

News in brief

Taiwan president resigns as party leader after election loss

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen has stepped



down as head of her ruling party after it suffered defeat in yesterday's local elections, while the Beijing-friendly main opposition held its ground. Voters cast ballots for mayors, magistrates and various other posts in 22 cities and counties in elections Tsai had previously described as a stage to showcase "Taiwan's persistence and

resolve to defend freedom and democracy" as Beijing ramps up pressure on the island. But her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lost four out of the island's six key mayoralties, including capital Taipei.

Kuwait detected cholera in a citizen arriving from a neighbouring country

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in a statement. According to the World Health Organization, Lebanon is the latest phase of an outbreak that began in Afghanistan in June before spreading to Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Belarus foreign minister Makei dies

Belarus Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei has died at the age of 64, state news agency Belta reported yesterday.



"Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei has passed away suddenly," Belta reported. Makei had held his post since 2012. He had attended a conference of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) - a military alliance of several post soviet states - in Yerevan earlier this week and was due to meet Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on Monday. Before the presidential elections

and mass anti-government protests in Belarus in 2020, Makei had been one of the initiators of efforts to improve Belarus' relations with the West and had criticised Russia.

Canadian Prime

Canada's Trudeau defends use of emergency powers in 'Freedom Convoy' protests

Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday defended invoking emergency powers to end anti-government protests that paralyzed the capital earlier this year, citing the threat of violence and lack of a credible plan by police. The "Freedom Convoy" demonstrations against public health measures including vaccine mandates shut down Ottawa and blocked some border crossings for weeks in January and February. Trudeau portrayed the move to use emergency powers as unavoidable, saying it was not possible to negotiate with the protesters. "It wasn't that they just wanted to be heard. They wanted to be obeyed," Trudeau told the independent public commission looking into the government's use of the powers. "I am absolutely, absolutely serene and confident that I made the right choice in agreeing with the invocation."



Curioser & Curioser

Facial recognition can help conserve seals, scientists say

AP | Freeport

Facial recognition technology is mostly associated with uses such as surveillance and the authentication of human faces, but scientists believe they've found a new use for it - saving seals.



A harbour seal looks around in Casco Bay

A research team at Colgate University has developed SealNet, a database of seal faces created by taking pictures of dozens of harbour seals in Maine's Casco Bay. The team found the tool's accuracy in identifying the marine mammals is close to 100%, which is no small accomplishment in an ecosystem home to thousands of seals.

The researchers are working on expanding their database to make it available to other scientists, said Krista Ingram, a biology professor at Colgate and a team member. Broadening the database to include rare species such as the Mediterranean monk seal and Hawaiian monk seal could help inform conservation efforts to save those species, she said.

Cataloguing seal faces and using machine learning to identify them can also help scientists get a better idea of where in the ocean seals are located, Ingram said.

"Understanding their dis-



SealNet is designed to automatically detect the face in a picture, crop it and recognize it based on facial patterns such as eyes and nose shape, as it would a human

persal, understanding their patterns really helps inform any conservation efforts for the coast," she said. "For mobile marine mammals that move around a lot and are hard to photograph in the water, we need to be able to identify individuals."

Xi tells Kim China willing to work with N. Korea for 'world peace': KCNA

Reuters | Seoul

Chinese President Xi Jinping told North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that Beijing was willing to work with Pyongyang for world peace, North Korean state media said yesterday.

The message from Xi came days after North Korea fired an intercontinental ballistic missile in one of its most powerful tests yet, declaring it would meet perceived US nuclear threats with nukes of its own. North Korea has conducted



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (left) and China's President Xi Jinping at the Kumsusan State Guest House in Pyongyang in 2019



Days before North Korea's ICBM launch, Xi met on the sidelines of a Group of 20 summit in Bali with US President Joe Biden, who voiced confidence that Beijing does not want to see a further escalation by Pyongyang

a record-breaking blitz of missile launches in recent weeks and fears have grown that it is building up to a seventh nuclear test, its first since 2017.

In his message to Kim, Xi said Beijing was ready to work with the North for "peace, stability, development and prosperity of the region and the world," Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

Xi said he was willing to collaborate with Pyongyang as "changes in the world, times,

and history are taking place in unprecedented ways," KCNA said, quoting from the message it said was received in response to congratulations from Kim after the Chinese Communist Party Congress last month handed Xi a third term.

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Musk says he will support DeSantis if Florida governor runs for president

Reuters | Washington

Billionaire Elon Musk said on Friday he would support Ron DeSantis in 2024 if the Florida governor, who recently coasted to a second term, were to run for president.

"My preference for the 2024 presidency is someone sensible and centrist. I had hoped that would be the case for the Biden administration, but have been disappointed so far," Musk said on Twitter.

"Yes," he replied in a tweet when asked if he would support DeSantis in 2024.

"As a reminder, I was a significant supporter of the Obama-Biden presidency and (re-



Ron DeSantis

luctantly) voted for Biden over Trump," the Twitter owner said.

Musk had previously said in June he was leaning towards supporting DeSantis for president in 2024, and added the Florida governor would easily defeat Biden in the election.



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ELON MUSK

When asked back then about Musk's support, DeSantis joked, "I welcome support from African-Americans, what can I say?" Musk, who is white, grew up in South Africa.

China to build nuclear-powered moon base

Bloomberg | Beijing

China plans to build its first base on the moon by 2028, ahead of landing astronauts there in subsequent years as the country steps up its challenge to NASA's dominance in space exploration.

The lunar base will likely be powered by nuclear energy, Caixin reported. Its basic configuration will consist of a lander, hopper, orbiter and rover, all of which would be constructed by the Chang'e 6, 7 and 8 missions.

"Our astronauts will likely be able to go to the moon within 10 years," Wu Weiran, chief designer of China's lunar exploration program, said in an interview with state broadcaster CCTV earlier this week. Nuclear energy can address the lunar station's long-term, high-power



A general view of China's Long March 3B rocket carrying the Chang'e-3 lunar probe (file photo)

energy needs, he said.

China has ramped up its ambitions in space in recent years, sending probes to the moon, building its own space station and setting its sights on Mars. The plans have put it in direct competition with the US. NASA has a rover on the Red Planet and is seeking to return astronauts to the moon this decade for the first time since the Apollo program ended in the 1970s.



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Both China and the US are spending billions of dollars to not just put humans on the moon, but also to access resources that could foster life on the lunar surface or send spacecraft to Mars.

Landslide hits Italian one woman dead, 10 missing



Rescuers remove mud from a street in Casamiciola Terme  
Reuters | Milan

A woman was found dead and around 10 people were still missing on the southern Italian holiday island of Ischia after a landslide engulfed buildings during heavy rain yesterday, a local Italian government official said.

Torrential rain hit the port of Casamiciola Terme, one of the six small towns on the island, in the early hours, triggering flooding and bringing down buildings.

"Currently the confirmed death toll is one, a woman. Eight missing persons have been found, including a child, and there still are around 10 missing," the prefect of Naples, Claudio Palomba, told a news conference, adding that around 100 people living close to the landslide area had been evacuated.

Infrastructure Minister

NASA's Orion capsule

AP | Washington

NASA's Orion capsule entered an orbit stretching tens of thousands of miles around the moon Friday, as it neared the halfway mark of its test flight.

The capsule and its three test dummies entered lunar orbit more than a week after launching on the \$4 billion demo that's meant to pave the way for astronauts. It will remain in this broad but stable orbit for nearly a week, completing just half a lap before heading home.

As of Friday's engine firing, the capsule was 238,000 miles (380,000 kilometres) from Earth. It's expected to reach a maximum distance of almost 270,000 miles (432,000 kilo-

Ukraine marks

AFP | Kyiv

Ukraine accused the Kremlin yesterday of using the same "genocidal" tactics that it used against it in the 1930s under Josef Stalin as Kyiv commemorated a Soviet-era famine that left millions of Ukrainians dead during the winter of 1932-33.

Ukraine this year holds its memorial day for the victims of the "Holodomor" famine as it grapples to repel invading Russian forces and deals with massive power outages across the country after waves of Russian air strikes on vital infrastructure.

"Once they wanted to destroy