

News in brief

◆ **The United States held briefings in Washington and Beijing** with foreign diplomats from 40 nations about the Chinese spy balloon that Washington shot down on Saturday for spying over US territory, a senior administration official and diplomats said on Tuesday. US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman on Monday briefed nearly 150 foreign diplomats across 40 embassies, the official said, while in Beijing the U.S. embassy gathered foreign diplomats on Monday and Tuesday to present US findings about the balloon. "We want to make sure that we are sharing as much as we can with countries around the world who may also be susceptible to these types of operations," the senior administration official said. Sherman's briefing was first reported by the Washington Post.



US briefed 40 nations on China spy balloon incident, diplomats and official say

◆ **President Volodymyr Zelenskyy** visited Britain yesterday to drum up aid, winning a pledge to train Ukrainian pilots on advanced NATO fighter jets, a big symbolic step up in Western military support. London was his first stop on

Zelenskyy, in London, wins pledge to train pilots on NATO jets



only his second trip abroad since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. An EU diplomat said Zelenskyy would travel on to Brussels the European Union

on Thursday, where is holding a summit. Zelenskyy was also due to meet King Charles III, address parliament and visit Ukrainian troops training in Britain. "President Zelenskyy's visit to the UK is a testament to his country's courage, determination and fight, and a testament to the unbreakable friendship between our two countries," Sunak said in a statement.

◆ **US President Joe Biden** on Tuesday renewed his call for police reform, saying officers who "violate the public trust"



Biden says police who 'violate' trust should be held accountable

should be held accountable and law enforcement officials should be given the necessary training and be held to higher standards. "I know most cops and their families are good, decent, honorable people ... And they risk their lives every time they put that shield on," Biden said in his State of the Union speech on Tuesday night. "But what happened to Tyre in Memphis happens too often. We have to do better," Biden added, referring to the death of Tyre Nichols, the 29-year-old Black man who was fatally beaten by Memphis police officers in January.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

New British stamp with image of King Charles unveiled



A Postal Museum employee looks at the new definitive stamps depicting Britain's King Charles, unveiled by the Royal Mail, in London

Reuters | London

New 'everyday' stamps featuring the image of King Charles were revealed for the first time on Wednesday, the latest item in Britain to get a makeover following the death of Queen Elizabeth.

From coins and banknotes and to the official royal cypher used by the government, Britain has been slowly introducing replacements featuring the new monarch since his mother's death in September.

In keeping with a tradition dating back to the first Penny Black in 1840, the new "definitive" stamp uses an adapted version of a portrait of Charles which is also appearing on new coinage.

"As with all stamps, the monarch approved them and so

we hope that he's happy with this design," said David Gold, Director of External Affairs & Policy at the Royal Mail.

"The guidance we were given was not to try to be too clever or to try to veer off into some different direction, but very much to keep that traditional image that we're all very much used to."

The new stamp, which will go on general sale at the start of April, consists solely of the king's head and its value on a plain coloured background.

"There is precedent for the king not wearing a crown," Gold said.

Charles is the seventh British monarch to appear on a definitive stamp. Existing stamps with Elizabeth's image will remain valid and in distribution until stocks are exhausted, the Royal Mail said.

Turkey's Erdogan ackn problems with quake r

Anger in Turkey and Syria over government resp

● **Combined death toll tops 11,000**

● **International aid gathers pace**

Reuters | Kahramanmaras/Antakya, Turkey

President Tayyip Erdogan yesterday admitted to problems with his government's initial response to a devastating earthquake in southern Turkey amid anger from those left destitute and frustrated over the slow arrival of rescue teams.

Erdogan, who contests an election in May, said on a visit to the disaster zone that operations were now working normally and promised no one would be left homeless, as the combined death toll across Turkey and neighbouring Syria climbed above 11,000.

But across a swathe of southern Turkey, people sought temporary shelter and food in freezing winter weather, and waited in anguish by piles of rubble where family and friends may lie buried. Rescuers were still digging out some people alive. Others were found dead.

There were similar scenes and complaints in neighbouring Syria, where the impact of Monday's huge quake extended to.

The death toll from both countries was expected to increase as hundreds of collapsed buildings in many cities have become tombs for people who had been asleep in the homes when the quake hit in the early morning.

In the Turkish city of Antakya, dozens of bodies, some covered in blankets and sheets and others in body bags, were lined up on the ground outside a hospital.

Families in southern Turkey and in Syria spent a second night in the freezing cold.

Many in the disaster zone had slept in their cars or in the streets under blankets, fearful of going back into buildings shaken by the 7.8 magnitude tremor - Turkey's deadliest since 1999 - and by a second powerful quake hours later.

"Where are the tents, where are food trucks?" said Melek, 64, in Antakya, saying she had not seen any rescue teams. "We survived the earthquake, but we will die here due to hunger or cold here."

The death toll rose to 8,574 in Turkey on Wednesday. In Syria - already devastated by 11 years of war - the confirmed toll climbed to more than 2,500 overnight, according to the government and a rescue service operating in the rebel-held northwest.

Turkish authorities released video of rescued survivors, including a young girl in pyjamas, and an older man covered in dust, an unlit cigarette clamped between his fingers as he was pulled from the debris.

In Syria's Aleppo, staff at the



Damaged buildings and rescue operations are seen in the aftermath of the earthquake, in Aleppo, Syria February 7, 2023, in this screen grab taken from a social media video



People take shelter at the historical Ulu Mosque following an earthquake, in Diyarbakir, Turkey



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan meets v earthquake in Kahramanmaras, Turkey today".

YOU KNOW WHAT

Turkish authorities say some 13.5 million people were affected in an area spanning roughly 450 km (280 miles) from Adana in the west to Diyarbakir in the east. In Syria, it killed people as far south as Hama, 250 km from the epicentre.

Al-Razi hospital attended to a man with bruised eyes who said more than a dozen relatives including his father and mother were killed when the building they were in collapsed.

"We were 16 and 13 of us died. My brother, one-and-a-half-year-old niece and I got out. Thank God," he said.

"My father, my mother, my brother, his wife and their four children. The wife and two kids of my brother who got out with

me also died."

ELECTION IMPACT?

Erdogan, who has declared a state of emergency in 10 provinces and sent in troops to help, arrived in Kahramanmaras to view the damage and see the rescue and relief effort.

Speaking to reporters, with the wail of ambulance sirens in the background, Erdogan said there had been problems with roads and airports but "we are better

"We will be better tomorrow and later. We still have some issues with fuel ... but we will overcome those too," he said.

However, the disaster poses a challenge to him in the May election that was already set to be the toughest fight of his two decades in power.

Any perception that the government is failing to address the disaster properly could hurt his prospects. On the other hand, analysts say, he could rally national support around the crisis response and strengthen his position.

BODIES IN BLANKETS

The quake toppled thousands of buildings including hospitals, schools and apartment blocks, injured tens of thousands, and left countless people homeless.

Entire streets in Kahramanmaras, near the epicentre, were reduced to rubble, drone footage showed, with plumes of smoke rising from fires across the town. Hundreds of tents were set up as shelter in a sporting venue.

Reuters journalists saw around 50 bodies draped in blankets on the floor of a sports hall.

Kneeling on the floor, a woman wailed with grief and embraced a body wrapped in a blanket

'UNDER THE RUBBLE'

In Syria, the relief effort is complicated by a conflict that has par-



An aerial view shows damaged and collapsed buildings following an earthquake, in Hatay, Turkey