

1479

Treaty of Alcáçovas: Portugal cedes the Canary Islands to Castile in exchange for claims in West Africa

1857

Dred Scott Decision: US Supreme Court rules African Americans cannot be US citizens

1869

Dmitri Mendeleev presents the first periodic table of the elements to the Russian Chemical Society



1899

Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) is patented by Felix Hoffmann at the German company Bayer

# Gulf tensions **escalate**

Western embassy staff shelter as air defences intercept missiles and drones



A plume of smoke rises over buildings in Doha

● **Drone debris injures six workers in Abu Dhabi**

● **Explosions reported in Doha, Dubai**

AFP | Riyadh

Some Western embassy staff in Riyadh were told to shelter in place, diplomatic sources said yesterday, with drone debris injuring six people in Abu Dhabi as Iran pressed attacks across the Gulf.

The war in the Middle East has engulfed the otherwise stable Gulf region as Iran retaliates to US and Israeli strikes that killed

its supreme leader, launching strikes at Israel, the wider region and beyond.

At least 13 people have been killed in the Gulf, including seven civilians, since Iran began its attacks on Saturday. Washington said six US servicemen were killed, including four in Kuwait.

In addition to the shelter-in-place order, a witness said the diplomatic quarter in the Saudi capital Riyadh had been closed off.

The witness and diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive security matter.

Authorities in Abu Dhabi responded to falling debris at two sites in an industrial zone after air defences intercepted a drone,

the emirate's media office said. Six Pakistani and Nepalese nationals were injured, while the UAE later said its air defences detected seven ballistic missiles, intercepting six as one fell inside the country.

Fresh waves of explosions, most from interceptions, also rocked Dubai and Doha yesterday.

In Doha, AFP journalists saw a plume of smoke rising from the Qatari capital and reported loud blasts across the city.

Qatar's defence ministry said its forces intercepted 13 Iranian ballistic missiles yesterday, while one fell in Qatari waters, and four drones were also shot down, with no casualties reported.

Earlier, Qatari authorities said

they were evacuating residents living near Doha's US embassy.

The fresh salvos came hours after Qatari premier Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani lambasted Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, during a call.

The Qatari premier accused Iran of seeking to "harm its neighbours and drag them into a war that is not theirs", according to a statement from Qatar's foreign ministry.

In Saudi Arabia, officials said they had intercepted three cruise missiles and several drones.

"Three cruise missiles were intercepted and destroyed outside the city of Al-Kharj," the Saudi defence ministry posted on X.

## Son of last shah says Iran clerics' next leader will be illegitimate



A woman holds a portrait of Reza Pahlavi, son of the last shah of Iran, during a "Freedom for Iran" protest in support of the Iranian people in New York

AFP | Washington

The son of the last shah toppled in Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution said yesterday that whoever the clerical government chooses to succeed the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will be illegitimate.

Reza Pahlavi, who has positioned himself as an alternative if the Islamic republic falls, said on social media that "victory is near" after Khamenei was killed last weekend as the United States and Israel launched the war.

"Any attempt to appoint a successor for him is pre-destined to fail. Whomever is introduced... will lack legitimacy and will be considered an accomplice to the bloody record of this regime and its criminal leaders," Pahlavi said.

Khamenei was Iran's top leader since 1989, pursuing a hardline policy of repressing dissent at home, developing a contested nuclear program and confronting regional rivals led by Israel.

Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of Khamenei, is among

the contenders to succeed his father.

Pahlavi said it made no difference if the next supreme leader were "Mojtaba or Hassan" -- a reference to another potential contender, Hassan Rouhani, the former president who was considered a moderate within the system and championed diplomacy with the United States.

Pahlavi, who lives in exile in the Washington area, has voiced hope for mass defections. He has said that he wants to be a transitional leader before a referendum is called to establish a secular democracy.

He urged Iranian security forces to "hand over power immediately and without violence."

"Declare your allegiance to the nation's Lion and Sun Revolution, and contribute to Iran's stable and secure transition to a democratically elected national government," he said.

The lion was a symbol of the ousted monarchy while the sun has deep resonance in Iran's pre-Islamic Zoroastrian tradition.

# Internet blackout leaves anxious Iranians in the dark

AFP | Tehran

Iran's internet is still "around 11 percent of ordinary levels", monitor Netblocks said yesterday, leaving most Iranians struggling to access independent news or communicate with the outside world.

Iranian authorities shut off internet access on Saturday after Israel and the United States began air strikes, plunging the country into an information blackout.

"Iran's internet blackout has now exceeded 120 hours with connectivity still flatlining around 1 percent of ordinary levels," internet monitor Netblocks said in a message posted on social media platform X yesterday.

Some Iranians are finding brief moments of the day when they are able to connect and send messages, while others have resorted to using illegal Starlink subscriptions, the Elon



Motorists drive along an expressway as plumes of smoke rise after a strike in Tehran

Musk-owned satellite-based internet provider.

Calls to Iran from overseas to mobile phones or landlines are near-impossible.

"The internet speed is very slow," a Tehran resident said by message, asking to remain anonymous for security reasons. "You can't call and voice messages don't get delivered. We can just text."

Netblocks said that Iranian telecoms companies were now sending messages to "threaten users who try to connect to the global internet with legal action."

Iran shut off the internet for several weeks during mass nation-wide protests in January and also cut it during a 12-day war with Israel last June.

"The internet situation here is abysmal," a resident in Bukhan in western Iran, who asked not to be named, said

in a message. "It connects and disconnects. The connection is slow so the VPNs don't work."

In normal circumstances, Iranians use VPNs to connect to Western internet services such as Instagram that are banned in Iran.

Others with working internet connections are helping out others.

Shima, a 33-year-old in Tehran, told AFP that she was helping friends by sending news of life in the capital which has been hit by waves of missile and bombing strikes since Saturday.

"I need to call a lot of people, even strangers, on behalf of their families," she said.

On Iran's borders, weary travellers who are fleeing to safety said they had to travel without any internet connection or access to phone navigation services such as Google Maps.