

WORLD

Briefly

EAST AFRICA 38 migrants drown off Djibouti coast

The bodies of 38 migrants, including children, have been recovered after a shipwreck off the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti, the UN said on Tuesday, the latest disaster on the so-called Eastern migration route. The UN's International Organization for Migration told Agence France-Presse that the boat was carrying 66 people when it sank in the early hours of Monday. The tragedy took place just 200 meters off the coast of Godoria in the northeast of Djibouti, the agency said in an email to AFP. In a post on X accompanied by a picture of white body bags lined up on a beach, the IOM said at least six other people were missing and presumed dead after the "tragic shipwreck".

UNITED KINGDOM 'God particle' physicist Higgs dies at age 94

British physicist Peter Higgs, whose theory of a mass-giving particle — the so-called Higgs boson — jointly earned him the Nobel Prize for Physics, has died aged 94, the University of Edinburgh announced on Tuesday. "He passed away peacefully at home on Monday 8 April following a short illness," the Scottish university, where he had been a professor for nearly five decades, said in a statement. His 1964 theory of a mass-giving particle, which became known as the Higgs boson or the "God particle", won him and Belgian physicist Francois Englert the 2013 Nobel Prize in physics.

SOUTH KOREA Opposition leads exit polls in election

South Korea's main liberal opposition Democratic Party overwhelmingly led exit polls in parliamentary elections, a survey from three local broadcasters showed on Wednesday. The Democratic Party and its satellite party were projected to secure 178-197 seats in the 300-member National Assembly, the joint exit polls from KBS, MBC and SBS showed. The ruling conservative People Power Party and its satellite party were estimated to win 85-110 parliamentary seats.

ICELAND Bjarni Benediktsson to return as PM

Bjarni Benediktsson, chairman of Iceland's Independence Party, said on Tuesday that he will become the country's new prime minister, according to an Icelandic radio RUV report. The position became vacant following former PM Katrin Jakobsdottir's resignation last week after she announced that she would run for president in the June election. Jakobsdottir's government, which represents the Left Green Movement, the Independence Party, and the Progressive Party, took office in November 2021. Benediktsson, 54, was briefly prime minister in 2017.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Helping hand



Rescuers evacuate residents of the flooded settlement of Pokrovka in northern Kazakhstan on Tuesday. Water levels in overflowing rivers were still rising in some parts of Russia and Kazakhstan. More than 100,000 people have been evacuated from the rising water, mostly in Kazakhstan. EVGENIY LUKYANOV / AFP

Rail firm to pay \$600m for Ohio mishap

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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Railroad company Norfolk Southern agreed to pay \$600 million to settle lawsuits related to a fiery train derailment with toxic materials in February 2023 in eastern Ohio. If approved by the US District Court in Ohio, the settlement would cover lawsuits within 20 miles (32 kilometers) of the accident, which released toxic smoke into the air and forced many residents and businesses to leave the area. The settlement also covers personal injury claims within a 10-mile radius of the derailment. Norfolk Southern, though said the settlement doesn't mean an admission of liability, wrongdoing or fault. "Individuals and businesses will be able to use compensation from the settlement in any manner they see fit to address potential adverse impacts from the derailment," the company said in a statement Tuesday. "This could include healthcare needs and medical monitoring, property restoration and diminution and compensation for any net business loss." The 2023 derailment of cars con-

taining hazardous materials occurred outside East Palestine, Ohio. It sent fumes and chemicals into the air, which led to about 2,000 out of 4,700 residents to evacuate temporarily. Some businesses were closed, while residents with homes close to the derailment site and nearby creeks said they were still exposed to chemicals after they returned. They complained of health problems from the exposure, including a burning sensation in their eyes, tingling in their lips, heaviness in their chest and swelling of lymph nodes in their necks and groins, according to CNN. East Palestine residents like Misti Allison have many unanswered questions, The Associated Press reported. "What goes through my head is, after all the lawyers are paid and the legal fees are accounted for, how much funding will be provided for families? And is that going to be enough for any of these potential damages moving forward?" she said. Jami Wallace, too, worries about having a settlement without knowing the long-term impact of the derailment.

"I would really like to see the numbers because in my opinion, taking a plea deal only is in the best interest of the attorneys," she said. "They're all going to get their money. But we're the residents that are still going to be left to suffer." Norfolk Southern estimated in January that the total cost related to the derailment would top \$1.1 billion and will continue to grow because of continuing cleanup work and lawsuits. Norfolk Southern's profit for the last quarter of 2023 had fallen 33 percent. In a court filing on Tuesday, the plaintiffs said they expected to file a motion for the judge to approve the settlement within 10 days. Attorneys representing the claimants said they hope to make the claims process easy and efficient and to begin sending out payments by the end of 2024. The National Transportation Safety Board hasn't finished investigating the accident, but its preliminary report said that a wheel bearing in the final stage of overheating was observed from a surveillance video from a local residence.

Agencies contributed to this story.

US, Canada stance on Ecuador slammed

MEXICO CITY — Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on Tuesday accused the governments of the United States and Canada of taking an "ambiguous" stance on Ecuador's recent raid on Mexico's embassy in Quito, the capital of Ecuador. At his daily news conference, Lopez Obrador said Mexico's main trading partners have not condemned Ecuador's violation of international law as other countries have. Mexico will appeal to the International Court of Justice to intercede, he said. Mexico released security camera video footage on Tuesday of the raid. Lopez Obrador played the

footage and said it showed the "authoritarian and vile" way police had raided the embassy. Ecuadorian police stormed the Mexican embassy in Quito on Friday to arrest former Ecuadorian vice-president Jorge Glas, just hours after Mexico granted him political asylum. After the assault on the Mexican embassy, Lopez Obrador announced the suspension of diplomatic ties with Ecuador and ordered an indefinite closure of the diplomatic outpost in the Andean country. Lopez Obrador deemed the police raid on the Mexican embassy a violation of Mexico's sovereignty and international law, and

severed diplomatic relations with Ecuador. He instructed Mexican Foreign Minister Alicia Barcena to coordinate the return of diplomatic personnel accredited in Ecuador, along with their families, after the "violent attack" on the Mexican embassy. Glas, 54, was admitted to hospital on Monday after he refused to eat for 24 hours while he was detained at the Guayaquil maximum security prison, officials said. Glas was taken back to his cell on Tuesday, the SNAI prisons authority reported, after his health recovered to "acceptable parameters".

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Promotion of Sino-Japanese dialogue sought

Exchanges needed for countries to boost people-to-people relations, forum hears

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
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Representatives from various sectors and youth delegates from China and Japan on Wednesday jointly called for further promotion of people-to-people exchanges, strengthening dialogue, enhancing mutual trust, and promoting the healthy and stable development of Sino-Japanese relations. At a forum in Tokyo on Wednesday, Wu Hailong, president of the China Public Diplomacy Association, said that while some issues in current China-Japan relations are unlikely to be resolved immediately, people-to-people exchanges can be initiated first. Various fields of civil exchanges — including education, culture, tourism, local governments, businesses, media, and think tanks — can engage in extensive interaction, Wu said. Government-level consultations and exchange mechanisms at various levels should also be gradually restored, he added.



Panda-shaped buns are displayed during an event for panda Xiang Xiang in Tokyo on Tuesday. JIANG QIAOMEI / XINHUA

"If exchanges between China and Japan can continue and maintain a certain level of enthusiasm, the goodwill of the two peoples may gradually rise. Only through communication can mutual understanding be achieved, and only through understanding can mutual trust be established," Wu said. "We must prioritize the overall situation of China-Japan relations and the interests of both countries," he said. "The media, think tanks and relevant government departments of both countries should objectively and rationally view the contradictions and differences between the two countries, timely guide the overly aggressive remarks and emotions of the two peoples, and do more things conducive to maintaining friendly bilateral relations," Wu added. Former Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda said the exchanges between Japan and China rely not only on the strength of the government but also on the strength of the private sector. It is necessary to further promote exchanges among individuals to help

drive diplomatic relations as the two are interrelated and complementary, Fukuda said. Through people-to-people diplomacy, mutual trust can be further enhanced, he added. Last November, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in San Francisco. The two leaders reaffirmed the positioning of comprehensively advancing the strategic and mutually beneficial relations between China and Japan. Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wu Jianghao said current China-Japan relations are at an important juncture of succession and innovation, facing a series of complex factors.

Hopes voiced He said he hoped that both sides would take the important consensus reached at the meeting of the leaders of the two countries last November as guidance to further strengthen people-to-people exchanges and practical cooperation while properly handling contradictions and differences. Exchanges between China and Japan were greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, he noted. The ambassador said, "We hope that both sides will further expand mutual visits and exchanges, shorten psychological distances, and enhance friendly feelings through face-to-face interactions." According to the former ambassador of Japan to China Yuji Miyamoto, comprehensively advancing the strategic and mutually beneficial relations between China and Japan means rebuilding Sino-Japanese relations conducive to world peace and development. This also means that dialogue, elimination of suspicion, and consolidation of trust between the two countries should be strengthened, said Miyamoto. Former Chinese ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua said it is necessary to maintain the stable and healthy development of Sino-Japanese relations, fulfill commitments through actions, and turn the vision reaffirmed in San Francisco into reality. "We should clarify that neither side poses a threat to the other and that both are cooperative partners, adhere to the established direction of peaceful development, and grasp the direction of Sino-Japanese relations from a strategic and long-term perspective," Cheng said. As part of the efforts to promote people-to-people exchanges, a gathering for the Japanese fans of the giant panda Xiang Xiang, who returned to China last year, was held in Tokyo on Tuesday. During the event, panda enthusiasts had a video call with Xiang Xiang and her keeper, witnessing her current life in China.

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