

# world

## At least 14 dead in apparent toxic gas leak in Pakistan



Paramedics carry a patient hit by a gas leak to hospital in Karachi

AFP | Karachi

An apparent gas leak killed at least 14 people near the Pakistani port city of Karachi, officials said yesterday, as investigators worked to determine the source of the deadly emission.

Residents of Keamari, a commercial and residential area, began falling sick Sunday, officials said.

A doctor at one hospital, who asked not to be named, said 250 people had been admitted for treatment, after complaining of breathing difficulties and burning eyes.

Local health ministry

spokesman Zafar Mehdi said that 14 people had died at various hospitals.

At the state-run Jinnah Post-graduate Medical Centre, about 35 people arrived for emergency treatment.

"Most of the patients were suffering from choking and breathlessness," Seemin Jamali, who heads the emergency department, told AFP.

Authorities initially suspected some sort of gas could have leaked from the port, but the Karachi Port Trust denied that was the case. "All the casualties took place outside the port, and our facility is clean," a port spokesman said.

## Maduro says 'not afraid of military combat'

● 2.4 million soldiers and members of the civilian militia are deployed throughout the country

Caracas

President Nicolas Maduro on Monday said he is "not afraid of military combat," accusing his US counterpart Donald Trump of plotting to invade Venezuela with the support of regional allies.

"We don't want war; we don't want violence; we don't want terrorism, but we are not afraid of military combat and we are going to guarantee peace," said Maduro in a televised speech, surrounded by the armed forces high command.

"Donald Trump was convinced that it is easy to get into Venezuela," said the socialist leader, accusing the US of having assembled a "mercenary force" to invade.

The US is one of more than 50 countries that have recognized opposition leader Juan Guaido as Venezuela's interim president after Maduro's 2018 re-election was widely denounced as rigged.

Maduro, however, still enjoys the support of Turkey, Russia, China and Cuba.

He also said there were groups of military "deserters" training in neighboring Colombia to "enter silently and attack military units."



Nicolas Maduro still enjoys the support of Turkey, Russia, China and Cuba but dozens of other countries do not recognize him as leader

Military exercises were carried out over the weekend, Maduro added, in response to alleged attack plans orchestrated

**"We don't want war; we don't want violence; we don't want terrorism, but we are not afraid of military combat and we are going to guarantee peace"**

NICOLAS MADURO

by the US, Colombia and Brazil.

According to official figures, some 2.4 million soldiers and members of the civilian militia were deployed throughout the

country. The practices were carried out "based on real threats, not imagined ones," said defense minister General Vladimir Padrino, who was seated next to Maduro during the president's speech.

Trump vowed to "smash" Maduro's rule in his annual State of the Union address to Congress, which was also attended by Guaido, earlier this month.

Trump branded Maduro as a "tyrant" during his speech and called Guaido the "legitimate president of Venezuela."

After returning from a three-week international tour, Guaido said a change of government in his country was "inevitable."

On Sunday, he said the military had the opportunity to make the change less "traumatic."

## Pakistan policeman killed as blast hits polio vaccine team



A Pakistani health worker administering the polio vaccine to a child at a railway station in Lahore in 2019

Peshawar Pakistan

A policeman was killed and two others wounded yesterday by a roadside bomb aimed at polio vaccination workers in Pakistan's restive northwest, officials said.

The attack came a day after Islamabad launched a nationwide anti-polio drive, aiming to immunise tens of millions of children in Pakistan -- one of only three countries, along with Afghanistan and Nigeria, where the crippling disease remains endemic.

Opposition to inoculations grew after the CIA organised a fake vaccination drive to help track down Al-Qaeda's former leader Osama Bin Laden in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad.

According to Captain Wahid Mehmood, a district police chief, a police van monitoring the polio team was hit on the outskirts of the northwestern city of Dera Ismail Khan.

"It was an IED (improvised explosive device) explosion in which one of our policemen got martyred while two others were wounded", Mehmood said.

## Assange's health improving

Reuters | London

Jailed WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is no longer being kept in solitary confinement and his health is improving, his spokesman Kristinn Hrafnsson told reporters yesterday.

Assange, 48, is in Belmarsh high-security prison in London, fighting an extradition request from the United States

where he faces 18 counts including conspiring to hack government computers and violating an espionage law. He could spend decades in prison if convicted. His supporters had expressed concern about the state of his health after he appeared confused during a court hearing in October, struggling to recall his age and name and saying he was unable to think properly.

## 'Jetman' stuns with Iron Man-style flight over Dubai

● They used jetpacks and carbon-fibre wings

AFP | Dubai

Daredevil Vince Reffet has soared into the skies above Dubai in the latest "Jetman" stunt, taking off from the ground and climbing to 1,800 metres (nearly 6,000 feet) in a feat reminiscent of Marvel's "Iron Man" and hailed as a world first.

Reffet and his collaborators, known as "Jetmen", have literally scaled new heights with the help of jetpacks and carbon-fibre wings, staging a series of aerial displays that send them tearing through the skies at breakneck speed.

In an awe-inspiring flight captured on viral video, the Frenchman on Friday hovered five metres above the crystal waters of Dubai's coast before shooting off into the air and skimming the city's skyline.

"We accomplished another world first in 100 percent autonomous human flight with @jetmandubai, who took off from the ground before soaring



The carbon fibre wings worn by daredevil Vince Reffet for his "Jetman" stunt in the Gulf city state of Dubai are powered by four mini jet engines that he can control by his movements

to a high-altitude flight of up to 1,800m!" tweeted Expo 2020 Dubai, the mammoth trade fair that will open in October.

The Jetmen had previously launched themselves into the air by jumping down from high

platforms. "It's the result of extremely thorough teamwork, where each small step generated huge results. Everything was planned to the split second, and I was overjoyed by the progress that



Reffet soared to heights of up to 1,800 metres (nearly 6,000 feet) over the skyscrapers of Dubai

was achieved," Reffet said in a statement.

"One of the next objectives is to land back on the ground after a flight at altitude, without needing to open a parachute. It's being worked on."

Reffet's carbon fibre wings are powered by four mini jet engines. The equipment, which is controlled by the pilot's movements, is capable of reaching speeds of 400 kilometres (250 miles) per hour.



Last year, Reffet and fellow Frenchman Fred Fugen also flew through the famed "Heaven's Gate" archway in the mountains of China's Hunan province

On Friday, Reffet hovered five metres above the crystal waters of Dubai's coast before shooting off into the air and skimming the city's skyline.

The Jetmen have pulled off a series of eye-popping flights in Dubai, soaring in tandem above the world's tallest building Burj Khalifa, and alongside an Emirates Airbus A380, the world's largest commercial airplane.