

‘Black smoke’ chokes Pakistan maternity ward as hospital fire kills 14 infants



A man carries the body of a newborn child who died following a fire at the Mother and Child Health (MCH) ward of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Hospital, during a funeral in Rawalpindi on August 26, 2026.

A fire erupted in a hospital maternity ward in Islamabad on Wednesday killing 14 infants, Pakistani authorities said, blaming a faulty air conditioner for the blaze.

The dawn fire broke out on the third floor of the Mother and Child Health Ward at the capital's premier public hospital Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), the Islamabad district office said in a statement.

The statement gave a death toll of 14, all of whom were infants, according to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Nineteen people, including seven children, were rescued, Deputy Interior Minister Talal Chaudhry said.

Health Minister Mustafa Kamal told reporters outside the hospital that CCTV footage showed a "spark from the air conditioner fell, and the fire spread within a minute".

He said 26 fire extinguishers were used to try to extinguish the flames but that there were no water sprinklers in the ward.

Witnesses described chaotic and harrowing scenes, including intense smoke and broken glass, a slow response from emergency services and guards reportedly preventing people from leaving the building.

Khurram Mehmood, 40, told AFP he lost his three-day-old daughter in the blaze

and that rescuers took hours to arrive.

"My wife was in the ward. They took everyone out. We were sitting on the road waiting for help," he said.

The door to the neonatal intensive care unit was locked, according to Jaweria, a woman who said she also lost her infant.

"I do not believe this. Give me my child back... Why did the doctors leave the children there?"

Witness Abdul Ghafoor told AFP that he went into the hospital to save patients but could not reach the maternity ward.

"The fire spread very quickly. There were babies as young as one day old," he said.

"There was thick black smoke inside and patients were trapped... Rescue teams arrived after almost two hours (after the fire started)."

Another witness, who did not give her name, said hospital security "were not letting them out and the guards were stopping them".

"People had to break the door down and rescue teams had to break the windows to control the fire," she added.

The Islamabad chief commissioner, Sohail Ashraf, said the emergency call was made just before 7:00 am (0200 GMT), and emergency responders reached the scene "immediately" and brought the fire under control.

British royals pay tribute to country queen Dolly Parton

AFP | London, United Kingdom

From a log cabin to Buckingham Palace: Dolly Parton's influence reached far and wide, with the British royal family sharing a special musical tribute Wednesday to the US country legend.

"Remembering the late, great Dolly, who brought joy, comfort and inspiration to so many -- including the millions of children given free books through her Imagination Library," the royal family posted on its official X



Flowers and notes are left outside Dolly Parton's studio on Elmwood Street in Nashville, Tennessee

account.

"We will always love you," it said, using a heart emoji.

The post included a video of the Buckingham Palace ceremonial band -- its members wearing their trademark red coats and bearskin hats -- playing Parton's working woman anthem "9-to-5" while standing in formation.

Fans around the world are grieving Parton, the cultural icon who died Tuesday at the age of 80, who penned global smash hits like "Jolene" and "I Will Always Love You."

Nepal-Tibet Floods Leave Hundreds Missing

Some 403 tourists -- 341 of them foreigners -- were unaccounted for several hours after the disaster struck

Images shared by Nepali police showed floodwater surging through a river, sweeping away houses in its path

AFP | Nuwakot, Nepal

A massive flood and landslide disaster unleashed on the Nepal-Tibet border killed nearly 100 yesterday and left several hundred people missing, many of whom are foreign tourists.

Surveillance footage verified by AFP shows dozens of people running away as a stories-tall surge of debris slams into the Chinese side of a border area, tossing lorries and buses aside as it strikes.

Chinese state media reported "major casualties" from a mudslide at a Tibet border hub, reporting three dead and another 265 people missing.

Nepal's Prime Minister Balendra Shah vowed a maximum response, writing on social media: "The pain and loss you have suffered is not small. But I want to assure you that you are not alone in this difficult time -- the state is with you with all its means and resources."

Police in Nepal reported the death toll hit at least 98, with rescuers wading through mud and sludge to look for survivors



Houses lie partially submerged in muddy water along a riverside after flash floods at Trishuli Bazar in Nepal's Nuwakot district



Images shared by Nepali police showed floodwater surging through a river, sweeping away houses in its path

in a flood that buried lower floors of multi-story buildings.

Some 403 tourists -- 341 of them foreigners -- were unac-

counted for several hours after the disaster struck, according to the ministry of culture tourism and civil aviation.

Nepal's tourism board said Americans, Indians, Malaysians, Britons and an Australian were among those unaccounted for, as well as 62 Nepali travellers.

Locals were left traumatised by the calamity, while experts cautioned that a lingering blockage in a river could produce an additional disastrous flood.

"I got a call from (my brother-in-law) this morning, and they were crying and said their entire house had been swept away. Three family members were rescued, but his brother is still missing," said 56-year-old local Raju Bhadel.

US Capitol Police arrest man with guillotine in pickup truck

AFP | Washington, United States

A 35-year-old man with a full-scale guillotine in the bed of his pickup truck has been arrested in Washington, police said.

Philan-Tam-Duy Le was taken into custody on Tuesday and charged with "carrying a dangerous weapon," the US Capitol Police said in a statement.

Le's pickup truck was illegally parked on a street near the US Supreme Court building and the US Capitol at the time of his arrest.

Police said they seized the guillotine. Le is from Julian, California, and drove to the nation's capital, police said.

"Investigators are going through the suspect's background to learn more about why he came to Washington," they said.

China tells citizens to leave Taiwan-allied Eswatini

AFP | Beijing, China

China has told its citizens to immediately leave Eswatini, citing security risks in the African nation that is one of Taiwan's few remaining diplomatic allies.

China claims Taiwan is part of its territory and opposes the self-governed island's attempts

at international exchange.

Taiwan's president Lai Ching-te travelled to Eswatini in May, with Taipei accusing Beijing of trying to derail the trip by pressuring nearby countries to revoke overflight permits.

The consular affairs department of China's foreign ministry said on Tuesday that "Chinese nationals and institutions

already in the country should evacuate as soon as possible or relocate to relatively safer areas such as South Africa".

The ministry cited "rampant cyber fraud and online gambling criminal activities" as among the ongoing security concerns.

"Those who insist on travelling to or remaining in the area will face extremely high

security risks, and the timeliness of receiving consular assistance may be affected," the department said in a statement shared to social media platform WeChat.

The Eswatini government on Wednesday said the claim of a security risk in the small country was "unsupported" and "regrettable".