

News in brief

One killed in Iraq's Erbil after vehicle explodes



◆ One person was killed and four were injured when a vehicle exploded in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil yesterday, the Kurdistan region's counter-terrorism service said. An explosive device attached to the bottom of the car detonated at around 1 pm (1000 GMT), killing the driver and injuring two women and two children who were in the car, it said in a statement. The counter-terrorism service has opened an investigation into the incident, the statement added.

A Russian cosmonaut who caught a US lift to the International Space Station arrived at her new home Thursday for a five-month stay, accompanied by a Japanese astronaut and two from NASA, including the first Native American woman in space.

SpaceX delivers Russian, Native American women to station



◆ A Russian cosmonaut who caught a US lift to the International Space Station arrived at her new home Thursday for a five-month stay, accompanied by a Japanese astronaut and two from NASA, including the first Native American woman in space. The SpaceX capsule pulled up to the station a day after launching into orbit. The linkup occurred 260 miles (420 kilometers) above the Atlantic, just off the west coast of Africa. It was the first time in 20 years that a Russian hitched a ride from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, the result of a new agreement reached despite friction over the war in Ukraine. Cosmonaut Anna Kikina joins two Russians already at the orbiting outpost. She'll live and work on the Russian side until March, before returning to Earth in the same SpaceX capsule.

Biden overhauls US policy on marijuana, pardons prior federal offenses



◆ President Joe Biden took steps to overhaul US policy on marijuana by pardoning thousands of people with federal offenses for simple marijuana possession and initiating a review of how the drug is classified. Biden said thousands of people with prior federal convictions could be denied employment, housing or educational opportunities and his executive action would relieve such "collateral" consequences. Nearly 40 US states have legalized marijuana use in some form, but it remains completely illegal in some states and at the federal level. Reclassification would be a first step toward wider legalization, a move backed by a majority of Americans, and usher in sweeping changes for companies and law enforcement and impact millions.

Two dead, six injured in stabbings along Las Vegas Strip



◆ An attacker with a large kitchen knife killed two people and wounded six others in stabbings along the Las Vegas Strip before he was arrested Thursday, police said. Three people were hospitalized in critical condition and another three were in stable condition, according to Las Vegas police, who said they began receiving 911 calls about the stabbings around 11:40 a.m. across the street from the Wynn casino and hotel. Yoni Barrios, 32, was booked on two counts of murder and six counts of attempted murder late Thursday, the Las Vegas Review-Journal reported.

Putin's nuclear threat of 'Armageddon,' Biden says

US President says nuclear risk highest since 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis

Russia's Eastern Commander sacked as defeats mount

Reuters | Kyiv

Russian President Vladimir Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine has brought the world closer to "Armageddon" than at any time since the Cold-War Cuban Missile Crisis, US President Joe Biden said.

As Putin's seven-month invasion unravels, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Kyiv's forces were swiftly recapturing more territory, including more than 500 sq km in the south where they burst through a second major front this week.

Russia's failings on the battlefield have brought unusual public recrimination from Kremlin allies, with one Russian-installed leader in occupied Ukrainian territory going so far as to suggest Putin's defence minister should have shot himself.

Biden said the prospect of defeat could make Putin, who was 70 yesterday, desperate enough to use nuclear weapons, the biggest risk since US President John Kennedy and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev faced off over missiles in Cuba in 1962.

"We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis," Biden said in New



Rescuers work at a residential building which was heavily damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhia

York. "For the first time since the Cuban Missile Crisis, we have a direct threat to the use of nuclear weapons, if in fact things continue down the path they'd been going."

Putin was "not joking when he talks about potential use of tactical nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons, because his military is, you might say, significantly underperforming," Biden said.

Concern so far has been over the prospect of Russia deploying a so-called "tactical" nuclear weapon - a short-range device for use on the battlefield - rather than the "strategic" weapons on long-range missiles that Washington and Moscow have stockpiled since the Cold War.

But Biden suggested it made little difference: "I don't think there's any such thing as the

ability to easily (use) a tactical nuclear weapon and not end up with Armageddon."

Putin has warned he would use all means necessary, including Russia's nuclear arsenal, to protect Russian soil, which he now says includes four Ukrainian regions he declared annexed last week.

In remarks to Australia's Lowy Institute, Zelenskiy said NATO should launch preventive strikes on Russia to preclude its use of nuclear weapons.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denounced those comments as "an appeal to start yet another world war with unpredictable, monstrous consequences". Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Zelenskiy's remarks demonstrated why Russia was right to launch its operation.

"We have not faced the prospect of Armageddon since Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis. For the first time since the Cuban Missile Crisis, we have a direct threat to the use of nuclear weapons, if in fact things continue down the path they'd been going"

JOE BIDEN

'What have you done?'

Putin signed a bill this week annexing Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, representing about 15% of the country, although none is fully under Russian control.

Ukrainian forces have advanced swiftly since bursting through the Russian front in the northeast at the start of September, and in the south this week.

Since Putin proclaimed the annexation a week ago, Ukraine has recaptured the main Russian bastion in northern Donetsk, and a swath of territory on the west bank of the Dnipro River in Kherson.

Zelenskiy said in a video address on Thursday that Kyiv's forces had recaptured more than 500 square kilometres (195 square miles) and dozens of set-

Death toll in Indian Himalayas avalanche rises to 26

AFP | New Delhi

At least 26 people have been confirmed dead after an avalanche struck climbers in the Indian Himalayas, officials said yesterday, with bad weather hampering the fourth day of search and rescue efforts.

A group of 41 climbing trainees and their teachers were caught in Tuesday's massive snowslide near the summit of Mount Draupadi ka Danda II in the northern state of Uttarakhand.

"We have retrieved 26 bodies so far - 24 of them were trainees and two bodies are those of instructors," an official from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, a government agency, told AFP.



Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel stand in position during preparations for a rescue operation for missing climbers struck by an avalanche

Three members of the expedition remained missing, the official added, but bad weather forced an early end to yesterday's search. Rescue operations will resume in the morning.

Uttarakhand state disaster agency spokesperson Ridhim Aggarwal told AFP that 32 people had been rescued from the site.

An update from the Uttarkashi district disaster management agency later clarified that the figure included 20 people at the trek's advance base camp who had not been hit by the avalanche.

Survivor Naib Subedar Anil Kumar told the Indian Express that he and some of his fellow

climbers had been pulled into a crevasse when the avalanche hit their ropes.

"When the snow began to settle, I undid the ropes and started to rescue my teammates," he told the newspaper. "However, there was little we could do."

Sunil Lalwani, one of the rescued trainee climbers, credited the instructors for saving many lives.

"We were 50-100 metres from the summit with our instructors ahead of us, when suddenly an avalanche hit us and took everyone down," Lalwani was quoted as saying by the Hindustan Times on Thursday.

Thais m

AP | Uthai Sawan

Relatives wailed and collapsed in grief before small coffins of children yesterday after a fired police officer stormed a rural Thai day center at naptime and massacred dozens of people.

Thailand's deadliest r... killing left virtually no one touched in this small community nestled among rice paddies in one of the nation's poorest regions. Grief also gripped rest of the country, where schoolchildren said prayers to honor the dead.

At least 24 of the 36 people killed in Thursday's grisly and knife attack were children, mostly preschoolers.

"I cried until I had no more tears coming out of my eyes. They are running through my heart," said Seksan Sriraj whose pregnant wife worked at the Young Children's Development Center in Uthai Sawan was due to give birth this month. "My wife and my child have gone to a peaceful place. They are alive and will have to live

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	98,474,755	1,087,350
2 India	44,606,460	528,754
3 France	35,705,236	155,369
4 Brazil	34,750,108	686,759
5 Germany	33,826,367	150,406
6 S. Korea	24,933,756	28,614
7 UK	23,735,273	190,888
8 Italy	22,737,577	177,418
9 Japan	21,489,738	45,321
10 Russia	21,163,942	387,991
11 Turkey	16,873,793	101,139
12 Spain	13,431,098	114,262
13 Vietnam	11,485,361	43,152
14 Australia	10,274,479	15,358

Global tally

625,798,263

Deaths

6,558,502

Recovered:

605,392,442

New cases

+223,336

New deaths

+572

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	817,403	+139	9,364	+2	804,375	3,664
UAE	1,030,146	+343	2,346		1,009,263	18,537
Kuwait	658,520		2,563		655,316	641
Oman	398,424		4,260		384,669	9,495
Qatar	456,371	+657	682		450,761	4,928

Although no substantial research has been done on the impacts of climate change on mountaineering risks in the Himalayas, climbers have reported crevasses widening, running water on previously snowy slopes, and the increasing formation of glacial lakes