

QATAR WORLD CUP 185 Nepalese died in 2013

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The extent of the risks faced by migrant construction workers building the infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar has been laid bare by official documents revealing 185 Nepalese men died last year alone.

The 2013 death toll, which is expected to rise further as new cases come to light, is likely to spark a fresh wave of concern over the treatment of migrant workers in Qatar.

According to the documents the total number of verified deaths among workers from Nepal, just one of several countries that supply workers to the gas rich state, is now at least 382 in two years alone.

The Int'l Trade Union Confederation has warned that up to 4,000 workers could die before a ball is kicked in 2022 without meaningful reform of the kafala system and stringent control of the myriad construction companies and sub-contractors involved.



PHOTO: AFP

EGYPT BLASTS

Egyptians stand in front of the damaged facade of the Cairo police headquarters, following a car bomb explosion in the Egyptian capital which killed five people, police and health ministry officials said yesterday. *From bottom left to right, officials look at a crater made by the blast; an Egyptian cop reacts and an Egyptian man carries an injured girl.*



Internet a 'gift' from god: Pope Francis

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Francis described the internet as "a gift from God" and called on Catholics to "boldly become citizens of the digital world".

"The internet... offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God," the Argentine pontiff said in his first World Communication Day message.

"Let us boldly become citizens of the digital world. Let our communication be a balm which relieves pain and a fine wine which gladdens hearts," he said.

The 77-year-old pontiff is a keen Twitter user whose account has attracted more than 10 million followers.

But he also makes a point of privileging human relationships and physical touch, often walking among the crowds who flock to see him in St. Peter's Square and embracing the ill or disabled.

However, Francis warned people not allow the desire to be connected to the digital world twenty-four hours a day to isolate them from society. "It is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply 'connected'. Connections need to grow into true encounters," he said.



Rivals agree to meet, finally

AFP, Geneva

Syria's warring sides have agreed to meet together today after a first day of peace talks in Geneva stumbled with President Bashar al-Assad's regime threatening to walk away.

After meeting with delegations from the regime and opposition, UN-Arab League Syria envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said they had agreed to "meet in the same room" after failing to do so on the first day of planned negotiations.

Pulled together by the United Nations, Russia and the United States, the delegations had been due to sit down early yesterday at UN headquarters in Geneva for their first face-to-face talks.

But plans for the meeting fell apart after the opposition insisted the regime must be prepared to discuss Assad leaving power.

"We knew that it was going to be difficult, complicated," Brahimi said. "We never expected this to be easy -- I think the two parties understand what is at stake."

Foreign Minister Walid Muallem had earlier warned Brahimi that the Syrian delegation "will leave Geneva" should "serious sessions" fail to take place today.

SYRIA PEACE TALKS

Nazir al-Hakim, a member of the opposition delegation, told AFP it was only willing to negotiate on the basis of the agreement reached at the "Geneva I" peace conference in 2012, which called for the creation of a transitional government.

The regime rejects the opposition's contention that the Geneva I agreement requires Assad to go.

Expectations are very low for a breakthrough at the Geneva II discussions, which officials have said could last up to 10 days.

But diplomats believe that simply bringing the two sides together for the first time is a mark of progress and could be an important first step.

With no one appearing ready for serious concessions, mediators will be looking for short-term deals to keep the process moving forward, including on localised ceasefires, freer humanitarian access and prisoner exchanges.

The start of the conference in the Swiss town of Montreux on Wednesday was marked by fiery exchanges, with Muallem labelling the opposition "traitors" and agents of foreign governments.

Erupting after the regime cracked down on protests inspired by the Arab Spring, Syria's civil war has claimed more than 130,000 lives and forced

Ukraine president offers concessions

AFP, Kiev

President Viktor Yanukovich yesterday pledged to reshuffle his government and amend controversial anti-protest laws to ease Ukraine's crisis, after losing control of local administrations across the west of the country.

With the ex-Soviet state in shock after five days of deadly clashes, Yanukovich vowed to press on with talks with the opposition but warned he would use "all legal methods" if no solution was found.

The protesters occupying the city centre of the capital Kiev showed no sign of yielding and extended their barricades close to the presidential administration.

In one of the biggest blows to Yanukovich of the crisis so far, protesters seized control of regional administrations in six regions in anti-government and pro-EU western Ukraine.

These included the key Lviv region on the border with Poland which protesters had stormed and seized in the first such action on Thursday.

NEWSIN brief

Indian SC issues notice over Kejriwal protest

IANs, New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday issued notice on a PIL seeking action against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for violating the law while holding a constitutional position. Kejriwal had staged a sit-in earlier this week in the heart of the capital to seek action against the Delhi Police for not heeding the orders of his Ministers. The stir ended after two police

Gunman kills 5 Afghan cricket players

AP, Kabul, Afghanistan

An Afghan official says a gunman on a motorcycle opened fire at a group of local cricket players, killing five of them during a game in eastern Laghman province.

A provincial spokesman, Sarhadii Zhouak, says the attack took place on Thursday in Alingar district. He says the attacker fled the scene. There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Doctors end strike in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

Hundreds of Nepalese doctors yesterday ended a five-day strike after the government agreed to meet their demands for medical education reforms, their professional association said.

Hospitals and clinics across the Himalayan nation have been shut since Sunday in support of an orthopaedic surgeon who launched a hunger strike, leaving thousands of patients without treatment.

Sri Lanka to release 61 Indian fishermen

PTI, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday announced it will release 61 Indian fishermen held in the country for alleged poaching, days after the two sides agreed to resolve the issue that has become an irritant in bilateral ties.

"As per the arrangements, India is to release 59 Sri Lankans and 3 trawlers. Sri Lanka would release 61 Indian fishermen and 15 boats," Fisheries Ministry spokesman Narendra Sri

ODDLY enough

Barman tries to 'arrest' Tony Blair

TNN, London

A bartender at a London restaurant tried to make a 'citizen arrest' on former British PM Tony Blair when he was having dinner with friends and family.

Twiggy Garcia, the staff member at the upmarket Tramshed restaurant attempted to arrest Blair yesterday for starting the



Iraq war.

Garcia made his move while Blair was eating. He said he was greatly influenced by a website arrestblair.org that offered a bounty of £2,150 to anyone who can "arrest" him for crimes against peace.

The website holds George W Bush and Tony Blair responsible for the death of tens and thousands of people in Iraq.

In an interview to a publication, Garcia said, "I feel great. I'm still in disbelief that I got the opportunity to citizen's arrest the former PM. It is something I have wanted to do for a few years. I believe Blair is responsible for the mass murder of Iraqi civilians after taking our country into an illegal war."

Snowden sees 'no chance' for fair trial in US

AFP, Washington

Fugitive intelligence leaker Edward Snowden said Thursday he has no plans to return to the United States, because he would have "no chance" for a fair trial.

"The hundred-year old law under which I've been charged... forbids a public interest defense," he said in a question-and-answer session on the "Free Snowden" website.

"This is especially frustrating, because it means there's no chance to have a fair trial, and no way I can come home and make my case to a jury," he said. The comments during the former National Security Agency contractor's first such public forum since June.

Snowden was asked about the conditions under which he would return to the United States, where he faces espionage charges for leaking numerous documents about NSA surveillance programs.

"Returning to the US, I think, is the best



resolution for the government, the public, and myself, but it's unfortunately not possible in the face of current whistleblower protection laws, which, through a failure in law, did not cover national security contractors like myself," he said.

"Maybe when Congress comes together to end the programs... they'll reform the Whistleblower Protection Act, and we'll see a mechanism for all Americans, no matter who they work for, to get a fair trial."

His comments came hours after a US government privacy watchdog panel said the NSA's indiscriminate collection of bulk phone records is illegal and has had minimal value in fighting terrorism.

Also Thursday, US Attorney General Eric Holder said he was unlikely to consider clemency for Snowden.

Holder told MSNBC television US authorities "would engage in conversation" about a resolution of the case if Snowden accepted responsibility for leaking govern-

ahead of Rahul Gandhi who had only 15 per cent support, according to the survey.

Sonia Gandhi is projected third on the PM ratings at 5 per cent. It shows AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal getting support of three per cent for the PM's post.

Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress is projected to get 20-28 Lok Sabha seats. The survey shows Jayalalithaa's

AIADMK getting 15-23 seats.

Left is projected to get only 15-23 seats. The survey gives 6-12 Lok Sabha seats to AAP. It also projects dismal show by Samajwadi Party and BSP.

According to it, Samajwadi Party is projected to get only 8-14 seats and BSP 10-16 seats.

LOK SABHA ELECTION

BJP-led NDA may win
211-231 seats

Congress-led UPA may
get 107-127 seats

AAP may get 6-12 seats

Mamata-led TMC may
win 20-28 seats