

Spain says 72,000 migrants entered Ceuta, 70,000 returned

AFP | Madrid, Spain

Spain has returned to Morocco 70,000 of 72,000 migrants who entered its north African territory of Ceuta last week, the interior minister said yesterday.

"We have reasonably estab-

lished that 72,000 people irregularly entered Spain and 70,000 have already left," Fernando Grande-Marlaska told a press conference in Madrid after a video call with EU counterparts, updating an earlier figure of 50,000 arrivals.



A group of migrants approach the border post to make their way back to Morocco, escorted by Spanish infantry soldiers, in the Spain's north African enclave of Ceuta

China draws up safety rules for autonomous vehicles

AFP | Beijing, China

China has drawn up new safety rules for the growing number of autonomous vehicles on its roads, including a mandatory deactivation override, the government said yesterday.

The standards taking effect July 1, 2027 will cover autonomous vehicles that require a human back-up driver, as well as independently operating vehicles such as the robotaxis made by US manufacturer Waymo.

Under the new rules, manufacturers will have to ensure autonomous systems can match the safety of human drivers, China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said in a statement.

Buyers will also have to be informed of any limitations in autonomous systems.

The rules standardise interactions between humans and machines to "prevent risks of misuse or abuse", the ministry said.

They will require that autonomous vehicles feature safe procedures to activate and deactivate automated driving, it said.



For cars with a human back-up driver, the autonomous system must monitor their readiness to take over.

Safety concerns and the cost of developing next-level systems have complicated progress in the introduction of autonomous vehicles.

Beijing warned leading automakers that safety rules would be more tightly enforced after a fatal crash in 2025 involving a Xiaomi car in assisted driving mode.

Syria says will restore Iraq oil pipeline link within three years

AFP | Rmeilan, Syria

Syria and Iraq are finalising negotiations on a contract to restore a key oil pipeline between the countries, a Syrian official said on Tuesday, laying out a timeline of around three years to complete the work.

Last month, Damascus signed a memorandum of understanding with Baghdad to revive the Haditha-Banias pipeline for transporting oil from Iraq to Syria's coast, linking Iraqi production to export markets in the Mediterranean and beyond.

A consortium of three companies including Chevron are

set to carry out the project.

The US State Department last month welcomed the plan, calling it "of bilateral and regional strategic significance".

On Tuesday, Syrian Petroleum Company CEO Youssef Qablawi told a press conference at the Rmeilan oil field in the country's northeast that "negotiations have begun to finalise the contract".

The prospect of a pipeline link to the Mediterranean via Syria has gained new urgency with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz -- a vital maritime route for Gulf oil and gas exports -- as a result of the Middle East war.

Gazans hold mass funeral for those killed during war

AFP | Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

In a cleared plot of land between buildings flattened by airstrikes in Gaza City, row upon row of Palestinian flags were laid out neatly over the remains of dozens of people to be buried yesterday.

Hundreds of people attended the funeral ceremony, where music played from speakers at a site where Israeli strikes in late 2023 killed the 112 people now recovered from the rubble, Gaza's civil defence said.

Ahmed Abu Sharia, a member of the extended family of those being buried, told AFP the funeral would at last provide closure for relatives.

"We came to mourn our martyrs, children, women and the elderly," he said.

"This is a funeral for the Palestinian people, because they are victims. People are under the rubble, and they did not



Palestinian mourners attend the funeral of members of the Abu Sharia and al-Hasayna families, whose remains were recently recovered from the rubble of residential buildings in the al-Sabra neighbourhood which were struck by Israeli bombardments in November 2023, in Gaza City

fight or bear weapons," he added. Hamas launched an attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which resulted in the deaths of 1,221 people, according to an

AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

They also took 251 hostages to Gaza.

Israel's retaliatory military

campaign in Gaza has killed more than 73,000 people, according to the territory's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the United Nations.

A ceasefire took hold in October but progress on permanently ending the war has stalled, and Israeli forces currently control nearly 70% of the territory.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmoud Bassal said 44 of the bodies recovered during two weeks in July were those of children, and all belonged to the same extended family.

"Our crews worked continuously for 17 days in an effort to recover these 112 bodies and remains from beneath the rubble," Mohammad Al-Mughayyir, director of operations for the civil defence said.

He added that teams often had to "dig through concrete and twisted steel with their bare hands".

US says hopeful of Hormuz strait deal

AFP | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

The United States was hopeful that a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz would be done "today or tomorrow", a top US official said yesterday, hours after yet another cargo ship was hit in the vital waterway.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told broadcaster CNBC "there is a chance we may have a deal" in the coming hours, a day after President Donald Trump said the strait might reopen on Tuesday.

Speaking from the White House on Monday, the US leader continued his now familiar combination of bullish optimism about diplomacy and bellicose threats, warning that this was Iran's "last chance before decapitation".

In what has become a regular pattern, Trump last week threatened to hit Iran "very hard", potentially with attacks against civilian infrastructure, only to pull back on Saturday, saying the "perimeters" of a deal were in place.

On Monday, he said he had

Iraq exported 30 mn barrels of crude via Hormuz in a month

AFP | Baghdad, Iraq

Iraq exported over 30 million barrels of crude oil in one month through the strategic Strait of Hormuz, data from the maritime tracking firm Kpler showed yesterday.

Before the Middle East war, which choked shipments through the vital waterway, Iraq produced around four million barrels per day, and exported an average of 105 million barrels per month, mostly from its Basra oil terminal via

Hormuz.

Around 30 million barrels of Iraqi crude oil passed through Hormuz between July 4 and August 4, according to vessels detected by Kpler.

Ali Nizar, the head of Iraq's State Organisation for Marketing of Oil (SOMO), said in a TV interview Monday that Iraq exported in July "35.5 to 37 million barrels" via Hormuz.

Another seven million barrels were exported through an Iraq-Turkey pipeline to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

no direct Iran-US talks planned.

'Not very complex'

Trump said he expected to know by Tuesday how the talks were going, "one way or the other", but insisted "it's not very complex".

The diplomatic focus is on reopening Hormuz, which Trump said could come "literally by tomorrow", and the denuclearisation of Iran, which he said could "take a little while".



The Strait of Hormuz is only about 33 km wide at its narrowest point, yet around one in every four barrels of oil shipped by sea passes through it—making this narrow waterway one of the most important trade routes on Earth.



A vessel is anchored off the coast of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates