



A US flag flies overhead as people enjoy the Astoria Pool on a hot afternoon in the borough of Queens, New York City, on Saturday. The US is sweating through a weekend of extremely hot weather, with major cities including New York and Washington bracing for temperatures close to or exceeding 38 degrees Celsius. — AFP

Camel dung fuels cement production in northern UAE

RAS AL-KHAIMAH: Thousands of tons of camel dung are being used to fuel cement production in the northern United Arab Emirates, cutting emissions and keeping animal waste out of landfill. Under a government-run

scheme, farmers in the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah drop off camel excrement at collection stations. It is then blended with coal to power the boiler at a large cement factory. "People started to laugh, believe me," said the general manager of Gulf Cement Company, Mohamed Ahmed Ali Ebrahim, describing the moment the waste management agency proposed the idea.

But after running tests, the company found two tons of camel waste could replace one ton of coal. "We heard from our grandfathers that they used cow dung for heating. But nobody had thought about the camel waste itself," said Ebrahim, whose factory now uses 50 tons of

camel dung a day. Cow dung has been tapped as a resource to generate energy from the United States, to Zimbabwe to China. Camel dung is a rarer fuel but one well suited to Ras al-Khaimah, one of the seven emirates that make up the UAE, home to around 9,000 camels used in milk production, racing and beauty contests.

Each camel produces some 8 kg of feces daily - far more than farmers use as fertilizer. A blend of one part dung to nine parts coal burns steadily - essential for cement ovens that work continuously at up to 1,400 degrees Celsius. The main aim of the project is to prevent camel waste from ending up in the dump, with the

government seeking to divert 75 percent of all waste from landfill by 2021.

"We don't make use of it. The most important thing is for the area to be clean, for the camels to be clean," said farm owner Ahmed Al-Khatiri, stroking camel calves in the afternoon sun as a farm worker sifted dung for collection. Authorities want more cement plants to adopt the practice and start using chicken and industrial waste, as well as sludge from water treatment, said Sonia Ytaurte Nasser, executive director of the waste management agency. "Waste is just a resource in the wrong place," she said. — Reuters

Philippines goes wild for 'force...'

Continued from Page 1

The man had a heart illness and could have gotten "excited" and "overjoyed" upon watching Thurman getting knocked down, Marikina police said, but added doctors had yet to issue a medical report. Pacquiao is considered a national hero by many as his athletic feats have put the Philippines on the boxing map. His rags-to-riches rise from high school dropout to millionaire champion is a source of inspiration in a nation mired in poverty.

In Pacquiao's heyday, authorities said his fights stopped traffic and crime. But Pacquiao, also an elected

senator, stirred controversy when he entered politics as he endorsed the death penalty and issued gay slurs in 2016 for which he later apologized. President Rodrigo Duterte's spokesman hailed his ally's victory. "Our pound-for-pound King did not show any signs of intimidation as he embodied what a Filipino spirit is all about - a fighter," Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

Some Pacquiao fans said while their idol had proven his mettle, he showed signs of ageing. "He can still fight but not a long bout because he gets tired. A younger fighter would have more endurance than an older fighter," said Willieboy Ramos, 50. Pacquiao, who reversed a 2016 decision to retire, repeatedly says boxing is his passion and he still feels young. Philippine boxing chief Ed Picson said only Pacquiao could decide on his future. "His place in world boxing as a legend is secure ... He has nothing more to prove," said Picson, secretary general of the Association of Boxing Alliances in the Philippines. — AFP

Britain's warship in the Gulf, the HMS Montrose, contacted an Iranian patrol vessel in an effort to ward off a boarding of the Stena Impero, according to radio messages provided to Reuters by maritime security firm Dryad Global.

"Please confirm that you are not intending to violate international law by unlawfully attempting to board," the Montrose said in the radio message. The Iranian patrol boat is heard instructing the Stena Impero to alter course. Responding to the Montrose, it says it intends to "inspect the ship for security purposes".

Separately, Iran said one of its tankers held in Saudi Arabia since being forced to seek repairs at Jeddah port has been released and is returning to the Islamic republic. The Happiness 1 tanker "has been released following negotiations and is now moving toward Persian Gulf waters," said transport minister Mohammad Eslami, quoted by state news agency IRNA. The ship had been forced to seek repairs in Saudi Arabia in early May after suffering "engine failure and loss of control", the Iranian oil ministry's SHANA news agency said at the time.

The rare docking came despite escalating tensions between staunch enemies Iran and Saudi Arabia. "Yesterday, with follow-ups from the ports and maritime authority the issue was resolved," Eslami said. "The tanker is moving towards the Persian Gulf with the permission of the Jeddah port, towed by two Iranian tug boats."

Iran's national tanker company said in a statement that on top of "political and diplomatic negotiations" the tanker's release required "the payment of related costs" demanded by Saudi Arabia. According to a July 2 report by Mehr News Agency, Iran paid "over \$10 million to Jeddah port for repairs and maintenance" of the tanker.

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016, after its missions in the country were attacked in demonstrations over the kingdom executing prominent Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. They still lack direct diplomatic channels, and Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi yesterday thanked "Switzerland and Oman as well as related Saudi parties for offering services and facilities" to resolve the issue. — Agencies

Israel boasts of 'killing Iranians'...

Continued from Page 1

Asked if he feared that Israel would not receive the backing of the United States in the case of a conflict with Iran, Hanegbi suggested that Tehran would avoid such a scenario. "Israel is the only country in the world that has been killing Iranians for two years," he said. "We strike the Iranians hundreds of times in Syria. Sometimes we acknowledge it and sometimes foreign reports reveal it." He added that the Iranians "understand that Israel means business".

Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria against what it says are Iranian and Hezbollah military targets. It has vowed to keep Iran from entrenching itself militarily there. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke in a similar vein last week with cadets at the national security college. "At the moment, the only army in the world to fight Iran is the Israeli army," he said. Earlier this month, Netanyahu warned that Israeli fighter jets "can reach anywhere in the Middle East, including Iran".

Meanwhile, Israel's foreign ministry said yesterday the country will this week host six journalists from Arab coun-

tries including, for the first time, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The visit comes as Israel seeks to improve ties with Gulf Arab countries, with which it has no formal diplomatic relations. Those states have resisted offering Israel formal recognition due to its continuing occupation of Palestinian territory, but their relations have warmed of late, largely due to common concerns over Iran.

The journalists will visit Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, parliament and holy sites, among others, the foreign ministry said in a statement. It said it had "the aim of exposing the journalists - some of whom come from countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel - to Israeli positions on diplomatic and geopolitical issues". Jordan is also participating, the ministry said. Jordan is one of only two Arab countries, along with Egypt, that have diplomatic relations with Israel.

In another recent sign of a thaw, a group of Israeli journalists attended the US-led economic conference on Israeli-Palestinian peace in the Gulf state of Bahrain in late June. The Palestinian leadership boycotted the conference, citing a series of moves against them by US President Donald Trump's administration. On Thursday, Israeli foreign minister Israel Katz said that he had met his Bahraini counterpart publicly for the first time during a visit to Washington last week. Katz also recently visited Abu Dhabi for a UN climate conference, where he met United Nations chief Antonio Guterres and an unnamed "high ranking UAE official". — AFP

Britain weighing response; Saudis...

Continued from Page 1

effect at the start of May. Washington imposed the sanctions after President Donald Trump pulled out of a deal signed by his predecessor Barack Obama, which had provided Iran access to world trade in return for curbs on its nuclear program.

European countries including Britain have been caught in the middle. They disagreed with the US decision to quit the nuclear deal but have so far failed to offer Iran another way to receive the deal's promised economic benefits. Britain was thrust more directly into the confrontation on July 4, when its Royal Marines seized an Iranian tanker off the coast of Gibraltar. Britain accused it of violating sanctions on Syria, prompting repeated Iranian threats of retaliation.

While Iran's official line is that its capture of the Stena Impero was because of safety issues, it has done little to hide that the move was retaliatory. The tactics it used - with masked troops rappelling from helicopters - matched those the British had used two weeks before. Parliament speaker Ali Larijani spelled it out more clearly yesterday, telling a parliament session: "The Revolutionary Guards responded to Britain's hijacking of the Iranian tanker."

Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, blamed Washington and Trump's hawkish national security adviser John Bolton for luring Britain into conflict. "Having failed to lure @realDonaldTrump into War of the Century ... @AmbJohnBolton is turning his venom against the UK in hopes of dragging it into a quagmire," Zarif wrote on Twitter. "Only prudence and foresight can thwart such ploys."

In a letter to the UN Security Council, Britain said the Stena Impero was approached by Iranian forces in Omani territorial waters, where it was exercising its lawful right of passage, and that the action "constitutes illegal interference".

Halal sees growth in Russia economy...

Continued from Page 1

The multi pointed to an annual exhibition of halal goods and producers in the Muslim-majority Russian republic of Tatarstan, which this year saw its biggest ever turnout, as an example of the sector's growth. Tatar officials told Russian media the halal food market accounted for around 7 billion rubles a year (\$110 million) - or just over three percent of the region's gross agricultural output. But they said the sector was growing at a rate of between 10 and 15 percent a year.

The certification center said Russia's overall halal economy was also growing at a rate of 15 percent every year, but declined to give a breakdown of its figures. Russia's overall economy is stagnant, with the government predicting growth of only 1.3 percent this year, after 2.3 percent growth in 2018.

Alif, a Moscow-based cosmetics firm, is a new company at the forefront of the move towards exporting halal goods from Russia. Manager Halima Hosman told AFP that, a year after launching, Alif's products were being sold in the Muslim-majority Russian republics of Dagestan and Chechnya, as well as ex-Soviet

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. "Our priority targets for export now are France, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia," she said, adding that the company had non-financial support from the halal certification center.

The 28-year-old, who was born into an Orthodox Christian family in southern Moldova but converted to Islam as a teen, said promoting halal products was about more than business. "It's a way for people who don't know about Islam, who aren't Muslim, to find out about what 'halal' actually means," Hosman added of the alcohol- and animal fats-free cosmetics. Lilit Gevorgyan, principal economist for Russia and former Soviet states at IHS Markit, said the growth in Russia's halal economy seemed impressive but was coming from a "very low base".

Further growth in the sector was likely to be driven more by export than by domestic demand, she said. This is mainly because household incomes have yet to recover from a 2014 crisis caused by a fall in global oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's annexation of Crimea. "Halal food is more expensive due to its production costs, and for Russian consumers... every ruble counts," she said, adding that much of Russia's Muslim community was non-practicing. Changing Muslim countries' perception of Russia will be key if Moscow is serious about increasing halal exports, Gevorgyan added. "Branding is important," she said, adding that Russia - as yet - is not seen as a major halal producer. — AFP