

## News in brief

### Myanmar to import Russian oil, military says



oil to ease supply concerns and rising prices, a junta spokesperson said, the latest developing country to do so amid a global energy crisis. The Southeast Asian country has maintained friendly ties with Russia, even as both remain under a raft of sanctions from Western countries - Myanmar for a military coup that overthrew an elected government last year, and Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, which it calls a "special military operation".

### Foreign Secretary Liz Truss remains far ahead of leadership rival Rishi Sunak

in the race to become Britain's next prime minister, a YouGov poll for Sky News showed yesterday. The governing Conservative Party is voting by postal ballot to choose a new party leader after Boris Johnson said he would step down following a series of scandals. The winner will be announced on Sept. 5. Truss, who has consistently topped polls of Conservative Party members, has a 32 percentage point lead over Sunak among those who have decided to vote, the survey showed. Truss was on 66%, with Sunak on 34%.

### UK's Liz Truss maintains big lead in leadership contest - poll



### Mali accuses France of arming Islamist fighters in letter to UN



Islamist militants in an attempt to destabilise the West African country, the latest in a barrage of accusations that have marked the bitter end to their once close relations. In a letter to the head of the United Nations Security Council dated Monday, Mali's foreign affairs minister, Abdoulaye Diop, said its airspace has been breached more than 50 times this year, mostly by French forces using drones, military helicopters and fighter jets. "These flagrant violations of Malian airspace were used by France to collect information for terrorist groups operating in the Sahel and to drop arms and ammunition to them," the letter said. Mali provided no evidence to show that France had supplied arms to Islamist groups. France has spent a decade and billions of dollars to stamp out Islamist militants, some with links to al Qaeda and Islamic State, in its former colony.

### The remains of 14 firefighters who died combatting a major blaze at a Cuban fuel depot last week are too badly burned to be identified, a specialist said.

In total, 16 firefighters were killed and 17 others hospitalized due to the massive fire in Matanzas, on Cuba's northern coast. "Given that the remains found were subjected to high temperatures for a long time, it is not possible to apply DNA extraction," Jorge Gonzalez Perez, president of the Cuban Society of Legal Medicine, told a press conference.

### Cuba unable to identify remains of 14 firefighters after fuel plant blaze



## COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	95,065,403	1,064,207	598,438,859
2 India	44,298,864	527,206	
3 France	34,299,686	153,427	6,464,982
4 Brazil	34,223,207	682,074	
5 Germany	31,725,160	146,214	572,472,108
6 UK	23,460,787	187,018	
7 S. Korea	21,861,296	25,813	New cases
8 Italy	21,581,917	174,447	
9 Russia	19,000,055	383,362	+617,377
10 Turkey	16,671,848	100,400	
11 Japan	16,161,801	35,955	New deaths
12 Spain	13,306,301	111,906	
13 Vietnam	11,376,571	43,103	+1,244
14 Australia	9,870,724	13,155	

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	812,397	+97	9,273	+1	799,354	3,770
UAE	1,007,742	+703	2,341	+1	986,102	19,299
Kuwait	118,531	+813	721	+7	109,916	7,894
Oman	397,231		4,260		384,669	8,302
Qatar	421,532		681		415,462	5,389

## At least 21 killed in Kabul mosque blast

AP | Kabul

A bombing at a mosque in the Afghan capital of Kabul during evening prayers killed at least 21 people, including a prominent cleric, and wounded at least 33 others, eyewitnesses and police said yesterday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack Wednesday night, the latest to strike the country in the year since the Taliban seized power. Several children were reported to be among the wounded.

The Islamic State group's local affiliate has stepped up attacks targeting the Taliban and civilians since the former insurgents' takeover last August as US and NATO troops were in the final stages of their withdrawal from the country. Last week, the extremists claimed responsibility for killing a prominent Taliban cleric at his religious center in Kabul.

Khalid Zadran, the spokesman for Kabul's Taliban police chief, gave the figures to The Associated Press for the bombing at the Siddiquiya mosque in the city's Kher Khanna neighborhood. An eyewitness told the AP the explosion was carried out by a suicide bomber.

The slain cleric was Mullah Amir Mohammad Kabuli, the eyewitness said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the explosion and vowed that the "perpetrators of such crimes will soon be brought to justice and will be punished."

There were fears the casualty numbers could rise further. Yesterday morning, one witness to the blast who gave his name as Qyaamuddin told the AP he believed as many as 25 people may have been killed in the blast.

"It was evening prayer time, and I was attending the prayer



Mourners carry the body of a victim of a mosque bombing in Kabul

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Despite the Taliban's assertion that they have brought security to the nation, Afghanistan has seen regular attacks by armed groups, many of them claimed by an ISIL affiliate known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province, ISKP (ISIS-K), in recent months

**”**

The murderers of civilians and perpetrators ... will soon be punished for their crimes

TALIBAN GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ZABIHULLAH MUJAHID

which had hosted al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

Since regaining power, the former insurgents have faced a crippling economic crisis as the international community, which does not recognize the Taliban government, froze funding to the country. Yesterday, the Taliban hosted a gathering of 3,000 tribal elders, religious scholars and others in Kandahar, their state-run Bakhtar News Agency reported. It wasn't immediately clear what topics they planned to discuss.

Separately, the Taliban confirmed on Wednesday that they had captured and killed Mehdi Mujahid in western Herat province as he was trying to cross the border into Iran.

Mujahid was a former Tali-

with others, when the explosion happened," Qyaamuddin said. Some Afghans go by a single name.

AP journalists could see the blue-roofed, Sunni mosque from a nearby hillside. The Taliban parked police trucks and other vehicles at the mosque, while several men carried out one casket for a victim of the attack.

A US-led invasion toppled the previous Taliban government,

## Hundreds evacuated as 'frightening' floods hit New Zealand

Reuters | London

Hundreds of families on New Zealand's South Island were forced to leave their homes yesterday after flooding caused a state of emergency to be declared in three regions.

A tropically fuelled storm has dumped more than 30 centimetres (11 inches) of rain on parts of the South Island, causing rivers to burst their banks. The extreme weather has also felled trees, blocking major roads.

A state of emergency was declared Wednesday in Buller, on the west coast, and Nelson -- where 233 homes have been evacuated after a month's worth of rain fell in just 15 hours.

The deluge turned Nelson's main river, the Maitai, into a torrent -- flooding houses, exposing pipes and leaving streets knee-deep in water.

The city's mayor Rachel Reese described the flash flooding as a "one-in-100-year event" as search and rescue teams, plus military personnel, helped people on submerged streets.

She warned locals to treat all water as contaminated, because some sewers had broken.

Nelson resident Sam Lagrutta



A road is washed away in Nelson, New Zealand

**YOU**  
KNOW WHAT

Nelson city on the South Island had received 106 millimetres of rain since midday on Tuesday - well above its average rainfall for the whole of August of 80 millimetres

said the situation was "frightening" after police gave him just five minutes to leave his home.

"I literally just grabbed a carry-on bag and filled it with my passport, wallet, and anything important I could find," he told the New Zealand Herald.

A further 160 households along the South Island's west coast were also asked to evacuate.

Buller has been hit by repeated flooding in the past few years.

Mayor Jamie Cleine said frequent evacuations took a toll on a community bracing itself for more flooding.

# Erdogan Chernobyl

Ukraine's President

## Turkish leader said discussed ways to end conflict

Reuters | Washington

Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned yesterday of a nuclear disaster in Ukraine during his first face-to-face talks with President Volodymyr Zelensky since Russia's invasion began, echoing pleas from the UN's chief.

A flare up in fighting around Europe's largest nuclear facility in Russian-controlled southern Ukraine has sparked urgent warnings from world leaders and UN chief Antonio Guterres cautioned during talks with Erdogan that any damage to the plant would be akin to "suicide".

"We are worried. We don't want another Chernobyl," Erdogan said during a press conference in the eastern city of Lviv, during which he also assured the Ukrainian leader that Ankara was a firm ally.

"While continuing our efforts to find a solution, we remain on the side of our Ukraine friends," Erdogan said.

Guterres said he was "gravely concerned" about the situation at the plant and said it had to be demilitarised, adding: "We must tell it like it is -- any potential damage to Zaporizhzhia is suicide".

Erdogan, who has major geopolitical rivalries with the Kremlin but maintains a close working relationship with Pres-

## China's drought Sept as it rains

Reuters | Shanghai

China warned that severe drought conditions along the Yangtze river could last well into September as local governments race to maintain power and find fresh water supplies to irrigate crops ahead of the autumn harvest.

A severe heatwave across the basin of China's longest river, the Yangtze, caused by a larger than usual Western Pacific subtropical high, has now lasted more than two months, slashing hydropower supplies and drying out large

It is expected that in September, water inflows in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze will still be low, and the drought in Anhui, Hubei, Hunan and Jiangxi could develop further

LIU ZHIYU, AN OFFICIAL AT THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES