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Pilgrims flock to Saudi Arabia for Haj

MAKKAH

Despite the Middle East war, there was never any doubt in Fadel's mind that he would attend this year's Haj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

"Even if the war were still ongoing, I would not have backed out," the 49-year-old US national, who asked that only his first name be used, told AFP.

"We are undoubtedly in the safest place in the world," he added.

This sentiment is common among many Muslims from Western nations who have come to Saudi Arabia for the upcoming Haj in the wake of the devastating war in the Middle East.

As an estimated 1.8 million pilgrims poured into the holy city of Makkah ahead of the Haj, the breadth and diversity of the global Islamic community was on vivid display. "This is an opportunity that comes once in life and I decided not to miss it," said Ibrahim Diab, a 63-year-old German national. — AFP

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TRUMP: US WILL NOT RUSH INTO A DEAL

US President says blockade of Iranian ports will remain in force

DUBAI

BY STEPHEN N. R.
Senior Associate Editor

US President Donald Trump said the US will not "rush into a deal" with Iran, adding that the US blockade of Iranian ports will remain in "full force and effect" until an agreement is reached.

"The negotiations are proceeding in an orderly and constructive manner, and I have informed my representatives not to rush into a deal in that time is on our side," Trump wrote in a social media post yesterday morning.

"Both sides must take their time and get it right. There can be no mistakes! Our relationship with Iran is becoming a much more professional and productive one."

No nuclear weapon

Trump reiterated that Iran must understand "that they cannot develop or procure a Nuclear Weapon or Bomb."

The president on Saturday said an agreement between the United States and Iran had been "largely negotiated" and that



Smoke rises following an Israeli strike on the southern Lebanese village of Nabatiyeh yesterday.

the Strait of Hormuz would be reopened, signalling potential momentum toward ending the months-long war.

Ahead of his announcement, Trump spoke to President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and other Gulf and regional leaders.

Those taking part in the joint call included King Hamad Bin Eisa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, Saudi Crown

Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, King Abdullah of Jordan, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah Al Sissi, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Qatar Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Al Thani, and Pakistan Defence Forces Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir.

Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed yesterday received a phone call from Sheikh Tamim during which they discussed efforts to

advance diplomatic solutions supporting regional security and stability.

Two phases

The Iran-US deal is expected to unfold in two phases, Axios and CNN reported.

In the first phase, Iran will reopen the Strait of Hormuz to its pre-war status, with shipping security in the region ensured, and provide assurances that it will not pursue nuclear weapons, the source said. Iran will also be allowed to resume the sale of fuel and oil.

The second phase, lasting 30 to 60 days, will focus on detailed negotiations over the nuclear issue and other broader matters, the source added.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly responded for the first time yesterday to reports of an emerging agreement, stating that "Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."

Later yesterday, Netanyahu added that Trump had reaffirmed his support for Israel's right to defend itself against threats on all fronts, including from Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon.

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HORMUZ WARNING

The Strait of Hormuz must return to its pre-war status as a free international waterway and should not be placed under political influence or control, Dr Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic Adviser to the UAE President, warned during the GLOBSEC Forum 2026 in Prague.

Gargash said any attempt to politicise or control the strategic maritime corridor would create a dangerous precedent with serious consequences for global trade and Europe's energy security.

He also warned that another round of fighting between the United States and Iran would further complicate the region's security landscape, stressing the need for a political settlement that addresses the root causes of instability.

Following his participation in the forum, Gargash said in a post on X that UAE's policies and positions continued to receive "clear appreciation and respect" internationally.

EID MUBARAK

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