

News in brief

◆ **Tens of thousands of Sydney residents have been told to evacuate** their homes as severe storms and flash flooding inundated swathes of Australia's largest city yesterday. The national weather bureau warned of "a tough 48 hours ahead" for the city, with 60,000 people subject to evacuation orders and warnings across the affected areas, according to emergency services. The death toll from a week of what officials have called "unprecedented" floods across much of Australia's east coast rose to 18 on Tuesday, as police continued to search for a mother and son whose car was discovered abandoned in a stormwater canal in Sydney's flood-hit west.



**Australia floods force tens of thousands to evacuate**

◆ **Russia has a self-interest in preventing Iran** from acquiring nuclear arms, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said during a visit to Estonia yesterday. "We continue to work to see if we can come back to mutual compliance with Iran on the deal. Russia continues to be engaged in those efforts and it has its own interest in ensuring that Iran is not able to acquire a nuclear weapon," Blinken said. Moscow threw a potential spanner in the works on Saturday, just as months of indirect talks between Tehran and Washington in Vienna appeared to be headed for an agreement, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying the Western sanctions over Ukraine had become a stumbling block for a nuclear deal.

**Blinken says Russia has self-interest in preventing nuclear-armed Iran**

◆ **Russian President Vladimir Putin** has signed a law allowing his government to quickly raise pensions, part of a set of anti-crisis measures after Russia was hit by a wave of economic sanctions over Ukraine, the RIA news agency reported yesterday. Another new initiative signed into law by Putin gave individuals and small- and medium-sized businesses the right to request "credit holidays," RIA reported.



**Putin signs law allowing government to quickly raise pensions**

◆ **Iran puts second military satellite into orbit**

◆ **Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)** has successfully put a second military satellite, the Noor 2, into orbit, the state-media said yesterday. The announcement came as talks held in Vienna to revive an agreement restraining Iran's nuclear program have reached a critical stage. Noor 2 is orbiting at an altitude of 500 kilometres (311 miles). The first military satellite, launched by the Islamic Republic in April 2020, placed the Noor, or "light" in Persian, at an orbit of 425km (265 miles) above the earth's surface. Iran will send a series of military satellites into orbit over the coming years, Space Commander of the Revolutionary Guards' Aerospace Force Ali Jafarabadi said on Tuesday, the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

◆ **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy** was given a standing ovation from lawmakers in the British House of Commons at the beginning and end of a speech delivered by video link.

**China's Xi supports efforts for diplomatic solution to Ukraine conflict**

**COVID-19 Countries worst affected**

| Country        | Total cases | Total deaths | Global tally |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 USA          | 80,979,977  | 985,914      | 448,624,192  |
| 2 India        | 42,971,308  | 515,241      |              |
| 3 Brazil       | 29,069,469  | 652,418      |              |
| 4 France       | 23,071,822  | 139,451      | Deaths       |
| 5 UK           | 19,245,301  | 162,147      | 6,029,874    |
| 6 Russia       | 17,081,394  | 357,601      | Recovered:   |
| 7 Germany      | 16,057,509  | 125,077      | 382,865,150  |
| 8 Turkey       | 14,388,231  | 95,681       | New cases    |
| 9 Italy        | 13,048,774  | 156,017      | +2,809       |
| 10 Spain       | 11,136,425  | 100,574      | New deaths   |
| 11 Argentina   | 8,942,888   | 126,842      | +771,831     |
| 12 Iran        | 7,102,159   | 138,260      |              |
| 13 Netherlands | 6,837,874   | 21,624       |              |
| 14 Colombia    | 6,072,656   | 139,120      |              |

**Middle East**

Figures as of closing

| Country      | Total cases | new cases | Total deaths | New Deaths | Total recovered | Active cases |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Egypt        | 491,892     |           | 24,222       |            | 422,223         | 45,447       |
| Saudi Arabia | 747,934     | +219      | 9,011        | +2         | 728,723         | 10,200       |
| UAE          | 883,593     | +323      | 2,302        |            | 845,470         | 35,821       |
| Kuwait       | 623,769     |           | 2,546        |            | 615,509         | 5,714        |
| Oman         | 385,513     | +360      | 4,249        |            | 376,019         | 5,245        |
| Qatar        | 358,564     | +146      | 671          | +1         | 355,957         | 1,936        |



A woman fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine hugs a child at a temporary camp in Przemysl, Poland,

**11-year-old flees Ukraine alone with just a phone number scribbled on his hand**

Agencies

As women and children flee Ukraine while men of fighting age stay back to join local defence units amid Russia's armed attack on the country, the photo of a young boy has gone viral.

The 11-year-old boy is being hailed as a "hero" after travelling nearly 700 miles (1,000 km) to Slovakia alone, armed with only a letter and a phone number written on his hand.

"With one plastic bag, passport and phone number written on his hand, he came completely alone because his parents had to stay in Ukraine," the Slovakian Ministry of Interior said in a Facebook post.

Hailing the boy for his courage, the ministry added: "[The boy] gained all of them with his smile, fearlessness and determination, worthy to be a true hero."

Sharing images of him being greeted by volunteers at the border, the post said the volunteers took care of him making sure he was kept warm and provided him with food and drinks, and even packed some for him for his journey ahead.

According to the Interior Ministry, the young boy is from Zaporizhzhia - the site of the Ukrainian nuclear power plant, which was captured by Russian forces last week. Images show the boy wearing a beanie and a heavy winter coat while standing in front of a table stocked with drinks and food.



The Slovakian authorities shared another video of the boy's mother explaining why he had to travel alone. Identified as Yulia Pisetskaya, in a video posted on Facebook, the mother, a widow, said that she had put her son on a train to Slovakia out of desperation.

"I want to thank the Slovak customs and volunteers who took care of my son and helped him cross the border. I am grateful you have saved my child's life. Next to my town is a nuclear power plant that the Russians are shooting at. I couldn't leave my mother - she can't move on her own," the woman said, as translated by HuffPost.

Authorities dialled the number on the boy's hand and were able to contact his relatives in Bratislava, Slovakia, who later picked him up. The ministry, which posted photos of the child, said, "the whole story ended well".



A man with his newborn child takes shelter in the basement of a perinatal centre as air raid siren sounds are heard



Children, children of the Russian Hotel Oss

**Russia warns barrel oil, cut**

● Deputy PM calls for US Europe to not ban oil imports

● Says Europe should be honest with consumers about price hikes

● Moscow warns could halt gas supply via Nord Stream 1

Reuters | Dublin



A police officer says goodbye to his son as troops as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues

Western countries could face oil prices of over \$300 per barrel and the possible closure of the main Russia-Germany gas pipeline if governments follow through on threats to cut energy supplies from Russia, a senior minister said on Monday.

Oil prices spiked to their highest levels since 2008 on Monday after U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington and European allies were considering banning Russian oil imports.

"It is absolutely clear that a rejection of Russian oil would lead to catastrophic consequences for the global market," Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said in a statement on state television.

"The surge in prices would be unpredictable. It would be \$300 per barrel if not more."

Novak said it would take Europe more than a year to replace



Nord Stream is a system of offshore natural gas pipelines in Europe, running under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany. It includes the two Nord Stream 1 pipelines running from Vyborg in northwestern Russia near Finland and the two Nord Stream 2 pipelines running from Ust-Luga in northwestern Russia near Estonia. All pipelines run to Lubmin in Northeastern Germany.

**More than two million**

AFP | Geneva

More than two million people have now fled Ukraine since Russia launched its full-scale invasion on February 24, according to the latest data from the United Nations yesterday.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, recorded 2,011,312 refugees on its dedicated website, 276,244 more than the previous count on Monday.

UNICEF, the UN children's agency, believes hundreds of thousands of them are youngsters.

Authorities and the UN expect the flow to intensify as the Russian army advances deeper into Ukraine, particularly as it approaches the capital, Kyiv.

Before Russia invaded, more than 37 million people lived in



The UN Refugee Agency has recorded 2,011 of Russia's invasion

Ukrainian territory under the control of the central government.

Besides those who have left, an unknown number have been displaced from their homes within