

Palestinian killed by Israeli settlers buried

AFP, Burqah

Mourners yesterday attended the funeral of a Palestinian killed by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank, after the UN warned of a dramatic spike in such cases.

The Palestinian health ministry in a statement late Friday announced the death of Qusai Jamal Maatan, 19, saying he was “shot dead by settlers in the village of Burqa”, east of Ramallah.

In a statement yesterday, the Israeli army said clashes broke out between Palestinians and Israeli civilians who were herding sheep near Burqa village.

The Palestinians let off fireworks and “Israeli civilians shot towards the Palestinians,” the army said.

Friday’s killings came three days after a Palestinian gunman wounded six people in a shooting at an Israeli settlement in the West Bank before being shot dead himself.



A fire, boosted by heavy winds, is threatening buildings on the close outskirts of Portbou, near the French-Spanish border yesterday. Firefighters said they evacuated more than 130 people as they fought to control a wildfire at Portbou on the Spanish border with France on the Mediterranean coast.

PHOTO: AFP

NORTHERN CHINA FLOODS

Death toll rises to at least 30

AFP, Beijing

At least 10 people were killed in floods in a city near Beijing, officials said yesterday, bringing the death toll from recent torrential rains in northern China to at least 30.

Officials reported the deaths in Baoding, about 150 kilometres (90 miles) from Beijing, adding that 18 people were missing.

Storm Doksuri, a former super typhoon that hit mainland China last Friday, has brought the most severe rains to the region since records began 140 years ago.

By noon yesterday (0400 GMT), more than 600,000 of Baoding’s 11.5 million residents had been evacuated from areas deemed to be at risk, officials said.

The torrential rain that hit northeast China yesterday battered the provinces bordering Russia and North Korea. A red alert remains in force in Beijing due to “geological risks” such as landslides linked to the bad weather.

Clean-up operations are ongoing after the overwhelming rainfall, which destroyed infrastructure and flooded entire districts.



ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370 ANNIVERSARY

Situation tense as rebels kill 3 soldiers in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Three soldiers were killed in Indian-administered Kashmir during a clash with suspected rebels as the disputed region marked the fourth anniversary of New Delhi imposing direct rule, police said yesterday.

An army patrol looking for armed rebels in the forests of Halan in the southern Kashmir valley clashed with the militants late Friday night, leaving the trio wounded in the exchange of fire.

“The three personnel sustained injuries and later succumbed,” police posted on Twitter.

A search operation was under way to track the rebels.

Clashes between armed rebels and government forces have dropped significantly since August 2019, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government ended the restive Muslim-majority region’s limited autonomy.

The government says the move

was meant to bring peace and development to the embattled region.

But nearly 900 people, including 144 members of Indian security forces, have died in the four years since the change.

At least 63 people, including nine civilians, 16 government forces personnel and 38 suspected rebels have been killed this year so far, compared with 253 deaths last year.

Young men continue to join rebel groups that have been fighting for decades for the region’s independence or its merger with Pakistan, which controls a smaller part of the divided Himalayan territory.

India’s top court is currently weighing whether Modi’s government acted lawfully in suspending Kashmir’s constitutionally guaranteed semi-autonomy.

The region has witnessed a drastic curtailment of civil liberties since, with restrictions on protests and journalists complaining of official

harassment.

Several leaders of the local Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were detained overnight after authorities denied them permission to stage a protest against yesterday’s anniversary of the 2019 decision.

“All this is being done to hoodwink the public opinion in the country,” PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti posted on Twitter alongside footage of a party official being detained by police.

“Just goes on to expose the façade of normalcy.”

Hundreds of police and paramilitary troops were deployed yesterday around commercial districts in Srinagar, Kashmir’s largest city, to keep order during the anniversary.

But two members of commercial associations representing the city’s shopkeepers, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP that retailers had been verbally instructed by police to remain open through the day.

‘Ridiculous’

In Alabama, Trump slams indictment

AFP, Washington

Former president Donald Trump appeared before ardent supporters in the deeply conservative southern state of Alabama on Friday, dismissing the latest federal indictment against him a day earlier as an “illegal and unconstitutional travesty.”

Trump, who is facing sweeping conspiracy charges over his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, called the indictment “ridiculous.”

“It’s an act of desperation by a failed disgraced crooked Joe Biden and his radical left thugs to preserve their grip on power,” Trump told the crowd.

A day after his visit to largely hostile Washington, Trump received a warm reception at the Republican summer dinner in Montgomery, Alabama’s state capital.

The 77-year-old billionaire won Alabama by landslides in 2016 and 2020, and all six Republicans the state sends to the House of Representatives in Washington endorsed his re-election bid ahead of the evening engagement.

In the Republican primary, Trump was 39 points ahead of his closest rival, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, in FiveThirtyEight’s national polling average on Friday – the kind of lead that has never been surmounted in modern primary contests.

But Trump makes his bid for a historic return to the White House charged with 78 felonies in three separate criminal probes. He is due to go on trial in New York in March next year over allegations that he misrepresented “hush money” payments to a porn star, and is scheduled to be tried in May over his handling of national security secrets.

Ex-PM Thaksin

delays return to Thailand

AFP, Bangkok

Former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra yesterday said he had delayed his return to the kingdom next week, as he awaits a breakthrough in a post-election gridlock that could see his family’s party lead a coalition government.

The 74-year-old billionaire, who won two elections but was ousted in a 2006 military coup, has been in self-exile for 15 years and long said he wished to return home – despite facing criminal charges that he says are politically motivated.

Yesterday, Thaksin said that he had delayed his return due to a medical appointment.

His daughter Paetongtarn Shinawatra announced last month that her father was due to arrive on August 10.

The Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai party has been trying to form a government, and property tycoon Srettha Thavisin is set to be its prime minister nominee.

The House speaker has pushed the date for a PM vote until after a constitutional court ruling on August 16.



Vendors waded through the flooded waters of Ganges river with their belongings after monsoon rains in Prayagraj, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Climbers break 14 peaks record

AFP, Kathmandu

Record-breaking mountaineering duo Kristin Harila and Tenjin “Lama” Sherpa were greeted with a heroes’ welcome in Nepal yesterday after the pair successfully conquered the world’s highest peaks.

The Norwegian climber and her Nepali guide set the record last month for the fastest summit of all 14 of the world’s 8,000-metre (26,000-feet) mountains, completing the feat in only 92 days.

The pair surpassed Nepal-born British adventurer Nirmal Purja’s 2019 record of six months and six days.

Sherpas performed religious

rites and a band played songs as the team arrived in Kathmandu while several hundred metres for a while,” Harila told the crowd.

The pair, joined by other record-holding climbers, stood on a van adorned with garlands and took a victory tour around the city.

“I don’t think I will climb any eight thousand metres for a while,” Harila told the crowd.

“I will be outside and come back to Nepal again, but not in this way.”

Harila is a native of Vadso, on the Barents Sea in Norway’s northernmost reaches, where the highest point is just 633 metres (2,000 feet).

In her race to the record, Harila

had to repeat the summit of 12 mountains, including K2, after delays in securing visas from China to climb Shishapangma – wholly in Tibet – and Cho Oyu, normally climbed from the Chinese side.

Lama, who has been a guide since the age of 16, was Harila’s companion throughout her record-breaking journey.

More than 40 people have summited the world’s top 14 peaks, but only a few of them are women.

“If you go and look at history, it’s been all about men,” Harila told AFP in an interview last week.

“I haven’t been thinking too much about the record,” she added.

“For me, I wanted to change something.”

JEDDAH TALKS

Saudi dives into Ukraine peace push

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia is hosting talks on the Ukraine war yesterday in the latest flexing of its diplomatic muscle, a session that Kyiv acknowledged would “not be easy” given the wide range of countries represented.

The meeting, which Ukrainian organisers had said would include representatives from nearly 40 countries but not Russia, began yesterday afternoon in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah, participants said.

According to an agenda seen by AFP, the session was expected to feature three hours of statements from various delegations before a two-hour closed discussion and a dinner.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky’s office said this week that the meeting would focus on his 10-point peace formula that calls for the full withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

It also calls for the restoration of Ukraine’s borders – including the territory of Crimea, annexed by Russia since 2014.

Russia has in the past said any negotiations would need to take into account “new territorial realities”.

The Jeddah meeting follows talks in Copenhagen in June that were designed to be informal and did not yield an official statement.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

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