

International

Trial over fatal Paris synagogue attack opens after 43 years

Bombing was the first deadly attack against a Jewish target on French soil

PARIS: The trial of a 69-year-old Lebanese-Canadian charged over a fatal 1980 bomb attack outside a Paris synagogue opened on Monday after more than four decades of legal wrangling. Canada-based Hassan Diab, who denies any involvement in the attack which killed four and wounded dozens, told the court during preliminary hearings that he would not show up for the trial, after accusations against him had been dropped in an earlier investigation.

In the early evening of October 3, 1980, explosives placed on a motorcycle detonated close to a synagogue in Rue Copernic in Paris's chic 16th district, killing four people—a student passing by on a motorbike, a driver, an Zionist journalist and a caretaker. Forty-six people were injured in the blast.

The bombing was the first deadly attack against a Jewish target on French soil since World War II. No organisation ever claimed responsibility but police suspected a splinter group of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. French intelligence in 1999 accused Diab, a sociology professor, of having made the 10-kilogramme (22-pound) bomb.

They pointed to Diab's likeness with police sketches drawn at the time and handwriting analyses that they said confirmed him as a suspect. They also produced a key item of evidence against him—a passport in his name, seized in Rome in 1981, with entry and exit stamps from Spain, where the attack plan was believed to have originated.

In 2014, Canada extradited Diab at the request of the French authorities. However, investigating judges were unable to prove his guilt conclusively during the investigation and Diab was released, leaving France for Canada a free man in 2018.

Three years later, a French court overturned the earlier decision and ordered Diab to stand trial after all, on charges of murder, attempted murder and destruction of property in connection with a terrorist enterprise. French authorities stopped short of issuing a new international arrest warrant for Diab, effectively leaving it up to him to attend his trial or not. He could be sentenced to life in prison in absentia if found guilty.

"This trial has to happen now," said Benjamin Chambré, one of the prosecutors, accusing Diab of "cowardice" for not showing up. But the suspect's celebrity lawyer, William Bourdon, said his client's decision to stay away was "humanly understandable". The French judiciary "falsely gave the impression" that Diab was guilty because the plaintiffs "were demanding a guilty person at any price".

"The case should have been closed when the investigation was dropped," Bourdon said. Diab won some backing from NGOs, including Amnesty International, who said his assertion that he was in Lebanon at the time of the attack was credible. Bernard Cahen, a lawyer for around 100 plaintiffs in the case, said the start of the trial marked "the end of a long ordeal" for his clients. The verdict is expected on April 21. — AFP



PARIS: French lawyer for the French Association of Victims of Terrorism (AFVT) David Pere (L), Corinne Adler (C), a victim who was 13 at the time, and French lawyer for the French Association of Victims of Terrorism (AFVT) Antoine Casubolo Ferro attend the opening of the trial in absentia of the accused of the 1980 bombing of the Copernic street synagogue. — AFP

Three dead as powerful quake strikes PNG

SYDNEY: At least three people were killed after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake shook a remote region of northwestern Papua New Guinea before dawn Monday. The country's National Disaster Centre said dozens of homes were also affected as emergency crews continued to assess the damage across difficult terrain.

The quake struck at a depth of 62 kilometres (38 miles) near the Chambri Lake system in the sparsely populated region of East Sepik Province, the US Geological Survey said. "Chambri lake is boiling and the continuous quake is still happening right now," a member of parliament in the area, Johnson Wapunai, said in a message on social media several hours after the quake struck.

The lawmaker urged people to watch out for falling objects or trees, and to be on alert for further seismic activity. No tsunami warning was issued. Colles Pinga, who lives not far from the epicentre, told Australia's national broadcaster that three homes in his village were destroyed and people have been injured.

"There's landslides along the riverbanks... it's quite frightening," Pinga told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The quake also left cracks on the interior floors of a new regional hospital that was nearing completion about 60 kilometres away, and also undlodged the building's paving stones, according to photographs taken by a doctor at the scene.

Loosening of soft ground in the quake zone can cause substantial subsidence and horizontal sliding of the ground and result in major damage, the USGS said. The earthquake shook an area about 100 kilometres east of the border with Indonesia on the island of New Guinea. The remote New Britain region, part of an archipelago in eastern Papua New Guinea, was struck by a magnitude 6.2 earthquake in late February. — AFP

Malaysia ready to negotiate on South China Sea

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said Monday that Malaysia was prepared to negotiate the South China Sea dispute with Beijing to safeguard the country's energy exploration efforts. China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea—a strategic waterway through which trillions of dollars in trade pass annually—

UN experts name S Sudan officials for rights abuses

NAIROBI: A panel of UN rights experts on Monday named several high-ranking South Sudanese officials they say warrant criminal investigation and prosecution for their part in grave atrocities against civilians.

Top government and military leaders were identified in a new report by the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan that details state responsibility for widespread murder, rape and sexual slavery. The commission, which conducted a year-long investigation across six states in South Sudan, and released a partial summary of its findings in March, said none of those named in the final report had faced any accountability for their crimes.

"Over several years, our findings have consistently shown that impunity for serious crimes is a central driver of violence and misery faced by civilians in South Sudan," commission chair Yasmin Sooka said. "So we have taken the step of naming more of the individuals who warrant criminal investigation and prosecution for their role in gross human rights violations."

The report identifies Joseph Monytil, governor of Unity State, and Lieutenant General Thoi Chany Reat of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, in relation to state-sanctioned killings in Mayom County in August 2022.

Four captured rebel officers were summarily executed by government troops in killings that were captured on video and shared widely. Three were killed by firing squad and a fourth was burned alive in a hut.

The report also names Gordon Koang, the county commissioner of Koch, who was accused of leading horrific attacks on civilians in neighbouring Leer County between February and April 2022. Other top-ranking officials in Warrap, Upper

despite an international court ruling that Beijing's assertion has no legal basis.

The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei all have overlapping claims in the sea, while the United States sends naval vessels through it to assert freedom of navigation in international waters. Anwar—who was on a visit to Beijing recently—said the "sensitive" issue was raised at a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping as Malaysia's state energy firm Petronas has its largest oil platform in the disputed area, as well as several exploration projects.

"I said, as a small country we need the resources, (like) oil and gas, we have to continue (exploration projects)," Anwar said during a monthly speech to staff at the Prime Minister's Office. "But if the con-

dition is that there must be negotiations, then we are ready to negotiate."

The premier did not provide further details on the conversation with Xi. While asserting their claims in the South China Sea, Chinese authorities in recent years have ramped up its development of artificial islands, including outfitting some with military facilities and runways.

Regional nations have also accused Chinese vessels of harassing their fishing boats. In 2021, Malaysia summoned Beijing's envoy to the Southeast Asian country in protest after Chinese vessels entered its maritime economic zone in the disputed sea.

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Nile, Jonglei and the Equatoria states were identified as warranting further scrutiny or investigation for their role in various abuses.

"The Commission found that while the Government of South Sudan has announced special investigation committees into several situations, not one has led to any form of accountability," the panel said in a statement.

"Government and military personnel implicated in these serious crimes remain in office." The government has accused the commission of interfering in its national affairs and rejected past findings from the three-member panel.

South Sudan achieved independence from Sudan in 2011 but collapsed into a civil war two years later that devastated the world's newest country. Close to 400,000 people died before a peace deal was signed in 2018 but core tenets of the agreement remain unfulfilled, and the country is riven by armed violence. A promised tribunal led by the African Union to prosecute offenders and deliver justice for victims of war crimes has never eventuated. — AFP

MoI supermarkets denying entry to...

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"This decision is against the laws of consumer protection and the ministry of commerce and industry and human rights. Let's assume that their claims that the co-ops are crowded is true. This is an administrative matter and must be organized administratively and not by random decisions, especially by preventing a consumer from buying their needs in the month of Ramadan," he said. Mane revealed he has informed the undersecretary of the ministry of commerce about the incidents faced by expats and

Kuwait says output cuts support...

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in October by slashing production by two million barrels per day. At the time, the White House accused OPEC+ of "aligning with Russia", saying the cuts would boost Moscow's revenue and undermine Western sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine. Russia's war on Ukraine stoked inflation as it sent energy prices soaring last year, but crude prices have fallen since then.

OPEC+ said in a statement on Monday that Sunday's move was a "precautionary measure aimed at supporting the stability of the oil market". The Kremlin also defended the decision, saying it was "in the interests of global energy markets for world oil prices to remain at a good level". "Whether other countries are happy with this or not is their business," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Sunday's decision "caught the markets off guard" and reversed recent oil-price gains after fears of a global banking crisis eased, noted ActivTrades analyst Ricardo Evangelista. "With the fizzling out of the banking crisis and the return of optimism to the markets, the price of the barrel was already showing signs of recovering," he noted. "The OPEC+ announcement compounded this dynamic, taking oil

informed him about Consumer Protection Association's objection to such behavior.

Citizen Ali Wahabi expressed his anger at the decision that prevents expatriates from entering cooperative societies, pointing out it violates the constitution and is discriminatory. "Kuwait is a humanitarian country. It has sufficient stocks, so there is no reason to prevent expatriates from entering. This decision must be canceled immediately, because it has negative repercussions at the local and global levels," he said.

Nada Maged, an expat who used to buy from the Police Co-Op in Zahra, said: "This started three days before Ramadan, when the Police Co-op denied entry to expats. They checked the IDs and prevented anyone from entering except Kuwaitis and interior ministry personnel."

prices back to pre-banking-crisis levels." The news sparked bumper gains for European energy companies and lifted London and Paris stock markets, although Frankfurt dipped. Shares in Britain's BP and France's TotalEnergies were up more than five percent in afternoon deals, while Shell rose 4.7 percent. Oil giants enjoyed record profits last year as crude prices soared. However, the weekend development also fanned concerns over a fresh spike in consumer prices that could put pressure on central banks to push interest rates even higher — and dent the global economy.

Central banks have been hiking rates in efforts to tame high inflation. "There's real concern that the surprise decision... will prompt central banks to maintain interest rates higher for longer, due to the inflationary impact, which will hinder economic growth," said Nigel Green, head of financial consultancy deVere Group. Global equities had been buoyed Friday after data highlighted easing inflation in the eurozone and the United States.

Green said the oil price rises "can be expected to increase the cost of production and transportation, reduce consumers' purchasing power, disrupt supply chains, and lead to higher inflation expectations." Crude prices have come down over the past year as concerns about a possible recession caused by higher borrowing costs have offset supply worries sparked by sanctions on Russia over its war on Ukraine. — AFP

Environmental care in Islam-I...

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Based on the above hadeeth, one of the many lessons we can extract is that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showed much care and concern towards the environment and aimed at caring and protecting it wholeheartedly. Following are four things — among others — that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught us about the environment.

1. Practice sustainable consumption whenever possible: Surely most of us have heard of the 3Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Through this framework, we are reminded to use only what we need, re-use things for the same or new purpose and convert waste into useful products. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself practiced these sustainable approaches during his lifetime. There are several narrations that the Prophet (PBUH) was seen to repair his shoes instead of discarding them. Aisha (RA) narrated, "Allah's Messenger (PBUH) used to mend his sandals, stitch his garments, and he would do what one of you would do in his house." (Al-Albani rated it as Saheeh (authentic) in Hida'yat Ar-Ruwat # 5, 759)

As seen from the above prophetic narration, it proves that even the noblest person on earth was mindful in his affairs and those around him. The daily items used were fixed and mended regularly. This does not necessarily mean that we have to use the same things until they wear out, but ought to work towards sustainability. We have to be conscious of the things we use, buy, sell, create, and consume. It is important for us to look at ways to get durable products and inventions, ones that prevent wear and tear for over a period.

2. Plant trees as a means of good deeds: Trees and plants, in general, are seen and appreciated in many areas of a country and also across many parts of the world. Trees are known to improve the quality of air and water by absorbing pollutants, releasing oxygen, and reducing ozone levels. They also help in reducing the atmospheric temperature by transpiring and

providing shades for humans and animals alike.

Planting trees is a beneficial act, one that benefits many levels of the ecosystem and helps to preserve and care for the environment. The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged the cultivation of trees. Anas bin Malik (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "There is none among the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from them, except that he will be rewarded for it as charity." (Al-Bukhari # 2, 320 and Muslim # 1, 553)

Through the above quoted hadeeth (prophetic narration), it is clear that every good work and beneficial deed done sincerely by any individual will result in abundant rewards from Allah (swt). Such are examples of impactful activities. It may only be seen by the naked eye as one act of planting a tree or a flower, but in return, it brings benefits to many creatures in the long run.

The act of planting trees as mentioned by the Prophet (PBUH) is regarded as a charity. Anas bin Malik (RA) narrated that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "Even if the Day of Judgement comes upon one of you while he has in his hand a seedling, then let him (go ahead and) plant it." (Al-Albani said that its chain of narrators is saheeh (authentic) based on the conditions of Imam Muslim in rating as authentic prophetic narrations; see As-Silsila As-Saheeha # 9 and Al-Adab Al-Mufrad # 371)

In another narration, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqaas (RA) related that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said what can be translated as: "I have declared sacred the territory between the two lava plains (areas full of black or burnt rocks) of Medina, so its thorny trees and shrubs should not be cut down, or its game killed." And he also said, "Medina is best for them if they knew. No one leaves it through dislike of it without Allah putting in it someone better than him in place of him; and no one will stay there in spite of its hardships and distress without me being an intercessor or witness on behalf of him on the Day of Resurrection." (Muslim # 1, 361) —Courtesy of the TIES Center