

News in brief

Rare Gandhi portrait smashes estimate to sell for nearly £153,000



A rare painting of Mahatma Gandhi, believed to be the only oil portrait that the Indian independence leader ever sat for, has sold at auction in the UK for £152,800 (\$205,000). The 1931 painting by British-American artist Clare Leighton fetched more than twice the estimated price when the auction closed on Tuesday in London, Bonhams auction house has revealed. "Thought to be the only oil painting of Mahatma Gandhi which he sat for, this was a very special work, which had never before been offered at auction," said Rhyanon Demery, Bonhams' head of sale.

The United States is moving to get weapons

to Ukraine quickly under President Donald Trump's plan for Europe to buy arms, and is weighing selling Patriot air defense systems from its own stocks, Washington's envoy to NATO said yesterday. "We are all moving with haste to facilitate this and get this done, and, you know, I think things are actually moving very quickly," US ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker told journalists.

US 'moving at haste' to get Ukraine weapons under Trump plan: envoy



Bangladesh police arrest 20 after deadly clashes in ousted premier's hometown



yesterday they had arrested 20 people, a day after clashes between supporters of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina and security personnel killed at least four people. The clashes erupted in Hasina's hometown of Gopalganj on Wednesday after members

of her Awami League party tried to foil a rally by the National Citizens Party (NCP), made up of many students who spearheaded the uprising that toppled her government last year. Bricks, stones and shattered windows littered the area where the clashes occurred. More than 1,500 police, as well as soldiers and border guards, have been deployed in the district to enforce a curfew.

SPOTLIGHT

54 people killed in 24 hours of heavy monsoon rain in Pakistan



A man along with his dog while a car wade through a flooded street during heavy monsoon rains in Rawalpindi

AFP | Islamabad

Heavy rains have been linked to 54 deaths in the past 24 hours in Pakistan, taking the toll to about 180 since the arrival of the monsoon in late June, the government's disaster agency said yesterday.

Torrential rain has poured almost without pause across parts of Punjab province since Wednesday morning, causing urban flooding and houses to collapse.

Rescue teams used boats to evacuate families from villages along the river further south in the morning, but the water had begun to recede by the afternoon.

"Children were screaming for help, and women stood on rooftops, waving their shawls and begging to be rescued," said Tariq Mehboud Bhatti, a 51-year-old farmer in Ladian village.

Residents living in low-lying areas near the Nullah Lai river that runs through Rawalpindi city, neighbouring the capital Islamabad, were ordered to evacuate after a sharp rise in

the water level.

"Rescue teams are on stand-by for more evacuations," a spokeswoman for the disaster agency said.

"Residents of vulnerable areas should prepare emergency kits with food, water, and essential medicines for three to five days in case of an emergency," the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) added in an alert.

The Rawalpindi government declared a public holiday yesterday to keep people at home, with the national meteorological department warning that heavy rain would continue until Friday.

Around 180 people have been killed, including 70 children, and about 500 injured since the start of the monsoon on June 26, according to the disaster agency.

"In the last 24 hours, 54 people were killed and 227 injured across Pakistan, with the majority of fatalities reported from Punjab," the NDMA spokeswoman said, adding that the toll had been counted at 8:00 am (0300 GMT) yesterday.

Iraq mall fire kills 61

Newly opened shopping centre in Kut becomes site of deadly overnight fire

Fire started on first floor

AC explosion suspected cause

Many suffocated in bathrooms

No fire suppression system installed

AFP | Kut

A fire tore through a newly opened shopping mall in the eastern Iraqi city of Kut overnight, killing at least 61 people, authorities said yesterday, as grief-stricken families searched for missing relatives.

Officials said many people suffocated in bathrooms, while one person told AFP that his five relatives died in an elevator.

The blaze -- the latest in a country where safety regulations are frequently neglected -- broke out late Wednesday, reportedly starting on the first floor before rapidly engulfing the five-storey Corniche Hypermarket Mall.

The cause was not immediately known, but one survivor told AFP an air conditioner had exploded.

Several people told AFP they lost families including mothers and children who had gone to shop and dine at the mall, days after it opened in Kut -- around 160 kilometres (100 miles) south-east of Baghdad.

Footage shared on social media



A cleaning operation starts outside the charred building



The mall had opened just days before the fire, with some victims among the first employees hired -- one had worked only three days before the disaster struck

showed people including children standing on the roof, calling for help.

Ali Kadhim, 51, has been shuttling between the mall and the main hospital, where the victims were taken, looking for his cousin, who is missing with his wife and three children.

Back at the mall, he waited anxiously as rescuers searched for victims in the wreckage, with an ambulance on standby.

"We don't know what happened to them," he said.

An AFP correspondent at the scene said the blaze had been contained and the front of the building was severely charred.

The interior ministry said in a statement that "the tragic fire

claimed the lives of 61 innocent citizens, most of whom suffocated in bathrooms, and among them 14 charred bodies yet to be identified."

'We couldn't escape'

INA news agency later quoted a medical source who put the toll at 63 dead and 40 injured.

Wasit province governor Mohammed al-Miyahi told the official INA news agency the victims included men, women and children.

A medical source in Kut said there were "many unidentified bodies".

A correspondent reported seeing charred bodies at the province's forensic department.

Air India probe of Boeing 787 fuel control switches finds no issues

Fuel switch inspections complete

No locking mechanism issues found

AFP | New Delhi

Air India's inspection of the locking feature on the fuel control switches of its existing Boeing 787 aircraft found no issues, an internal communication circulated within the airline said.

The switchings have come under scrutiny following last month's crash of an Air India jet that killed 260 people after a preliminary probe by Indian investigators found that they had flipped from run position to cutoff shortly after takeoff.

India's aviation regulator earlier this week ordered the country's airlines to investigate the locking feature on the switches of several Boeing models.

The order came after Boeing notified operators that the fuel switch locks on its jets were safe.



Debris of Air India flight 171 is pictured after it crashed in a residential area near the airport in Ahmedabad

But it was in line with a Special Airworthiness Information Bulletin (SAIB) issued by the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 2018, which recommended inspection of the locks to ensure they could not be moved accidentally.

Air India's probe, however, found no problems with the locking mechanism.

"Over the weekend, our Engineering team initiated precautionary inspections on the locking mechanism of Fuel Control Switch (FCS) on all our Boeing

787 aircraft," the airline's flight operations department said in a communication to its pilots.

"The inspections have been completed and no issues were found," the communication said, noting that it had complied with the regulator's directives.