

News in brief

◆ **Hunter Biden pleaded not guilty** yesterday to an illegal gun possession charge, marking the latest chapter in his troubled life just as his father President Joe Biden accelerates his campaign for reelection next year. Hunter Biden, 53, arrived in federal court in his family hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, without speaking to waiting reporters. He entered a not guilty plea to three felony charges stemming from his purchase of a .38-caliber Colt Cobra revolver in 2018 when, by his own admission, he was heavily addicted to drugs and barely in control of his life. Hunter Biden is charged with two counts of making false statements for claiming on forms required for the gun purchase that he was not using drugs illegally at the time. He faces a third charge, based on the same statements, that he illegally possessed the gun -- which he had for only 11 days in October 2018 -- before he got rid of it.



Hunter Biden pleads not guilty to gun charges

◆ **US authorities said** they have issued a "breakthrough" first-ever fine over space debris, slapping a \$150,000 penalty on a TV company that failed to properly dispose of a satellite. On Monday the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) came down on Dish for "failure to properly deorbit" a satellite called EchoStar-7, in orbit since 2002. "This marks a first in space debris enforcement by the Commission, which has stepped up its satellite policy efforts," the FCC, which authorizes space-based telecom services, said in a statement. As the geostationary satellite came to the end of its operational life, Dish had moved it to an altitude lower than the two parties had agreed on, where it "could pose orbital debris concerns," the FCC said.

US slaps TV producer with first-ever space debris fine



◆ **A Florida man** convicted of murdering two women in 1996 is to be executed by lethal injection yesterday. Michael Zack, 54, is to be put to death at 6:00 pm (2200 GMT) at the Florida State Prison in the town of Raiford. Zack was sentenced to death in 1997 for the June 1996 sexual assault, robbery and murder of Ravonne Smith, a woman he met at a bar. He was also convicted of the murder of another woman, Laura Rosillo, who had befriended him at another bar. Zack's defense attorneys had sought to block his execution on the grounds that he suffers from fetal alcohol syndrome and is intellectually disabled.

Florida man convicted of two murders to be put to death



CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Indonesia hunting foreigner who meditated naked at shrine



Picture courtesy of Coconuts Bali
AFP | Denpasar, Indonesia

Authorities on the Indonesian resort island of Bali said yesterday they are searching for a foreign national who was filmed in a viral video meditating naked at a Hindu shrine.

The palm-fringed hotspot has vowed a crackdown on misbehaving tourists after a spate of incidents including acts of disrespect to the predominantly Hindu island's culture.

The case gained widespread attention on the Hindu island after Balinese influencer Ni Luh Djelantik reposted the video multiple times between Saturday and Sunday, attracting hundreds of thousands of views.

"We are still carrying out investigations regarding this incident," said Immigration Office head Tedy Riyandi in a statement sent to AFP on Tuesday.

The foreign national has

been identified by authorities but his name and nationality have not been publicly disclosed as the search goes on.

"The efforts currently being made by the Immigration Office are to contact the foreigner's social media account, but to date there has been no response," Riyandi said.

He said the search for the foreign national was being coordinated with Bali police and they were still trying to assess the location and time it took place. Tourist-dependent Bali attracts millions of foreign visitors annually but several high-profile cases since the island reopened after the Covid-19 pandemic have seen some deported for lewd acts.

Bali immigration deported a Danish woman in June after she was filmed flashing the public while riding a motorbike. A Russian woman was also booted off the island in April for posting a nude photo of herself in front of a sacred tree.

India arrests 1,000 people in child marriage crackdown

AFP | Guwahati, India

More than 1,000 people were arrested yesterday in India's remote northeast during the second government crackdown on illegal child marriages in the region this year, authorities said.

Assam state had already arrested 4,000 people in an earlier abolition drive in February, including parents of married couples and registrars who signed off on underage betrothals. The state's chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that police had launched a second phase of the campaign "in a special operation which began in the early

hours of dawn".

"The number of arrests is likely to rise," he wrote in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "The number now stands at 1,039."

Sarma has campaigned on a platform of stamping out child marriages completely in his state by 2026.

The legal marriage age in India is 18 but millions of children are forced to tie the knot when they are younger, particularly in poorer rural areas.

In a landmark 2017 judgment, India's top court said that sex with an underage wife constituted rape, a ruling cheered by activists.

Mexico says ex-diplomat accused of sex crimes arrested in Israel

AFP | Mexico City, Mexico

Mexican writer and former diplomat Andres Roemer, who faces multiple accusations of sex crimes, has been arrested in Israel, according to Mexico's president.

Roemer "will be extradited," Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Monday at his regular morning press conference.

The allegations against Roemer, which number about 60 according to activists, began in February 2021 when

the Mexican dancer Itzel Schnaas accused him of sexual assault.

Israel's police said the force arrested a 60-year-old Mexican citizen in the coastal city of Tel Aviv, following an order from international police organization Interpol.

"Extradition proceedings to Mexico will take place," the force said in a statement.

Without identifying the man detained, Israeli police said he stands accused of sexual offenses.

New right babies as

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Around 30 young adults conceived via sperm or egg donation in the UK will soon be able to discover the identity of their biological parent.

The new rights come as rising numbers of children are being conceived using the technology, posing a range of challenges for the children, their families and donors. The UK law removed the anonymity of egg and sperm

fertility treatment methods and changing social attitudes have seen an increasing number of donor-conceived children being born -- not just to people facing fertility challenges but also same-sex couples and women in their late forties and even fifties.

Initially the numbers of children who will have the right to know will be small, with just 30 people becoming eligible between now and December this year. Data from the UK's Human Fertilisation and

Embryology Authority (HFEA) shows that will rise to more than 700 people

With the first children covered by the legislation turning 18 this month, they will finally be able to request details such as the donor's full name, date of birth and last known address. Advances in



Ukraine frontline attacks 'failed': Moscow

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Kyiv's attempts to penetrate Russian defences on frontlines in the east and south of the country have "failed", Moscow said yesterday, four months into a closely-watched Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Kyiv launched the long-awaited counteroffensive in June but has acknowledged slow progress as its forces crash into sophisticated and kilometres-deep Russian defensive positions.

"The enemy's attempts to break through our defences

in the areas of Verbovoye and Rabotino on the Zaporizhzhia front have failed," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told senior Russian military officials.

He was using Russian place names to refer to two villages along the frontline in the south

where Ukrainian forces claim to have broken through the toughest points.

Shoigu also said the Russian army had "repelled all attacks in the Soledar-Bakhmout direction" on the eastern front in the war-battered Donetsk region.

Trio wins physics Nobe

AFP | Stockholm, Sweden

France's Pierre Agostini, Hungarian-Austrian Ferenc Krausz and French-Swedish Anne L'Huillier won the Nobel prize in physics yesterday for research using ultra quick light flashes that enable the study of electrons inside atoms and molecules.

Their technique employs pulses measured in attoseconds, a unit so short that there are as many in one second as there have been seconds since the universe's birth over 13 billion years ago, the jury said.

The laureates' research has made it possible to examine moves or changes so rapid that they were previously impossible to follow, with potential applications in both electronics and medical diagnostics.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences likened the process to how the flapping wings of a hummingbird turn into a blur for the human eye, but can be slowed



Pierre Agostini



Ferenc Krausz



Anne L'Huillier

and examined using high-speed photography.

"We can now open the door to the world of electrons. Attosecond physics gives us the opportunity to understand mechanisms that are governed by electrons," Eva Olsson, chair of the Nobel

Committee for Physics, said in a statement.

'Not so many women'

In 1987, L'Huillier "discovered that many different overtones of light arose when she transmitted infrared laser light through a

noble gas," the Nobel Committee noted, adding that she has continued to explore this phenomenon, "laying the ground for subsequent breakthroughs".

In the early 2000s, Agostini and Krausz worked on experiments that made it possible to isolate