

News in brief

◆ **The United Nations' rights chief lamented on Monday that efforts to gain access to China's Xinjiang region to probe reports of serious violations against Muslim Uyghurs have not succeeded, adding that she was finalising a report on the situation.** "I regret that I am not able to report progress on my efforts to seek meaningful access to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region," Michelle Bachelet said at the opening of the Human Rights Council on Monday in Geneva. "In the meantime, my Office is finalising its assessment of the available information on allegations of serious human rights violations in that region, with a view to making it public."



UN rights chief regrets lack of access to Xinjiang

◆ **New Zealand's largest city Auckland will remain in lockdown to beat the spread of the Delta variant of the coronavirus,** Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said yesterday.

New Zealand PM Ardern extends lockdown in Auckland to Sept 21



Auckland will remain in the strict Alert level 4 lockdown until midnight on Sept. 21, after which it will move to alert level 3, Ardern said in a news conference.

◆ **India is worried that growing complacency as COVID-19 infection rates and deaths decline could lead to people skipping their second vaccine shots, leaving communities vulnerable to the coronavirus, said two health experts briefed on the matter.** India has administered more than 744 million vaccine doses - with 60% of its 944 million adults getting a first shot and 19% fully vaccinated with the required two shots. India has the most partly immunized people in the world, according to the Our World in Data website, mainly due to a long gap of between 12 and 16 weeks between doses, as prescribed by the government.

India worried about complacency over second dose of COVID-19 vaccine



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◆ **Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have contradicted public promises on rights including by ordering women to stay at home, blocking teenage girls from school and holding house-to-house searches for former foes, a United Nations official said yesterday.** High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said Afghanistan was in a "new and perilous phase" since the militant Islamist group seized power last month, with many women and members of ethnic and religious communities deeply worried. "In contradiction to assurances that the Taliban would uphold women's rights, over the past three weeks, women have instead been progressively excluded from the public sphere," she told the Human Rights Council in Geneva.



Taliban breaking promises including over women, says UN

COVID lockdowns only used as last resort, says UK PM's spokesman



A passenger takes escalators on the London Underground tube train network, as lockdown restrictions continue to ease amidst the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in London

Reuters | London

Britain's government will only introduce a new COVID-19 lockdown as a last resort, a spokesman for Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Monday, after the country's health minister signalled he did not expect to see them used again.

"The ability to do that is retained as you would expect, but it would only be done in a last resort and as I said we are in a very different position thanks to the strength of our vaccination programme than where we were when it was necessary to take those steps previously," the spokesman told reporters. Johnson himself said yesterday that they would do everything to protect the country but "the way things are going at the moment we're very confident in the steps that we've taken".

Britain's top medics recommend 12 to 15-year-olds get COVID vaccine

Reuters | London

Britain's top medical advisers yesterday recommended that all 12 to 15-year-olds receive a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, citing the benefit on avoiding disruption to education. The advice from the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) paves the way for the broad vaccination of children aged 12-15 in Britain, after the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) earlier in the month decided against making the recommendation.

The CMOs said that vaccinating children could reduce disruption to schools, and that "on balance provide sufficient extra advantage... to recommend in favour of vaccinating this group." "The UK CMOs) therefore recommend on public health grounds that ministers extend the offer of universal vaccination with a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to all children and young people aged 12-15 not already covered by existing JCVI advice," the CMOs said in a letter.

Iran escapes rebuke at IAEA despite no 'promise'

Reuters | Vienna

Western powers yesterday scrapped plans for a resolution criticising Iran at the UN atomic watchdog after Tehran agreed to prolong monitoring of some nuclear activities, even though the watchdog said Iran made no "promise" on another key issue.

The decision by the United States, France, Britain and Germany not to push for a resolution at this week's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation Board of Governors avoids an escalation with Iran that could have killed hopes of resuming wider talks on reviving the Iran nuclear deal.

During a last-minute visit to Tehran this weekend by IAEA chief Rafael Grossi, Iran agreed to grant his agency overdue access to its equipment in Iran that monitors some sensitive areas of its nuclear programme. Inspectors



Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Kazem Gharibabadi waits for the beginning of a board of governors meeting at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna, Austria

will swap out memory cards more than two weeks after they were due to be replaced, read more

Grossi said on Sunday that the agreement solved "the most urgent issue" between the IAEA and

Iran. He made clear on Monday, however, that on another source of concern - Iran's failure to explain uranium traces found at several old but undeclared sites - he had obtained no firm com-

North Korea tests cruise missiles with possible nuclear capability

● **Tests involved new, long-range cruise missiles - KCNA**

● **New missiles represent serious capability for N.Korea - analysts**

● **U.S. military: Launches highlight threat to N.Korea's neighbours**

● **Tests came before meeting by US, Japan, S.Korea to discuss N.Korea**

Reuters | Seoul

North Korea carried out successful tests of a new long-range cruise missile over the weekend, state media said yesterday, seen by analysts as possibly the country's first such weapon with a nuclear capability.



The Academy of National Defence Science conducts long-range cruise missile tests in North Korea

The missiles are "a strategic weapon of great significance" and flew 1,500 km (930 miles) before hitting their targets and falling into the country's territorial waters during the tests on Saturday and Sunday, KCNA said.

The latest test highlighted steady progress in Pyongyang's weapons programme amid a gridlock over talks aimed at dismantling the North's nuclear and

ballistic missile programmes in return for US sanctions relief. The talks have stalled since 2019.

North Korea's cruise missiles usually generate less interest than ballistic missiles because they are not explicitly banned under UN Nations Security Council Resolutions.

"This would be the first cruise missile in North Korea to be explicitly designated a 'strategic'

Israeli minister says Iran giving militias drone training near Isfahan

Reuters | Herzliya, Israel

Israel's defence minister accused Iran on Sunday of providing foreign militias with drone training at an airbase near the city of Isfahan, a month after Tehran came under global scrutiny over a suspected drone attack on an Israeli-managed tanker off Oman.

Israel has combined military strikes with diplomatic pressure to beat back what it describes as an effort by its arch-foe, whose nuclear negotiations with the West are deadlocked, to beef up re-

gional clout through allied guerrillas.

In what his office described as a new disclosure, Defence Minister Benny Gantz said Iran was using Kashan airbase north of Isfahan to train "terror operatives from Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon in flying Iranian-made UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles)".

Iran was also trying to "transfer know-how that would allow the manufacturing of UAVs in the Gaza Strip," on Israel's southern border, Gantz told a conference at Reichman University near Tel Aviv.

Pets enjoy some

Reuters | Nablus, West Bank

A new animal clinic has opened in the West Bank, part of a growing trend for Palestinians to raise and pamper their pets. Veterinarian Ahmed Al-Amad's "Clinic", in the city of Nablus, is one of many in the Palestinian Territories offering services for cats, dogs and other animals while their owners travel.

Pet ownership has become more popular in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in recent years as some Palestinian supermarkets now have sections for animal food and accessories. "We started the project after the services in the market," Amad said. "This is a private project. Despite the challenges, we are ready to receive stray animals who need our services."

In the Gaza Strip, Palestinians have

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	41,857,615	678,003	225,685,317
2 India	33,287,296	443,119	
3 Brazil	20,999,779	586,882	Deaths
4 UK	7,256,559	134,261	
5 Russia	7,158,248	193,468	4,647,259
6 France	6,905,071	115,517	
7 Turkey	6,658,251	59,886	Recovered:
8 Iran	5,318,327	114,759	
9 Argentina	5,224,534	113,402	202,304,005
10 Colombia	4,930,249	125,647	
11 Spain	4,907,461	85,290	+225,155
12 Italy	4,609,205	129,955	
13 Indonesia	4,170,088	139,165	New deaths
14 Germany	4,091,137	93,217	

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	292,957		16,871		246,726	29,360
Saudi Arabia	546,067	+75	8,628	+5	535,144	2,295
UAE	729,518	+632	2,064	+2	720,653	6,801
Kuwait	410,784		2,431		407,145	1,208
Oman	303,163	+58	4,089		293,343	5,731
Qatar	234,642		604		232,105	1,933