

## 11 killed in Pakistan mall fire

AFP, Karachi

At least 11 people were killed and 35 injured yesterday by a fire at a shopping mall in Pakistan's commercial capital of Karachi, officials said.

More than 60 people were inside the mall when the fire broke out on the fourth floor of the six-storey building in the southern port city.

"Our rescue workers have taken 11 dead bodies to hospitals so far," said Shahid Hussain, a spokesman for the Chippa welfare organisation, which runs a rescue service.

He said 35 people were injured, with seven of them in serious condition.

"At least 40 people have been rescued," he added.

Shabbir Ali, a provincial health ministry spokesperson confirmed the death toll and number of injured persons.

Hussain said the fire was started by a generator short circuit and spread to engulf two floors of the building.

## New Maldives leader faces rift

AFP, Male

Maldives' ex-president Abdulla Yameen will form a new political party, his lawyer said, splitting from his successor's ruling party and posing the new president a major setback ahead of parliamentary polls.

President Mohamed Muizzu, 45, was sworn in last week after being elected in September as a proxy for his pro-China predecessor Yameen, who was disqualified from the polls because he was serving an 11-year jail term for corruption.

On Friday, Yameen loyalists accused Muizzu of seeking to hijack the leadership of their Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), and the former president will now form his own party.

Yameen "chose to resign from the PPM and President Muizzu's 'coalition', the 64-year-old ex-leader's lawyer Mohamed Jameel told AFP late on Friday.

Yameen is now forming a new political party and a significant portion of the party is rallying behind him."

Muizzu needs to win a majority in parliamentary elections slated for next year to implement his legislative program.

One of the new president's key election pledges was to evict a small contingent of Indian troops.

## ATTACK ON CONVOY Chinese military holds drills near Myanmar border

REUTERS, Shanghai

China's military began "combat training activities" from yesterday on its side of the border with Myanmar, it said on social media, a day after a convoy of trucks carrying goods into the neighbouring Southeast Asian nation went up in flames.

The incident, which Myanmar state media called an insurgent attack, came amid insecurity concerns in China, whose envoy met top officials in Myanmar's capital for talks on border stability after recent signs of rare strain in their ties.

The training aims to "test the rapid maneuverability, border sealing and fire strike capabilities of theatre troops," the Southern Theatre Command, one of five in China's People's Liberation Army, said on the WeChat messaging app.

A separate statement released by the provincial government of China's Yunnan, which neighbours Myanmar, said the drills would run until November 28 in the areas near Manghai, Manling, and Qingshuihe villages.

Myanmar was told of the drills, military junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said, adding that they aimed to "maintain stability and peace" near the border, and did not undermine China's policy of non-interference in Myanmar's internal affairs.

"The military tie between China and Myanmar is firm and collaboration between both armies is friendly and building up," he said in his post on state-run social media.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinians inspect the damage to their homes upon their return to the Khezaa district on the eastern outskirts of the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Yunis, following weeks of Israeli bombardment, as a truce between Israel and Hamas entered its second day yesterday.

## What became of their homes?

Palestinians use truce to pick through rubbles in Gaza

REUTERS, Gaza

After seven weeks of bombardment stopped in Gaza for a truce, Tahani al-Najjar used the calm yesterday to return to the ruins of her home, smashed by an Israeli air strike that she said killed seven of her family and forced her into a shelter.

More than 24 hours into the four day pause in fighting, thousands of Gaza residents are making that same difficult journey from communal shelters and makeshift encampments to discover what has become of their homes.

"Where will we live? Where will we go? We are trying to collect bits of wood to build a tent to shelter us, but to no avail. There is nothing to shelter a family," Najjar said, picking through the rubble and twisted metal of her house.

Najjar, a 58-year-old mother of five from Khan Younis in the south of the enclave, said Israel's military had also levelled her house in two previous conflicts in 2008 and 2014.

She pulled several miraculously intact cups from the ruins, where a bicycle and dust-caked clothes lay amid the debris. "We will rebuild again," she said.

For many of the 2.3 million people who live in the tiny Gaza Strip, the pause in the near-constant air and artillery strikes has offered a first chance to safely move around, take stock of the devastation, and seek access to aid imports.

At outdoor markets and aid depots, thousands of people stood queuing for some of the aid that began flowing into Gaza in larger quantities as part of the truce.

Israel's military has said civilians should not return to the north during the truce and many of those who fled south are now seeking



information from those who stayed behind.

An accompanying blockade has meanwhile added to a humanitarian crisis with little electricity for hospitals, fresh water, fuel for ambulances or food and medicines.

In a street market in Khan Younis, where tomatoes, lemons, aubergines, peppers, onions and oranges sat in crates, Ayman Nofal said he was able to buy more vegetables than had been available before the truce and that they cost less.

"We hope the truce will continue and be permanent, not just four or five days. People cannot pay the cost of this war," he said.

At a UN agency centre in Khan Younis,

people waited for cooking gas. Supplies had begun running short weeks ago and many people were cooking food over open fires fuelled by scavenged wood salvaged from bomb sites.

Mohammed Ghandour had been waiting five hours to fill his cylindrical metal canister, after getting up at dawn in the school where he and his family shelter and making the long trip to the depot, but was still too late. "I'm now going home without gas," he said.

However, at the Rafah crossing with Egypt, trucks could be seen early yesterday moving slowly over the border and into Gaza bringing fresh supplies.

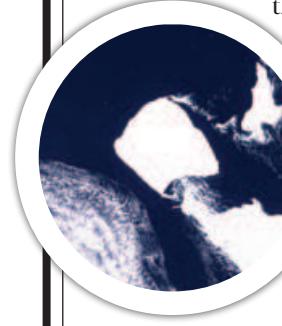


This handout photograph taken and released by Ukrainian Emergency Service yesterday, shows a rescuer working at the site of a drone attack in Kyiv.

## World's largest iceberg breaks free Heads toward Southern Ocean

REUTERS

The world's largest iceberg is on the move for the first time in more than three decades, scientists said on Friday. At almost 4,000 square km (1,500 square miles), the Antarctic iceberg called A23a is roughly three times the size of New York City. Since calving off West Antarctica's Filchner-Ronne Ice Shelf in 1986, the iceberg — which once hosted a Soviet research station — has largely been stranded after its base became stuck on the floor of the Weddell Sea. Not anymore. Recent satellite images reveal that the berg, weighing nearly a trillion metric tonnes, is now drifting quickly past the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, aided by strong winds and currents. It's rare to see an iceberg of this size on the move, said British Antarctic Survey glaciologist Oliver Marsh, so scientists will be watching its trajectory closely. As it gains steam, the colossal berg will likely be launched into the Antarctic Circumpolar Current. This will funnel it toward the Southern Ocean on a path known as "iceberg alley" where others of its kind can be found bobbing in dark waters. Why the berg is making a run for it now remains to be seen. "Over time it's probably just thinned slightly and got that little bit of extra buoyancy that's allowed it to lift off the ocean floor and get pushed by ocean currents," said Marsh. A23a is also among the world's oldest icebergs. It's possible A23a could again become grounded at South Georgia island. That would pose a problem for Antarctica's wildlife. Millions of seals, penguins, and seabirds breed on the island and forage in the surrounding waters. Behemoth A23a could cut off such access. In 2020, another giant iceberg, A68, stirred fears that it would collide with South Georgia, crushing marine life on the sea floor and cutting off food access.



## INDIAN TUNNEL Rescue of 41 workers set to take longer

AFP, Silkyara Tunnel

Rescuing 41 workers trapped in a highway tunnel in the Indian Himalayas for two weeks will take much longer than previously hoped as rescuers are switching to manual drilling following damage to machinery, officials said yesterday. The heavy drill brought in to break through nearly 60 metres of debris was damaged on Friday and was being pulled out entirely, government officials said, adding the last 10-15 metres would have to be broken with hand-held power tools. The men, construction workers from some of India's poorest states, have been stuck in the 4.5 km (3-mile) tunnel being built in Uttarakhand state since it caved in early on November 12. Authorities have said they are safe, with access to light, oxygen, food, water and medicines. A heavy drill machine, called an auger, which got damaged after hitting an obstacle on Friday, broke while being pulled out of the 47-metre pipe inserted to bring out the trapped workers. Pushkar Singh Dhami, chief minister of Uttarakhand state said yesterday the damaged drilling machine would be taken out by this morning, allowing manual drilling to start. Syed Ata Hasnain, a member of the National Disaster Management Authority which is overseeing rescue efforts, said the operation was becoming "more complex" and the process would become slower, compared to when the auger was used to drill.

## Iran hangs 17-yr-old for murder Say rights groups

AFP, Paris

Iran has executed a 17-year-old convicted of murder, two rights groups said on Saturday, expressing outrage that the Islamic republic continues to hang people for crimes committed as minors.

Hamidreza Azari was executed on Friday in prison in the eastern town of Sabzevar in Razavi Khorasan province, the Norway-based Hengaw and Iran Human Rights (IHR) groups said in separate statements.

Persian-language satellite TV channel Iran International also reported the execution, saying Azari was the only child in his family.

Citing documents they had seen, both Hengaw and IHR said he was 16 years old at the time of the crime and 17 when executed. He had reportedly been sentenced to death for killing a man in a brawl in May.