

TREASURES OF NOTRE-DAME

The fire-gutted Notre-Dame cathedral contained some of the most sacred relics of the Christian faith, including the Holy Crown of Thorns believed to have been worn by Jesus at his crucifixion. While firefighters were able to save the crown as Monday's massive blaze tore through the building in the heart of Paris, the fate of other items inside the 850-year-old Gothic cathedral is unclear. The crucifix standing over the main altar was one of several objects which escaped destruction. Most of the emblematic rose windows of medieval stained glass were also spared. Here is an overview of some of the treasures contained in the venerated Notre-Dame (Our Lady) Cathedral:

Holy relics: Its most precious item, the Holy Crown of Thorns, is about 21 centimetres (eight inches) in diameter and made up of rushes braided together and bound by gold wire. Firefighters who were directed to the cathedral's most treasured objects rescued the crown as well as a tunic worn by 13th-century French crusader king, Louis IX, who was made a saint. Notre-Dame also held two other relics said to be from the crucifixion of Jesus: a piece of the cross on which he was nailed and one of the nails. There were three holy items in the spire that collapsed in flames on Monday: a fragment of the Crown of Thorns and relics from Saint Denis and Saint Genevieve, two of the city's most cherished saints.

The Great Organ: Of the cathedral's three organs, the most impressive is the Great Organ with five keyboards, 109 stops and close to 8,000 pipes. Built in the 15th century, the organ was progressively added to over the centuries to become one of the largest in France. Culture Minister Franck Riester said the organ "seems to be quite badly damaged".

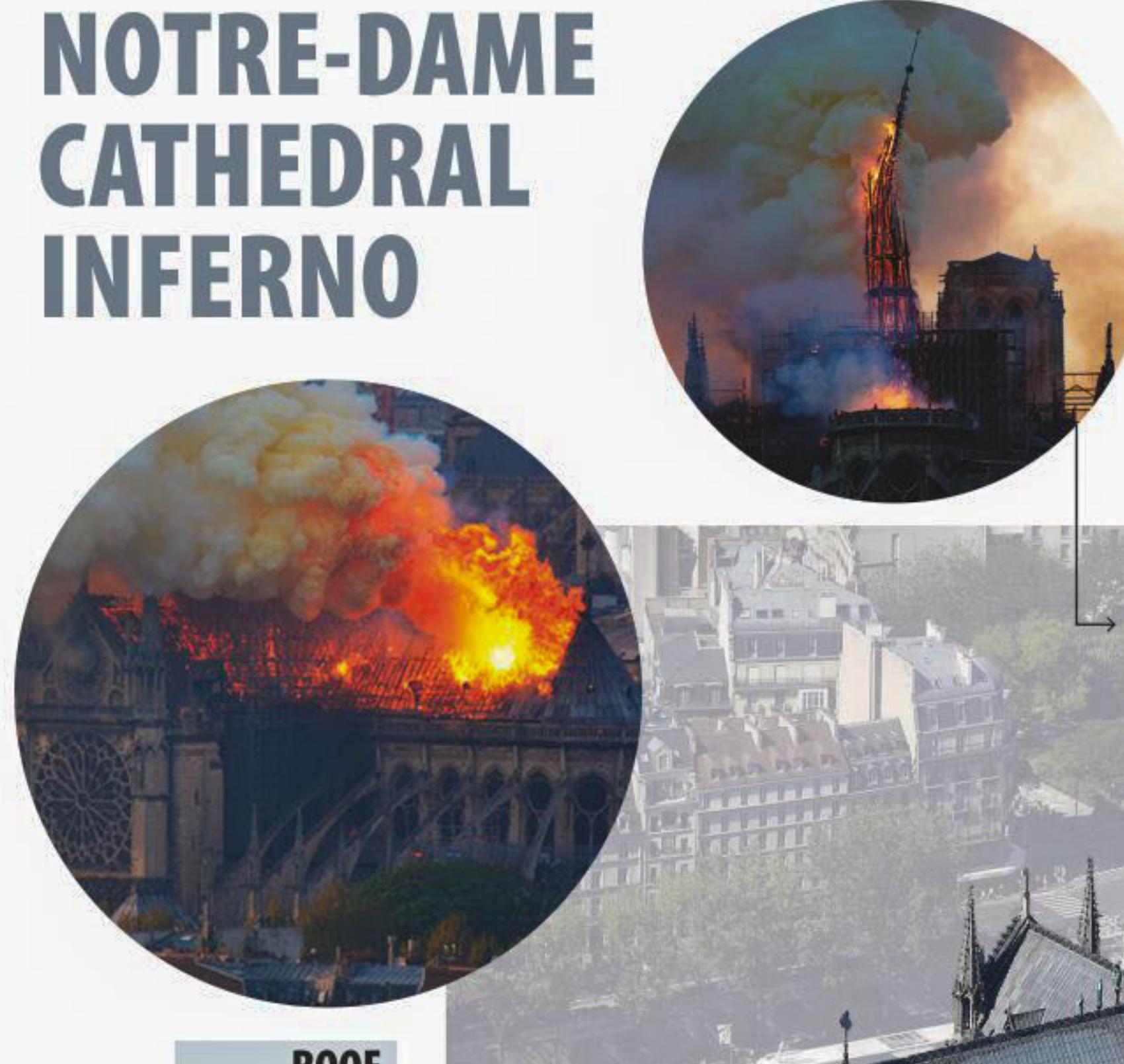
Stained glass: The cathedral's three impressive stained glass circular rose windows were built in the 13th century and renovated several times. The one on the south appeared to be intact, as did another on the western facade which lies between the two stone towers which can be climbed by tourists on the front of the cathedral. AFP was unable to verify the state of the northern window. They show prophets, saints, angels, kings and scenes of the daily lives of holy figures.

37 figures of Virgin Mary: A mid-14th century statue of the Virgin with Child, placed in the sanctuary, is the most famous of the 37 images of the Virgin Mary contained in the cathedral. Another depicts Mary holding the body of her son descended from cross, created by French sculptor Nicolas Coustou between 1712 and 1728 and positioned behind the choir altar.

Paintings: Between 1630 and 1707 the Paris goldsmith guild presented the cathedral with a painting on every May 1. Of these 76 works called "The Mays", 13 were displayed in various chapels in the cathedral. On the west wall of the Chapel of Saint-Guillaume is the one of the most beautiful paintings in the cathedral, the "Visitation" by Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet (1716).



NOTRE-DAME CATHEDRAL INFERNO



ROOF

Fire engulfed 1,000 m²

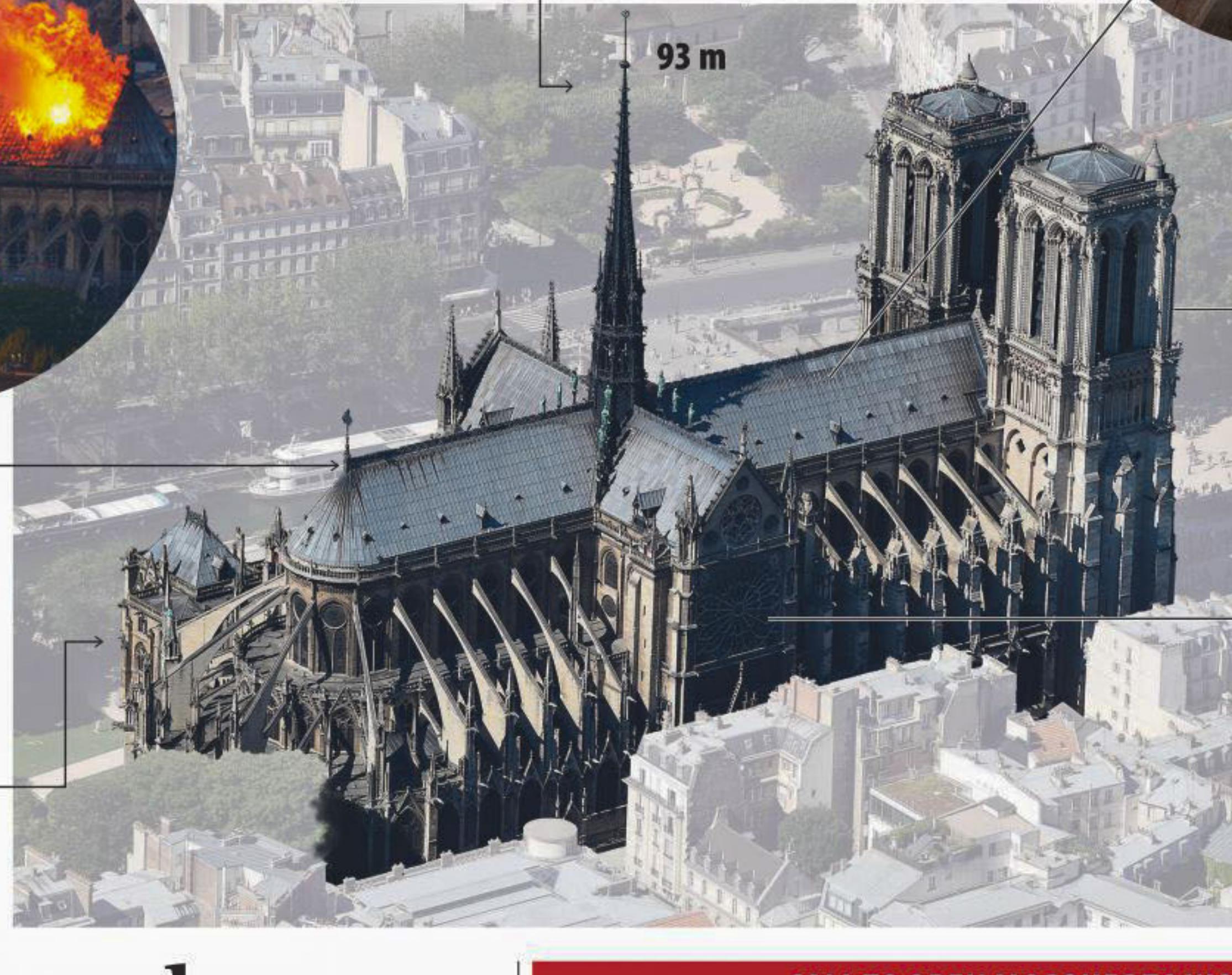
13th-century oak wood frame destroyed.

21 hectares of forest used in its construction

TREASURES

Numerous works of art and sacred relics

Saved from flames

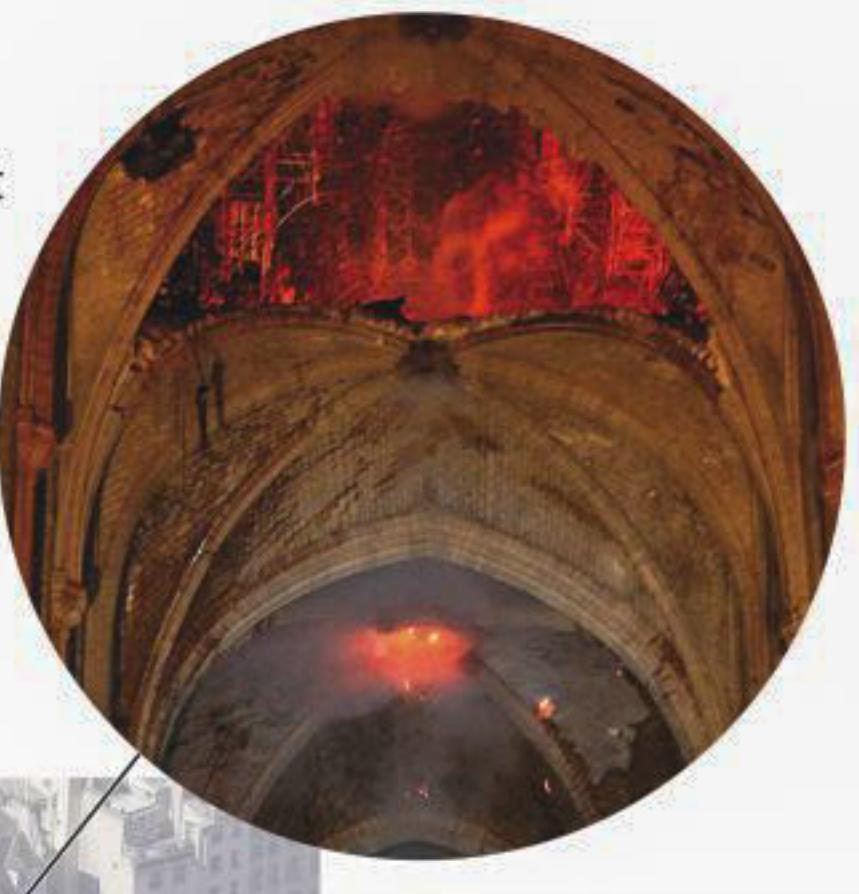


SPIRE

Erected in 13th century. Rebuilt in 19th century by architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc

Collapsed at 7.50 pm on April 15. **Cockerel weather vane** containing sacred relics **melted**

16 monumental statues (12 apostles, 4 evangelists), being restored outside Paris, escape fire



VAULT

Part of vault collapsed into nave

NORTH, SOUTH TOWERS

Saved by firefighters. Contain cathedral bells, including the 17th-century bourdon, Emmanuel

ROSE WINDOWS

13th-century north and south rose windows not "catastrophically damaged", according to government

© AFP

190m vote today

Reut, Jayapura

From sending ballot boxes by elephant in Sumatra to keeping voters safe in Papua's rebel territory, Indonesia is pulling out all the stops for one of the world's biggest one-day polls across a vast archipelago of 260 million.

Today, over 190 million registered voters in the Muslim-majority country will cast their votes in just eight hours of polling, with the election commission battling torrential downpours, voter fraud and damaging cyber attacks.

And if that wasn't hard enough, the world's third-largest democracy behind India and the United States is staging a first for its two-decade-old system, which rose from the ashes of a military-backed dictatorship: holding presidential, parliamentary and local polls all in one day.

Calling on four-legged transport, motorbikes, speedboats and planes, officials have been distributing cardboard ballot boxes -- guarded by armed security staff -- to every corner of the 4,800 kilometre (3,000 miles) long archipelago, which is home to hundreds of ethnic groups and languages.

While elephants carried ballot boxes through Sumatra's Aceh province, horses were used to reach to remote communities in the southeast corner of Java island.

Plastic bags are being inserted into the boxes to protect millions of ballot papers in a tropical country used to pounding rainstorms.

A record 245,000 candidates are vying for

INDONESIA'S GIANT POLLS

public office, with current president Joko Widodo facing off against ex-general Prabowo Subianto for the top job.

The polls kick off early today at over 800,000 plus ballot stations staffed by millions of election officials, starting in easternmost Papua where a separatist insurgency has simmered for decades.

Security will be tight in parts of the mountainous region after rebels massacred more than a dozen employees at a state-backed contractor in December.

Violence also erupted as election material was delivered before local polls last year, resulting in the deaths of several police and election officials.

But armed rebels aren't the only election challenge in Papua, which shares an island border with independent Papua New Guinea.

Voters in parts of the mineral-rich region use a communal voting system called "noken", in which a village head collects votes and represents the group at the ballot box.

It is a challenge to the concept of direct voting and a headache for local officials who have tried -- and failed -- to change the fraud-prone system in a country where vote buying is already rife.

Training millions of electoral officers -- many working an election for the first time -- has been another challenge.

A few staff at each station were trained, and then expected to teach the rest of their colleagues, as tens of millions of voters work out who to vote for among the sea of candidates.

Algeria constitutional council chief quits

Reut

The head of Algeria's constitutional council yesterday stepped down after weeks facing the ire of protesters, state television reported. Tayeb Belaiz informed the council, which will play a key role in upcoming presidential elections, that "he presented his resignation... to the head of state". Algerians have called for Belaiz and other top figures to quit in mass demonstrations which prompted the departure of veteran president Abdelaziz Bouteflika earlier this month. The constitutional council is tasked with vetting election candidates, as well as ensuring the regularity of the polls.

Redacted Mueller report to be released tomorrow

Reut

A redacted version of special counsel Robert Mueller's report into Russian meddling in the US election will be released tomorrow, the Justice Department said. The report could feature allegations that Trump tried to obstruct the investigation, although Attorney General Bill Barr has said there is not sufficient evidence to establish he committed such a crime. Mueller himself has offered no conclusion on this, according to a brief summary of the report from Barr, who was handpicked by Trump. Barr said Mueller found no evidence of criminal conspiracy by Trump's campaign to collude with the Russian government to skew the 2016 election in Trump's favor over Democrat Hillary Clinton.

174 killed in fight for Libya's Tripoli

Reut

At least 174 people have been killed and 758 wounded in the battle for control over the Libyan capital Tripoli, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

CALL TO OPEN MOSQUES TO WOMEN

India SC admits plea

Reut, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court yesterday agreed to consider a petition from a Muslim couple to allow women into mosques, seeking to overturn a centuries-old practice that largely bars women from the places of worship.

Women are not allowed inside most mosques in India although a few have separate entrances for women to go into segregated areas.

The petitioners, Yasmeen Peerzade and her husband Zuber Peerzade, said that women were allowed to enter mosques during the time of the Prophet Mohammad.

"Like men, women also have the constitutional rights to offer worship according to their belief," they said in their petition.

"There should not be any gender discrimination and allow Muslim women to pray in all mosques," they said.

The court last year lifted a ban on the entry of women of menstrual age at a Hindu temple in southern India saying it was a violation of their right to worship.

The Muslim couple referred to the tem-

ple ruling, which angered conservative Hindus, as a precedent to support their call for women to be allowed to pray at mosques.

A representative of a prominent organisation of Islamic scholars, the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, was not immediately available for comment.

The petition comes at a sensitive time for relations between minority Muslims and the majority Hindu community.

Some members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist ruling party have been accused of stirring communal animosity as the party seeks a second term in a staggered general election now underway.

Supreme Court judge S.A. Bobde said the court will examine the couple's request at length.

The court in 2017 ruled as unconstitutional a law which allows Muslim men to divorce their wives simply by uttering the word "talaq", which means divorce in Arabic, three times.

This year, the government issued an executive order making instant divorce an offence punishable with up to three years in jail.

NEWS IN brief

Global measles cases up 300 percent: UN

Reut, Geneva

Measles cases rose 300 percent worldwide through the first three months of 2019 compared to the same period last year, the UN said. At least 14 civilians are among those killed and 36 have been wounded, WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told journalists citing local health facilities.

"WHO has deployed additional surgical staff to support hospitals receiving trauma cases," the United Nations agency wrote on Twitter.

Both pro-government forces and Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) accuse each other of targeting civilians, with each launching daily air raids in addition to clashes on the ground.

Fighting in the southern outskirts of the capital has displaced more than 18,000 people, the UN office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs reported Monday.

Urgent medical supplies were being delivered to Libya's health ministry to support those in the worst-hit areas, the UN's refugee agency said.

The US military confirmed Monday that it had killed the second-ranking Islamic State leader in Somalia in an air strike. US Africa Command said that Abdul-hakim Dhuquib was killed Sunday in the strike vicinity of Xiriirto in the Bari region.

The Islamic State group has a relatively small presence in Somalia, where Al-Shabaab fighters are more powerful and aligned with al-Qaeda.

US kills No 2 IS leader in Somalia

Reut, Mogadishu

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113 arrested at London climate protests

Reut, London

At least 113 people have been arrested in ongoing climate change protests in London that brought parts of the British capital to a standstill, police said yesterday. The protests were organised by the campaign group Extinction Rebellion, which was established last year in Britain by academics and has become one of the world's fastest-growing environmental movements.

ECI has woken up now

Says India's SC after 4 politicians banned from campaign trail over alleged hate speech; Modi fires fresh salvo at Congress

Hindustan Times Online

The Supreme Court yesterday refused to consider Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati's plea against the 48-hour ban on campaigning imposed by the Election Commission.

Mayawati had moved the top court against the poll body's order on the ground that it was "taken under pressure" from the ruling dispensation.

"All citizens have the rights to move about and put forth their point of view. But here, the Election Commission has suddenly given an order which has cruelly deprived me of my rights on the basis of wrong facts. This order will be remembered in the history of Election Commission as a black day," said Mayawati on Monday reacting to the EC order.

The poll body has imposed a nation-wide ban on Mayawati restricting her from campaigning in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The Election Commission had found her remarks made at a poll rally in Uttar Pradesh. Some other political leaders were banned from campaigning for their "provocative" remarks, which the EC said had the "propensity to polarise the

INDIAN ELECTION 2019



Mayawati for 48 hours that began yesterday morning.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday referred to the death of BJP MLA Bhima Mandavi and four security men in a Maoist attack in Chhattisgarh to launch a scathing attack at the Congress. Saying that neither the Congress's intentions nor its policies were honest, he said that the party had done a "PhD in betraying the people".

Addressing a rally in Korba in Chhattisgarh, PM Modi said that the Congress used to refer the Maoists as "revolutionaries". He claimed that the rise of Maoists in the state once again was because the Congress was boasting their confidence.

"What kind of politics is this? On one hand, we are working towards the security and development of the country and its tribal and backward areas. On the other hand, there is a conspiracy to push the state into violence. You need to beware of such people," he said.

Referring to the Congress's manifesto he said that the Maoists were also being emboldened by the party's manifesto.

Form civilian ruling council

Demands Sudan protesters

Reut, Khartoum

The Sudanese group that led protests against deposed President Omar al-Bashir called for the transitional military council that has taken power to be disbanded and for a new interim civilian ruling council to be formed.

Representatives of the Sudanese Professionals' Association (SPA) piled pressure on the military commanders who have taken over, issuing a long list of demands for deeper and faster change to end repression and a ruinous economic crisis. If their demands were not met, the group would press on with protests and not join a future transitional government, Ahmed al-Rabie, an SPA member, told Reuters on Monday.

The SPA held its first news conference since Bashir, who ruled with an autocratic hand since seizing power in a coup 30 years ago, was ousted by the military on Thursday following months of street demonstrations.

A new interim civilian body should be given full executive powers, with the armed forces having representation, and the Transitional Military Council (TMC) that took over last week should be dissolved, the SPA said.

In a communiqué on Monday, the African Union's Peace and Security Council called for Sudan's military to transfer power to a "transitional civilian-led political authority" within 15 days or face suspension from the AU.