

## Russian oil depot on fire after Ukraine drone attack

AFP, Moscow

An oil depot caught fire in Russia's Rostov region yesterday after a Ukrainian drone attack, its governor Vasily Golubev said on Telegram.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have used drones, including larger self-detonating craft with ranges stretching hundreds of kilometres extensively throughout the conflict, which began in February 2022.

"After a drone attack, a fire broke out in a petrol refinery in the Tsimlyansky district," Golubev wrote, adding that there were no casualties.

He later said the fire had been extinguished.

Russia's defence ministry meanwhile announced that its forces had downed four Ukrainian drones – two in Rostov, one in the Belgorod region adjoining Ukraine and another in Kursk which is up further north.

## Italian police free 33 Indian farm labourers from 'slavery'

REUTERS, Rome

Italian police said yesterday they had freed 33 Indian farm labourers from slave-like working conditions in the northern Verona province and seized almost half a million euros (\$545,300) from their two alleged abusers.

Labour exploitation is in the spotlight in Italy following an accident in June in which an Indian fruit picker died after his arm was severed by machinery.

In the latest case, police said the alleged gang-masters, also from India, brought fellow nationals to Italy on seasonal work permits, asking them to pay 17,000 euros each and promising them a better future.

The migrants were given farm jobs, working seven days a week and 10-12 hours a day for just 4 euros per hour, which was entirely docked from them until they settled all their debts, police said, describing the migrants' treatment as "slavery".

Some were asked to continue working for free to pay an additional 13,000 euros for a permanent work permit "which, in reality, would have never been given to them," the police statement said.



Palestinians search for loved ones in the debris of tents and makeshift homes following an Israeli military strike on the al-Mawasi camp for internally displaced people, near the city of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# 'I came back from the dead'

## Says Palestinian after being freed from Israeli jail

AFP, Bethlehem

Muazzaz Abayat's parents barely recognised their son lying in a hospital bed after being freed from nine months in Israeli detention, with his weight halved from his usual heavysset build, hollowed cheeks and shaggy hair.

"I came back from the dead," the 37-year-old Palestinian, told AFP at a hospital in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank.

Abayat, a butcher by trade, was arrested without explanation on October 26.



**About 9,700 Palestinians are currently in Israeli jails, including hundreds under administrative detention.**

He was held at a prison in the Negev desert, officially under so-called administrative detention, which meant he could be held without charge or trial for an extended period.

"They arrested me at home, not surrounded by fighters but by my children and pregnant wife," said Abayat, whose sixth child was born while he was in jail.

Detentions of West Bank Palestinians have soared since the offensive began on October 7, with regular use of administrative

detentions.

According to the Prisoners Club, a Palestinian watchdog, about 9,700 Palestinians are currently in Israeli jails, including hundreds under administrative detention.

The NGO estimates that arrests have doubled since October 7 compared to the same period last year.

Violence has surged in the territory since the start of the Gaza offensive, with at least 572 Palestinians killed by Israeli troops or settlers, according to the Palestinian authorities.

In a video that went viral on social media when Abayat was freed Tuesday, he is seen limping and leaning on a man to walk, while his right hand seems paralysed.

"No human being on the face of the earth can imagine how life has been" he said, calling the prison where he was held, "the Guantanamo of the Negev", after the US prison in Cuba used to hold detainees after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

"We were unjustly detained, killed and severely beaten with iron clubs and subjected to all kinds of torture," Abayat added.

Israel's prison administration told AFP it was "not aware" of Abayat's claims.

"All prisoners are detained according to the law. All basic rights required are fully applied by professionally trained prison guards," an Israeli Prison Service (IPS) spokesperson told AFP.

"The prisoner was examined and treated medically by the IPS' finest doctors throughout his incarceration." The spokesperson said, Abayat could file a complaint if he wished.

Showing his bruised, bony legs, Abayat recounted beatings with clubs and chains, and said his body still hurt all over.

## French PM Attal eyes rebuilding political force

AFP, Paris

France's prime minister was elected leader of his party's National Assembly by lawmakers yesterday as politicians from all sides jockeyed for position to form the next government.

Gabriel Attal was the only candidate in the vote by the Renaissance party parliamentary group, which he plans to use as the base from which to rebuild the political force that got roundly beaten in a snap election called by President Emmanuel Macron.

Of the 98 Renaissance deputies registered to vote, 84 backed Attal, who will start in his role next week.

As Attal and other ministers eye a future outside government, deep cracks have appeared between the 35-year-old premier and his former mentor Macron.

Macron did not get any mention in Attal's message to Renaissance deputies outlining his leadership bid, with observers saying that the prime minister blames the president for calling the vote.

Last Sunday's election runoff left the National Assembly without any overall majority, but a broad alliance -- called New Popular Front won the most seats, with 193 in the 577-strong lower chamber.

## China blasts US Tibet-China dispute bill

### Vows to 'firmly defend' its interests

REUTERS

China yesterday expressed strong opposition to a US law signed by President Joe Biden that presses Beijing to resolve a dispute over Tibet's demands for greater autonomy, vowing to "firmly defend" its interests.

Biden signed into law on Friday the Tibet dispute act, which seeks to push Beijing to hold talks with Tibetan leaders, stalled since 2010, to secure a negotiated agreement on the Himalayan region and spur China to address the Tibetan people's aspirations on their historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

The law "grossly interferes in China's domestic affairs, undermines China's interests, and sends a severely wrong signal to the 'Tibet independence' forces," China's foreign ministry said.

Although Washington recognises Tibet as a part of China, the law appears to question that position, analysts say. The US has long supported the rights of the Tibetan people to practice their religion and culture, accusing China of human rights violations in the remote region bordering India.

"The US must not implement the Act," the China's ministry said. "If the US continues down the wrong path, China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests."

## Musk donates to group working to elect Trump

### Reports Bloomberg

REUTERS, Washington

Billionaire Elon Musk, who has been ramping up criticism of US President Joe Biden, has donated to a political group working to elect rival presidential candidate Donald Trump, Bloomberg reported on Friday, citing sources.

The report did not indicate how much Musk donated but added it was "a sizable amount" given to a group called America PAC.

Bloomberg reported that the PAC - a group that can receive unlimited contributions for political activity - is next required to disclose its list of donors on July 15.

In March, Trump, a former US President who is expected to be formally nominated next week as the Republican Party's candidate for the November 5 election, met with Musk and other wealthy donors.



In response to reports of the meeting, South Africa-born Musk posted on X: "Just to be super clear, I am not donating money to either candidate for US President."

In May, he also denied media reports that there had been talks over a potential advisory role for him in any Trump presidency.

Musk, the world's richest person who runs electric car maker Tesla, rocket maker SpaceX, social media company X and other companies, did not respond to Reuters' request for comments.

Biden campaign spokesman James Singer said that Musk knows Trump is "a sucker who will sell America out, cutting his taxes while raising taxes on the middle class by \$2,500."

## Stop deporting undocumented Afghans

Malala tells Pakistan

AFP, London

Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai called for Pakistan to stop deporting undocumented Afghans, saying she was especially concerned about the "dark future" awaiting women and girls sent back.



"It is deeply concerning that Pakistan is forcing Afghan refugees based in Pakistan back into Afghanistan, and I'm deeply concerned about the women and girls", the activist, who was awarded the Nobel Peace prize in 2014, told AFP in an interview on Friday.

Despite extending leave for Afghan refugees with permits to stay in Pakistan for another year, Islamabad this week said it would remove illegal migrants.

More than 600,000 Afghans have fled Pakistan since Islamabad last year ordered undocumented migrants to leave or face arrest.

Human rights monitors have warned that some sent to Afghanistan faced persecution by the Taliban, who came into power in 2021 and have imposed an austere form of Islam, barring girls from higher education and excluding women and girls from areas of public life.

"A lot of these girls in Pakistan were studying, they were in school, these women were doing work", said Malala, 27, who grew up in Pakistan's Swat valley.



Members of Nepal's Armed Police Force search for survivors in the Trishuli River at the site of a landslide following heavy rainfall in Simaltar, Nepal yesterday. Rescuers recovered the first body from around 50 people missing after rains triggered the landslide that swept two buses off a highway and into the river.

PHOTO: AFP

## Population to peak at 10.3bn in the 2080s: UN

AFP, New York

Earth's population will peak in the mid-2080s at around 10.3 billion people, then drop slightly to a level much lower than anticipated a decade ago, the UN said.

The current population of 8.2 billion people will rise to that maximum over the next 60 years, then dip to 10.2 billion by the end of the century, says a report released Thursday entitled "World Population Prospects 2024."

It said size of population in 2100 will be six percent lower than what was anticipated in June 2013.

"The demographic landscape has evolved greatly in recent years," said Li Junhua, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

He said unexpected population peak stems from several factors that include lower levels of fertility in some countries.