



Biden to allow up to 62,500 refugees into US after criticism

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## India virus infections top 20m, Europe, US ease restrictions



MEXICO CITY: Rescue workers gather at the site of a metro train accident after an overpass for a metro partially collapsed in Mexico City Monday. — AFP

# 23 dead as metro collapses in Mexico

## Mexican president vows full investigation into deadly metro crash

**MEXICO CITY:** An elevated metro line collapsed in the Mexican capital on Monday, leaving at least 23 people dead and dozens injured as a train came plunging down, authorities said. Carriages were seen hanging from the overpass in a tangle of twisted cables with the ends pointing towards the ground in a V-shape.

"Unfortunately there are 23 deceased," including minors, Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum told reporters at the scene in the south of the capital. Around 65 others received hospital treatment following the dramatic accident, one of the worst to strike the Mexico City metro since it was inaugurated in 1969. Anxious relatives gathered at the site awaiting news of those believed to have been aboard the train. Efraim Juarez said that his son was in the wreckage.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador yesterday promised a full investigation involving international experts into a metro accident. "A thorough investigation will be carried out ... to know the truth," Lopez Obrador said at his daily news conference. "From that the responsibility will be established," he added. The left-wing populist said that the investigation was in the hands of the federal

and Mexico City prosecutors. "We cannot get into speculation, much less blame the possible perpetrators without having proof. We will have the investigation carried out soon," Lopez Obrador said. The metro line that partially collapsed on Monday night was built while Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard, a close ally of Lopez Obrador, was mayor of the capital from 2006-2012. Ebrard told the same news conference that it was "a very sad day for everyone" and said he shared the outrage and pain over the tragedy.

"My daughter-in-law called us. She was with him and she told us the structure fell down over them," he told AFP. Another man who did not give his name said that his brother was among those trapped. "He came with his wife and they managed to get her out, but he was crushed there and we don't know anything," he said.

### 'Structure was shaking'

Dozens of emergency workers were seen trying to rescue victims from the carriages. The work had to be suspended because of fears the wreckage was too unstable, but it later resumed with the help of a

crane. A car was trapped under the rubble, but a person inside managed to get out alive, she said.

The police, who brought rescue dogs, urged onlookers to move back in case of falling debris.

"Suddenly I saw that the structure was shaking," an unidentified witness told the Mexican television network Televisa. "When the dust cleared we ran... to see if we could help. There were no screams. I don't know if they were in shock," she added.

Medics were seen taking the injured away on stretchers. The casualties were rushed to different hospitals in the city, Sheinbaum said. She promised a structural examination of the affected metro line, which will remain closed, and a full investigation into the causes of the accident. "We will report the whole truth. Our support to all victims," Sheinbaum tweeted.

### Lucky escape

One man, Jose Martinez, told reporters that he had a miraculous escape because he was unable to leave work in time to catch the ill-fated train. "I was saved by like 15 minutes. It's good that nothing happened to me," he said. The Mexico City subway has 12 lines and carries millions of passengers each day.

Line 12, where the accident struck, was inaugurated in October 2012 by then mayor Marcelo Ebrard, who is now foreign minister. Writing on Twitter, Ebrard offered his cooperation with the investigation to establish the causes and responsibility for what he called a "terrible tragedy."

Ricardo de la Torre, a Mexico City resident who lives close to Line 12, said that he had been worried about the quality of the overpass because the trains make nearby buildings shake.

"By that simple fact we know that the construction is bad," he said. In one of the worst accidents on the network, two metro trains ramed into each other leaving 23 dead and 55 injured in October 1975. Monday's incident comes just over a year after two subway trains collided in Mexico City, leaving one dead and around 40 injured as panicked passengers escaped through dense smoke. In January of this year, one person died and 29 suffered smoke inhalation injuries in a fire in the metro's control center. The latest accident comes at a time when Mexico is struggling to cope with the coronavirus pandemic, which has left more than 217,000 people dead in the country—one of the world's highest tolls. — AFP

## London's feisty mayor fighting for second term

**LONDON:** London Mayor Sadiq Khan, running for re-election tomorrow, has risen from humble roots to spar with prime ministers and presidents since taking charge of the British capital five years ago.

The 50-year-old politician from the main opposition Labour party, a former human rights lawyer brought up on a London public housing complex, is firm favorite to be returned to City Hall for a second stint. It will continue a remarkable journey for the Pakistani immigrant bus driver's son, who was the first Muslim mayor of a Western capital when initially elected in 2016.



Sadiq Khan

He has made a name for himself as a vocal critic of Brexit and successive Conservative prime ministers, including his mayoral predecessor Boris Johnson, as well as for a feud with former US president Donald Trump. The pair became embroiled in an extraordinary war of words, after Khan criticized Trump's controversial travel ban on people from certain Muslim countries. The mayor allowed an infamous blimp of the president dressed as a baby in a nappy to fly above protests in Parliament Square during his 2018 visit to Britain.

"He once called me a stone cold loser. Only one of us is a loser, and it's not me," a typically combative Khan told AFP as he campaigned ahead of this week's poll.

### Street fighter

Born in London in 1970 to parents who had recently arrived from Pakistan, Khan was the fifth child out of seven brothers and one sister. He grew up in public housing in Tooting, an ethnically mixed residential area in south London, and slept in a bunkbed until he was 24.

His modest background plays well in a city that is proud of its diversity and loves a self-made success story. "I never dreamed that someone like me could be elected as mayor of London," he said back in 2016, adding he wanted to give every Londoner "the opportunities that our city gave to me and to my family".

Khan still regularly recalls how his father drove one of London's famous red buses, and his mother was a seamstress. One of his brothers is a motor mechanic. He is a handy boxer, having learnt the sport to defend himself in the streets against those who hurled racist abuse at him, and two of his brothers are boxing coaches. He also ran the London Marathon in 2014.

At school, he wanted to study science and become a dentist. But a teacher spotted his gift for verbal sparring and directed him towards law. He gained a law degree from the University of North London and started out as a trainee lawyer in 1994 at the Christian Fisher legal firm, where he was eventually made a partner.

He specialized in human rights, and spent three years chairing the civil liberties campaign group Liberty. He represented Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam movement, and Babar Ahmad,

a mosque acquaintance who was jailed in the United States after admitting providing support to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

### Muslim PM?

Khan joined Labour aged 15 when Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher was in her pomp. He became a local councillor for Tooting in the Conservative-dominated Wandsworth local borough in 1994, and its member of parliament in 2005. He still lives in the area with his lawyer wife Saadiya and their two teenage daughters.

Then prime minister Gordon Brown made him the communities minister in 2008 and he later served as transport minister, becoming the first Muslim minister to attend Cabinet meetings.

In parliament, he voted for gay marriage—which earned him death threats. As mayor, he vowed to focus on providing affordable homes for Londoners and freezing transport fares, but—like many in power around the world—has seen his agenda engulfed by the pandemic. Khan has said his priority for a second term will be "jobs, jobs, jobs" as he bids to keep London on its perch as a top world city while tackling the crisis and the fallout from Brexit, which could threaten the capital's vital financial sector.

He is London's third mayor after Labour's Ken Livingstone (2000-2008) and Johnson (2008-2016), with widespread speculation he could try to follow in his predecessor's footsteps to Downing Street.

Khan predicts Britain will have a Muslim prime minister "in the not-too-distant future" but insists it will not be him. "As long as Londoners continue to trust me to be their mayor, I'm currently in this job," he said.—AFP



BAGHDAD: Two rockets were fired yesterday at a base hosting Americans, in the third such attack in three days and as a US government delegation is visiting the country. —AFP

## Rocket attack, 3rd in 3 days, targets US in Iraq: Army

**BAGHDAD:** The Iraqi army said two rockets were fired yesterday at a base hosting Americans, in the third such attack in three days and as a US government delegation is visiting the country. The two rockets fell on an unoccupied segment of the Ain-Al-Assad airbase, "without causing damage or casualties," the army said.

The latest rocket attack follows one against an airbase at Baghdad airport housing US-led coalition troops on Sunday night, and another against Balad airbase, which hosts US contractors, north of the capital on Monday night. None of the attacks have so far been claimed, but Washington routinely blames Iran-linked Iraqi factions for such attacks on its troops and diplomats.

Pro-Iran Iraqi groups have vowed to ramp up attacks to force out the "occupying" US forces in recent months, sometimes against Tehran's wishes, according to some experts. Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi, perceived by pro-Iran factions as too close to Washington, on Tuesday discussed the presence of 2,500 US soldiers based in Iraq with

US envoy Brett McGurk.

The men know each other well — Kadhemi, in his role as head of intelligence, a position he retains to this day, worked closely with McGurk when he was the US-led coalition's representative.

The military coalition was set up to fight the Islamic State jihadist group, which seized control of a third of Iraq in a lightning 2014 offensive. Iraq declared victory against the jihadists in late 2017 and pressure from Shiite public opinion for the US to withdraw all its troops has mounted in the years since.

Kadhemi and McGurk are working on drawing up a timetable for the "withdrawal of combat forces from Iraq," according to a statement by the prime minister's office. Around 30 rocket or bomb attacks have targeted American interests in Iraq — including troops, the embassy or Iraqi supply convoys to foreign forces — since President Joe Biden took office in January. Two foreign contractors, one Iraqi contractor and eight Iraqi civilians have been killed in the attacks.

Last month, an explosives-packed drone slammed into Iraq's Arbil airport in the first reported use of such a weapon against a base used by US-led coalition troops in the country, according to officials. Dozens of other attacks were carried out in Iraq from autumn 2019 during the administration of Biden's predecessor Donald Trump. —AFP