



PUPILS ON STRIKE



Pupils and parents protest at Barking Town Hall in London



Getty

HUNDREDS of pupils in the UK have taken part in school strikes, urging the Government to demand a ceasefire in the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Schoolchildren in London, Bristol, Manchester, Glasgow and other towns and cities skipped lessons to urge an end to the fighting in Gaza. The marches were part of the National School Strike for Palestine, which was co-ordinated by campaign group Stop the War Coalition. The organisers said that during the conflict more than 3,000 children have lost their lives in the Palestinian territory.

In Bristol, where demonstrations first took place more than three weeks ago, pupils delivered a petition calling for a ceasefire to representatives of the local council. In Tower Hamlets, London, students marched to the offices of Rushanara Ali. The Labour MP had abstained (didn't take part) from a vote in Parliament calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. The vote was defeated, although 56 Labour MPs defied their party's leader to call for a ceasefire.

On 7 October, more than 1,200 men, women and children were killed in an attack on Israel by Hamas, and around 240 people were taken hostage, prompting Israel's retaliation. Demonstrations have also been taking place in

Israel, with the families of the hostages pleading for their safe return.

To secure the release of the hostages, the Israeli military has directed attacks at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza. The army released footage that it says shows a tunnel running under the hospital, claiming Hamas had a command centre there. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said his first goal of the war is to destroy Hamas, followed by returning the hostages and stopping the threat from Gaza.



Demonstrators led by the families of hostages marched from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem

Inspirational teacher is celebrated



THE 2023 Global Teacher Prize has been awarded to Sister Zeph from Pakistan.

The annual award, organised by charitable organisation The Varkey Foundation, celebrates impressive educators. Sister Zeph decided at the age of 13 to set up a school in her own home for children from poor families. She worked eight-hour days to earn money to fund the school and spent another four hours teaching students. She then stayed up at night, teaching herself.

Twenty-six years later, the school is

housed in a new building and provides free education for more than 200 underprivileged children. Sister Zeph also provides self-defence classes for girls, having herself been threatened. She helps fund families who can't afford to pay for their children's education.

As this year's Global Teacher Prize winner, Sister Zeph has been awarded \$1 million (£800,000). With the money, she plans to build a new school and a shelter for orphans, with food grown in the school grounds.

Shape of brain affected by screen time

PLAYING computer games, looking at smartphones and watching TV can all have long-term effects on children's memories and thinking, new research shows.

A report measured the impact of digital technology on the brains of children aged under 12. It looked at 33 studies, published during the past 23 years, involving 30,000 young people.

The report states that early digital experiences are having a major impact on the shape of children's brains and how they function. Areas of the brain that deal with what we see, touch and feel are all affected. Some studies claimed that tablet device users were found to have

worse brain function and score worse in problem-solving tasks. Others suggested that intelligence scores were lowered by playing videogames.

However, not all the studies agreed and some were more positive. One said that playing videogames helped learning and understanding. As a result, the report does not recommend limiting screen time, which might cause arguments. Instead, it says parents and guardians need guidance with the digital world, with more emphasis on tech that supports positive brain development.

The report was published in the journal *Early Education and Development*.

EDITOR'S COMMENT



Nicky Cox MBE

I HOPE our front cover about Buy Nothing Day and giving secondhand presents has made you stop and think.

Shopping and Christmas are linked together in the modern world, but many people say that the way we buy so much stuff is a big problem. A lot of energy and resources go into making toys and gifts that often end up in the back of a cupboard or in a charity shop.

But then the people who run companies and shops want us to buy stuff, otherwise they'd lose money or maybe even go out of business.

So, what's the answer? Buy less? Spend money on activities and meals instead? Or is homemade and secondhand the way to go?

Make sure you take part in our front page poll at [first.news/polls](https://www.first.news/polls) and leave your comments!

Pine martens



THESE marvellous mammals were once common throughout the UK, but sadly were almost extinct by the start of the 20th century. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is now providing £1.2 million to help their recovery in the woodlands of Wallington in Northumberland. The money will improve the elusive animals' habitats and train volunteers to check on their progress.



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Sea birds



NUMBERS of more than half the sea bird species breeding in the UK and Ireland have declined over the last 20 years. Eleven out of 21 species have seen a loss, with Scotland the most badly affected country. Reasons for the reduction include climate change and an increase in numbers of predators, such as rats and minks.



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A pair of puffins in Pembrokeshire

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