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It was a day of celebration across the Middle East as Hamas released the remaining 20 hostages as part of a swap deal for nearly 2,000 Palestinian detainees yesterday, with people in both Israel and Palestine reunited with loved ones. The exchange came as US president Donald Trump joined the leaders of Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey in signing a joint declaration at the peace summit in Egypt. Pictures: AP/Getty/Reuters

Hostages freed as peace deal holds

There was a rare moment of joy among Israelis and Palestinians yesterday as Hamas released the remaining 20 living hostages in Gaza as part of a swap deal for nearly 2,000 Palestinian detainees, on a day world leaders met in Egypt to try to ensure the current limited truce is extended into a durable peace. Addressing the summit, Egyptian president Abdel Fattah el-Sisi called for the ceasefire in Gaza to usher in a new era in the Middle East. "Let the Gaza war be the last of wars in the region," said the president. In Tel Aviv, an estimated 65,000 Israelis gathered in Hostages Square and cheered when a military helicopter carrying the 20 freed Israelis flew overhead on the way to a hospital. Live footage of their release and their family

Millions 'counting on life-saving aid' getting into Palestine at scale

reunions was broadcast on large screens around the square. The plaza has been the centre of the national campaign for their release since October 7, 2023, in the surprise Hamas attack on southern Israeli communities which killed 1,200 people. Over the course of yesterday, a large crowd massed in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis to celebrate the return of nearly 1,700 Palestinians detained over the course of the war. In the West Bank capital of Ramallah, people welcomed the arrival of 88 Palestinian detainees who had been serving life sentences

imposed by Israeli courts. At least one had been imprisoned for 24 years. About 160 more were deported through Egypt after their release. The public committee against torture in Israel said almost all Palestinian detainees had been held without trial as "unlawful combatants". It noted that there were 22 minors among those released, some of the 360 Palestinian minors held in Israeli custody. The ceasefire appeared to be holding in Gaza yesterday after a two-year Israeli military onslaught that has killed nearly 68,000 people. However, 2.1m surviving Palestinians there still face a

deep and complex humanitarian crisis in a sealed coastal strip where the overwhelming majority of homes have been destroyed or severely damaged, and which has been starved of humanitarian supplies for many months. Tom Fletcher, head of the UN's humanitarian relief branch Ocha, said aid deliveries had begun arriving in Gaza, with far more poised to enter the stricken territory in the coming days. "Millions of Palestinians counting on life-saving aid getting through at scale. We must make it happen," Mr Fletcher said at the peace summit at Sharm el-Sheikh. US president Donald Trump, who brokered the ceasefire last week, arrived in the Red Sea resort after a visit to Israel. He declared "a new day is rising", and

signed a joint declaration with the leaders of Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey, intended to turn the ceasefire into a coherent peace plan. The last Gaza ceasefire broke down after two months in March when Israel resumed its offensive. There are fears in the region that this truce may also prove precarious, especially given the resistance from the far-right wing of the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition. Mr Trump insisted his 20-point proposal for maintaining peace and rebuilding Gaza would take root. "The document sets out a whole series of rules and regulations and is very comprehensive," he said. The summit for peace in Egypt was a virtual who's who of Middle Eastern and European politics, while

attracting other unlikely power brokers in the Trump era of international diplomacy such as the president of Fifa, Gianni Infantino. Leaders from at least 27 countries joined the summit in Sharm el-Sheikh. Representatives from Israel and Hamas were absent from the signing ceremony. A last-minute plan by Mr Trump to invite Mr Netanyahu was scuppered after Turkish president Recep Erdogan said he would not land his plane if the Israeli prime minister attended. **News: 4 World: 7 Editorial: 8**

Three held for questioning over death of Cork postman

Ann Murphy

Two teenage boys and a man in his 20s were being questioned last night about the violent death of North Cork postman Barry Daly. The 44-year-old father of four from Doneraile was found unresponsive outside a house in Rockview Terrace in the early hours of Sunday morning. He was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy was carried out at the city morgue in Cork yesterday afternoon. The results of the autopsy are not being released for operational reasons, gardai said. Questioning continued of two males who were arrested yesterday morning, while a third person, a teenager, was also arrested and questioned later in the day. The arrested men are from the wider locality. People in the town of Doneraile have been stunned by the death, with some knowing both the deceased man and those arrested on suspicion of involvement in the incident which led to it. The three people were being held under Section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act 1984, and they were questioned by investigating gardai throughout yesterday. They can be held for a period of 24 hours. As they were being questioned, gardai were in Doneraile carrying out door-to-

door enquiries in the Rockview Terrace area of the town. No funeral arrangements had been made as of last night for Mr Daly. A white tent remained in the front garden of the house where Mr Daly was found in a collapsed state in the early hours of Sunday morning, and entry onto the property remained sealed off by garda crime scene tape. CCTV footage has been harvested from premises in the town, and it will now be analysed by investigating gardai. The investigation was being headed up in an incident room in Mallow Garda Station. A family liaison officer has been appointed to Mr Daly's family, who are well known and popular in the area. Mr Daly's colleagues at An Post in Mallow, where he had a mail delivery run, are devastated at the sudden death of the postman. A statement issued by An Post said: "The CEO and all An Post staff, particularly the team at Mallow delivery unit, are deeply shocked and saddened at the untimely death of our colleague, Barry Daly. "We offer our deepest sympathy to Barry's family. May he rest in peace." Gardai have appealed for witnesses to contact them. **News: 5**



Barry Daly was found outside a house in Rockview Terrace.

Family rejects Humphreys claim she did 'all she could'

Paul Hosford and Tadgh McNally

The family of Shane O'Farrell, who earlier this year received a State apology related to his killing, "reject" that Fine Gael presidential candidate Heather Humphreys had done "all she could" to help their campaign. The 23-year-old cyclist died in August 2011. He was cycling home when he was struck by a car driven by Zigimantas Gridziuska near Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan. At the time of Mr O'Farrell's death, Gridziuska was on bail in connection with a number of separate incidents. Ms Humphreys was the family's local TD, and she said yesterday that she was glad that the apology was given by justice minister Jim O'Callaghan. She said that she had not wished to interfere in the case, and had made representations on it. She said she was "sorry" if Lucia O'Farrell, Shane's mother, did not feel she had done enough. In a statement to the *Irish Examiner*, the O'Farrell family rejected Ms Humphreys' explanation. "For over 13 years, Ms Humphreys was our local TD, a member of government, and sat at the Cabinet table. She was also minister for justice during this time.

"There is nothing on the public record or the record of the Dail of her advocating for Shane... she did not vote on the two occasions that the Dail voted in favour of a public inquiry. "She never met our family during her time as a TD, nor did we hear from Ms Humphreys after the State apology. "We do not accept Ms Humphreys' contention that she 'did all that she could'." Meanwhile, People Before Profit TD Paul Murphy has threatened to take legal action against Ms Humphreys over comments she made on an RTE debate. Mr Murphy's solicitors have sent a letter to her, saying the TD intends to issue defamation proceedings in the High Court over her remarks in an RTE Radio debate on Sunday, referring to an incident in Jobstown in 2014 involving former Labour leader Joan Burton. Mr Murphy was cleared of all wrongdoing in court in 2017. In the letter, seen by the *Irish Examiner*, Mr Murphy's legal team said Ms Humphreys had accused him of engaging in "violent criminal conduct", that he had committed "an act of gender-based violence", and that he was a "misogynist". Ms Humphreys has been contacted for comment. **News: 4**

Buyers having to use two state subsidy schemes to purchase new home

Sean Murray

Almost two-thirds of those buying homes through the Government's shared equity scheme are having to use a second state scheme to complete the purchase. The first home scheme has approved 8,399 buyers in its first three years, with 4,118 homes bought or self-built as at the end of September. It has issued over €270m to date. Two-thirds of the scheme's users (66%) also availed of the help to buy scheme, which helps towards the deposit for a new home, when they sought to buy the property. "Again, we have the Government spending hundreds of millions of euro on subsidies that have no positive impact on fixing our housing system," said Sinn Féin housing spokesperson Eoin Ó Broin. "We have a dizzying array of subsidies introduced over the last decade aimed at improving affordability. All



Eoin Ó Broin: Schemes have no positive impact on system.

that money could go toward building homes that working people could afford to buy." The first home scheme is aimed at giving support to first-time buyers who could not afford it otherwise. It can provide a maximum of 30% of the purchase price, or 20% if combined with help to buy, with the Government taking an equity stake in the home. **News: 5**

Service charges apply to the equity share after five years. The scheme was allocated a further €80m in funding in last week's budget. According to figures for the third quarter of this year, the average price of homes purchased or built using the scheme is €387,000 with the average support per homebuyer via the scheme standing at €66,000. "This Government believes in home ownership and is taking concrete steps to support home ownership," housing minister James Browne has said. "The first home scheme has been a key part of these efforts and has proven to be a vital support for thousands of first-time buyers." A report compiled by KPMG says there was no evidence to suggest it was contributing to inflation, but housing experts such as TU Dublin senior lecturer Lorcan Sirr say subsidies like this do put upward pressure on the price of homes. **News: 5**

Bird flu alert shuts Fota Wildlife Park

David Kent

Fota Wildlife Park is to close today and tomorrow after a suspected case of avian flu was detected. The park has reported the potential case to the Department of Agriculture. Further updates will be shared in due

course, a spokesperson for the Cork wildlife park said. It comes as flock keepers are urged to implement the "highest standards of biosecurity" after a suspected outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza was detected in a large poultry flock in Co Tyrone. It comes less than a month after an outbreak of avian flu was confirmed among wild birds at The Lough in Cork. Tests on a number of birds, which were found dead at The Lough wildlife sanctuary in late September, proved conclusive for the highly pathogenic variant.

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