

News in brief

India declares candidature for UN Security Council membership

India has declared its candidature for non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the 2028-29 term, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said. On December 1, India assumed the monthly rotating Presidency of the Security Council. This is the second time after August 2021 that New Delhi is presiding over the Council during its two year tenure as elected UNSC member. "I am glad to inform you that we have declared our candidature for our next tenure at the Security Council for 2028-29," Jaishankar said.



Peruvian ex-President Pedro Castillo's pre-trial detention in prison was extended to 18 months, amid a deepening diplomatic spat with left-leaning countries opposed to his removal and as deadly protests extended into a second week.

At least 15 people have been killed in the protests, according to statements from authorities. A judicial panel within the Supreme Court ordered the extended period of pre-trial detention for Castillo as prosecutors continued an investigation into criminal charges against him. The decision did not touch on the merits of accusations faced by Castillo, who has been charged with rebellion and conspiracy, but a Supreme Court judge heading up the panel cited the risk of flight by the deposed president.

Castillo jail term extended as Peru protest death toll hits 15



Fire breaks out at historic Panama Canal lock



Panama Canal Authority. "A fire outbreak was recorded in one of the machinery tunnels in the upper chamber of the Miraflores locks," the Authority said in a statement. "No injuries were reported. However, the transit of ships through this lock has been temporarily suspended as a security measure," it added.

A small fire broke out in machines that operate the historic Miraflores Lock on the Panama Canal, which delayed the crossing of some ships but did not shut down interoceanic navigation.

The fire started in a tunnel where the machinery of the lock is housed, but the other locks continued working normally, said the Panama Canal Authority.

Pet retailers are set to be barred from selling dogs, cats and rabbits in the state of New York

New York come December 2024 under a new law, signed by Governor Kathy Hochul on Thursday, designed to stop the supply of animals from so-called puppy mills. Hochul, a Democrat, said banning pet stores from selling pets will help protect animal welfare and clamp down on abusive, wholesale breeders. New York will join a small group of other states, including California, Illinois and Maryland, that have instituted similar bans on such sales. The law leaves the door open for pet stores to work with animal shelters to encourage adoptions, including rental space.

New York to ban animal sales at pet stores in 2024

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Ardern auctions transcript of parliament insult for charity

AFP | Wellington

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is raising money for a prostate cancer charity by auctioning off a transcript of a parliamentary exchange in which she called a political opponent an "arrogant prick".

Bidding for a framed copy of the document, signed by Ardern and the insult's target, political rival David Seymour, had reached NZ\$45,500 (US\$29,000) by yesterday in an online auction.

New Zealand's premier was overheard muttering the insult following a heated exchange between the pair at a parliamentary session on Tuesday.

A microphone picked up an exasperated Ardern saying "he's such an arrogant prick" in reference to Seymour as she retook her seat after answering a barbed question from the MP.

Seymour, leader of the right-liberalist ACT party, petitioned the speaker of New Zealand's parliament for an apology by Ardern, which meant her comment was entered into the official record, known as the Hansard.

Ardern later texted an apology to Seymour, who came up



Jacinda Ardern and David Seymour sign official parliamentary record with the idea of joining forces to raise money for charity.

"We are thrilled it's got such good support," Seymour said yesterday, with bidding due to close on December 22.

In a Facebook post on Thursday, Ardern said she had signed the official transcript with Seymour "in the spirit of good sportsmanship and a good cause".

Seymour said the prime minister needed little persuasion.

"I suggested we sign a copy of the Hansard and auction it off to raise money for the foundation and pricks everywhere," he added.

Seymour said her insult "was not significant in terms of the stuff that goes on, people were surprised as it's so out of character" for Ardern.

Pacifist Japan unveils biggest military build-up since World War Two

Reuters | Tokyo

Japan yesterday unveiled its biggest military build-up since World War Two with a \$320 billion plan that will buy missiles capable of striking China and ready it for sustained conflict, as regional tensions and Russia's Ukraine invasion stoke war fears.

The sweeping, five-year plan, once unthinkable in pacifist Japan, will make the country the world's third-biggest military spender after the United States and China, based on current budgets.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who described Japan and its people as being at a "turning point in history", said the ramp-up was "my answer to the various security challenges that we face".

His government worries that Russia has set a precedent that will encourage China to attack Taiwan, threatening nearby Japanese islands, disrupting supplies of advanced semiconductors and putting a potential stranglehold on sea lanes that supply Middle East oil.

"This is setting a new heading for Japan. If appropriately executed, the Self-Defence Forces will be a real, world-class effective force," said Yoichi Koda, a



Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force's (JMSDF) JS Mogami (FFM-1), a Japanese multi-mission stealth frigate, takes part in the International Fleet Review

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YOICHI KODA, A FORMER MARITIME SELF DEFENCE FORCE ADMIRAL

former Maritime Self Defence Force admiral, who commanded the Japanese fleet in 2008.

The government said it would also stockpile spare parts

and other munitions, expand transport capacity and develop cyber warfare capabilities. In its postwar, American-authored constitution, Japan gave up the right to wage war and means to do so.

"Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a serious violation of laws that forbid the use of force and has shaken the foundations of the international order," the strategy paper said.

"The strategic challenge posed by China is the biggest Japan has ever faced," it added, also noting that Beijing had not ruled out using force to bring Taiwan under its control.

North Korea tests high-thrust solid-fuel engine for apparent ICBM development

Reuters | Seoul

North Korea has tested a high-thrust solid-fuel engine that experts said would allow quicker and more mobile launch of ballistic missiles, as it



A view of a "high-thrust solid-fuel motor" test in Tongchang-ri, North Korea

seeks to develop a new strategic weapon and speeds up its nuclear and missile programmes.

The test, overseen by leader Kim Jong Un, was conducted on Thursday at North Korea's Sohae Satellite Launching Ground which has been used to test missile technologies, including rocket engines and space launch vehicles, the official KCNA reported yesterday.

Experts say the test appears aimed at developing a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) given the thrust of the engine, which the North said was "the first of its kind" in the country.

North Korea has been working to build more solid-fuel missiles that are more stable and can be launched with almost no warning or preparation time.

Twitter suspends accounts of several journalists

Reuters | Los Angeles

Twitter suspended the accounts of several prominent journalists who recently wrote about its new owner Elon Musk, with the billionaire tweeting that rules banning the publishing of personal information applied to all, including journalists.

Responding to a Tweet on the account suspensions, Musk tweeted: "Same doxxing rules apply to 'journalists' as to everyone else," a reference to Twitter rules banning the sharing of personal information, called doxxing.

On Wednesday, Twitter suspended @elonjet, an account



An image of Elon Musk is seen on a smartphone placed on printed Twitter logos

tracking Musk's private jet in real time using data available in the public domain. Musk had threatened legal action against the account's operator, saying his son had been mistakenly followed by a "crazy stalker".

Musk added on Thursday: "Criticizing me all day long is



The suspensions come after Musk has repeatedly vowed to uphold absolute free speech on the platform he bought for \$44 billion in October

totally fine, but doxxing my real-time location and endangering my family is not."

Malay

Malaysia rescuers race

● Five children, 12 women among the dead; 12 missing

● Hundreds involved in search mission

Reuters | Batang Kali

A landslide killed at least 21 people, including children, while they slept in their tents at an unlicensed campsite in Malaysia yesterday, officials said, as search teams scoured thick mud and downed trees for survivors.

The landslide in Selangor state bordering the capital, Kuala Lumpur, occurred before 3 a.m. (1900 GMT), tearing down a hillside into an organic farm that officials said was operating the campsite illegally.

Among the victims were five children and 12 women, according to the fire and rescue department.

The disaster struck about 50 km (30 miles) north of Kuala Lumpur in Batang Kali, just outside the

Residential fire in Lyon kills 10, incl



French firefighters work at the scene of a residential fire in Lyon

Reuters | Lyon

Ten people including five children aged three to 15 were killed in a fire yesterday that engulfed a residential building in an impoverished French city near the southeastern French city of Lyon.

Another four people were seriously injured in the blaze in Vaulx-en-Velin, which started around 3am (0200 GMT) on the ground floor before spreading up the seven-storey building, rescue authorities said.

Footage on social media showed a huge, dark cloud billowing above the building at the time of the fire before it was extinguished after daybreak.

Witnesses in nearby buildings said they had been woken up by screams and felt helpless as they stood at the foot of the building on fire, the smoke too thick for them to get in and try to rescue residents before firefighters arrived.

"At around 3.30 am, I heard shouting so I ran out of my home...I saw the building, number 12, on my left burning on the ground floor...and people trying to get out," said Furkan Bag, a neigh-