

News in brief

◆ **Jimmy Carter, the longest-living US president,** turned 99 yesterday, defying the odds seven months after entering hospice care to notch another birthday. World leaders, celebrities and everyday people sent wishes to the almost-centenarian, while the White House displayed a giant wooden cake on its lawn with 39 candles for the 39th president. "I admire you because you have such incredible integrity, character and determination," US President Joe Biden said in a video message posted on X, formerly Twitter. "God love you, happy birthday pal."



Former US president Jimmy Carter turns 99

Carter, who already beat brain cancer in his 90s, was thought to be on his last legs in February when his nonprofit foundation, the Carter Center, announced he would spend his "remaining time" at home with his family in the small town of Plains, Georgia in hospice care. Since the announcement, Carter, a Nobel peace laureate and former peanut farmer, has been reported to be sleeping a lot but also still watching baseball and eating his beloved peanut butter ice cream. Last weekend he even made an appearance at the Plains Peanut Festival, riding in the parade next to his 96-year-old wife, Rosalynn.

UN mission arrives in Karabakh, first visit in 30 years



◆ **A United Nations mission** arrived in Nagorno-Karabakh yesterday, Azerbaijan said, after almost the entire ethnic-Armenian population fled since Baku recaptured the breakaway enclave. An Azerbaijani presidency spokesman told AFP that a "UN mission arrived in Karabakh on Sunday morning" -- mainly to assess humanitarian needs. It marks the first time in about 30 years that the international body has gained access to the region. Armenian separatists, who had controlled the region for three decades, agreed to disarm, dissolve their

government and reintegrate with Baku following a one-day Azerbaijani offensive last week.

◆ **A leading hardline Republican** said yesterday he would move to oust House Speaker Kevin McCarthy for striking a deal with Democrats to avert a US government shutdown without the spending cuts demanded by the right-wing caucus. "I do intend to file a motion to vacate Speaker McCarthy this week," Congressman Matt Gaetz told CNN. "I think we need to rip off the Band-Aid." Gaetz is a leading figure within the House Freedom Caucus -- a small group of hardline Republican legislators who had brought the government to the brink of shutdown with their refusal to adopt fresh federal funding without deep spending cuts. The group was furious when McCarthy struck a stopgap deal with Democrats late Saturday to keep the government open for a further 45 days at current spending levels.

Hardline leader says will move to oust US Speaker



CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Crossing glaciers and fjords: Norwegian reindeer migrate for winter



Several hundred reindeer swim across Jokelfjord, on route to their winter pastures in Northern Norway

Tromso, Norway

A herd of reindeer with white, brown or grey coats climb mountains and swim between glaciers on their great migration to their winter pasture in Norway's far north.

Over fourteen days, an AFP photographer followed the Kautokeino reindeer on their way back from their summer pasture in Seglvik to the Kautokeino lands near the Finnish border.

The reindeer -- bred by the indigenous Sami reindeer herders that span northern Europe -- are semi-nomadic and travel across vast expanses as they move between their winter and summer grazing grounds. To make their journey home, the reindeer bypass two glaciers before arriving at the foot of the Jokelfjord glacier -- the only one in Europe which drains into the ocean.

The Sami follow their animals on quad bikes, on foot, or by boat. Ante Niillas Gaup, a

37-year-old Sami herder, whistles towards the herd to show them the path to take. But the herder, accompanied by his barking dogs, says mostly they are driven by their instinct to follow the right route.

"If they don't want to walk, they don't walk -- they do it little by little as they want, when they decide," said Gaup.

When they reach obstacles such as a steep wall or crossing a fjord, the reindeer stop and wait for a signal from the herders. A Sami herder in a small motorboat in the middle of the fjord rings a bell to show them the way to the opposite bank.

When they are ready to swim, the reindeer form themselves into a single file, preparing to dive in.

Hundreds of the animals then launch into the water, grunting as they head for the other shore in a synchronised swim. Once they reach land again, they are on the final leg of their journey to Kautokeino, where they will spend the winter.

Afghan embassy in India suspends operations

New Delhi, India

Afghanistan's embassy in India yesterday suspended operations, more than two years after the ouster of the former Western-backed government.

While New Delhi does not recognise the Taliban government that returned to power in 2021, it had allowed the Afghan embassy to continue operations under the ambassador and mission staff appointed by former president Ashraf Ghani, who fled Kabul as US troops pulled out.

"It is with profound sadness, regret, and disappointment that the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi announces this decision to cease its operations," the statement read, posted on X.

The suspension comes into immediate effect.

'Negligent' Iraq officials sacked for wedding fire

Baghdad, Iraq

A mayor and his fire chief are among five Iraqi officials sacked for "grave negligence" after a blaze that killed 107 people at a wedding last week, authorities said yesterday.

The tragedy struck the northern Iraqi town of Qaraqosh, a centre of Iraq's small Christian community near Mosul, in a wedding hall with a capacity of "no more than 400 people", Interior Minister Abdel Amir al-Shammari told a press conference.

That night, it held in excess of 900 people, he said, confirming the blaze on the night of September 26 was an accident.

Public anger has flared over the high death toll, which General Saad Faleh, head of the commission investigating the tragedy, said currently stands at 107.

Ukraine says working US after Congress drops

The 11th-hour funding bill passed by Congress on Saturday will keep US federal agencies running for another 45 days

AFP | Kyiv, Ukraine

Ukraine said yesterday it was working with Washington to ensure new wartime aid, after US lawmakers dropped additional funding for Kyiv in a last-minute deal to avoid a government shutdown.

The 11th-hour funding bill passed by Congress on Saturday will keep US federal agencies running for another 45 days, but left out new aid to Ukraine amid opposition from some hardline Republicans.

"The Ukrainian government is now actively working with its American partners to ensure that the new US budget decision, which will be developed over the next 45 days, includes new funds



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (L) holds a flag of the Ukrainian armed forces as a Ukrainian serviceman pays his respects for Ukraine during a ceremony marking Defenders Day of Ukraine in Kyiv.

to help Ukraine," Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko said.

"The situation with the US temporary budget will not stop the flow of aid to Ukraine, which was announced earlier," he said.

Kyiv has relied heavily on West-

ern support since Russia invaded last year.

The United States has been the country's biggest financial backer, providing it with over \$40 billion in military assistance.

But the issue of funding for Ukraine has become increasingly

At least 13 dead in Spanish nightclub

AFP | Madrid, Spain

At least 13 people were killed in a fire in a Spanish nightclub yesterday morning, authorities said, with fears the toll could still rise as rescue workers sift through the debris.

The fire broke out in the two-storey "Teatre" nightclub, also called "Fonda Milagros", in the city of Murcia in southeastern Spain in early hours of the morning. Emergency services said on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, that firefighters were continuing to work at the scene and had not ruled out "the possibility of finding more victims."

Jose Ballesta, mayor of Murcia, said the fire had broken out at around 6:00 am local time (0400 GMT) and was "extremely seri-



Firefighters getting ready near the Teatre nightclub

ous". Ballesta told press at the scene that "there are still bodies to be pulled out" from the rubble,

which he said was a complicated task given the "risk of collapse".

Firefighters dispatched to the

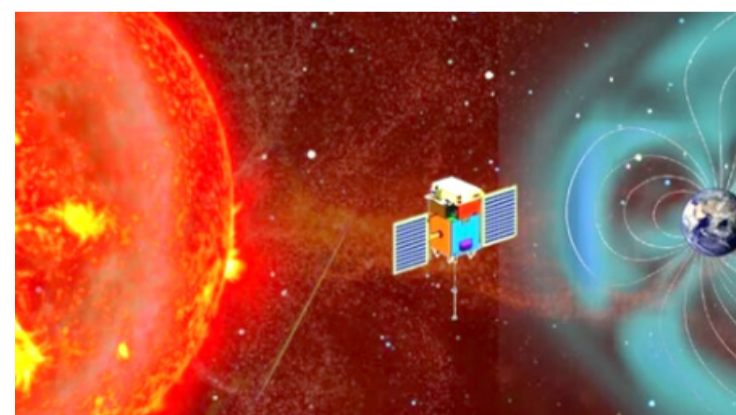
Indian spacecraft heads towards centre of solar system

The Aditya-L1 mission started its four-month journey towards the centre of the solar system on September 2

AFP | New Delhi, India

India's Sun-monitoring spacecraft has crossed a landmark point on its journey to escape "the sphere of Earth's influence", its space agency said, days after the disappointment of its Moon rover failing to awaken.

The Aditya-L1 mission, which started its four-month journey towards the centre of the solar system on September 2, carries instruments to observe the Sun's



Representative picture

outermost layers. "The spacecraft has escaped the sphere of Earth's influence," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said in a statement late Saturday. Aditya, named after the Hindu Sun deity,

has travelled 920,000 kilometres (570,000 miles), just over half the journey's total distance.

At that point, the gravitational forces of both astronomical bodies cancel out, allowing the

mission to remain in a stable halo orbit around our nearest star.

"This is the second time in succession that ISRO could send a spacecraft outside the sphere of influence of the Earth, the first time being the Mars Orbiter Mission", the agency added.

In August, India became the first country to land a craft near the largely unexplored lunar south pole, and just the fourth nation to land on the Moon.

Rover Pragyan surveyed the vicinity of its landing site but was powered down before the start of lunar night, which lasts roughly two weeks on Earth.

India had hoped to prolong the mission by reactivating the solar-powered vehicle once daylight returned to the lunar surface, but so far has been greeted by radio