

# Hurricane Dorian lashes US east coast

## 20 killed in Bahamas

AFP, Charleston

Hurricane Dorian lashed the Carolinas with driving rain and fierce winds as it neared the US east coast yesterday after devastating the Bahamas and killing at least 20 people.

Parts of downtown Charleston were flooded, with video footage showing people kayaking in the dark in gushing knee-deep water in the stately city on the coast of South Carolina. Trees bent in wind gusting in from the sea.

Dozens of streets were reported closed as up to 20 inches of rain were forecast and forecasters warned of flash flooding.

As day broke, the Category 3 hurricane was 130 kilometers southeast of Charleston, moving north along the coast with maximum sustained winds of 115 mph, the National Hurricane Center said.

Hundreds of thousands of people in the Carolinas, Georgia and elsewhere were under evacuation orders as the US girded for its taste of a storm that caused severe destruction in the Bahamas.

Power has been knocked out to more than 80,000 customers in South Carolina, and at least 22 shelters have been set up for evacuees, the state emergency management agency said on Twitter.

On Wednesday Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said at least 20 people were known dead so far and he described the damage as nothing short of "generational devastation."

The US Coast Guard and Britain's Royal Navy airlifted survivors and ferried in emergency supplies as floodwaters receded in the Bahamas.

The United Nations said 70,000 people on Grand Bahama and Abaco islands were in "immediate need" of aid.

Dorian left Florida largely unscathed.



This photo shows debris and destruction in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian on the island Great Abaco in the northern Bahamas. Photo was taken on Tuesday and released on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

# INX Media case: Court sends Chidambaram to jail

A Delhi court yesterday sent former Union finance minister P Chidambaram in judicial custody till September 19 in the INX Media case. Considering that he has Z-security, the court directed that he be kept in a separate cell. The CBI argued for his judicial custody submitting that there was strong apprehension that he would tamper with evidence and influence witnesses if released on bail. Chidambaram's 15-day CBI custody, ordered by the special court in five spells that started after his arrest on August 21 night, ended yesterday. The allegations in the case centre around the role of Chidambaram, his son Karti Chidambaram, and several former government officials, in approving foreign direct investment in local media firm INX Media in 2007. The Central Bureau of Investigation says the approval was illegal and that it was a case of "abuse of power".

# Yahoo outage hits email users

Yahoo services went down for several hours yesterday, drawing ire from thousands of its email users who were given no idea how long the outage would last. Downtdetector, a website that provides information on online outages, had received more than 5,000 reports of problems related to Yahoo Mail by 2 am ET. Some 300 users also reported problems with other Yahoo services, according to Downtdetector. According to one Twitter user, Yahoo had been down for "well over 3 hours" in Australia. Most of the complaints originated in Europe. Yahoo's customer service webpage — help.yahoo.com — also went down for a time, displaying the message, "Thank you for your patience. Our engineers are working quickly to resolve the issue."

# Italy swears in new pro-EU cabinet



President Sergio Mattarella yesterday swore in Italy's new pro-European government, heralding a fresh start for the eurozone's third largest economy as the far-right falls from power. Brussels warmly welcomed the coalition between the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and centre-left Democratic Party (PD), which is expected to markedly improve rocky relations between Europe and Rome. "We're ready to give our utmost for the country," M5S head Luigi Di Maio, the new foreign minister, said. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's government still faces votes in parliament on Monday and Tuesday. First on the cabinet's to-do list is the 2020 budget, which has to be submitted to parliament by the end of September, and then to Brussels by October 15. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker congratulated Conte and said Italy's new political era came at "an important moment for our Union", adding that he was sure Rome would play a "front-line" role on key issues.

SOURCE: AFP

# Iran lifts all restrictions

AGENCIES

Iran said it would take another step away from a 2015 nuclear deal by starting to develop centrifuges to speed up its uranium enrichment but it also gave European powers two more months to try to save the multilateral pact.

Separately, the United States refused to ease its economic sanctions on Iran, imposed fresh ones designed to choke off the smuggling of Iranian oil and rebuffed, but did not rule out, a French plan to give Tehran a \$15 billion credit line.

The moves suggested Iran, the United States and the major European powers may be leaving the door open for diplomacy to try resolve a dispute over Iran's nuclear program even as they largely stuck to entrenched positions.

The friction has intensified since US President Donald Trump last year withdrew from the 2015 international accord under which Iran had agreed to rein in its atomic program in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.

Washington has since renewed and intensified its sanctions, slashing Iran's crude oil sales by more than 80%.

Trump again said he was open to the possibility of meeting Iranian President Hassan Rouhani but made clear he had no intention of easing sanctions.

"That's not happening," he said. "That won't be

## NUCLEAR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Tehran to develop centrifuges for faster uranium enrichment

Israel wants tougher actions; EU urges Tehran to backtrack

Rouhani gives Europeans two more months to save 2015 nuclear accord

US refuses to drop sanctions, imposes new ones

happening."

In a televised address, Rouhani said Iran from Friday will begin developing centrifuges to speed up the enrichment of uranium, which can produce fuel for power plants or for atomic bombs, as the next step in reducing its nuclear commitments.

Under the accord, Iran was allowed to keep restricted quantities of first-generation centrifuges at two nuclear plants. The successful development of more advanced centrifuges would enable it to produce material for a potential nuclear bomb several

times faster.

Iran says it is only enriching uranium to fuel nuclear power plants, but the United States has long suspected the program ultimately aims to produce weapons.

Iran's atomic energy organisation spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi will hold a news conference tomorrow to detail Tehran's third round of cuts in its nuclear commitments since May, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported.

Iran's arch-enemy Israel responded by calling for more international pressure on Iran.

"This is not the time to hold talks with Iran; this is the time to increase the pressure on Iran," said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The EU yesterday urged Iran to backtrack on moves to drop its commitments under the deal, known as the JCPOA.

"These activities we consider are inconsistent with the JCPOA," said European Commission spokesman Carlos Martin Ruiz de Godejuela.

"We urge Iran to reverse these steps and refrain from further measures that undermine the nuclear deal."

Iran has expressed mounting frustration at Europe's failure to offset the effects of renewed US sanctions in return for its continued compliance with the agreement.

It had already hit back twice with countermeasures in response to the US withdrawal from the deal.



# Give support or deal with refugees

Erdogan threatens Europe over Syria safe zone, aid

AFP, Ankara

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday warned Turkey would be forced to open the doors to Syrian refugees fleeing to Europe if Ankara did not get more international support.

Turkey is home to more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees and recently called for a "safe zone" in the war-torn country's northeast, to which refugees could return.

If the safe zone does not happen, "we will be forced to open the doors. You either give support, or if you won't, sorry, but we can only put up with so much," Erdogan said.

"Are we going to shoulder this burden alone?" he asked during the televised speech in Ankara.

Erdogan claimed Turkey had spent \$40 billion on refugees and criticised the West, especially the European Union, for failing to live up to its promises.

Under a 2016 agreement, the EU promised Ankara six billion euros (\$6.6 billion) in exchange for stronger controls on refugees leaving its territory for Europe, but Erdogan said only three billion euros had so far arrived.

"We may be forced to do this (open the gates) to get this (international support)," he said.

Turkey fears a fresh influx of refugees as the Syrian government advances into the last rebel stronghold of Idlib.

# Amazon's 'tallest tree' safe: scientists

AFP, Sao Paulo

Intrepid Brazilian and British scientists say they have located the Amazon's tallest tree in northern Brazil, untouched by a spate of wildfires that have raged in the rainforest for weeks.

The scientists say they located an unusually large specimen of the giant Dinizia Excelsa species -- measuring 88 meters (288-feet) with a circumference of 5.50 meters -- in a sanctuary of other Dinizia trees.

"The species generally reach a height of 60 meters. We have a great discovery here and now a commitment to preserve the largest trees in the Amazon," said research coordinator Eric Bastos.

Bastos led research conducted in August by scientists from the Federal University of the Valleys of the Jequitinhonha and Britain's Cambridge University and the University of Swansea. The discovery was made by using aerial sensors over Paru State Forest, which is shared by the Brazilian Amazon basin states of Amapa and Para.

The sanctuary of Dinizia Excelsa trees lies outside the areas affected by the wildfires which have caused international concern, Amapu State scientific sources told AFP.

According to National Geographic, scientists earlier this year discovered the world's tallest tropical tree, a 100 meter meranti tree in Sabah on the island of Borneo.

The tallest known trees are California redwoods, which have been measured up to 379.7 feet, or 115.7 meters.



Environmental activists protest yesterday outside Brazilian embassy in central Athens to demand action to save Amazon rain forest.

PHOTO: AFP

## AMAZON FOREST FIRES

# Bolivia has lost 1.7m hectares

AFP, La Paz

Wildfires raging in Bolivia's forests and grasslands since May have destroyed 1.7 million hectares (4.2 million acres), officials said Wednesday, amid an \$11 million effort by the government to contain them.

Environmentalists blame laws enacted under leftist President Evo Morales, who has encouraged the burning of forest and pasture land to expand agricultural production, while the government attributes the blazes to dry weather and winds.

"Of the fires that have occurred, 41 percent are in protected areas and 30 percent are in forests," Cinthia Asin, environmental minister for the eastern region of Santa Cruz told the press, updating the amount of land burned to 1.7 million hectares.

Santa Cruz is the hardest hit of Bolivia's departments since the fires began in May and intensified in late August.

Bolivia's government recently authorized farmers to burn 20 hectares (almost 50 acres) instead of the usual five hectares (12 acres) -- which is believed to have contributed to thousands of wildfires.

Asin said that over the first days of September, 751 new fires blazed, mostly in forested areas, leading Santa Cruz officials to believe that humans had started the conflagrations to clear farmland.

Separately, the Bolivian government reported that it was continuing its land and air efforts to extinguish the fires.

Foreign Minister Diego Pary said that the executive branch had spent \$11 million fighting the fires and had an additional \$2 million at its disposal from international cooperation.

# Taliban blast kills 12 in Kabul

REUTERS, Kabul

A Taliban suicide blast in the centre of Kabul killed at least 10 people and wounded more than 40 yesterday, destroying cars and shops in an area near the headquarters of Afghanistan's Nato force and the US embassy, officials said.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack even as the insurgents and US officials have been negotiating a deal on a US troop withdrawal in exchange for Taliban security guarantees.

"At least 10 civilians have been killed and 42 injured were taken to hospitals," said Nasrat Rahimi, a spokesman for the interior ministry.

The Nato-led Resolute Support mission said in a statement a Romanian and a U.S. member of the force were killed in action in Kabul, but it did not provide any more details.

A senior Afghan interior ministry official said the two were killed in the suicide bomb attack and their vehicle was the main target.

Video footage and photographs posted on social media showed several cars and small shops torn apart by the blast at a checkpoint on a road

Blast hits near security complexes, diplomatic district

12 civilians and 2 members of Nato force killed; 42 injured



near the Nato office and US embassy. Police cordoned off the area.

Witnesses said the suicide bomber blew himself up as many people were standing nearby or crossing the road.

There has been no let-up in violence in Afghanistan even though both the Taliban and US officials have reported progress in negotiations aimed at securing a deal on ending their war.

On Monday, a Taliban suicide truck bomber attacked a compound used by international organisations in Kabul, killing at least 16 people and wounding more than 100.

The US top negotiator for peace in Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad said this week the two sides had drawn up a draft framework agreement under

which US troops would leave five military bases in Afghanistan within 135 days of the signing of the pact.

There are some 14,000 US troops in Afghanistan, deployed at various bases across the country. Despite ending their combat role in 2014, an estimated 20,000 US and Nato security forces remain in the war-ravaged country.

Khalilzad is expected to meet Afghan and Nato officials to explain the draft agreement, which must still be approved by US President Donald Trump before it can be signed.

In a separate incident, Taliban fighters said they detonated a car bomb near a security meeting in the eastern province of Loghar. Government officials said four civilians were killed.

## SECURITY LAPSES IN FACEBOOK

# 419m users' phone numbers exposed

AFP, Washington

Phone numbers linked to more than 400 million Facebook accounts were listed online in the latest privacy lapse for the social media giant, US media reported Wednesday.

An exposed server stored 419 million records on users across several databases -- including 133 million US accounts, more than 50 million in Vietnam, and 18 million in Britain, according to technology news site TechCrunch.

The databases listed Facebook user IDs -- unique digits attached to each account -- the profiles' phone numbers, as well as the gender listed by some accounts and their geographical locations, technology website TechCrunch reported.

The server was not password protected, meaning anyone could access the databases, and remained online until late Wednesday when TechCrunch contacted the site's host.

Facebook confirmed parts of the report but downplayed the extent of the exposure, saying that the number of accounts so far confirmed was around half of the reported 419 million.

The exposure of a user's phone number leaves them vulnerable to spam calls, SIM-swapping -- as recently happened to Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey -- with hackers able to force-reset the passwords of the compromised accounts.