

News in brief

◆ **The UK yesterday** sanctioned more than two dozen people, groups and suppliers accused of helping to smuggle migrants across the Channel, in the first such use of sanctions powers. The move comes as the UK government faces growing pressure to stem the migrant arrivals on small boats from northern France, as numbers hit record levels this year. The asset freezes and travel bans announced on Wednesday target individuals and entities “driving irregular migration to the UK”, the Foreign Office said. They include a small boat supplier in China, so-called “hawala” money movers in the Middle East, and gang leaders based in the Balkans and North Africa. Foreign Secretary David Lammy called it “a landmark moment in the government’s work to tackle organised immigration crime” linked to the UK.

◆ **Donald Trump** on Tuesday accused his predecessor Barack Obama of treason and called for his prosecution over a report alleging that officials in the Democrat’s administration manipulated information on Russia’s interference in the 2016 election. Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Tulsi Gabbard has sent criminal referrals to the Justice Department related to a report published Friday that asserted the Obama officials had been part of a “treasonous conspiracy.” Gabbard claimed Obama and his team had manufactured intelligence regarding Russian election interference to “lay the groundwork for what was essentially a years-long coup against President Trump.” Her accusations were widely criticized as they fly in the face of findings by four separate criminal, counterintelligence and watchdog probes between 2019 and 2023 -- all of which concluded that Russia did intervene on Trump’s behalf in the 2016 election.

◆ **Relatives of a British victim** killed in last month’s Air India crash received a casket that contained mixed remains, a lawyer representing several families and UK media said yesterday. The family of a separate victim received the remains of another person, according to James Healy-Pratt, who is representing 20 British families who lost loved ones in the disaster. A total of 241 people on board the London-bound Boeing 787 Dreamliner died when the plane crashed shortly after take-off from Ahmedabad in western India on June 12. Some 169 Indian passengers and 52 British nationals were killed, making it one of the deadliest plane crashes in terms of the number of British fatalities. Several people on the ground also died while only one passenger, British citizen Vishwash Kumar Ramesh, survived the crash. Healy-Pratt told the Press Association news agency that the return of victims’ remains had been marred by serious errors, which had been identified following a probe by a British coroner.

SPOTLIGHT

Iran says it confronted US destroyer in Gulf



Representative picture

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iranian forces confronted a US destroyer in the Gulf on Wednesday, warning it to stay out of waters claimed by Tehran, state television reported Thursday -- a month after US strikes on the Islamic republic. An Iranian army helicopter flew over the USS Fitzgerald at about 10:00 am (0630 GMT) after the vessel “attempted to approach the waters under the supervision” of Iran, the broadcaster said. The destroyer issued threats of its own, state TV said, adding however that “the Iranian pilot firmly continued the mission and reiterated the warning to stay away from Iranian waters”. Iranian forces then urged the US ship to “alter its course southward”, forcing it to “give in” and turn away. There was no immediate comment from the US Navy. Iranian forces have a history of confronting US forces in the Gulf. In 2023, Tehran said it forced a US submarine to surface while crossing the strategic Strait of Hormuz -- a claim Washington denied. The latest confrontation comes after US strikes on June 22 targeted Iran’s nuclear sites during a 12-day war with Israel. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the damage was “serious and severe” but insisted uranium enrichment would continue.



UK sanctions
25 over migrant
Channel crossings

WHO chief says ‘large proportion’ of
Gaza’s people ‘starving’

Israel is facing mounting international pressure



Naeema, a 30-year-old Palestinian mother, carries her malnourished 2-year-old son Yazan

2.1million people
trapped in the war zone

21 deaths in Gaza
related to malnutrition of
children under the age

Israeli forces have
killed more than
1,000 Palestinians
trying to get food

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The World Health Organization’s chief warned yesterday of widespread starvation in Gaza, saying food deliveries into the war-ravaged Palestinian territory were “far below what is needed for the survival of the population”. “A large proportion of the population of Gaza is starving. I don’t

know what you would call it other than mass starvation -- and it’s man-made,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters. His statement added his voice to those of 111 aid organisations and rights groups, including MSF and Oxfam, who warned earlier Wednesday that “mass starvation” was spreading in Gaza. “Our colleagues and those we serve are wasting away,” they said in a joint statement. Israel is facing mounting international pressure over the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, where more than two million people are facing severe shortages of food and other essentials after 21 months of conflict. Even after Israel began easing a more than two-month aid blockade in late May, Gaza’s population is still suffering extreme scarcities. “The 2.1million people trapped in the war zone that is Gaza are

facing yet another killer on top of bombs and bullets: starvation,” Tedros said. “We are now witnessing a deadly surge in malnutrition-related deaths,” he added. **Children starving to death** Tedros highlighted that “rates of global acute malnutrition exceed 10 percent, and over 20 percent of pregnant and breast-feeding women that have been screened are malnourished, often severely”. The UN health agency has documented 21 deaths in Gaza related to malnutrition of children under the age of five since the beginning of the year, but acknowledges that that the true number is likely higher. The head of Gaza’s largest hospital said Tuesday that 21 children had died due to malnutrition and starvation in the Palestinian territory over the previous three days alone.

Tedros warned that “the hunger crisis is being accelerated by the collapse of aid pipelines and restrictions on access”. The starvation is “man-made” and clearly caused by Israel’s blockade on the territory, he said. The WHO chief highlighted how starving people were risking their lives to access aid. The UN rights office said Tuesday that Israeli forces have killed more than 1,000 Palestinians trying to get food aid in Gaza since the US- and Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation started operations in late May. “Not only 1,026 were killed while trying to feed themselves or find food for their family. Thousands were also wounded,” Tedros said. “We demand that there is full access, and we demand that there is a ceasefire,” he said. “We demand that there is a political solution to this problem, a lasting solution.”

Taliban says detained British couple receiving medical care

AFP | Kabul, Afghanistan

An elderly British couple detained for months in Afghanistan are receiving medical care, the Taliban government’s top diplomat said yesterday, after UN experts warned they were at risk of dying. Peter and Barbie Reynolds, 80-years-old and 75-years-old, had lived in Afghanistan for 18 years when they were arrested in February along with Chinese-American friend Faye Hall, who has since been released, and an Afghan translator. “All their human rights are being respected,” Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi told



Peter and Barbie Reynolds, 80-years-old and 75-years-old, had lived in Afghanistan for 18 years

a news conference in the capital Kabul. “They are being provided with medical care. They are in occasional contact with their

families.” Muttaqi said “efforts are underway to secure their release, but the process is not complete”, echoing similar comments by the government in April. Independent United Nations experts warned on Monday of the “rapid deterioration” of their physical and mental health, stating that they “risk irreparable harm or even death”. The couple, against whom no charges have been brought, were held “in a high-security facility for several months, then in underground cells, without daylight, before being transferred last week” to the intelligence services in Kabul, according to the UN.