

News in brief

Rockets in Sudan's Darfur kill 16 civilians: lawyers



At least 16 civilians have been killed by rocket fire that hit their houses in war-torn Sudan's western Darfur region, a local lawyers' union said yesterday. The vast region, already ravaged by brutal conflict in the early 2000s, has seen some of the worst of the violence since fighting erupted in mid-April between Sudan's rival generals vying for power.

"During an exchange of rocket fire between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), 16 civilians were killed on Friday, according to a preliminary toll, in Nyala," the South Darfur state capital, the union said. And at least one man was killed by a sniper, it added.

The number of migrants passing through Panama on the way to the United States keeps climbing, far outpacing the record numbers reached in 2022, a top authority said.

"Today we add 227,000 migrants who have passed through our territory, and this month we are going to exceed the history-making 2022, when there were 248,000 migrants," Security Minister Juan Manuel Pino told reporters. Migrant passages are tallied at a border checkpoint in the Darien Gap, the muddy jungle that separates Panama and Colombia, which migrants traverse on foot as they head toward the United States.

Panama says migrant numbers keep surging



Portugal tightens border checks ahead of Pope's visit



Youth Day, Portugal has reinstated random border security checks yesterday. The "exceptional" measure has been implemented "to prevent possible threats to public order and internal security", which will last until Aug 7, according to a government decision. The identity checks at the borders will be "random and not systematic", said Interior Minister Jose Luis Carneiro on Friday, adding there will be coordination with the Spanish, French and Italian authorities.

In preparing to welcome Pope Francis along with a million young people for World Youth Day, Portugal has reinstated random border security checks yesterday.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Fur-ever after: Indonesians sorry after lavish dog 'wedding' backlash



Two Alaskan Malamutes don traditional Javanese costumes alongside their owners in a "wedding" widely panned in Indonesia

AFP | Jakarta

Two Indonesian women have apologised after a lavish "wedding" for their dogs sparked a backlash in the middle-income country, where wealth distribution is one of the most unequal in the world.

Two Alaskan Malamutes were wedded Friday at a mall in the capital Jakarta, donning traditional Javanese costumes alongside their owners and relatives at a fake ceremony that reportedly cost 200 million rupiah (\$13,350).

A social media uproar followed after images emerged of the wolf-like dogs taking each other's paws in marriage at the extravagant ceremony, forcing the owners into a contrite news conference.

"We regret it very much and we would like to apologise for the Javanese culture enthusiasts and all Indonesians who were uncomfortable and hurt by the event," Indira Ratnasari, owner of female dog Luna, said Wednesday.

"We had no intention to insult the Indonesian and the Javanese culture," she said,

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

The minimum monthly wage in Jakarta is 4.9 million rupiah (\$327) and the World Bank last year said nearly a tenth of Indonesia's 270 million people still live below the poverty line

according to footage posted on her makeup artist's Instagram account.

Ostentatious displays of wealth in the world's fourth-most populous country are frowned upon and often criticised because of its widening income gap.

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# 30,000 people moved as Rhodes wildfire

AFP | Athens, Greece

Officials on the Greek island of Rhodes said Saturday they had moved 30,000 people threatened by wildfires to safety -- including 2,000 who had to be ferried off beaches.

George Hadjimarkos, regional governor of the South Aegean, told Skai television that the operation, which was still ongoing, had been hampered by fires cutting off some road access.

"The aim is to protect human life," he said.

Tourists and some locals were being taken to gyms, schools and hotel conference centres on the island where they will stay overnight, while firefighters battle the blaze.

In addition, three passenger ferries have been moored at the port of Rhodes to accommodate those rescued, Athens News Agency reported.

Members of the coastguard, the armed forces and local authority workers used dozens of buses to help move people away from the fires, said Rhodes municipality official Teris Hatzioannou.



Tourists are evacuated from hotels during a wildfire on the Greek island of Rhodes

Where the fires had cut off road access, some tourists had to walk to safety.

Panagiotis Dimelis, head of the Archangelos village council, told Skai TV that many locals had rushed to help the tourists.

"It is an unprecedented situation for the island," he added.

For the beach operation, the coastguard said three of its boats led more than 30 private vessels to pick up people from the Kiotari and Lardos beaches on the east of the Mediterranean island.

A Greek navy boat was also headed to the area to help, according to the coastguard.

Later Saturday, fire services spokesman Yannis Artopoios told ERT that new evacuation orders had been issued for the villages of Gennadi and Kiotari with direction to Plimiri on the eastern side of the island.

And one boat owner involved in the beach evacuations told Skai TV: "We have received an order from the Port Authority to head back to Gennadi for new evacuations."

"There are a lot of people at the beach. More than 500 people."

## Monkey business in Pakistan court during smuggling case

AFP | Karachi

A baby monkey caused chaos in a Pakistan court after escaping from a troop presented as evidence in a case of wildlife smuggling, officials said.

Two men were intercepted outside Karachi Thursday trying to smuggle 14 baby monkeys in crates usually used to transport mangos.

But when they were brought to court on Friday, one of the monkeys escaped -- causing chaos as staff tried to tempt it down from a tree.

"The monkeys were kept in the boxes in a bad condition... they could hardly breathe," said Wildlife Department.

Javed Mahar, chief of Sindh The trade or keeping of wild



A monkey trainer gives water to his monkey along a street in Rawalpindi

animals is illegal in Pakistan, but laws are routinely ignored and there is a lively market in exotic pets. Monkeys are frequently kept by street entertainers to attract customers, and in some cases have been trained by criminals to enter houses to steal.

The smugglers were each fined 100,000 rupees (around \$350) on Friday and the court ordered the monkeys to be handed over to Karachi Zoo -- a step immediately criticised by wildlife officials.

"The monkeys should have been returned to their natural habitat from where they were captured," Mahar said.

## Around 2,000 penguins wash up dead on Uruguay coast

AFP | Montevideo

Around 2,000 penguins have appeared dead on the coast of eastern Uruguay in the last 10 days, and the cause, which does not appear to be avian influenza, remains a mystery, authorities said.

The Magellanic penguins, mostly juveniles, died in the Atlantic Ocean and were carried by currents to Uruguayan shores, said Carmen Leizagoyen, head of the Environment Ministry's department of fauna.

"This is mortality in the water. Ninety percent are young specimens that arrive without fat reserves and with empty stomachs," she said, and stressed that all samples taken have tested negative for avian influenza.



Dead penguins are scattered on a beach in Uruguay

undetermined reasons.

Hector Caymaris, director of the Laguna de Rocha protected area, said that he counted more than 500 dead penguins along six miles (10 kilometres) of Atlantic coast.

Environmental advocates attribute the increase in Magellanic penguin deaths to overfishing and illegal fishing.

"From the 1990s and 2000s we began to see animals with a lack of food. The resource is overexploited," Richard Tesore, of the NGO SOS Marine Wildlife Rescue, said.

A subtropical cyclone in the Atlantic, which hit southeastern Brazil in mid-July, probably caused the weakest animals to die from the inclement weather, he added.

Magellanic penguins nest in southern Argentina. In the southern hemisphere winter, they migrate north in search of food and warmer waters, even reaching the coast of the Brazilian state of Espirito Santo. "It is normal for some percentage to die, but not these numbers," Leizagoyen said, recalling that a similar die-off occurred last year in Brazil, for