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SONG COVER



Bloomberg

■ Firefighters attempt to control a wildfire in Dionysos, Greece, yesterday. A huge wildfire blazed through the suburbs on the outskirts of Athens, forcing thousands of people to evacuate as houses were engulfed by the fire and local hospitals put at risk.

## Greece calls on EU for help as Athens suburbs on fire

Thousands of  
residents flee as  
wildfire guts homes

PENTELI, GREECE

A massive wildfire blazed its way into Athens' northeastern suburbs yesterday as hundreds of firefighters battled to contain it, forcing thousands of residents to flee their homes and sparking a Greek government appeal for international help.

In scenes never before seen in the Greek capital, residents wearing masks against the choking smoke were desperately dousing their homes with water hoses in the leafy suburbs of Nea Penteli and Vrilissia in an effort to render them less vulnerable to fire.

Television footage showed several cars in both areas gutted by fire and the roofs

of stately homes burning as water-bombing helicopters roared overhead.

"The situation is dramatic," Penteli mayor Natassa Kosmopoulou said. "A school and homes are on fire, and I can see the fire coming towards the town hall," she said.

Greece yesterday formally called for EU assistance, a spokesman said. "The EU civil protection mechanism was activated upon request of the Greek authorities," EU spokesman Balazs Ujvari said in a statement, adding that Italy, France, the Czech Republic and Romania were sending units to help.

The wildfire started on



Scan the QR code  
for more pictures of  
wildfires raging near  
Greek capital

Sunday afternoon in the town of Varnavas, some 35 kilometres northeast of Athens.

Strong winds

Aided by strong winds, it grew to a 30-kilometre long frontline of fires, more than 25 metres high in places, according to state TV ERT.

Nearly 700 firefighters with 190 fire engines and over 30 aircraft sought to contain it, but it scaled Mount Pentelicon, which looms over the Greek capital.

Authorities opened the Olympic stadium in northern Athens and other stadiums to house thousands of people evacuated from the path of the blaze.

Several smaller communities and towns, including Marathon, which gave the Olympic long distance race its name, started to evacuate on Sunday.

— AFP

## US ups military might ahead of Gaza truce talks

CEASEFIRE DEAL COULD PERSUADE IRAN,  
PROXIES TO HOLD OFF ON ATTACKS

DUBAI

BY STEPHEN N. R.

Senior Associate Editor

The US is ramping up its naval and air forces in the Middle East to bolster Israel against potential Iranian attacks amid simmering tensions in the region just as Gaza ceasefire talks are set to resume on August 15.

Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin has expedited the arrival of the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group, which includes F-35C fighters, to the region and has also deployed the guided-missile submarine USS Georgia, reports said.

The decision follows a call with Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and aims to strengthen Israeli defences and potentially deter Iran.

Threat of retaliation

Iran, along with its Hezbollah proxy, has threatened retaliation for the recent assassinations of key militants in Beirut and Tehran. Iran's acting foreign minister Ali Bagheri Kani has reiterated the country's intent to retaliate against Israel for the death of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

The US is keen to prevent a major escalation, particularly with a presidential election approaching in three months.

The development comes as

Lufthansa said it was extending the suspension of flights to Tel Aviv, Tehran, Beirut, Amman and Erbil through to August 21.

Air France and its subsidiary Transavia France also extended the suspension of their flights to Beirut, through Wednesday.

Spiral of violence

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz yesterday expressed "great concern" about the "spiral of violence" in the Middle East in a phone call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, his spokesman Wolfgang Buechner said. He "appealed to President Pezeshkian to do everything possible to prevent a further military escalation".

The US, Qatar and Egypt last week called for a new round of Gaza ceasefire talks on August 15, an effort to resolve long-deadlocked negotiations between Israel and Hamas more than 10 months into their war.

Israel has agreed to attend the talks. One Israeli official said they would take place in Doha with focus on whether Hamas might relent on truce terms, according to Bloomberg.

A deal that offers Hamas a reprieve could be enough to persuade Iran and its proxy groups to hold off on their promised attacks. But Israeli media has speculated a retaliation for the assassinations could come before the truce talks are scheduled to start.

SEE ALSO P9

Up to Dh1m  
fine for UAE  
labour law  
violators

DUBAI

The UAE Government has issued a Federal Decree-Law amending specific provisions of the UAE Labour Law. The decree aims to ensure the efficiency and competitiveness of the labour market, regulate employment relationships, define the rights and obligations of all parties involved, and ensure their protection by law.

According to the decree, fines of no less than Dh100,000 and no more than Dh1 million will be imposed on any employer who employs workers without a proper permit, hires workers or brings them to the country and fails to provide them with a job, misuses work permits, or shuts down a business or suspends its activities without settling workers' rights. The same penalties apply to the illegal employment of minors or allowing minors to work in violation of the law by their guardians.

Additionally, the new decree introduces criminal penalties for fictitious recruitment, including fictitious Emiratisation. Therefore, employers found guilty of bypassing the provisions of the laws or executive regulations or decisions regulating the labour market, by faking their recruitment of one or more employees, will face fines ranging from Dh100,000 to Dh1 million.

—WAM

SEE ALSO P2

## How Paris Olympics became the hub for wedding proposals

City of Love witnessed 7 marriage proposals during the Games

DUBAI

BY A.K.S. SATISH

Sports Editor

Olympic Games are known to break records. The athletes have been preparing for a lifetime to showcase their skills at the pinnacle of sporting glory and motivate themselves to give their best. Through the years, many legends were born during the Olympic Games who push hard to etch their names in the history books.

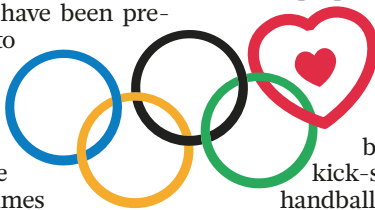
Paris also witnessed a few records being broken but it was a record broken outside

the playing field that caught everyone's attention.

The City of Love saw seven marriage proposals as the athletes went down on one knee to propose to their partners during the July 26 to August 11 showpiece, including a double proposal in Marseille following the sailing events.

The marriage proposals began even before the games kick-started, with Argentines handballer Pablo Simonet and Maria Campoy, a member of the women's hockey team, got engaged before the opening ceremony on July 26.

SEE ALSO P11



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