

## In Russia, Biden’s verbal slip draws mockery

REUTERS, Moscow

Joe Biden has shown he is “a pro-Russian candidate being controlled by the Kremlin,” Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman joked yesterday, after the US president misspoke and introduced Ukraine’s leader as “President Putin” before correcting himself.

Video of the gaffe at a Nato summit in Washington on Thursday featured prominently on news bulletins in Russia.

Biden mixing up the names of his Republican rival Donald Trump with that of Kamala Harris, his vice-president, was also given coverage.

Olga Skabeyeva, a pro-Kremlin TV commentator, posted a clip of Biden’s Putin name fumble on her social media feed with a crying with laughter emoji.

“The show from Joe goes on!” she wrote separately beneath footage of Trump/Harris name mix-up.



Palestinians gather as they inspect the damages after Israeli forces withdrew from a part of Gaza City, following a ground operation in Gaza City yesterday. The civil defence agency said that about 40 bodies had been found in an initial search of two Gaza City districts.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Iran demands US pay \$6.8bn for sanctions impact

AFP, Tehran

An Iranian court has ordered the United States to pay almost \$6.8 billion in damages for the effect of sanctions on patients with a rare skin disease.

The International Court in Tehran ordered its for the United States to pay \$6.785 billion to patients with epidermolysis bullosa, a disorder that causes the skin to blister easily, the judiciary’s Mizan Online website said on Thursday.

Then-president Donald Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the US from a nuclear accord between Iran and several global powers. He reimposed economic sanctions that had been lifted under the agreement.

Washington’s measures “deprived these patients of medicines and ointments”, leading to “the death of about 20 people”, it said.

The trial began in November 2021, when 295 complainants, including patients, took 30 American officials to court for “having participated in the establishment of the sanctions,” Mizan added.

They filed the case after United Nations experts in October 2021 cited the impact of the US measures on epidermolysis bullosa patients as an example of “over-compliance with sanctions”.

## FAMINE IN GAZA

# Displaced Palestinians turn to leaves to survive

REUTERS, Gaza

Struggling through rubble and buildings shattered by Gaza’s offensive, Ahmed Al-Shanbari and three of his sons risk their lives to pick mulberry leaves to eat, a scene being played out across the enclave as Palestinians face a hunger crisis.

“It is scary to walk when the bombing is still happening,” said Al-Shanbari, who like many Gazans risks Israeli bombardment in the search for food.

Ahmed’s wife Fatima cleans the leaves and boils them over a makeshift stove. “Nothing in it is tolerable, neither its taste nor its



**More than 495,000 people are facing the most severe level of food insecurity, says UN-backed global monitor**

colour,” she said. Fatima stuffs the leaves with rice and spices, hoping to get her children to tolerate the sour taste. Yet the bitterness remains.

The mulberry leaves are animal’s food, she says. “But what can we do?”

The al-Shanbari family of eight struggles to survive, like many Palestinians in Gaza, where 2.3 million people live in one of the world’s most densely populated

places facing shortages of food, water, medicine and fuel.

“Ever since the offensive started, we did not taste anything, we’re living on the few things we find,” said Fatima.

In a July 9 statement, a group of independent human rights experts mandated by the United Nations said that famine has spread throughout the enclave. Israel’s diplomatic mission in Geneva said the statement amounted to “misinformation”.

“Israel has continuously scaled up its coordination and assistance in the delivery of humanitarian aid across the Gaza Strip, recently connecting its power line to the Gaza water desalination plant,” it added.

According to Gaza’s health authorities, at least 33 children have died of malnutrition, mostly

## Nigeria school collapse kills several students Others trapped

AFP, Jos

A school in central Nigeria collapsed yesterday, killing several students and trapping others who were heard crying for help under the rubble, a rescue agency and witnesses said.

Mechanical diggers tried to rescue victims while parents desperately looked for their children at the Saint Academy in Jos North district of Plateau State after the building fell in on students taking their exams, an AFP correspondent at the site said.

“I entered the class not more than five minutes, when I heard a sound, and the next thing is I found myself here,” Wulliya Ibrahim, one of the injured students told AFP with his mother at his hospital bedside.

“We are many in the class, we are writing our exams.”

The National Emergency Management Agency said the two-storey building housing Saint Academy collapsed killing “several students” without giving details.

“NEMA and other critical stakeholders are presently carrying out Search and Rescue operations,” it said.

## Musk’s X ‘deceives’ users with blue checks: EU

AFP, Brussels

Tech billionaire Elon Musk’s X platform is misleading users with its blue checkmarks for certified accounts, and is also violating EU content rules, Brussels said yesterday, in a finding that could lead to hefty fines.

EU regulators are unhappy with the blue badge system under Musk’s ownership since anyone can now obtain it with a premium subscription, whereas before it was reserved for verified accounts including leaders, companies and journalists, after approval.

The formal warning against X is the first under the Digital Services Act (DSA), a sweeping law that forces digital companies do more to police content online. It follows a probe launched in December 2023.

X becomes the third company in as many weeks to face the European Union’s wrath for violating landmark new rules, after Brussels warned Apple and Meta to change their ways or risk massive fines – for breaches of a second law known as the Digital Markets Act (DMA).

Musk has overhauled the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, including changing its name, since purchasing it in October 2022.

But his plans for X have put him at odds with Brussels since the EU wants big tech to do more to protect users online and increase competition in the digital sphere. Now the European Commission has told X of its preliminary view that it is “in breach of” the DSA, arguing that the social network “deceives” users with its new blue badge rules.

## Ukraine downs 5 missiles, 11 drones launched by Russia

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukrainian air force said yesterday it shot down all five Kh-101 cruise missiles and 11 out of 19 drones launched by Russia.

Russia’s main target was the town of Starokostiantyniv, an important Ukrainian air base and a frequent target of Moscow’s strikes, the air force said in a statement.

Ukrainian air force shot down 11 drones over six Ukrainian regions and did not have the location of the remaining eight drones launched in the attack.

“It is likely that the enemy is using imitators of attack drones to overload air defense. There was no information on casualties or damage,” the air force said.

The governors of some of the targeted regions, including Sumy, Kyiv, Khmelnytskyi, and Mykolaiv, reported no damage or casualties in their morning statements.

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday that Russia does not rule out any scenarios regarding the possible resumption of the now-defunct Black Sea grain deal.

On Thursday, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, speaking after a meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, said they had discussed navigational security in the Black Sea, including the grain deal.

Russia allowed the Turkish- and United Nations-brokered deal, which for a year facilitated Russian and Ukrainian agricultural exports via the Black Sea, to expire in July 2023.



## Pakistan’s first breast milk bank opposed by clerics

AFP, Karachi

A hospital that launched the first breast milk bank for premature babies in Pakistan is negotiating for it to be reopened after clerics deemed it un-Islamic, doctors and the national Islamic council said yesterday.

The milk bank in the megacity of Karachi received religious approval in December from a provincial Islamic seminary, but that approval was withdrawn almost as soon as the facility opened in June, forcing it to shut.

“Breast milk is the only way to improve the chances of the survival of premature babies,” said Jamal Raza, a doctor and the executive director of the Sindh Institute of Child Health and Neonatology hospital, where the bank was set up.

“People have no idea what this is about. Only premature babies were going to be given this milk,” Raza added.

The facility was intended to help premature babies survive in a country where the neonatal mortality rate is 39 deaths per 1,000 live births, according to the UN children’s agency – one of the highest in South Asia.

A religious edict, or fatwa, approving the facility was issued in December 2023 by Jamia Darul Uloom, an Islamic advisory body in the province.

However, the government’s national Council of Islamic Ideology later questioned whether it risked breaking Islamic codes on kinship, which dictate that husband and wife cannot be breastfed by the same woman.

“The child’s family must know who the donors are to not complicate the issue of future marriages between such families,” the head of research at the council, Inamullah, who goes by one name, told AFP.



Relatives of construction workers comfort each other as rescuers work at the site of a collapsed scaffolding accident in the Malley suburb of Lausanne, Switzerland yesterday. At least three people were killed and eight injured when the scaffolding collapsed off a 19-storey building under construction in Lausanne, police said.

PHOTO: AFP

## MIGRANT CRISIS

### Four drowned trying to cross Channel

### Says French police

AFP, Lille

Four migrants drowned in the Channel overnight off France’s northern coast while trying to cross to Britain, French maritime police said yesterday.

A navy patrol boat went to the site off of Boulogne-sur-Mer after being alerted that several migrants had fallen into the sea, maritime police told AFP.

Four bodies were pulled from the water, but people were also rescued, the police added.

The UK’s new interior minister Yvette Cooper described the deaths as “truly awful”.

“Criminal gangs are making vast profit from putting lives at risk,” she wrote on X.

“We are accelerating action with international partners to pursue & bring down dangerous smuggler gangs,” she added.