

News in brief

Firefighters contain blaze at Sudan Red Sea port



Firefighters have contained a large blaze that erupted in a cargo area of the Sudanese Red Sea port of Suakin, the port's director said yesterday. The fire, which raged for hours, broke out in the cargo drop off area of the port on Wednesday sending plumes of acrid smoke into the sky. It was not immediately clear what caused the blaze. "The fire has been brought under control following the intervention of civil defence forces and port workers," port director Taha Ahmed Mokhtar said.

A French court stepped into a row over the wearing of burkinis in municipal swimming pools, suspending a council's decision to allow Muslim women to wear them.

The administrative court in the Alpine city of Grenoble blocked the rule change by the council there, arguing that it "seriously violated the principle of neutrality in public service". The ruling was the latest development in a long-running dispute that has set defenders of France's secular values against those arguing that a burkini ban constitutes discrimination.

French court blocks 'burkinis' in council's pools



US and Japan say they staged joint fighter jet flight after North Korea missile launches



The US military and Japan's Self Defense Force said yesterday they flew fighter jets together over the Sea of Japan in a show of strength after North Korea lobbed three missiles into the waters that separate Japan and the Korean peninsula. The exercise was meant to "showcase combined capabilities to deter and counter regional threats", the US military said in a news release. Japan and the United States wanted to show their combined resolve in the wake of North Korea's latest missile launches, two US officials told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Tunisian President Kais Saied issued a decree to call voters to a referendum on a new constitution on July 25, the official gazette said, ignoring the opposition's calls to reverse the controversial move.

Saied last week named law professor Sadok Belaid to head an advisory committee that included law and political science deans, to draft a new constitution for a "new republic," excluding political parties from restructuring the political system. The main political parties have said they will boycott the unilateral restructuring of politics.

Tunisian president decrees a referendum for new constitution



Police face questions over delays in storming Texas school

Reuters | London

Law enforcement authorities faced questions and criticism yesterday over how much time elapsed before they stormed a Texas elementary school classroom and put a stop to the rampage by a gunman who killed 19 children and two teachers.

Investigators were also unable to say with any certainty whether an armed school district security officer outside Robb Elementary in the town of Uvalde exchanged fire with the attacker, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos, when Ramos first arrived on Tuesday.

The motive for the massacre — the nation's deadliest school shooting since Newtown, Connecticut, a decade ago — remained under investigation, with authorities saying Ramos had no known criminal or mental health history.

During the siege, which ended when a U.S. Border Patrol team burst in and shot the gunman to death, frustrated onlookers urged police officers to charge into the school, ac-



Flowers and candles are placed outside Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas

Authorities were still working to clarify the timeline of the attack, uncertain whether that period of 40 minutes to an hour began when the shooter reached the school or earlier, when he shot his grandmother at home

According to witnesses. "Go in there! Go in there!"

women shouted at the officers soon after the attack began, said Juan Carranza, 24, who watched the scene from outside a house across the street.

Texas Department of Public Safety Director Steve McCraw said Wednesday that 40 minutes to an hour elapsed from when Ramos opened fire on the school security officer to when the tactical team shot him.

"The bottom line is law enforcement was there," McCraw said. "They did engage immediately. They did contain (Ramos) in the classroom."

Two-year-old Saudi girl saved after swallowing 27 toy magnets

Agencies | Riyadh

With quick intervention, the surgical team specializing in infants and newborns at the Maternity and Children Hospital in Hafr Al-Batin (eastern Saudi Arabia) managed, on Tuesday to save the life of a two-year-old girl who had been suffering from abdominal pain with continuous vomiting for

more than two weeks. X-ray images showed the presence of 27 small magnetic balls inside the girl's intestine, which led to the formation of 8 holes in the intestinal wall. It turned out that the girl swallowed the magnets from a toy she was playing with.

The child's constant pain entailed the need for a quick surgical intervention to extract the

magnetic pieces and sew the intestinal holes caused by the magnets' presence inside the digestive tract for a prolonged period.

The operation, which took three and a half hours to perform, was successful. The girl was discharged from the hospital after her condition stabilized, and she is now in good health.

11 babies killed in Senegal hospital fire

Reuters | London

Eleven newborn babies died in a hospital fire in the western Senegalese city of Tivaouane, the president of the country said late Wednesday.

Just before midnight in Senegal, Macky Sall announced on Twitter that 11 infants had died in the blaze.

"I have just learned with pain and dismay about the deaths of 11 newborn babies in the fire at the neonatal department of the public hospital," he tweeted.

"To their mothers and their families, I express my deepest sympathy," Sall added.

The tragedy occurred at Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh Hospital in the transport hub of Tivaouane, and was caused by "a short circuit", according to Senegalese politician Diop Sy.

"The fire spread very quickly," he said.

The city's mayor Demba Diop said "three babies were saved".

According to local media, the Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh Hospital was newly inaugurated.

Health minister Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr, who was in Geneva attending a meeting with the World Health Organization, said he would return to Senegal immediately.

"This situation is very unfor-



A mother of a baby reacts as she walks out of the Mame Abdou Aziz Sy Dabakh Hospital

YOU KNOW WHAT

The tragedy in Tivaouane comes after several other incidents at public health facilities in Senegal, where there is great disparity between urban and rural areas in healthcare services

fortunate and extremely painful," he said on radio. "An investiga-

tion is under way to see what happened."

The tragedy in Tivaouane comes after several other incidents at public health facilities in Senegal, where there is great disparity between urban and rural areas in healthcare services.

In the northern town of Linguere in late April, a fire broke out at a hospital and four newborn babies were killed. The mayor of that town had cited an electrical malfunction in an air conditioning unit in the maternity ward.

Wednesday's accident also comes over a month after the nation mourned the death of a pregnant woman who waited in vain for a Caesarean section.

Advancing key h

Luhansk governor say

Russia seeking to encircle Ukrainian forces

Ukrainian military says Moscow has the advantage in the fight in the eastern Luhansk region

Reuters | Kyiv

Advancing Russian forces came closer to surrounding Ukrainian troops in the east, briefly seizing positions on the last highway out of a crucial pair of Ukrainian-held cities before being beaten back, a Ukrainian official said yesterday.

Three months into its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has abandoned its assault on the capital Kyiv and is trying to consolidate control of the industrial eastern Donbas region, where it has backed a separatist revolt since 2014.

It has poured thousands of troops into its assault, attacking from three sides in an attempt to encircle Ukrainian forces in Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk. The fall of the two cities, which straddle the Siverskiy Donetsk river, would bring nearly the whole of

Boeing Starliner capping key u

Reuters | London

Boeing Co's Starliner astronaut capsule returned from the International Space Station and landed in New Mexico on Wednesday, capping a high-stakes test flight as NASA's next vehicle for carrying humans to orbit.

Less than a week after its launch from the Cape Canaveral US Space Force Base in Florida, the CST-100 Starliner capsule plunged through Earth's atmosphere Wednesday evening ahead of a parachute-assisted descent over the desert of White Sands Space Harbor, New Mexico. It touched down on time at 6:49 p.m. EDT (2249 GMT).

The roughly five-hour return trip from the space station, an orbital outpost some 250 miles above Earth, checks off the last leg of a repeat test flight that Boeing had first attempted in 2019, but failed to complete after running into software failures.

The latest test mission moves Starliner, beset by repeated delays and costly engineering setbacks, a major step closer to providing NASA with a second reliable avenue for ferrying astronauts to and from the space station.

Starliner was lofted to orbit last Thursday atop an Atlas V rocket furnished by the Boeing-Lockheed Martin joint venture United

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	85,440,340	1,030,415
2 India	43,144,820	524,525
3 Brazil	30,846,602	666,112
4 France	29,413,371	148,056
5 Germany	26,239,348	139,112
6 UK	22,276,975	178,313
7 Russia	18,310,673	378,700
8 S. Korea	18,036,720	24,063
9 Italy	17,333,299	166,358
10 Turkey	15,065,767	98,939
11 Spain	12,280,345	106,105
12 Vietnam	10,714,008	43,078
13 Argentina	9,178,795	128,825
14 Japan	8,705,990	30,418

Global tally

529,940,983

Deaths

6,306,917

Recovered:

500,426,549

New cases

+399,447

New deaths

+832

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	765,305	+516	9,138	+3	749,704	6,463
UAE	906,236	+395	2,302		889,943	13,991
Kuwait	632,781		2,555		629,695	531
Oman	389,473		4,260		384,669	544
Qatar	367,807	+190	677		365,878	1,252