



Harris dons running shoes, but is the White House her goal?

## Regional lawmaker is Germany's first transgender MP



GDANSK: A man is held on the ground by security personnel after he attacked the mayor of Gdansk during a charity event. — AFP

# Poland's Mayor of Gdansk dies after stabbing

## 'There is an atmosphere of aggression in Poland'

**WARSAW:** Pawel Adamowicz, the liberal mayor of the Polish city of Gdansk, died yesterday of his wounds a day after being stabbed on stage at a charity event. "We couldn't win," Poland's health minister Lukasz Szumowski told reporters via private broadcaster TVN. Adamowicz was attacked while attending the annual Great Orchestra of Christmas charity, a fundraiser where volunteers collect money for medical equipment in hospitals.

Television footage showed a man screaming "Adamowicz is dead!" as he rushed the stage and stabbed the mayor. Speaking on the stage before he was arrested, the man accused the mayor's former party of putting him in prison and said he was tortured. Doctors operated on Adamowicz for five hours after the incident, Poland's state news agency PAP said.

Politicians across the political spectrum in Poland condemned the stabbing, including members of the ruling nationalist Law and Justice Party (PiS), such as Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Interior Minister Joachim Brudziński. Adamowicz was known as an opponent of PiS. "I'm expressing great pain for the tragic death due to the criminal attack on mayor Pawel Adamowicz. We express solidarity with his family," Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the country's ruling party

leader was quoted as saying in a tweet from the party spokeswoman.

Polish President Andrzej Duda will meet with political party leaders to organize a march against violence and hatred in the wake of the attack. Adamowicz stood out for his initiatives to encourage migrants to seek refuge in the northern Polish city, and for his support of a protest campaign defending the rule of law in Poland against PiS efforts to increase its control over the judiciary and other bodies. Adamowicz was one of Poland's longest-serving mayors, holding his position in Gdansk since 1998. In the 2018 regional election, he won 65 percent of votes.

### 'Atmosphere of aggression'

Paramedics resuscitated Adamowicz at the scene before rushing him to the hospital. Gdansk residents flooded blood donation centers following news that Adamowicz had received 15 liters of blood and required more of the rare O Rh- type. "There is an atmosphere of aggression in Poland," a blood donor who identified himself only as Zygmunt told AFP, reflecting on the broader context of the attack. A local police spokesman said the detained man was a 27-year-old who lived in Gdansk, a Baltic coast city with

a population of around half a million that was the cradle of Poland's anti-communist Solidarity movement in the 1980s.

In a video recording of the attack posted on YouTube, the suspect was seen seizing the microphone and claiming he had been wrongly jailed by the previous centrist government of the Civic Platform (PO) party and tortured. "That's why Adamowicz dies," he said. One witness told broadcaster TVN that the man appeared "happy with what he had done".

### 'Solidarity' with mayor

Adamowicz has been mayor of Gdansk for two decades and the opposition Civic Platform, the archival of Poland's governing right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party, had supported his re-election in 2018 municipal polls. Since winning office in 2015, the PiS has systematically blamed PO politicians for an array of issues, ranging from VAT fraud to the 2010 crash of a Polish presidential jet in Russia that claimed the life of then president Lech Kaczynski, the identical twin brother of PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

Sunday's fundraising event was part of a popular annual nationwide drive to purchase medical equipment for children and featured a colourful stage set-

up including lights, smoke and pyrotechnics. "Despite our political differences, I stand without question in solidarity with him and those close to him... I pray for his swift recovery," PiS-allied President Andrzej Duda said on Twitter.

### 'Doubts about his sanity'

The suspect had previously been sentenced to more than five years in prison for four armed attacks on banks in Gdansk, justice officials confirmed. Deputy prosecutor general Krzysztof Sierak said the suspect would be charged with attempted murder and would undergo a psychological assessment due to "doubts about his sanity".

Police were investigating how the attacker had been able to breach security to reach the podium, local police spokeswoman Joanna Kowalik-Kosinska told reporters. "We know that he used an identifier with the inscription 'Press,'" she said. "Now we have to establish how it was obtained, was the accreditation in his name and was he really entitled to be there at that time?" This type of attack is rare in Poland. A similar incident occurred in 2010 when an assailant gunned down an aide at a regional PiS office before stabbing another PiS employee, who survived. — AFP

## Mohammad Reza: The last king of Iran

**PARIS:** Iran's last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who fled his country 40 years ago under pressure from massive street protests, was the "King of Kings" who came to be damned by his own people. His exile with his third wife Farah Diba on January 16, 1979 ended not only his 37-year reign but also 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran, replaced by an Islamic system that remains in charge today. Pahlavi would die from cancer just 18 months later at the age of 60, broken and stateless, having been refused asylum by his former ally, the United States.

### 'Island of stability'

Tyrannical, arrogant, extravagant but also modernizing, the playboy king started out as a darling of the US which groomed him to act as sentry in the Middle East against the Soviet Union. The "great leadership of the shah" had made Iran "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world," US president Jimmy Carter declared just a year before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Pahlavi enjoyed all the trappings of his royal status, believing his escape from two assassination attempts was proof of his divine calling. But gradually his Western-

style leanings and reforms, as well as his increasingly autocratic behavior and lavish lifestyle, contributed to his alienation among Iranians and angered the conservative clerics who would help drive the revolution that sent him fleeing.

### Replaces forced-out father

Pahlavi was just 21 when he ascended to the throne on September 16, 1941 to replace his father, Reza Khan, who had been forced to abdicate following an invasion by Britain and the Soviet Union which were unhappy at his neutrality in their stand against Germany during World War II. Born on October 26, 1919 and educated in Switzerland, Pahlavi was at first seen as only a pale copy of his military strongman father. It was only 12 years later, following a CIA-backed coup against his popular prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh, who had nationalized the oil industry, that Pahlavi began to amass real power.

### Modernizing reforms

Determined to drag Iran rapidly into the modern age, he launched wide-ranging education and healthcare programs, while hosting leaders from around the world in his Napoleonic uniform. He helped drive up global oil prices in the early 1970s, and poured the resulting billions into nuclear power projects and new military hardware. As a pilot himself, much of the money went into the airforce.

By then, the king was married to the glam-

orous Soraya Esfandiary Bakhtiary, having divorced his Egyptian first wife Fawzieh — sister of King Farouq of Egypt — after she had given birth to a daughter but no sons. They too divorced in 1958 when Princess Soraya failed to produce an heir. Farah Diba, whom he married in 1959, bore him two sons and two daughters.

Many trace the beginning of the shah's downfall to 1963 when he implemented the "White Revolution", a large-scale reform program centered on agriculture that alienated the traditional land-owning elite and their clerical allies, who also fiercely opposed the decision to grant women the vote. The following year he exiled Shiite religious leader Ruhollah Khomeini, who railed against the shah's perceived kowtowing to the West.

Khomeini's star grew in exile and he would eventually become the figurehead of the Islamic revolution that ended Pahlavi's reign. Major economic powers queued up in Tehran to take advantage of the oil boom while closing their eyes to the authoritarian drift, as the shah outlawed opposition parties and relied ever-more heavily on his feared secret police, the SAVAK. Angry over US criticism of his human rights record, Pahlavi grew closer to the Soviet Union and China, while also launching an economic partnership with Europe and in particular France.

### 'King of kings'

At home the billionaire shah's extravagance and the wealth lavished on those in the royal circle drew increasing criticism. He took



TEHRAN: In this file photo taken on December 21, 1959, the Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his wife Farah Diba pose for a photograph during their wedding celebrations. — AFP

on the traditional title of "King of Kings" in a lavish coronation ceremony in 1967, having already adopted the specially chosen moniker of "Light of the Aryans" two years earlier. The unprecedented luxury of his party to mark the mythical 2,500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy in 1971 was also vilified by his left-wing and clerical opponents.

The shah's power began to crumble in January 1978 after a daily newspaper was forced to publish an article critical of

Khomeini. It sparked demonstrations by theology students that were violently crushed, the memorials to victims leading to a cycle of protests that grew through the year. Unable to comprehend why his people were ungrateful for his modernising efforts, the shah grew increasingly paranoid and reclusive. A final bid to arrest the uprising, by apologizing for his mistakes and lifting many repressive measures, came too late and only fuelled the protests. — AFP