

News in brief

Russia says US wants China included in arms control talks

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said



that the United States wanted China to be included in wider talks on nuclear arms control, the Interfax news agency reported. Ryabkov made the comments a day after senior US and Russian officials restarted talks in Geneva to ease tensions between the world's largest nuclear weapons powers.

The container ship Ever Given, which got stuck

Ever Given, the ship that blocked the Suez Canal, arrives in Rotterdam

in the Suez Canal for six days in March, arrived in the Dutch port of Rotterdam after being released by authorities in Egypt. It was scheduled to dock at Rotterdam's ECT Delta terminal for unloading until Aug. 3 before departing for Felixstowe, England, the port said. The vessel, one of the world's largest container ships, became jammed across the canal in high winds on March 23, halting traffic in both directions and disrupting global trade.



New Mexican vigilante group's sympathizers set fire to government offices, businesses

Mexican villagers



sympathizing with a new indigenous self-defense group torched government offices, businesses and houses in a remote mountainous region in southern Chiapas state this week, protesting rampant insecurity in the area. The violence in the indigenous Tzotzil community of Pantelhó late on Monday and early

on Tuesday came less than two weeks after a group of hooded men, calling themselves El Machete, took up arms in nearby Chenalhó to confront drug-trafficking gangs. It was unclear how many members El Machete has.

The Tunisian presidency fired the head of the national television channel after two guests were briefly banned from entering its studios to take part in a programme.

Tunisian presidency sacks head of national TV channel



The dismissal of Wataniya's CEO comes after president Kais Saied suspended parliament and sacked the prime minister on Sunday, in what opponents have labelled a coup.

Paraguay seized more than 3,400 kilos of cocaine near the capital city of Asuncion as it was being stashed in a load of sugar for international shipment, police said, calling it the country's biggest-ever drug bust. National Police Commander Luis Arias told reporters that the illegal stimulant, made with coca leaves grown in South America's Andean region, was found in a warehouse in the Asuncion suburb of Fernando de la Mora. It was being prepared to be shipped out disguised in a load of organic sugar, he said.

Blinken says nuclear talks with Iran 'cannot go on indefinitely'

AFP | Washington

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday that nuclear talks with Iran "cannot go on indefinitely" but that Washington was "fully prepared" to continue negotiations.

The US is indirectly involved in Iran's talks with world powers to revive a nuclear deal that gave Iran some relief from international sanctions in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme.

The deal was torpedoed in 2018 by then US president Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew from the agreement and imposed punishing sanctions.

"We're committed to diplomacy, but this process cannot go on indefinitely... we look to see what Iran is ready to do or not ready to do and remain fully prepared to return to Vienna to continue negotiations," Blinken said during a visit to Kuwait yesterday.

"The ball remains in Iran's court."

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's government has been holding talks with major powers in Vienna since April on bringing Washington back into the agreement.

But a deal now seems unlikely until after he hands over to President-elect Ebrahim Raisi early next month.

Raisi is an ultraconservative but has expressed support for the nuclear talks, arguing Iran needs an end to US sanctions.

Iran's ultraconservative camp, which deeply distrusts the United States, has repeatedly criticised Rouhani over the 2015 deal.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Wednesday that experience has shown "trusting the West does not



Secretary of State Antony Blinken exits his vehicle in Washington

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ANTONY BLINKEN

work", referring to the US withdrawal from the deal and its fallout.

Raisi has said his government will support talks that "guarantee national interests", but will not allow negotiations for the sake of negotiations.

One of the major criticisms of the 2015 deal raised by Trump was its failure to address Iran's ballistic missile programme or its alleged interference in regional affairs.

But Tehran has always rejected bringing non-nuclear issues into the agreement, which is known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Khamenei also criticised the US for refusing to "guarantee that (it) will not violate the agreement in the future" by pulling out unilaterally, as Trump did in 2018.

Trump's successor Joe Biden has signalled his readiness to return to the nuclear deal and has engaged in indirect negotiations with Iran alongside formal talks with the agreement's remaining parties, Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.

Iran's chief negotiator Abbas Araghchi said this month that the talks must "await our new administration" as Tehran is "in a transition period".

A sixth round of talks concluded on June 20 and dates for the next round have yet to be fixed.

Rouhani, in office since 2013 and preparing to leave after the maximum two consecutive terms, had repeatedly promised to secure relief from sanctions before the end of his term.

But earlier this month, he expressed hope that his successor can clinch a deal to lift sanctions, insisting that from his administration's side, "the work was ready" to be done.

Forc Turkish

Almost 60 wildfires



A man carries his dog he rescued from their

31 blazes contained, firefighters battling a remaining 17

Reuters | Istanbul

Three people died in a forest fire in southern Turkey yesterday where authorities were battling multiple blazes for a second day amid suspicions of arson, the country's AFAD disaster agency and the agriculture minister said.

Dozens of villages as well as some hotels were evacuated, and television footage showed burnt buildings and people fleeing across fields as firefighters on the ground and in helicopters tried to contain a blaze in Manavgat, 75 km (45 miles) east of the Mediterranean resort of Antalya.

Officials have said that more than 60 wildfires have erupted across 17 provinces on Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	35,494,551	628,152	197,100,439 Deaths 4,210,081 Recovered: 178,372,436 New cases +451,368 New deaths +7,268
2 India	31,570,904	423,243	
3 Brazil	19,797,516	553,272	
4 Russia	6,218,502	156,977	
5 France	6,054,049	111,735	
6 UK	5,801,561	129,515	
7 Turkey	5,682,630	51,184	
8 Argentina	4,891,810	104,822	
9 Colombia	4,757,139	119,801	
10 Spain	4,422,291	81,442	
11 Italy	4,336,906	128,029	
12 Iran	3,826,447	90,074	
13 Germany	3,771,050	92,114	
14 Indonesia	3,331,206	90,552	

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	284,128		16,507		228,836	
Saudi Arabia	523,397	+1,289	8,212	+12	503,827	+1,299
UAE	677,801	+1,550	1,939	+5	655,183	+1,508
Kuwait	118,531	+813	721	+7	109,916	7,894
Oman	295,857	+322	3,814	+12	278,195	+563
Qatar	225,905	+158	601		223,494	+118

8.2 magnitude earthquake off Alaskan peninsula, tsunami warning

AFP | Anchorage

An 8.2 magnitude earthquake struck off the Alaskan peninsula late Wednesday, the United States Geological Survey said, prompting a tsunami warning.

The earthquake hit 56 miles (91 kilometers) southeast of the town of Perryville, the USGS said.

The quake struck at 0615 GMT yesterday. Perryville is a small village about 500 miles from Anchorage, Alaska's biggest city.

The US government's National Tsunami Warning Center immediately issued a tsunami alert for south Alaska and the Alaskan peninsula.

It initially warned of hazardous waves. About two hours later it gave an update that the forecast maximum height of any tsunami would be less than one foot (30 centimeters) above tide levels.

Tsunami warning sirens were broadcast across Kodiak, an island with a population of about



A dump truck and excavator work on a temporary fix of an off ramp that collapsed after an earthquake (file photo)

5 aftershocks were recorded within 90 minutes of the earthquake, the largest with a magnitude of 6.2

6,000 people, along Alaska's coastline.

The warning center said any potential tsunami would hit Kodiak about 11:55 pm.

That time passed without any

tsunami, according to a broadcaster on local radio station KMXT.

Videos posted on social media by journalists and residents in Kodiak showed people driving away from the coast as warning sirens could be heard.

A tsunami watch was initially issued for Hawaii, meaning residents were required to stay away from beaches, but was lifted about two hours later.

Five aftershocks were recorded within 90 minutes of the earthquake, the largest with a magnitude of 6.2, according to the USGS.

China accuses BBC

AFP | London

Beijing yesterday launched a scathing attack on the BBC, accusing it of broadcasting "fake news" and saying the organisation was "naturally unpopular" over its coverage of devastating floods in central China.

The broadside by the foreign ministry comes after the BBC called on Beijing to put a stop to the harassment of its journalists by nationalists who have accused foreign media of biased reporting.

Days of heavy rain last week sparked record flooding in the central province of Henan that has claimed the lives of at least 99 people.

The BBC said its reporters covering the deluge had been subjected to online vitriol, while other outlets had been harassed on the ground in "attacks which continue to endanger foreign journalists".

But Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian yesterday called the broadcaster a "Fake News Broadcasting Company" that has "attacked and smeared China, seriously deviating from journalistic standards".

Zhao said the BBC deserved to be "unpopular with the Chinese public" and "there is no such thing