

## International

# Northern Irish Nobel laureate David Trimble dies at 77

## His courage in helping achieve the Good Friday Agreement leaves a legacy

**DUBLIN:** David Trimble, the Nobel peace prize-winning former first minister of Northern Ireland whose statecraft helped end decades of conflict, died Monday aged 77. Trimble, a key architect of the landmark 1998 peace deal in the troubled UK province, won the prize along with pro-Irish leader John Hume that year after the pair sealed the historic agreement.

"It is with great sadness that the family of Lord Trimble announce that he passed away peacefully earlier today following a short illness," his Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) said in a statement. No further details were given about the death of a politician who, despite his staunch pro-UK convictions, worked with Irish nationalists to end the three decades of bloodshed known as the "Troubles".

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson described Trimble as a "giant of British and international politics". He "will be long remembered for his intellect, personal bravery and fierce determination to change politics for the better", Johnson tweeted.

Irish premier Micheal Martin hailed the Nobel laureate as "someone who played a crucial and courageous role in bringing peace to Northern Ireland".

### Fresh troubles

Sinn Fein's Michelle O'Neill, in line to be Northern Ireland's next first minister after her nationalist party swept to a historic victory in assembly elections in May, lauded Trimble's "very significant contribution to the peace process".

"His courage in helping achieve the Good Friday Agreement leaves a legacy a quarter-century on for which he and his family should be rightly proud," she added. Trimble's death comes at a time of renewed tensions in Northern Ireland with the now-dominant pro-UK force, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), refusing to serve under O'Neill until London rips up a post-Brexit trading pact with the European Union.

The UK government is pushing through legislation to unilaterally rewrite the so-called Northern Ireland Protocol, sparking legal action by the EU. But the DUP has still refused to enter the power-sharing government with Sinn Fein. The UUP also opposes the protocol. But at his final public appearance at the end of June, Trimble said the cornerstone of peace remained in place. "People are actually not throwing the (Good Friday) agreement to pieces, their complaints are still based on the existence of the agreement," Trimble said at the unveiling of a portrait of him.

"They are not saying 'throw it out', so that's the thing to bear in mind." UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, who drafted the contentious protocol legislation and is running to succeed Johnson as prime minister, praised Trimble as "a great figure".

He was, she tweeted, "instrumental in delivering the Belfast Good Friday Agreement and the optimistic Northern Ireland of today". At the start of a televised debate with Truss, her Conservative party rival Rishi Sunak also lauded Trimble as "a giant of unionism" and "a deserving winner of the Nobel Peace Prize".

### 'Huge and lasting legacy'

The 1998 Good Friday accord largely ended 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland that killed 3,500. Despite resistance within the unionist community, which steadfastly believes in Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom, Trimble brought his party to the table in the fraught peace talks.

As part of the process he became the party's first leader in 30 years to meet with the Irish premier in Dublin, and in 1997 he became the first unionist leader since Ireland's partition to negotiate with Sinn Fein.

The nationalist party's leader at the time, Gerry Adams, acknowledged the challenges that Trimble faced persuading his own side. "David's contribution to the Good Friday Agreement and to the quarter-century of relative peace that followed cannot be underestimated," he said. Following the 1998 deal, Trimble served as first minister of Northern Ireland. However, the UUP's popularity waned amid unionist dislike for elements of the 1998 accord seen as too accommodating to republicans.

The rival DUP eventually supplanted it as the biggest unionist party. DUP leader Jeffrey Donaldson said Trimble had braved "a considerable threat to his safety" in defending the union with the UK. "He leaves a huge and lasting legacy to Northern Ireland. He can undoubtedly be said to have shaped history in our country," he said. Trimble, who led the UUP for a decade from 1995, lost his UK House of Commons seat in 2005. He sat as a peer in the House of Lords—the upper chamber of the British parliament—from 2006. —AFP



**MANILA, Philippines:** File photo shows Northern Irish Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lord David Trimble discusses efforts to negotiate a peace accord between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in the south during a press briefing in Manila. — AFP

### 'Direct result' of climate change

Jonathan Pierce, a spokesman for the fire department, said low humidity and high temperatures were stoking the blaze, worsened by the high number of dead trees and steep slopes in the area. The Oak Fire has forced the evacuation of around 3,000 people so far, officials said.

Nearly 3,000 firefighters backed by 24 helicopters have been deployed near the southwestern edge of Yosemite National Park. In recent years, California and other parts of the western United States have been ravaged by huge and fast-moving wildfires, driven by years of drought and a warming climate.

"What I can tell you is this is a direct result of what is climate change," Heggie told CNN. "You can't have a 10-year drought in California and expect things to be the same," he said. "That drought is what drives what we are calling megafires."

Extreme temperatures could be seen elsewhere in the country, as 60 million Americans were under a heat advisory on Monday. The National Weather Service said heat advisories were in place in the Southern Plains and Lower Mississippi Valley, while stifling temperatures would ease on Tuesday in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic.

The usually cool Pacific Northwest will see temperatures surpassing 100 or more degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius) in the Columbia River Gorge and Basin. The NWS said daily record highs will likely be broken from northern California to the Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington areas on Tuesday.

Cities have opened cooling stations and increased outreach to at-risk communities such as the homeless and those without air conditioning. The world has been hit by extreme heat waves in recent months, including Western Europe in July and India in March and April—incidents that scientists say are an unmistakable sign of a warming climate.

The extreme weather prompted former US vice president Al Gore, a long-time climate advocate, to issue a stark warning on Sunday about "inaction" by US lawmakers. Asked whether he believes US President Joe Biden should declare a climate emergency, which would grant him additional policy powers, Gore was blunt. "Mother Nature has already declared it a global emergency," Gore told ABC. — AFP

In 2016, a PIA plane burst into flames after one of its two turboprop engines failed while flying from the remote north of Pakistan to Islamabad, killing more than 40 people. And two years ago a PIA jet crashed while landing at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport killing all but two of the 99 passengers and crew on board, casting the firm's safety standards into doubt. —AFP



**A Pakistan International Airlines Boeing 777**

lockdowns could have contributed, either by lowering immunity in children or by changing the patterns of virus circulation. Deirdre Kelly, a professor of pediatric hepatology at the University of Birmingham who was not involved in the work, said: "I think this is a plausible explanation for these cases. It looks like coinfection is the key."

But, she added, more work was needed to understand why some children develop severe disease and require transplantation. Thomson said it was also important "to understand more about seasonal circulation of AAV2, a virus that is not routinely monitored." "It may be that a peak of adenovirus infection has coincided with a peak in AAV2 exposure, leading to an unusual manifestation of hepatitis in susceptible young children." — AFP

## Greek firefighters battle sixth day to save national park

**ATHENS:** Hundreds of firefighters on Tuesday fought for a sixth day to save one of Greece's most important national parks from a fire that has already devastated vast swathes of forest. "Firebreaks are being broadened (at the Dadia national park)," Dimitris Petrovits, deputy governor of the Evros region in northeast Greece, told reporters.

More than 2,500 hectares (6,178 acres) of pine forest are already estimated to have been lost to the fire that erupted last Thursday. "It is very difficult to check the fire because the vegetation is so dense," a fire department spokesman told AFP.

More than 300 firefighters, four aircraft and six helicopters are active in the area, he said. Dadia, around 900 kilometres (560 miles) northeast of Athens, calls itself one of the most important protected areas in Europe, offering ideal habitat for rare birds of prey, and says it is home to the only breeding population of black vultures in the Balkans. The park's deputy manager Anna Konstandinidou said the 428-square-kilometre (165 square-mile) facility has already sustained "incalculable" damage. "It's been a great shock," she told state television ERT.

"The (bird) observatory has been completely destroyed. The only goal now is to save the most important area that contains the black vulture nests," she said. The park hosts three out of Europe's four vulture species—the black vulture, the griffon vulture and the Egyptian vulture—and 36 of Europe's 38 species of raptors.

Its varied habitats also support 104 butterfly species, 13 amphibian species, 29 reptile species and about 65 mammal species, 24 out of which are bats. Greece is particularly vulnerable to fires during the summer season. —AFP

## Firefighters tackle California wildfire as heat grips parts of US

**MIDPINES, United States:** Firefighters were battling California's largest wildfire of the summer on Monday, a blaze near famed Yosemite National Park that has forced thousands of people to evacuate, officials said. The Oak Fire in central California broke out on Friday and is raging while parts of the United States swelter through a heat wave, including the usually cool Pacific Northwest.

The fire in Mariposa County has engulfed 17,241 acres (6,977 hectares) and is 16 percent contained, Cal Fire, the state fire department, said. "Fire crews are working aggressively using bulldozers, hand crews and aircraft," with only "minimal growth on the fire" seen on Monday, the department said.



**NEW YORK:** People stand together during a moment of silence as the climate clock counts down seven to six during a demonstration for "Climate Emergency Day" at Union Square in New York. — AFP

lot of watering, so I'm going to have to dig even deeper as the water level goes down," he said.

Drought is not the only source of the farmer's water problems. Iran has built several dams on the Lower Zab, notably the Kolsa barrage. "The Kolsa dam has caused at least an 80 percent drop in the water levels" of the Lower Zab, said Banafsheh Keynoush of the Washington-based Middle East Institute. She said Iran is going through one of the worst droughts in its history and has had to revise its irrigation policy.

"Iran is on a dam-building spree, and many of its dams are small," she told AFP. The Dukan dam in Iraq has also been badly affected by the reduced river flow, said its director Kochar Jamal Tawfeeq. "Now we have only 41 percent, below half of the capacity" of the dam, he said. It supplies drinking water for "about three million people in Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk", two major cities downstream, he said. But at just 300 mm of rainfall last year - half the previous annual average - the skies have not been generous. And Tawfeeq said 2022 is on track to mirror last year's figures. "We are releasing 90 cubic meters per second," the director said. "When the reservoir is full, we release 200 to 250." Tawfeeq said farmers were being told "not to grow crops that need too much water".

He said Baghdad had sent teams to Iran to discuss the reduced flow of the Lower Zab river, but "there's no cooperation from the Iranians". Iran contends its river flow contribution into the Tigris and Euphrates basin is only about six percent, according to Keynoush. "What Iran is trying to say is: 'The Euphrates and Tigris problems you have are really between you and Turkey,'" where the two main rivers have their sources, she added.

But Iraq itself is not above criticism, said Azzam Alwash, founder of the Nature Iraq non-government organization and presidential adviser. Iraqi Kurdistan in the north plans to construct new dams but the projects lack any coordination with Baghdad, Alwash said. Downstream, in central and south Iraq, the situation is being exasperated by a lack of modernization of water resources and could result in disaster, he warned. — AFP

## Jetliners narrowly escape collision

**ISLAMABAD:** Two Pakistan passenger jets had a high altitude near-miss in Iranian airspace owing to human error by air traffic controllers, an airline official said on Tuesday. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) said the close call happened on Sunday, when Iranian air traffic control (ATC) cleared Peshawar-bound PIA flight PK-268 to descend from 36,000 feet to 20,000 feet.

Another PIA passenger liner - PK-211 bound for Dubai - was underneath cruising at an altitude of 35,000 feet, and the planes came within 1,000 feet of each other, according to the state-owned carrier. PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan told AFP a cockpit "collision avoidance system helped the two pilots to correct the course and avoid a collision after the planes came close to each other." "We will write to the Iranian authorities to investigate the incident as the ATC should not have cleared the Peshawar-bound flight to descend," he added.

## Breakthrough in mysterious...

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Both teams ruled out recent or prior SARS-CoV-2 infection as a direct cause. No coronavirus was found in the livers of the patients, and while the Scottish study found that two-thirds of the patients had antibodies against the coronavirus, that rate was similar to the overall population prevalence among children at that time.

It is unclear why hepatitis cases spiked recently, but both teams underscored the possibility that

## Iraq's Kurd farmers battle drought as...

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### Rainfall becoming rare

With rainfall becoming a rarity and after three successive years of drought, Iraq has been forced to have the area it devotes to agriculture. "If we hadn't had a little rain in late spring, there would have been no crops in Kurdistan this year," Kalkani said.

Farmers in the area used to dig shallow wells fed by the Dukan so they could irrigate their crops. But not any more. "The wells have lost 70 percent of their water," he said. Sesame farmer Shirko Aziz Ahmed had to dig a well several metres deep so he could access water and raise it using a diesel-powered pump. "Sesame needs a



**RANIYE:** This picture shows cracked soil in a dried-up irrigation canal through a wheat field in the Rania district. — AFP