

Hurricane Jose spares Irma-ravaged islands

AFP, Marigot
Ravaged by Hurricane Irma, Saint Martin and Saint Barts escaped a further battering by Jose, which had "markedly less" of an impact on the two Caribbean islands than anticipated, France's meteorological agency said yesterday.
The agency had issued its highest warning, saying the Category 4 Hurricane Jose could become a "dangerous event of exceptional intensity".
"I'm relieved, almost happy," said Saint Martin resident Donald Tchuisseu, plastic glass of gin in hand after toasting Jose's mercy with a friend.
Jose passed 135 kilometres (83 miles) north of Saint Barts, also known as Saint Barthelemy, a haven for the rich and famous with celebrity visitors who have included Beyonce and Gwyneth Paltrow.
The new hurricane was 125 kilometres from Saint Martin, 95 percent of which has already been ravaged by Hurricane Irma, which struck Wednesday and reached Florida yesterday.
"Thanks to a passage which was further away than anticipated, the effects on the territory were markedly less," the meteorological agency said.
Many on St Martin, an island which is divided between France and The Netherlands and known for its vibrant nightlife and pristine beaches, had been concerned about how to shelter from the second storm.
Tchuisseu, in his thirties, was among those who headed for a school in the Saint Martin town of Grand-Case that was requisitioned as a temporary shelter from Jose.
Even though the danger has passed, he said he preferred to have company.
"It's good to have a drink, laugh and think about other things," Tchuisseu said. "The alternative is to stay home alone without power or water."



People take shelter inside the Germain Arena in Estero ahead of from Hurricane Irma make landfall in Florida, US; boats wrecked by Irma are seen in Geringa shipyard in Saint-Martin island; and Cubans take photos of flooded streets in Havana. All photos were taken on Saturday.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

War risk 'extremely great'

Warns UK Defence Secretary; UN chief says crisis worst 'in years' for world

AFP, Independent.co.uk
North Korea's nuclear weapons programme must be "halted" before it develops a missile capable of hitting London, the Defence Secretary said.
Asked if the rogue state could strike the UK capital, Michael Fallon replied: "Not yet, but they are clearly accelerating the missile programme, the range is getting longer and longer."
He added: "We have to get this programme halted, because the dangers now of miscalculation, or some accident triggering a response, are extremely great."
The comments appeared to toughen up Britain's stance, just a few weeks after the government insisted it was not preparing to help the US target North Korea's nuclear weapons sites.
Meanwhile, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un praised the "perfect success" of the country's sixth and largest nuclear test and urged further weapons development, according to state media.
Pyongyang held a banquet, concert and performances in a weekend display of pageantry to celebrate the September 3 nuclear test, which the North said was a hydrogen bomb that could be fitted onto a rocket.
The blast, which came weeks after the country fired off two intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that appeared to bring much of the mainland US into range, prompted global condemnation and calls to ramp up sanctions against the isolated nation.
But the North's leader appeared deaf to the international outrage and hailed the "perfect success in the test of H-bomb" at a dinner to congratulate the scientists and technicians behind the nuclear programme, the official Korean Central News Agency reported Sunday.
Pyongyang says it needs nuclear arms to protect itself, but the US has accused the isolated nation of "begging for war".
In an interview published yesterday United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said the showdown over North Korea's nuclear and missile programme was the world's worst crisis "in years" and had left him deeply worried.
"We have to hope that the seriousness of this threat puts us on the path of reason before it is too late," said Guterres in the French Sunday newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche.
He also called for unity in the UN Security Council, which is set to consider a new draft resolution presented by Washington in recent days that would be the toughest-ever imposed on North Korea.
The US is calling for an oil embargo on the North, an assets freeze on Kim Jong-Un, a ban on textiles and an end to payments of North Korean guest workers.
It is hoping for a vote today though both China and Russia are thought to have raised opposition to the measures.

three-month long crisis that has put the whole region on edge, and prompted Turkey to send troops to the wealthy Gulf state in a sign of support.
Last week, Saudi Arabia suspended any dialogue with Qatar, accusing it of "distorting facts", just after a report of a phone call between the leaders of both countries suggested a breakthrough in the Gulf dispute.
Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir told the news conference that Qatar needed to show seriousness in finding a solution to the crisis.
"We will continue to take action and we will maintain our position until Qatar responds," Jubeir said.
"We want clarity in the Qatari position, we want seriousness in finding a solution to this crisis that leads to the implementation of principles which all countries support: no supporting terrorism, no welcoming unwanted guests, no spreading hate, no intervention in others' affairs," he said.
The two ministers also discussed the planned de-escalation zones in Syria.

RUSSIA URGES DIRECT DIALOGUE, GCC UNITY TO SOLVE GULF CRISIS
Saudi vows pressure on Qatar until demands met
REUTERS, Afp
Arab countries and Qatar should enter into direct talks to solve a diplomatic dispute, Russia's foreign minister said on a trip to Saudi Arabia yesterday, urging all parties to restore regional unity.
Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt severed ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of supporting terrorist groups - a charge it denies.
"We have confirmed our position (that we are) in favour of settling the disagreements by means of negotiations, by directly expressing concerns and achieving solutions which would take into account the concerns and the interests of all parties," the minister, Sergei Lavrov, told a news conference in Jeddah.
"We are interested in all those mediatory efforts that are currently being made producing results and the unity of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) being restored," he added.
Kuwait and the United States have been mediating to reach a breakthrough in the



NORTH KOREA TENSION
Kim Jong-Un praises, celebrates nuclear test



DEPORTATION OF ROHINGYAS IN INDIA

SC to hear plea

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE
India's Supreme Court will hold a hearing today on a petition that challenged the government's decision to deport illegal Rohingya Muslim immigrants back to Myanmar.
The matter came up before a bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud on September 4 that asked Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Tushar Mehta to take instruction from the Centre about its response to the petition which has challenged the decision on various grounds including that it violated international human right conventions.
While the bench posted the matter for today, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the two Rohingya immigrants, wanted an assurance that during the pendency of the petition, the Centre will not take any step including deportation of the immigrants.
The plea, filed by two Rohingya immigrants, Mohammad Salimullah and Mohammad Shaqir, who are registered refugees under the United Nations High Commission of Refugees (UNHCR), claimed they had taken refuge in India after escaping from Myanmar due to widespread discrimination and violence against the community there.
It has also sought a direction that Rohingyas be provided "basic amenities to ensure that they can live in human conditions as required by international law".



Women hug while standing next to a destroyed house after an earthquake struck the southern coast of Mexico late on Thursday, in Union Hidalgo, on Saturday.

Mexico quake toll rises to 90

AGENCIES
The death toll from the massive earthquake that struck Mexico on Thursday night has risen to at least 90 after emergency services in the southern state of Oaxaca said late on Saturday there had been 71 confirmed fatalities in the state alone.
"It's 71 (dead). Just for Oaxaca," said Jesus Gonzalez, a spokesman for the state civil protection authority.
At least 15 people died in the neighboring state of Chiapas, according to local authorities, while another four deaths have also been confirmed in the state of Tabasco to the north, reported Reuters.
The 8.1 magnitude quake that struck off the coast of Chiapas on Thursday was stronger than a devastating 1985 temblor that flattened swathes of Mexico City and killed thousands.
Relief efforts in the south continued through Saturday, with many of the people worst affected still wary of returning indoors to weakened buildings, fearing they could be brought down by ongoing aftershocks.
People in Juchitan queued up for food at a shop window as families carried flowers and wreaths, and eventually coffins.
Ignacio Chavez said his son died in the quake.
"He didn't have time to get out and the building completely collapsed," Chavez told AFP.
"It was a very old building, over 200 years old, and unfortunately out of the seven people who were inside only four were able to be rescued. The other three died."
In Juchitan, emergency teams with search dogs found the body of a policeman under the rubble of City hall.
The epicenter of Thursday's quake was in the Pacific Ocean, about 100 kilometers (62 miles) off the town of Tonala in Chiapas.

Saudi embassy in US may have funded 9/11 'dry run': report

AL JAZEERA ONLINE
New evidence in a 9/11 lawsuit against the government of Saudi Arabia alleges the kingdom's embassy in Washington, DC may have funded a test run for the deadly attacks in 2001, according to a US newspaper report.
The evidence was submitted as part of a class action lawsuit against the government of Saudi Arabia, the New York Post reported on Saturday.
It alleges the embassy paid for two Saudi nationals to fly from Phoenix to Washington two years before planes hit the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and slammed into a field in Pennsylvania as part of a "dry run" for the attacks.
Saudi Arabia has always denied any involvement in September 11, 2001 attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people.
The victims' lawyers, however, have said the evidence suggests "a pattern of both financial and operational support" for the 9/11 conspiracy from official Saudi sources, according to the Post.
The evidence could further reinforce the claim that employees and agents of Saudi Arabia directed and supported the hijackers.
During the flight in November 1999, Saudi students Mohammed al-Qudhaeain and Hamdan al-Shalawi are reported to have attempted to get into the plane's cockpit to test security. The pilots made an emergency landing because of the incident and the men were interrogated by the FBI, which eventually let them go.
According to the Post story, the FBI confirmed the men's airline tickets were paid for by the Saudi embassy in Washington.
The story follows the passage of a US law last year that allows families of the victims of the September 11 attacks to sue the Saudi government.
Fifteen of the 19 men who carried out the 2001 attacks were Saudi nationals.

IS has 11,100 blank Syrian passports

Reports German media
AFP, Frankfurt Am Main
German authorities believe the Islamic State group holds some 11,100 blank Syrian passports that can be completed with any individual's details, weekly newspaper Bild am Sonntag reported yesterday.
The stolen passports are genuine identity papers that have not yet been filled out with an individual's details, making them a valuable tool for forgers.
Members of the group behind a series of coordinated bomb and gun attacks in Paris that claimed 130 lives in November 2015 were found to have used fake Syrian passports.

SEPARATE OFFENSIVES AGAINST IS

Syria army, US-led forces converge in Deir al-Zor

17 civilians killed by Russian air strikes
REUTERS, Beirut
Syrian government forces and US-backed militias converged on Islamic State in separate offensives against the militants in the eastern Syrian province of Deir al-Zor yesterday.
The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces alliance of mostly Kurdish and Arab militias (SDF) said it had reached Deir al-Zor's industrial zone, just a few miles to the east of the city after launching operations in the area in recent days.
The Syrian army and its allies, backed by Iran and by Russian air cover, meanwhile advanced from the west to seize full control of the Deir al-Zor-Damascus highway, a Hezbollah-run media unit reported.
The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said at least 17 civilians had been killed by Russian air strikes in Deir al-Zor yesterday.
The attacks squeezed Islamic State in its last major Syria stronghold in areas near the border with Iraq. The group has come under pressure since losing its de facto capital Mosul in Iraq this year and is surrounded by the SDF in Raqqa, its former Syria bastion.
The jihadist group still holds much of Deir al-Zor province and half the city, as well as a pocket of territory near Homs and Hama further west, however, and is mounting counter-attacks.
Yesterday's advances mean that US-backed forces and the Syrian government side, boosted by Russian military support, are separated only by about 15 km (10 miles) of ground and the Euphrates River in Deir al-Zor.
Much of northeast Syria to the east of the Euphrates is held by the SDF, which is dominated by the Kurdish YPG militia. The Syrian government and its allies are increasingly capturing the remaining areas Islamic State holds to its west.