

News in brief

6 dead, 30 missing after ferry  
sinks on way to Indonesia's Bali



yesterday after a ferry sank in rough seas on its way to Indonesian resort island Bali, according to rescue authorities who said 31 survivors had been plucked from the water so far. Rescuers were racing to find 30 people still missing at sea after the vessel carrying 65 passengers and crew sank before midnight on Wednesday as it sailed to the popular holiday destination from Indonesia's main island Java. "The ferry tilted and immediately sank," survivor Eka Toniansyah told reporters at a Bali hospital.

◆ Two people were killed and 16 others injured yesterday in southern Malaysia after the tour bus they were traveling on collided with two trucks, local media reported. The crash near the town of Ayer Hitam, some 250 kilometres (156 miles) southeast of the capital Kuala Lumpur, was the second serious accident involving a bus in less than a month on the country's perilous roads. It "involved a tour bus, a Volvo truck and a tanker lorry", Ayer Hitam fire and rescue chief Mohamad Shamin Mohamed Salikin said..

Two dead, 16 injured in  
Malaysia tour bus crash



Three Indians seized in  
Mali during militant attacks



◆ Three Indians working in Mali were kidnapped from a cement factory during a spate of militant attacks this week in the troubled west African nation, New Delhi's foreign ministry said. The men were seized Tuesday when "a group of armed assailants carried out a coordinated attack at the factory premises" of the Diamond Cement Factory in Kayes, the main city in Mali's western region, the ministry said in a statement late Wednesday. It said the gunmen "forcibly took three Indian nationals as hostages." It added the Indian embassy in Bamako was in "close and constant communication" with Mali's government, as well as "the family members of the abducted Indian nationals."

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Third-ever confirmed interstellar  
object blazing through Solar System



An artist's impression of 'Oumuamua, the first known visitor from the stars to our Solar System

AFP | Washington

Astronomers on Wednesday confirmed the discovery of an interstellar object racing through our Solar System -- only the third ever spotted, though scientists suspect many more may slip past unnoticed.

The visitor from the stars, designated 3I/Atlas, is likely the largest yet detected, and has been classified as a comet, or cosmic snowball.

"It looks kind of fuzzy," Peter Veres, an astronomer with the International Astronomical Union's Minor Planet Center, which was responsible for the official confirmation, told AFP. "It seems that there is some gas around it, and I think one or two telescopes reported a very short tail."

Originally known as A11pl3Z before it was confirmed to be of interstellar origin, the object poses no threat to Earth, said Richard Moissl, head of planetary defense at the European Space Agency.

"It will fly deep through the Solar System, passing just in-

side the orbit of Mars," but will not hit our neighboring planet, he said.

Excited astronomers are still refining their calculations, but the object appears to be zooming more than 60 kilometres (37 miles) a second.

This would mean it is not bound by the Sun's orbit, unlike objects that remain within the solar system.

Its trajectory also "means it's not orbiting our star, but coming from interstellar space and flying off to there again," Moissl said.

"We think that probably these little ice balls get formed associated with star systems," added Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. "And then as another star passes by, tugs on the ice ball, frees it out. It goes rogue, wanders through the galaxy, and now this one is just passing us."

A Chile based observatory that is part of the NASA-funded ATLAS survey first discovered the object on Tuesday.

Modi boosts India-Africa ties

Indian PM outlines economic ambitions during historic Ghana parliament address



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi shakes hands with members of Parliament after delivering his address at the Parliament of Ghana

Modi touts India-funded rail and 200+ projects

AFP | Accra



Over 200 projects across the continent enhance connectivity, infrastructure and industrial capacity

NARENDRA MODI

Indian Prime Minister Neren-dra Modi yesterday outlined plans for deeper ties between his country and Africa, as New Delhi increasingly vies for a stronger economic presence on the continent along with China and Russia.

In a speech to Ghana's parliament, Modi highlighted a major rail project that opened in the west African nation last year, financed by the India Export-Import Bank.

He also underlined his country's expanding diplomatic development and business footprint in Africa.

"Over 200 projects across the continent enhance connectivity, infrastructure and Industrial capacity," Modi said. On the political front he welcomed "the establishment of Ghana-India Parliamentary Friendship Society in your parliament".

Modi's visit is the first to

Ghana by an Indian leader in three decades.

But India's rival China remains the most important backer of infrastructure across the continent, a position only strengthened as the United States and other Western powers slash aid programmes.

In a meeting Wednesday, Modi and Ghanaian President John Mahama agreed to deepen security and mining ties.

In November 2024, the Indian prime minister visited Nigeria, discussing trade and security at a time when Indian companies had expressed interest in investing in Nigerian industries including steel.

The Indian prime minister also yesterday called for a greater global diplomatic role for both his country and Africa, warning that "the world order created



Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama (back) conferring India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the country's national award, 'The Officer of the Order of the Star of Ghana'



During his speech, Modi surprised Ghana's MPs by noting India's 2,500 political parties--prompting laughter and highlighting the scale and diversity of the world's largest democracy

after the Second World War is changing fast".

Global South's voice

Modi noted that the African

Union had been admitted as a permanent member to the G20 while India held the rotating presidency of the bloc.

Progress on worldwide challenges including climate change, diplomacy, "terrorism" and pandemics "cannot come without giving voice to the Global South", he added.

Resource-rich Ghana is Modi's first stop in a tour that will take the Indian premier to four other countries in Africa, the Caribbean and South America.

The visit to Accra came as he made his way to Brazil for a summit of the BRICS group of emerging economies on Sunday and Monday.

Highlighting his own country's economic development aspirations to become a "developed nation by 2047," Modi said "India remains a committed partner in Africa's development journey."

Hundreds evacuated as Greece wildfire rages on Crete

AFP | London

A wildfire fanned by gale-force winds on the southern Greek island of Crete has forced the evacuation of residents and tourists, officials said yesterday.

Hot dry weather in Greece, which is not unusual for this time of year, has heightened the risk of a repeat of the summer wildfires that have hit the country in recent years.

Media reports said around 1,500 people had to be evacuated because of the blaze, which broke out on Wednesday evening.

"Evacuations took place in numerous hotels and tourists were safely transferred to a closed gymnasium in the municipality of Ierapetra," vice-prefect Yannis Androulakis told TV channel



Firemen battle with a wildfire that broke out in Ierapetra at the southern Greek island of Crete

Mega, referring to the holiday town in the southeast.

The authorities acted because

water bomber planes could not reach the affected areas overnight, he added.

"At the moment, there are three active fronts," Androulakis said. "Because of the strong winds, the fire has progressed quite rapidly."

Around 270 firefighters, 10 helicopters and drones have been deployed to tackle the blaze, said Vassilios Vathrakoyannis, a spokesman for the fire service.

They include reinforcements sent in from the capital, Athens. "There are still a number of different fronts. The fire is burning scrubland and crops," he said.

"The winds are very strong -- up to nine on the Beaufort scale."

- Uneven, arid terrain - Crete, Greece's largest island, has an arid, uneven landscape criss-crossed by gullies, making it difficult for firefighters to tackle the blaze.