

FIRE AT CAIRO COPTIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH 41 killed during mass

AFP, Cairo

More than 40 people were killed in a blaze that broke out during a Sunday mass in a Coptic Christian church in a suburb of Egypt's capital Cairo, church officials said.

The blaze started for unknown reasons at the Abu Sifine church in the capital's northwestern, working class district of Imbaba.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi declared on his Facebook page: "I have mobilised all state services to ensure that all measures are taken."

Fire services later said the blaze had been brought under control.

The Egyptian Coptic Church reported "41 dead and 14 injured" citing "sources in the Ministry of Health", in a statement posted on its Facebook page.

The prosecutor's office said it had opened an investigation and sent a team to the scene to establish the cause of the blaze.

Copts are the largest Christian community in the Middle East, making up at least 10 million of Egypt's 103 million people.

The minority has suffered attacks and complained of discrimination in the majority Muslim north

African country, the Arab world's most populous.

Copts have suffered deadly attacks at the hands of Islamists, particularly after Sisi overthrew former Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013, with churches, schools and homes burnt down.

Copts feel they have been left out of key state positions and deplored restrictive legislation for the construction of churches compared to that of mosques.

Sisi, the first Egyptian president to attend the Coptic Christian mass every year, recently appointed a Coptic judge to head the Constitutional Court for the first time in history.

Accidental fires are not uncommon in the sprawling megalopolis of Cairo, where millions of Egyptians live in informal settlements.

Egypt, with its often dilapidated and poorly maintained infrastructure, has suffered several deadly fires in recent years.

In March 2021, at least 20 people died in a blaze in a textile factory in an eastern suburb of Cairo.

In 2020, two hospital fires claimed the lives of 14 Covid-19 patients.



A deer looks on in a burnt forest following a fire in South Gironde, near Belin-Beliet, southwestern France, on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

WILDFIRES

Rain brings relief to France

AFP, Toulouse

A forest fire that flared anew in southern France sent 1,000 more people fleeing while overnight rain brought blazes elsewhere in the country under control, officials said yesterday.

France has been buffeted this summer by a historic drought as well as a series of heatwaves and several forest fires.

A fire that had been raging since Monday in the southern Aveyron region appeared to be under control and dying out on Saturday afternoon when it suddenly reignited in a "virulent" manner, gobbling up 500 more

hectares (1,235 acres), the prefecture said.

At least 1,000 people were evacuated from the village of Mostuejols near the city of Millau and six nearby hamlets, it said.

Around 3,000 people had already been evacuated because of the fire, but were allowed back when it appeared under control. No casualties have been reported so far from the blaze, which has consumed a total of 1,260 hectares so far.

A local man was under investigation for accidentally starting the fire when a metal part of his trailer touched the road, sending off sparks that ignited the dried vegetation.



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GD-1536

Scotland first in world to make period products free

AFP, Edinburgh

Scotland will today become the first country in the world to ensure universal access to free period products following the passing of landmark legislation in 2020.

Councils and education providers will be legally required to make period products available free of charge to anyone who needs them, the Scottish government said in a statement issued Sunday.

"Providing access to free period products is fundamental to equality and dignity, and removes the financial barriers to accessing them," said Social Justice Secretary Shona Robison.

"We are proud to be the first national government in the world to take such action," she added.

The Scottish parliament voted

unanimously in favour of the Period Products Bill, which made it a legal right to have free access to sanitary products in public buildings, in November 2020.

Sanitary products were already free for pupils and students, but the bill placed a legal duty on ministers to ensure anyone can get access to them.

Schools, colleges and universities must also make a range of period products available for free in their toilets. Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon welcomed the decision at the time.

"Proud to vote for this groundbreaking legislation, making Scotland the first country in the world to provide free period products for all who need them," she wrote on her Twitter account.



RUSHDIE TWEET

Police probe 'online threat' to JK Rowling

AFP, London

Scottish police yesterday said they were investigating an apparent "online threat" made to Harry Potter author JK Rowling in response to her tweet supporting Salman Rushdie following his stabbing.

"We have received a report of an online threat being made and officers are carrying out enquiries," said a Police Scotland spokeswoman.

The 57-year-old writer tweeted on Friday that she was "feeling very sick right now" as news broke of the attack on Rushdie in New York state.

In response, a user tweeted "Don't worry you are next".

Rowling shared a screenshot of the reply, asking Twitter moderators "any chance of some support?"

The tweet appeared to have been taken down yesterday.

The same Twitter account, believed to be based in Pakistan, also posted messages praising Rushdie's attacker.

Hadi Matar, 24, was arraigned in court in New York state on Saturday, with prosecutors outlining how Rushdie had been stabbed approximately 10 times in what they described as a planned, premeditated assault.



IDEOLOGIES NEVER DIE

The Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed by some miscreants on this very day in 1975. They wanted to erase the glorious contribution and immense sacrifice of Bangabandhu. But a person may die but his ideologies which remain among us and still today act as an inspiration in building up our nation which the world at large look at us as a role model for development.

AB Bank

Liz Truss leads race to be UK's next PM

REUTERS, London

Britain's Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is 22 percentage points ahead of her rival Rishi Sunak in the contest to become the country's next prime minister, a poll of Conservative Party members by Opinium Research showed on Saturday. Among a sample of 450 party members who had decided how they would vote in the ongoing leadership election put Truss, who other polls have also shown to be the clear frontrunner, on 61 percent, with former finance minister Sunak on 39 percent, Opinium said. The leadership vote is taking place by postal ballot, with a winner due to be announced on Sept 5. The poll shows that the top 3 reasons for supporting Truss were a dislike of Sunak, the perception that she was more trustworthy, and that she had remained loyal to Johnson. Sunak's resignation helped trigger Johnson's downfall.

