

US judge rejects bid to break up Google's ad business

AFP | Washington, United States

A US judge yesterday refused to force Google to sell a division of its digital advertising business, rejecting the government's push to break up part of the company's ad empire.

In a court order, Judge Leonie Brinkema of the federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, opted instead for a set of rules governing how Google must operate in the ad market.

The decision is the second time in recent years that a federal judge has declined to dismantle a piece of Google's business after a judge last year refused to force the sale of its Chrome browser in a separate monopoly case over online

search.

Those cases are part of a broader US government effort to curtail the competitive dominance of big tech companies, including Apple, Amazon and Meta.

Results have been mixed, with another judge deciding against government lawyers in a suit against Meta's social media empire.

The reasoning behind today's decision is not yet public.

Judge Brinkema filed her opinion under seal for 14 days, leaving the details of how Google must change its ad business unknown for now.

She gave the two sides 30 days to submit a joint proposed final judgment.

George Clooney says US run by 'least qualified people'

AFP | Venice, Italy

Veteran film star George Clooney said yesterday the United States would surmount an "unfortunate" time in its history under the Trump administration, calling it a government run by the "least qualified people".

Clooney spoke to the media on the opening day of the Venice Film Festival, where he is to be awarded a Golden Lion for career achievement.

In a press conference that touched on his career, artificial intelligence, climate change and the state of the filmmaking industry, Clooney expressed feeling "ashamed" over the US government.

"I do believe... we're at a moment in time that's unfortunate. I think that's an understatement," said the 65-year-old star, who has spoken out against the Trump administration in the past.

"There's a great word, a kakistocracy, which is a country run by the least qualified people. I think maybe we have a kakistocracy right now, but we'll get through it," he said.

Midterm elections in November may provide a "check

and balance", he said, while "in 2028 with any luck we'll have some restoration into some normalcy," said Clooney.

Calling himself an optimist, Clooney said he remembered living through other dark times in the country's history.

"I'm old enough to have been through 1968 in the States when every city in the United States was set on fire and we lost Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy in the same year," he said.

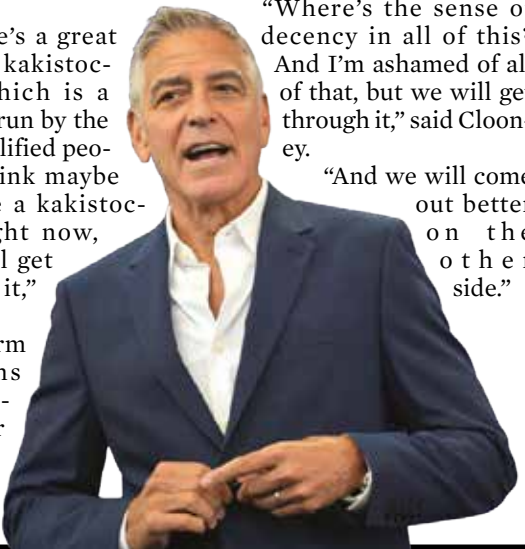
"There was tons of violence. The Capitol was surrounded with tanks," he said.

"We've had some other difficult times, but this is one of them."

He cited a tweet posted this week by US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth appearing to mock the physical appearance of an overweight female Canadian soldier presenting a medal at a youth camp.

"Where's the sense of decency in all of this? And I'm ashamed of all of that, but we will get through it," said Clooney.

"And we will come out better on the other side."



Uber says laying off 'about 10%' of workforce worldwide

AFP | Washington, United States

Ride-hailing giant Uber will be laying off around 10 percent of its staff as part of "significant organizational changes," CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said in a message to employees released on Wednesday.

"Today, we're making a number of significant organizational changes across Uber," Khos-

rowshahi said. "As a result, we will be reducing the size of our team by about 10 percent."

Uber has a total of roughly 34,000 employees with operations in more than 70 countries, according to a recent SEC filing.

The company said the layoffs were aimed at making the platform "simpler and faster" and at reducing coordination delays in what has become a sprawling operation.

Macron meets King Charles before viewing Bayeux Tapestry at start of UK visit

AFP | London, United Kingdom

French President Emmanuel Macron kicked off a two-day visit to Britain yesterday, meeting King Charles III at his London residence ahead of viewing the landmark Bayeux Tapestry exhibition with the monarch and their wives.

Macron and wife Brigitte met Charles and Queen Camilla at Clarence House in central London, before joining Prime Minister Andy Burnham at an event to mark the British Museum's historic tapestry showcase.

All three men were expected to deliver remarks at the early evening inauguration ceremony in the British capital.

The work depicting the 1066 Norman conquest of England -- which had not left France since it was made nearly 1,000 years ago -- goes on public display at the museum from next week until July.



The daring loan gambit is the culmination of years of cross-Channel diplomacy, with Macron playing an instrumental role, and is viewed as another step towards healing the rancour of the Brexit years.

"The loaning of the tapestry is a great example of French-British cooperation," Burnham told MPs earlier Wednesday, heralding "the same cooperation" as help-

ing reduce the number of migrants crossing the Channel to Britain on small boats to a seven-year low.

The UK premier -- who replaced Keir Starmer in July -- will be looking for other concrete outcomes when he welcomes Macron to Downing Street for talks Thursday.

The French president will be the first European Union leader hosted there by Burnham.

The former Manchester mayor has been clear he is eager to build on his predecessor's efforts to forge closer post-Brexit cooperation with the bloc as he eyes boosting sluggish UK growth.



The Bayeux Tapestry is a nearly 70-metre-long embroidered artwork that depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England in 1066, including the Battle of Hastings. It is believed to have been created in the 11th century, shortly after the conquest.

Netanyahu says 'we are not retreating'

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday visited Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip, where he vowed not to pull back troops despite a recent push by mediators to advance a US-backed ceasefire plan calling for their withdrawal.

It was the first time Netanyahu has visited the war-shattered territory since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect in October 2025.

"We control the area. We are not retreating. We are staying on this line," Netanyahu said near the so-called Yellow Line, which demarcates the areas under Hamas and Israeli military control.

"We control 60 percent of the Strip, and we are not stopping, because we are eliminating the terrorists who threaten us, day in and day out."



Two girls walk past the rubble of collapsed buildings in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip

Israel has kept striking the Gaza Strip and its forces have made further inroads despite the US-brokered ceasefire, insisting it must eliminate threats from Hamas, which led the unprecedented October 7, 2023 attack against Israel.

International appeals to move

to the next stages of the US-led peace plan have not stopped Israel targeting Palestinians.

Netanyahu, facing tight elections in October, last month rejected a proposal for advancing to the next stage of the plan after Hamas said it had agreed to hand over its weapons.

The Israeli premier has vowed no military pullout until the Palestinian Islamist movement is "genuinely" disarmed.

Israel's defence minister yesterday said the country had plans to remove Palestinians from the Gaza Strip but was waiting for the United States to figure out where to take them.

"There is no real solution for Gaza in the end without this migration," Defence Minister Israel Katz told a conference hosted by Israeli news site Ynet and newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth.

The Israeli government "is organised and prepared to get them out -- by sea, by air, by every way possible", he said.

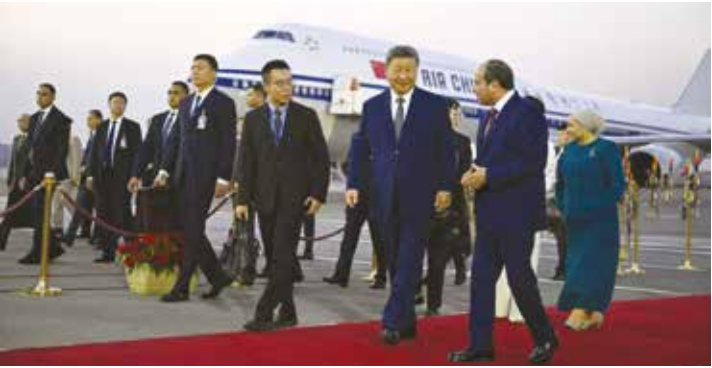
Similar suggestions in the past that Gazans could be displaced from the territory entirely have drawn international outrage, as well as condemnation from Palestinians themselves.

Xi tells Egypt's Sisi 'external interference' in Mideast should be opposed

AFP | Beijing, China

Chinese President Xi Jinping told his Egyptian counterpart yesterday that "external interference" in the Middle East should be opposed, Beijing's state media reported, following talks in Cairo between the two leaders.

"We must uphold the principle that the people of the Middle East are the masters of their own affairs, oppose external interference (and) support regional countries in strengthening dialogue on peace and security," Xi told Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, according to Chi-



nese state news agency Xinhua.

Xi is on his first visit to Egypt in a decade as Beijing seeks a greater foothold in the region against the backdrop of the US-

Iran war.

Washington vowed last month to isolate Iran economically, threatening expanded sanctions that could also hit Chinese banks,

among others.

China, a major buyer of Iranian oil, has vowed to safeguard its interests.

Xi also said during talks with Sisi that Beijing was willing to help protect maritime shipping from the energy-rich region, upended since US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February triggered the war.

"China stands ready to work with countries in the region to safeguard the security of international shipping lanes, advance development cooperation... and eliminate the breeding grounds for conflict," Xi said, according to Xinhua.