attacks using more than 100 missiles have killed at least 26 people across Ukraine since Monday, when President Vladimir Putin ordered what he called retaliatory strikes against Ukraine for an explosion on a bridge.

Air raid sirens sounded across swathes of Ukraine for a third day on Wednesday and there were reports of some shelling, but no

Putin to meet Erdogan, likely to look at Ukraine peace options - Kremlin

Reuters | Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan for talks in Kazakhstan today, a meeting at which the Turks are likely to raise ideas for peace in Ukraine, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters.

"Now many say that the Turks are ready to come up with other initiatives in the context of the settlement of the Ukrainian conflict," Ushakov said.

"There are reports in the press that the Turkish side is putting forward specific considerations in this regard, I do not exclude that Erdogan will actively touch on this topic during the Astana contact. So a very interesting and, I hope, useful discussion awaits us."



Biden vows consequences for Saudi Arabia after OPEC+ decision

Reuters | Washington

President Joe Biden pledged on Tuesday "there will be consequences" for US relations with Saudi Arabia after OPEC+ announced last week that it would cut its oil production target over U.S. objections.

His announcement came a day after Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the United States must immediately freeze all cooperation with Saudi Arabia, including arms sales.

Biden, in an interview with CNN's Jake Tapper, would not discuss what options he was considering.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said a policy review would be conducted but gave no timeline for action or information on who would lead the re-evaluation. The United States will be watching the situation closely "over the coming weeks and months," she said.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said the OPEC+

