

Hundreds of firefighters battle wildfire in Portugal

REUTERS, Lisbon

More than 700 firefighters yesterday battled a wildfire sweeping across a part of central Portugal, with strong winds complicating efforts to tackle the blaze.

The wildfire has been raging in the municipality of Oleiros since Saturday afternoon but it has now spread to two neighbouring municipalities and has already forced the precautionary evacuation of several people.

A 21-year-old firefighter died in a road accident on Saturday evening while fighting the fire and six others were injured.

"I would like to send a word of solidarity, encouragement and thanks to the firefighters ... for the work they do for Portugal and for all of us," Prime Minister Antonio Costa said in a statement.

The fires are small compared with a massive fire that hit the region in June 2017, killing 66 people and injuring more than 250.



Russian warships sail during the Navy Day parade in Kronstadt near Saint Petersburg, Russia, yesterday. Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said the Russian Navy would be armed with hypersonic nuclear strike weapons and underwater nuclear drones, which the defence ministry said were in their final phase of testing. Putin, who says he does not want an arms race, has often spoken of a new generation of Russian nuclear weapons that he says are unequalled and can hit almost anywhere in the world. Some Western experts have questioned how advanced they are.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US sends envoy to press for peace talks in Afghanistan

Washington has dispatched a special envoy for Afghanistan to press for peace talks between the government and Taliban fighters, with the diplomat scheduled to visit Kabul on a trip with stops in five nations, the US State Department said on Saturday.

Hurricane Hanna lashes south Texas coast amid pandemic

Hurricane Hanna pummeled the south Texas coast on Saturday night with howling winds and a surging sea that threatened a broad area already contending with an intense spike in coronavirus deaths.

Temperatures at Norway's Arctic archipelago hit record high

Temperatures at Norway's Svalbard archipelago, about midway between the mainland and the North Pole, hit a record high of 21.7 degrees Celsius on Friday, Norway's Meteorological Institute said.

Prince Harry took offence at brother's advice, says book



Britain's Prince Harry took offence at what he thought was Prince William's "snobbishness" when he advised his brother to "take as much time as you need to get to know this girl" when he was dating Meghan, Markle, a new book says.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

US RACE PROTESTS

Protesters clash with cops

Dozens arrested, 21 police hurt in Seattle; one shot dead in Texas

AGENCIES

US police used flashbang grenades, pepper spray and tear gas as protestors marched in cities across the country on Saturday amid a wave of public anger over Donald Trump's planned "surge" of federal agents into major metropolises.

The demonstrations against racism and police brutality -- sparked by the death in Minneapolis of unarmed African-American George Floyd -- come as the US president faces an increasingly tough battle for re-election, and is campaigning heavily on a platform of "law and order".

Protestors marched in Austin, Texas, as well as Louisville in Kentucky, New York, Omaha, California's Oakland and Los Angeles, and Richmond in Virginia -- where riot police fired chemical agents at a Black Lives Matter march, according to US media.

In Seattle, the sounds of repeated

small detonations rang out in some streets, and smoke rose from an area where demonstrators had set fire to trailers by a construction site for a youth detention facility, an AFP reporter observed.

Protestors slashed car tires and smashed trailer windows. Police in riot gear faced off against the protestors, some holding umbrellas against falling pellets of pepper spray.

Late Saturday, Seattle police said 45 people were arrested in connection with the demonstrations, which they designated a riot, according to the force's official Twitter account. The post also said "21 officers sustained injuries after being struck by bricks, rocks mortars or other explosives. Most officers were able to return to duty. One was treated at a hospital for a knee injury."

Police Chief Carmen Best implored people to "come in peace to the city," and castigated the demonstrations.

"The rioters had no regard for the

community's safety, for officers' safety or for the businesses and property that they destroyed," local media reported her as saying.

In Texas, one person was killed when several shots were fired amid the Black Lives Matter protest in downtown Austin on Saturday, authorities said.

Footage posted during a Facebook Live showed the moment when several shots rang out in the Texas capital as about 100 people marched and chanted, "Fists up! Fight back!"

The latest violence came after police and federal agents fired tear gas and forcefully dispersed protestors further south in Portland early Saturday, also in anger over Trump's heavily-criticised surge of security forces.

The city, the biggest in the state of Oregon, has seen nightly protests against racism and police brutality for nearly two months, initially sparked by Floyd's death.

HANDLING OF CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Calls grow in Israel for Netanyahu to go

AFP, Jerusalem

"We won't leave until Bibi leaves." Israel's struggle to contain the coronavirus has stirred deep-seated resentment towards Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and protests demanding his resignation are growing by the week.

Some demonstrators branded Netanyahu -- who has been indicted with bribery, fraud and breach of trust -- as corrupt, while others condemned a lack of coherence in the government's response to the pandemic.

For Tamir Gay-Tsabary, who travels each day to the Jerusalem protests with his wife Tami from southern Israel, coronavirus was "a trigger" that brought renewed focus to Netanyahu's leadership faults.

The pandemic made people "understand that he doesn't care (about) Israel, he just cares for himself," the 56-year-old sales manager told AFP. Netanyahu won praise for his initial response to the virus.

His government's quick decisions in March to curb travel and impose a lockdown brought the daily case-count to a trickle by early May.

But an economic re-opening that began in late April has led to an explosion in transmission in the country of about 9 million people, with daily COVID-19 tallies ranging between 1,000 and 2,000 cases in recent weeks.

Anti-government protests that initially included a few hundred people in Tel Aviv, now regularly count several thousand there and in Jerusalem.

Reflecting on the movement, Einaf Schiff of the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper said it began in response to "a premature victory celebration for having defeated the coronavirus".

That false victory "morphed into a healthcare and economic failure, which has left a severe crisis of confidence between the public and the government in its wake," he said.

In response to rising cases, Netanyahu's centre-right coalition has re-imposed economically painful restrictions, including targeting shops and markets. It has also approved additional relief measures, notably cash deposits to all citizens.

Protester Amit Finklerstein said accused the government of giving everyone cash "just to shut our mouth up."

Netanyahu has taken responsibility for re-opening the economy too soon, but said he was seeking a tricky balance between protecting livelihoods and limiting viral transmission, a challenge faced by many leaders. But he has also sought to undermine the protests as a product of the "anarchist left" and accused the media of exaggerating their size.



Police officers stand guard as a bus, which was loaded up with items by US Consulate staff, leaves the US Consulate General in Chengdu, Sichuan province, China, yesterday, after China ordered its closure in response to US order for China to shut its consulate in Houston.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Vietnam bus crash kills 13 on school reunion trip

AFP, Hanoi

A high school reunion trip in Vietnam took a fatal turn yesterday when a bus carrying the alumni crashed at a bend on the highway, killing more than a dozen passengers.

The nearly 40 passengers on the bus were classmates from Dong Hoi High School who were travelling to visit an area in central Quang Binh province for the 30th anniversary of their graduation. But the driver lost control on a sharp turn on the highway, said state media.

UK to unveil anti-obesity plan

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is set to roll out a £10 million anti-obesity campaign, including junk food advert bans, following his own brush with death that he partly blamed on his weight.

Johnson will announce his "Better Health" campaign on Monday, which is expected to include encouraging doctors to issue "cycling prescriptions" for overweight patients, more segregated cycling lanes and a ban on junk food television ads before 9.00pm, according to British media reports.

"COVID-19 has given us all a wake-up call of the immediate and long-term risks of being overweight, and the Prime Minister is clear we must use this moment to get healthier, more active and eat better," said a government spokesman on Sunday.

"We will be urging the public to use this moment to take stock of how they live their lives, and to take simple steps to lose weight, live healthier lives, and reduce pressure on the NHS."

Restaurants will also have to publish the number of calories in the meals they serve, according to a report in the Daily Mail.

Johnson, who has fought his own battles to control his weight, required intensive care treatment in April after catching the virus.

The plan, which the Guardian estimated would cost £10 million (\$12.8 million,

11 million euros), marks a U-turn by the prime minister, who has long railed against the interventionist "nanny state".

A Public Health England (PHE) study published on Saturday found that obesity increased the risk of death from coronavirus by 40 percent.



Advertisement for Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) regarding bus services and ticket information.