VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Anne Ball reporting.

The Nigerian government is now confirming that 110 girls are missing after a Boko Haram attack in a northeastern town. This comes after days of silence from the government.

On Sunday, the girls they said from the Government Science and [Technological] Technical College in Yobe State are unaccounted for after suspected Boko Haram militants invaded their school on Monday.

Authorities had denied any girls had been kidnapped, suggesting instead they were hiding in the bush after the attack.

Boko Haram horrified the world when it abducted 276 girls from a boarding school in Chibok almost four years ago.

And in Britain, an explosion in Leicester, England, destroyed a store and house, which police described as a "major incident."

Pictures of the blast showed flames shooting up from the rubble where the two-story building once stood.

The cause of the blast is unknown. But police say now there is no indication this is terrorist related.

New fighting erupted Sunday near Damascus in spite of the United Nations' demand for a 30-day cease-fire to allow rescue and medical workers to enter the region.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said nine people were killed and another 31 injured outside the Syrian capital, boosting the death toll to more than 500 in clashes over the last week.

The fighting, nonetheless, appeared to be less intense in the wake of the U.N. Security Council's unanimous approval of a truce.

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With the symphony and orchestra, an explosion of fireworks, rousing cheers from spectators, the 2018 Winter Games were declared closed on Sunday.

In his speech at the Games' closing ceremony, International Olympics Committee President Thomas Bach praised North and South Korea for marching together during the opening ceremony.

"With your joint march, you have shared your faith in a peaceful future with all of us. You have shown our sport brings people together."

Bach handed the Olympic flag to the mayor of Beijing, which will host the next winter Olympics in 2022. The Chinese capital will be the first city to host both the summer and Olympic winter games after it hosted the summer edition in 2008.

China responded angrily Saturday to new sanctions the U.S. imposed on North Korea, maintaining they are counterproductive to efforts to halt Pyongyang's nuclear and long-range missile development programs.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Friday what he called the "largest ever" set of sanctions against North Korea and threatened a "phase two" if the measures aren't effective.

The sanctions target one person, 27 companies and 28 ships registered in China and seven other countries with the intent of eliminating North Korea's illicit shipping and trade. They block assets held by the companies in the U.S. and prohibit U.S. citizens from interacting with them.

A powerful earthquake has struck the Pacific island nation of Papua New Guinea but no tsunami warning has been issued.

The U.S. Geological Survey says the 7.5 magnitude quake was centered about 90 kilometers south of Porgera in Enga province.

There is no immediate report of casualties or damage. But earthquakes are common in Papua New Guinea, which sits on the so-called "Ring of Fire," a belt of tectonic plates circling the Pacific Ocean with frequent seismic activity.

After a testy exchange this past week over a proposed U.S. border wall, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has canceled plans to visit the White House, according to a report Saturday in *The Washington Post*.

I'm Anne Ball, VOA news.

That's the latest world news from VOA.