

Iran prison fire kills 4, hurts 61

Anti-hijab protests persist

REUTERS, Dubai

A fire at Iran's Evin prison late on Saturday killed four detainees and injured 61, state media reported, as anti-government protests sparked by a woman's death in police custody continued yesterday, including at several universities.

Iranian authorities said on Saturday that a prison workshop had been set on fire "after a fight among a number of prisoners convicted of financial crimes and theft".

Evin holds many detainees facing security charges, including Iranians with dual nationality.

Iran's judiciary said four of those injured in Saturday's fire were in critical condition and that those killed had died of smoke inhalation, Iranian state media reported.

Protests sparked by 22-year-old Mahsa Amini's death on Sept. 16 have turned into one of the boldest challenges to Iran's clerical rulers since the 1979 revolution, with protesters calling for the downfall of the Islamic Republic, even if the unrest does not seem close to toppling the system.

Demonstrations continued at several universities yesterday, including in the cities of Tabriz and Rasht, to a heavy deployment of riot police.

Footage of the prison fire aired on state television hours after the fire apparently showed that calm had returned to the facility with inmates asleep in their wards.

Several dual national Iranians and foreign citizens are held in Evin prison mostly for security-related charges. Some Twitter posts by their friends and relatives said they had contacted their families yesterday.

Asked about the prison fire, US President Joe Biden told reporters during a campaign trip on Saturday to Portland, Oregon that the Iranian government was "so oppressive" and that he was surprised by the courage of the Iranian protesters.

Iran's foreign ministry said Biden had interfered in Tehran's state matters by showing support for the anti-government protests.



Chinese President Xi Jinping is seen on a giant TV screen in a street in Hong Kong yesterday, as he delivers the opening speech of the ruling Communist Party's 20th party congress in Beijing. PHOTO: AFP

Xi vows to promote green lifestyles

REUTERS, Beijing

President Xi Jinping yesterday said China will give priority to environmental protection and promoting green lifestyles, and that the conservation of nature was an essential part of building a modern socialist country.

In a speech opening the twice-a-decade ruling Communist Party Congress, Xi said China had made progress in tackling environmental problems over the last 10 years and vowed to "basically eliminate" heavy air and water pollution while bringing soil contamination under control.

"Ecological and environmental protection has undergone a historical, transformational and comprehensive change - our motherland's skies are bluer, the mountains are greener and the water is clearer," Xi told more than 2,300 delegates.

Reversing the damage done by decades of breakneck economic growth has been one of China's major policy objectives during Xi's decade in power. He warned in 2018 any failure to tackle pollution could be used as an "excuse" for hostile forces to undermine Party rule.

Low-carbon growth has also become a key part of China's efforts

to boost its international prestige and lead a new "global green industrial revolution".

Xi vowed last year China - the world's biggest source of climate-warming greenhouse gases - would achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 after bringing emissions to a peak by the end of this decade.

He told delegates China's carbon peak and neutrality targets would be implemented steadily.

China will support low-carbon industries, pursue an "energy revolution" and build a new energy system while continuing to promote the "clean and efficient use of coal", Xi said.

Another Palestinian killed in West Bank

REUTERS, Rafah

Israeli soldiers shot a Palestinian during a clash in the occupied West Bank and he later died of his wounds, Palestinian health officials said yesterday. The Israeli military said Palestinians had started "a violent riot" near the town of Qarawet Bani Hassan on Saturday and soldiers who had been operating there opened fire. One Palestinian who was shot later died, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Three others were wounded. The incident follows months of tensions that have deepened since Israeli forces began a crackdown in the West Bank in March in response to a series of attacks by Palestinians in Israel.

Pope Francis urges UN reform

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Francis said the need to reform the United Nations was "more than obvious" after the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war exposed its limits, in an extract of his new book published yesterday. The Argentine pontiff said Russia's February invasion of Ukraine highlighted the need to ensure the current multilateral structure - especially the UN Security Council - finds "more agile and effective ways of resolving conflicts".

The organisation was founded to prevent the horrors of two World Wars from happening again, but although the threat represented by those conflicts was still alive, "today's world is no longer the same", said Francis.

"The necessity of these reforms became more than obvious after the pandemic" when the current multilateral system "showed all its limits", he added. Francis denounced the unequal distribution of vaccines as a "glaring example" of the law of the strongest prevailing over solidarity. Francis's new book, "I ask you in the name of God: Ten prayers for a future of hope", is due to come out in Italy Tuesday.



Biden has 'no plans' to meet MBS at G20

AFP, Washington

President Joe Biden has "no plans" to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at an upcoming G20 summit in Indonesia, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said yesterday.

Stormy US-Saudi ties have seen new strain over Riyadh's recent support for oil production cuts, with Biden warning of unspecified "consequences."

The move last week by OPEC+ - composed of the Riyadh-led OPEC cartel and an additional group of 10 exporters headed by Russia - would reduce global output by up to two million barrels per day from November.

It could send energy prices soaring amid an energy crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine, and as inflation-weary American voters prepare to cast ballots in midterm elections.

'The game is up' Truss struggles to salvage premiership amid party revolt

AFP, London

Britain's Prime Minister Liz Truss yesterday vied to reboot her economic programme, but Conservative critics warned the party faces electoral oblivion under her crippled leadership.

With even US President Joe Biden joining in attacks on her libertarian platform, Truss admitted it had been a "wrench" to fire her friend Kwasi Kwarteng as chancellor of the exchequer on Friday.

But writing in the Sun on Sunday newspaper, she said: "We cannot pave the way to a low-tax, high-growth economy without maintaining the confidence of the markets in our commitment to sound money."

That confidence was jeopardised on September 23 when Kwarteng and Truss unveiled a right-wing programme, inspired by 1980s US president Ronald Reagan, of £45 billion in tax cuts financed exclusively by higher debt.

Markets tanked in response, driving up borrowing costs for millions of Britons, and the Conservatives' poll ratings have similarly slumped, leading to open warfare in the governing party mere weeks after Truss succeeded Boris Johnson.

"I think the game is up, and it's now a question as to how the succession is managed," senior Tory MP Crispin Blunt said on Channel 4.

Truss has been forced into a screeching policy U-turn which cost Kwarteng his job. Bidding to placate investors, Kwarteng's replacement Jeremy Hunt is

now warning that taxes may in fact have to rise, and is pressing for spending restraint by his cabinet colleagues even as Britons endure a cost-of-living crisis.

The new chancellor met the prime minister at her country retreat yesterday to thrash out a new budget plan which he is due to deliver on October 31, effectively demolishing the "Trussonomics" programme that brought her to power.

"It's going to be very, very difficult, and I think we have to be honest with people about that," Hunt told the BBC - prompting a warning from trade unions of concerted strike action if he enforces painful cuts.

"Truss has become a pointless prime minister - an empty vessel with no policies or power," the Sunday Times editorialised.

Up to 100 letters expressing no confidence in Truss have been submitted by Tory MPs, the Sunday Times and Sunday Express said.

Opponents were said to be coalescing around Truss's defeated leadership rival Rishi Sunak and another one-time foe, Penny Mordaunt, for a possible "unity ticket" to rebuild the stricken Tories.

But Johnson loyalists - still seething at Sunak's perceived disloyalty towards the scandal-tainted former leader - warned against a coronation that cuts out Tory grassroots members.

Any new leader would face strong pressure to call an early general election, and the opposition Labour party has streaked far ahead in the polls.



AB Bank gets J.P. Morgan award



AB Bank has received the "2022 U.S. Dollar Clearing Quality Recognition Award" from J.P. Morgan Bank recently. J.P. Morgan Bank has been giving this award globally to acknowledge the consistent & high quality performance of their client banks since 1997. Mr. Sazzad Anam, Executive Director & Head, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank N.A., Bangladesh Representative Office, Dhaka handed over the Certificate and the Crest to Mr. Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director of AB Bank Limited. The other Senior Management members of AB Bank Limited and J.P. Morgan Bangladesh Representative Office were also present in the award ceremony.

Gun attack on central Mexico bar kills 12

AFP, Guanajuato

Twelve people were killed in a shooting at a bar in central Mexico on Saturday, local authorities said, with growing cartel violence making the region one of the country's most dangerous.

Industrial Guanajuato state has become the site of a raging dispute between two rival groups - the Santa Rosa de Lima and Jalisco New Generation cartels - known for carrying out drug trafficking and fuel theft.

Police believe the attack took place when an armed group entered the bar in the city of Irapuato at around 8 pm and opened fire on customers and staff.

Police did not specify the identity of the attackers or their motives. The assailants are being hunted by state police, the army, the prosecutor's office and the National Guard, the municipal government said.

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