

News in brief

Power, water return to cyclone-hit New Zealand cities



Water and electricity supplies slowly returned to cyclone-struck New Zealand cities yesterday, as the death toll from the disaster rose to nine. Almost a week after Cyclone Gabrielle brought scouring winds and torrential rains to the country's North Island -- causing landslides and widespread flooding -- recovery efforts have begun

in earnest. Roger Ball, acting director of the National Emergency Management Agency, said water had been restored to the east-coast city of Gisborne and that some residents in the neighbouring city of Napier now had power.

Media titan Rupert Murdoch described Donald

Fox's Murdoch called Trump stolen vote claims 'crazy': court docs

Trump's claims that the 2020 election was stolen as "crazy," according to court documents that also threaten to embarrass Fox News's top stars. The 91-year-old billionaire made the comments in emails to senior Fox executives even as anchors on his conservative network continued to give credence to Trump's false allegations, Thursday's filing showed. The document also says some of Fox News's most popular hosts, including Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham, privately ridiculed top Trump advisors who were saying Joe Biden had lost the election.



FBI investigates hack of its own computer network



The FBI is investigating a hack of its computer network, in an isolated incident that was now contained, the agency said. "The FBI is aware of the incident and is working to gain additional information," the agency said in an emailed statement to Reuters, without providing further details. CNN, which first reported the incident citing people briefed on the matter, said FBI officials believe it involved computers at its New York office which were used to investigate child sexual exploitation.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Astronomers marvel at 'perfect explosion,' a spherical cosmic fireball



An illustration shows a perfectly spherical explosion, called a kilonova

Reuters | Washington

Astronomers have observed what might be the "perfect explosion," a colossal and utterly spherical blast triggered by the merger of two very dense stellar remnants called neutron stars shortly before the combined entity collapsed to form a black hole.

Researchers described for the first time the contours of the type of explosion, called a kilonova, that occurs when neutron stars merge. The rapidly expanding fireball of luminous matter they detailed defied their expectations.

The two neutron stars, with a combined mass about 2.7 times that of our sun, had orbited each other for billions of years before colliding at high speeds and exploding. This unfolded in a galaxy called NGC 4993, about 140-150 million light years away from Earth in the direction of the constellation Hydra. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km).

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"It is a perfect explosion in several ways. It is beautiful, both aesthetically, in the simplicity of the shape, and in its physical significance," said astrophysicist Albert Snieppen of the Cosmic Dawn Center in Copenhagen, lead author of the research published in the journal Nature.

"Aesthetically, the colors the kilonova emits quite literally look like a sun - except, of course, being a few hundred million times larger in surface area. Physically, this spherical explosion contains the extraordinary physics at the heart of this merger," Snieppen added.

The researchers had expected the explosion to perhaps look like a flattened disk - a colossal luminous cosmic pancake, possibly with a jet of material streaming out of it.

North Korea fires long-range missile after warning over military drills

Reuters | London

North Korea launched a long-range ballistic missile into the sea off Japan's west coast yesterday after warning of a strong response to upcoming military drills by South Korea and the United States.

Japanese authorities said the missile plunged into waters inside Japan's exclusive economic zone more than an hour after it was launched, suggesting the weapon was one of Pyongyang's largest missiles.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the missile appeared to have been ICBM-class, referring to an intercontinental ballistic missile. He told a briefing Japan strongly condemned the launch, calling it a threat to the international community.

Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada said the missile appeared to have a range of more than 14,000 km (8,700 miles) - sufficient to reach the U.S. mainland.

Tokyo said there were no immediate reports of damage to ships or aircraft.

In South Korea, which denounced the launch as a "clear breach of U.N. Security Council resolutions", the joint chiefs of staff said the missile had flown about 900 km (560 miles) before splashing into the sea.

North Korea's first missile firing since Jan. 1 came after Pyongyang threatened on Friday an "unprecedentedly persistent, strong" response



A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea

YOU KNOW WHAT

North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programmes are banned under UN Security Council resolutions, but Pyongyang says its weapons development is necessary to counter "hostile policies" by Washington and its allies

to fend off the North's growing nuclear and missile threats.

Following yesterday's launch, South Korea's National Security Council convened a meeting and agreed to increase cooperation on security with Washington and Japan.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that U.S. commitments to the defence of Japan and South Korea "remain ironclad".

"While we have assessed that this event does not pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel, or territory, or to our allies, we will continue to monitor the situation," the statement added.

Nuclear-armed North Korea fired an unprecedented number of missiles last year, including ICBMs that are capable of striking anywhere in the United States, while resuming preparations for its first nuclear test since 2017.

as South Korea and the United States gear up for annual military exercises as part of efforts

US cancer patient developed 'uncontrollable' Irish accent

BBC

A US man developed an "uncontrollable Irish accent" after being diagnosed with prostate cancer, despite having never visited Ireland, researchers say.

The North Carolina man, who was in his 50s, was presumably afflicted with foreign accent syndrome (FAS), the British Medical Journal reports.

The rare syndrome gave the man, who had no immediate family from Ireland, a "brogue" that remained until his death.



Stock image of a man being examined by a doctor

Several similar cases have been recorded globally in recent years.

The case was jointly studied and reported by Duke University in North Carolina and the Carolina Urologic Research

Center in South Carolina.

"To our knowledge, this is the first case of FAS described in a patient with prostate cancer and the third described in a patient with malignancy," said the report's authors.

Much of the man's identifying characteristics, including his name and nationality, were not included in the report.

It says he lived in England in his 20s and had friends and distant family members from Ireland. But they add he had never previously spoken with the foreign accent.

North Korean leader Kim's daughter appears at sports event, state media reports

Reuters | Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong and his daughter watched a sports event attended by government officials on Friday, according to state media, the first time the girl has been seen at a non-military event.

The daughter, often described by state media as Kim's "beloved child" or "respected child" has been seen along-



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reacts as he watches sport games in Pyongyang, North Korea

side her father Kim at military events including earlier this month.

Little is known about the girl and she has not been named in state media. South Korean in-

telligence officials believe she is the daughter identified as Ju Ae by former American basketball player Dennis Rodman, who spent time with Kim's family in 2013.

The event took place in celebration of a major holiday called the Day of the Shining Star in North Korea

Ea
46,000

345,000 apartments destroyed in Turkey

Reuters | Antakya

More than 46,000 people have been killed in the earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria and the toll is expected to soar, with some 345,000 apartments in Turkey now known to have been destroyed, and many still missing.

As Turkey attempts to manage its worst modern disaster, concerns were growing over the victims of the tragedy in Syria, with the World Food Programme (WFP) pressuring authorities in the northwest to stop blocking access to the area as it seeks to help hundreds of thousands of people ravaged by earthquakes.

Thirteen days after the quake hit, workers from Kyrgyzstan tried to save a Syrian family of five from the rubble of a building in

Six dead as gunman rampage in small town



A man stands next to the vehicle of the victim convenience store in Arkabutla, Mississippi

Reuters | Arkabutla

A gunman went on a rampage in a small Mississippi town on Friday, killing his ex-wife and five other people in three locations before sheriff's deputies arrested him, the county sheriff and witnesses said.

The bloodshed occurred in Arkabutla, a rural hamlet of fewer than 300 people in Tate County in northern Mississippi, about 40 miles (60 km) south of Memphis, Tennessee.

The gunman, identified as Richard Dale Crum, 51, was charged with first-degree murder, Tate County Sheriff Brad Lance told reporters.

President Joe Biden condemned the shooting and urged Congress to enact gun control including background checks, an assault weapons ban and requiring the safe storage of guns.

"Jill and I are mourning for the six killed in today's violence in Tate County, Mississippi - as we have for far too many Americans," Biden said in a statement, referring to his wife.

Investigators had yet to ascertain a motive, but Lance said