

News in brief

◆ **The head of the Russian Orthodox Church** has said that Russian soldiers who die in the war against Ukraine will be cleansed of all their sins, days after President Vladimir Putin ordered the country's first mobilisation since World War Two. Patriarch Kirill is a key Putin ally and backer of the invasion. He has previously criticised those who oppose the war and called on Russians to rally round the Kremlin. "Many are dying on the fields of internecine warfare," Kirill, 75, said in his first Sunday address since the mobilisation order. "The Church prays that this battle will end as soon as possible, so that as few brothers as possible will kill each other in this fratricidal war."



**Orthodox Church leader says Russian soldiers dying in Ukraine will be cleansed of sin**

◆ **A Kazakh court** yesterday sentenced a nephew of former president Nursultan Nazarbayev to six years in prison for embezzlement, the first verdict against a close relative of the once powerful leader of the oil-rich Central Asian nation. The court found businessman Kairat Satybaldy guilty of embezzling money from state-owned companies. Nazarbayev resigned as president in 2019 after

**Kazakh ex-leader's nephew sentenced to 6 years for embezzlement**



ruling the ex-Soviet nation for three decades, and endorsed Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as his successor.

The former president, however, retained sweeping powers as the head of the country's security council. Tokayev and Nazarbayev fell out in January when street protests over fuel price hikes escalated into the deadliest bout of political violence in the country's since it gained independence in 1991.

◆ **The leaders** of Italy's opposition parties yesterday blamed their defeat on a lack of unity and on voters choosing a path of populism, after



**Italy's opposition blame disunity and populism for defeat**

Giorgia Meloni's rightist bloc overwhelmingly won the national election. Near final results showed the conservative alliance, which includes Meloni's Brothers of Italy, Matteo Salvini's League and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, on course for a solid majority in both houses of parliament. Centre-left and centrist parties, who fought the election on their own after a series of bust ups, collectively won more votes than the right, but an electoral law that awards a third of seats on a first-past-the-post system favours broad alliances. Enrico Letta, the head of the opposition Democratic Party (PD), announced he would stand down.

◆ **Iran accused** the United States yesterday of using unrest triggered by the death of a woman in police custody to try to destabilise the country, and warned it would not go unanswered, as the biggest protests since 2019 showed no signs of abating. Iran has cracked down on nationwide demonstrations sparked by the death of 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini after she was detained by morality police enforcing the Islamic Republic's strict restrictions on women's dress.

**Iran accuses US of trying to use unrest to undermine country**

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	97,905,915	1,081,715	620,405,933
2 India	44,572,243	528,530	
3 France	35,157,046	154,887	Deaths: 6,540,798
4 Brazil	34,674,422	685,860	
5 Germany	32,952,050	149,458	Recovered: 600,621,637
6 S. Korea	24,634,296	28,246	
7 UK	23,621,952	189,919	New cases: +159,867
8 Italy	22,313,612	176,912	
9 Japan	21,067,544	44,375	New deaths: +398
10 Russia	20,833,109	386,842	
11 Turkey	16,873,793	101,139	
12 Spain	13,403,502	114,009	
13 Vietnam	11,473,733	43,146	
14 Australia	10,204,195	14,928	

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	515,645		24,613			48,850
Saudi Arabia	816,000	+161	9,344	+2	+115	3,406
UAE	1,025,910	+342	2,344	+1	+323	18,300
Kuwait	658,520		2,563			641
Oman	397,993		4,260			9,064
Qatar	447,133		682			6,051

Figures as of closing

# Kremlin in 'sporadic' contact

- US warns Russia against using nuclear weapons in Ukraine
- Fourth day of voting in referendums on joining Russia
- Ballot boxes taken door to door, says Ukraine
- Heavy fighting continues along frontline
- Russians protest against military draft

Reuters | Kyiv



Local residents wait before receiving ballots from members of an electoral commission and casting their votes into a mobile ballot box on the third day of a referendum

The Kremlin said yesterday it was in "sporadic" contact with the United States on nuclear issues, a day after Washington warned of

"catastrophic consequences" if set to annex. Citizens in four regions of Ukraine were voting for a fourth day on Monday in Moscow-organised referendums on joining Russia, a plan Kyiv and the West

# Swastika-wearing gunman kills 13 at Russian school



Police officers secure the area near a school after a gunman opened fire there, in Izhevsk, Russia

Reuters | Moscow

A gunman with a swastika on his t-shirt killed 13 people, including seven children, and wounded more than 20 at a school in Russia on Monday before committing suicide, investigators said.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which handles major crimes, said it was looking into the attacker's suspected neo-Nazi links. It named him as Artem Kazantsev, a man in his early thirties, and said he was a graduate of the school.

"Currently investigators ... are conducting a search of his residence and studying the personality of the attacker, his views and surrounding milieu," the committee said in a statement. "Checks are being made into his adherence to neo-fas-

cist views and Nazi ideology." Investigators released a short video showing the man's body lying on the floor of a classroom with overturned furniture and papers strewn on the bloodstained floor. He was dressed all in black, with a red swastika in a circle drawn on his t-shirt.

The committee said the six adult victims included teachers and security guards. It said 21 people, including 14 children, were wounded.

Tass news agency quoted investigators as saying the attacker was armed with two pistols and a large supply of ammunition.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said President Vladimir Putin "deeply mourns" the deaths. He described the incident as "a terrorist act by a

Police officers secure the area near a school after a gunman opened fire there, in Izhevsk, Russia

person who apparently belongs to a neo-fascist organisation or group".

He said doctors, psychologists and neurosurgeons had been sent on Putin's orders to the location of the shooting in Izhevsk, about 970 km (600 miles) east of Moscow.

Russia has seen several school shootings in recent years.

In May 2021, a teenage gunman killed seven children and two adults in the city of Kazan. In April 2022, an armed man killed two children and a teacher at a kindergarten in the central Ulyanovsk region before committing suicide.

# NASA's nears p

Reuters

Ten months after launch, NASA's asteroid-deflecting DART spacecraft neared a planned impact with its target yesterday in a test of the world's first planetary defense system, designed to prevent a doomsday collision with Earth.

The cube-shaped "impactor" vehicle, roughly the size of a vending machine with two rectangular solar arrays, was on course to fly into the asteroid Dimorphos, about as large as a football stadium, and self-destruct around 7 pm EDT (2300 GMT) some 6.8 million miles (11 million km) from Earth.

The mission's finale will test the ability of a spacecraft to alter an asteroid's trajectory with sheer kinetic force, plowing into the object at high speed to nudge it astray just enough to keep our planet out of harm's way.

It marks the world's first attempt to change the motion of an asteroid, or any celestial body. DART, launched by a SpaceX

# India's C

Reuters | New Delhi

India's main opposition Congress party is likely to elect a new party president from outside the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty for the first time in nearly 25 years.

Formed 137 years ago during India's struggle for independence from Britain, Congress was thumped by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the last two general elections.

Many senior Congress leaders have quit to form their own party