

News in brief

◆ Russian Defence Minister

Sergei Shoigu inspected Russian troop units involved in Ukraine, the defence ministry said yesterday. “At the command posts of Russian units, Army General Sergei Shoigu heard reports from the commanders on the current situation and actions of the Russian Armed Forces in the main operational areas,” the ministry said in a statement. It was not immediately clear when the visit took place or if Shoigu had visited Ukraine itself.



Russia’s defense minister visits troops involved in Ukraine operation

◆ A well at a site operated by local Nigerian firm Eroton Exploration and Production Limited has been spilling oil and gas into the Niger Delta for more than a week, the company and an agency responsible for detecting oil spills said. Eroton produces and exports crude from its Oil Mining Lease 18 block through the Nembe Creek Trunkline. Last year, a nearby well run by Aiteo Eastern E&P spilled oil for more than a month, polluting the Delta creeks before it was successfully shut. Idris Musa, head of the National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency said on Sunday Eroton had reported the spill to authorities, blaming it on a leak from a wellhead.

Well run by Nigeria’s Eroton spills oil and gas for over a week

◆ Egypt has strategic reserves of wheat sufficient

for 5.7 months, Supply Minister Aly Moselhy said in a news conference on Sunday, adding that the country has procured 3.9 million tonnes of wheat in the local harvest so far. Egypt is often the world’s biggest wheat importer. He added that the strategic reserves for sugar were sufficient for more than six months and those for vegetable oils are sufficient for 6.2 months, while the country is self-sufficient for rice for 3.3 months.

Egypt’s strategic wheat reserves sufficient for 5.7 months

◆ **Charity donations accepted** by Britain’s Prince Charles were handled correctly, his office said after a newspaper reported that he received 3 million euros (\$3.2 million) in cash from a former Qatari prime minister, some of it in shopping bags. The Sunday Times said that Charles accepted three lots of cash that were given



Prince Charles followed rules on charity donations, his office says

to him personally by Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani between 2011 and 2015. “Charitable donations received from Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim were passed immediately to one of the prince’s charities who carried out the appropriate governance and have assured us that all the correct processes were followed,” the prince’s office said in a statement on Sunday. The Sunday Times said there was no suggestion the payments were illegal. In November Michael Fawcett, the right-hand man to Prince Charles for decades, stepped down from his role running one of the British royal’s main charities weeks after the Sunday Times said he had offered honours in return for donations. Police and Britain’s Charity Commission are investigating those claims. A spokesman for the prince has said that Charles had no knowledge of the alleged offer of honours or citizenship on the basis of donations.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

	Country	Total cases	Total deaths	
				Global tally
1	USA	88,777,558	1,040,792	548,861,879
2	India	43,391,331	524,999	Deaths
3	Brazil	32,061,959	670,418	6,350,679
4	France	30,513,713	149,317	Recovered:
5	Germany	27,771,111	140,734	523,759,480
6	UK	22,592,827	179,927	New cases
7	Russia	18,418,881	380,892	+220,458
8	S. Korea	18,326,019	24,522	New deaths
9	Italy	18,234,242	168,102	+412
10	Turkey	15,085,742	98,996	
11	Spain	12,681,820	107,799	
12	Vietnam	10,743,448	43,084	
13	Argentina	9,341,492	129,016	
14	Japan	9,239,615	31,116	

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	515,645		24,613		442,182	48,850
Saudi Arabia	791,784	+827	9,201	+3	772,979	9,604
UAE	938,759	+1,722	2,311		919,155	17,293
Kuwait	641,985		2,555		634,914	4,516
Oman	390,244		4,260		384,669	1,315
Qatar	379,862	+585	679	+1	374,426	4,757

Russia steps up missile strike on Ukraine as G7 leaders g

● Russian missiles strike central Kyiv

● Officials say one killed, five wounded

● ‘It’s more of their barbarism’, says Biden

● Ukraine loses key city to pro-Russian forces

● G7 countries announce Russian gold ban at start of summit

Reuters | Kyiv/Pokrovsk



A damaged vehicle is seen outside a residential building hit by a Russian missile strike, as Russia’s attack on Ukraine continues, in Kyiv, Ukraine

Russian missiles hit an apartment block and kindergarten in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv yesterday, in strikes US President Joe Biden condemned as “barbarism” as world leaders gathered in Europe to discuss further sanctions against Moscow.

Up to four explosions shook central Kyiv in the early hours, in the first such attack on the city in weeks. Two more blasts were heard on the southern outskirts of the city later in the day, a Reuters reporter said.

“The Russians hit Kyiv again. Missiles damaged an apartment building and a kindergarten,” said Andriy Yermak, head of the president’s administration.

A Reuters photographer saw a large blast crater by a playground in a kindergarten that had smashed windows.

Ukraine’s police chief, Ihor Klymenko, said on national television that five people had been

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Moscow says the Luhansk and Donetsk provinces in Donbas, where it has backed uprisings since 2014, are independent countries. It demands Ukraine cede the entire territory of the two provinces to separatist administrations.

wounded, and police later said one person was killed.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, US President Joe Biden, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel, Italy’s Prime Minister Mario Draghi, Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and France’s President Emmanuel Macron attend a round table for their first working session of G7 group at Bavaria’s Schloss Elmau Castle, near Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

UK, US, Japan and Canada to ban Russia gold

Reuters | London

Britain, the United States, Japan and Canada will ban new imports of Russian gold as part of efforts to tighten the sanctions squeeze on Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine, the British government said yesterday.

The ban will come into force shortly and apply to newly mined



or refined gold, the government statement said ahead of a meeting of Group of Seven leaders in Germany on Sunday.

The move will not affect previously exported Russian-origin gold, it added.

Russian gold exports were worth 12.6 billion pounds (\$15.45 billion) last year and wealthy Rus-

sians have recently been buying bullion to reduce the financial impact of Western sanctions, the government said.

“The measures we have announced today will directly hit Russian oligarchs and strike at the heart of Putin’s war machine,” Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in the statement.

Iran tests Zuljanah satellite launcher for second time

● The Zuljanah is a three-stage satellite launcher using a combination of solid and liquid fuels

Reuters | Dubai

Iran has carried out a second test of its Zuljanah satellite launcher, Iranian state TV reported yesterday.

“The third development

phase of the Zuljanah satellite launcher will be based on a combination of information gained during today’s launch,” a defence ministry spokesperson told state TV, without clarifying whether the test was successful.

Last year, the United States voiced concern over the successful launch of the domestically-made satellite launcher for the first time, which Tehran said was aimed at helping achieve its “most powerful rocket engine”.

Israel to let more Palestinians manufacturing to fill labour s

Reuters | Jerusalem

Israel’s cabinet approved issuing 3,500 additional permits for Palestinian workers in Israel’s manufacturing and services sectors, increasing the number to 12,000 to help relieve a shortage of skilled staff, the Economy Ministry said yesterday.

Workers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, territories which Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East War, require permits to cross checkpoints and enter Israel



A Palestinian worker holds up his ID card as he is processed after entering Israel through the Erez Crossing, on the border with Gaza