



38,000 women, girls killed in Gaza war by end of 2025, says UN



Table with weather forecasts for various cities including Beijing, Colombo, Dhaka, Dubai, Houston, Istanbul, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Moscow, New York, Singapore, Toronto, and Washington.

Lebanon truce holds as Israel signals continued action against Hezbollah

Displaced residents stream back under 10-day truce as army cites violations, with Islamabad continuing efforts to mediate broader deal



Displaced residents drive back to their homes in the southern Lebanese area of Msaileh | AFP

BEIRUT

A 10-day ceasefire deal struck between Lebanon and Israel took effect on Friday, sending displaced residents streaming south towards their homes...

Shortly after the truce went into effect at midnight local time (2100 GMT), the army told residents of the south — many of whom had to flee their homes following sweeping Israeli evacuation warnings — not to return...

Displaced resident Alaa Damash acknowledged the warnings "to wait a bit" before rushing back home. But the people's "love for their lands and houses, and their attachment to them, pushed them to go back there despite the fire threats", she said.

The ceasefire represents a key step in Washington's efforts to reach a deal to end its war with Iran, with Tehran insisting a Lebanon truce must be part of any agreement.

Mediator Islamabad has been leading the international push to restart face-to-face talks between Tehran and Washington with Trump signaling he might fly to Pakistan to sign any agreement — adding they were "very close" to striking one.

'Hezbollah fight not finished' Israel has not yet finished dealing with Hezbollah, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday, vowing to press on with the Lebanese militant group's "dismantling" just hours after a 10-day ceasefire came into effect.

'Today's Hezbollah is a shadow of its former self compared to the heyday of (Hassan) Nasrallah,' he said of the group's leader who was killed by Israel in 2024. "But we haven't yet finished the job. There are things we plan to do to address the remaining rocket threat and the drone threat," said Netanyahu.

Israel's other objective, the "dismantling of Hezbollah" wouldn't be "achieved overnight," he said, warning it would require "a sustained effort, patience and perseverance, along with skilful diplomatic manoeuvring."

Netanyahu said Israel's operation had "removed" two threats from Lebanon. "A near threat involving the infiltration of thousands of terrorists and anti-tank fire into our communities and a distant threat... of 150,000 missiles and rockets to destroy Israel's cities," he said.

Israel's defence minister said on Friday that the campaign against the militant group Hezbollah was not yet complete, just hours after a 10-day ceasefire came into force in Lebanon. He also warned that if the fighting resumed, displaced residents returning to the country's war-torn south would have to evacuate again. "The ground manoeuvre into Lebanon and the strikes on Hezbollah have achieved many gains, but they are still not complete," Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a broadcast statement.

France, UK to lead Hormuz mission

PARIS: France and the UK on Friday welcomed the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz but said freedom of navigation must be fully and permanently restored. President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Keir Starmer said planning was underway for a multinational mission to secure shipping routes. More than a dozen countries may contribute, with military planners set to meet in London next week, amid efforts to stabilise global trade and ease tensions.

Turkey hosts latest diplomatic push

ANTALYA: Turkey on Friday hosted a diplomatic forum bringing together foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as efforts intensified to end the West Asia war. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged dialogue to turn a fragile ceasefire into lasting peace. Talks later Friday were expected to focus on the war and security of the Strait of Hormuz. The meeting is seen as part of broader regional efforts to revive negotiations and prevent further escalation.

London step in with \$1B Hormuz cover

LONDON: London insurers will provide \$1 billion in extra cover for vessels sailing through the Strait of Hormuz, as the West Asia war disrupts trade, a statement said. Insurance firm Beazley will lead a marine war consortium via Lloyd's of London. The facility aims to support shipping and keep global trade moving, though traffic remains low due to safety concerns, recent attacks on vessels, and ongoing regional security risks.

Starmer resists calls to quit over Mandelson appointment

LONDON

BRITISH Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Friday resisted demands he resign over revelations that his scandal-tainted pick for UK ambassador to Washington was appointed despite failing security checks. Starmer says he was not informed that the Foreign Office had overruled the recommendation of security officials in early 2025 not to give Peter Mandelson the job. Many considered Mandelson a risky appointment because of his past friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Starmer said he was "absolutely furious" that he had been kept in the dark, calling it staggering and "unforgivable."



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer | AP

He said he would "set out all the relevant facts in true transparency" to Parliament on Monday. The top Foreign Office civil servant, Olly Robbins, took the fall for the decision and resigned. The prime minister's job has been endangered by his fateful decision to appoint Mandelson, a trade expert and elder statesman of the governing Labour Party, as envoy to the Trump administration. It was a calculated risk that backfired spectacularly and could bring down the prime minister.

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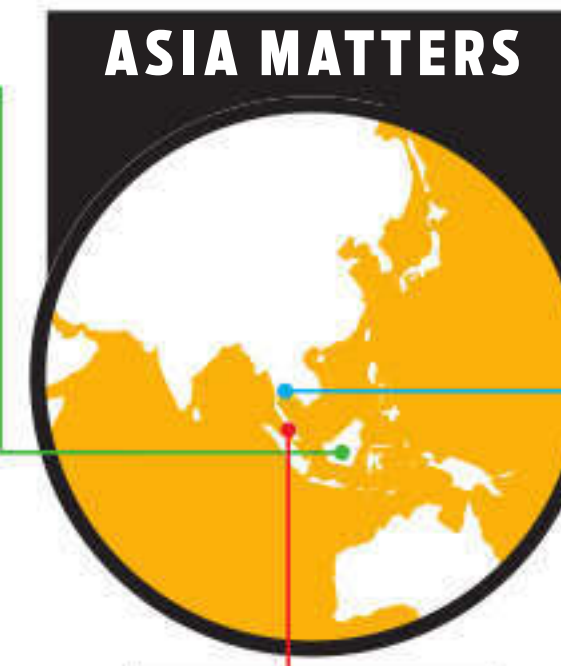
Opposition politicians expressed disbelief that Starmer could have been unaware Mandelson had failed security vetting. Starmer's office said he only found out this week. AP

ASIA MATTERS

INDONESIA

COPTER CRASH ON BORNEO ISLAND KILLS 8

A helicopter flying between palm oil plantations on Borneo Island crashed, killing the eight people on board, Indonesian officials said Friday. The Airbus H130 owned by PT Mattoo Air Nusantara lost contact Thursday, five minutes after it took off from Melawi district in West Kalimantan province. It was on its way to another palm oil plantation in Kubu Raya district. Searchers later found the wreckage and recovered the bodies of two crew members and six passengers in dense forests in Sekaduu district, authorities said, adding one victim was Malaysian.



THAILAND

PROBE INTO INTIMIDATION OF JOURNALIST

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul has ordered an urgent probe into alleged information operations targeting journalists after a petition flagged online intimidation campaigns. Media founder Thapanee Eadsrichai said anonymous pages attacked her after she questioned a military commander. Authorities were told to establish facts and ensure journalists' safety. The government said intimidation by officials would not be tolerated, while activists warned such campaigns threaten press freedom and peace efforts.

MALAYSIA

Police seized air rifles, PVC pipes and jihad-related books from the family home of a police station attacker, a court heard. An officer said items and phones were recovered during a search after the deadly attack. Five family members were arrested and face multiple terrorism-related charges in court proceedings.

Venezuela wins back IMF and World Bank recognition

WASHINGTON

THE IMF and World Bank said Thursday they are restoring relations with Venezuela, further legitimizing the interim government and opening new doors to financial support.

Within hours the Venezuelan government confirmed it too would recognise the relationship that has been frozen since 2019.

"Guided by the views of International Monetary Fund members representing a majority of the IMF's total voting power, and consistent with long standing practice, the Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva today announced that the IMF is now dealing with the Government of Venezuela, under the administration of acting President Delcy Rodriguez," the IMF said in a statement.

On Venezuelan state television Thursday night, Rodriguez said: "We are normalizing all processes that involve Venezuela's rights in the organisation." AFP

Saudi rolls over \$3B deposit to support Pak reserves

KARACHI

SAUDI ARABIA has reached an agreement with the State Bank of Pakistan which allows for an extension in the maturity of a USD 3 billion deposit with the central bank, it was announced on Friday.

The announcement comes a day after the SaudiA Fund for Development deposited USD 2 billion of the USD 3 billion on Thursday with the State Bank

of Pakistan (SBP), bringing a major boost to the country's skewed foreign reserves.

"The agreement, signed between the SaudiA Fund for Development (SFD) and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), provides for the extension in the maturity of a USD 3 billion deposit placed by SFD with the State Bank of Pakistan," said a post on X by the Ministry of Finance.

The Finance Ministry said that the agreement was signed between SBP Governor Jameel Ahmed and Chief Executive Officer of the SFD Sultan bin Abdulrahman Al-Marshad.

Minister for Finance and Muhammad Aurangzeb witnessed the signing of an important financial agreement in Washington, DC, in the presence of Pakistan's Ambassador to the

United States. The development took place on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings. Saudi Arabia on Tuesday extended its USD 5 billion facility for a further three years and had also pledged the additional USD 3 billion deposits for Pakistan. With this fresh loan, Saudi Arabia has become the single largest country to have placed a total of USD 8 billion in cash deposits with Pakistan's central bank. PTI

EXPRESS READ

LeT leader injured in gunmen attack

LAHORE: Punjab Police on Friday registered a case after unidentified gunmen opened fire on Lashkar-e-Taiba co-founder Amir Hamza in Lahore, leaving him injured. The attack targeted a vehicle near a TV channel office on Thursday. Hamza was hospitalised and later shifted home. Police said intelligence agencies have taken over the probe, with efforts underway to trace suspects using CCTV footage.

Sri Lanka's min resigns over coal import charges

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Power Minister Kumara Jayakodi resigned Friday after a presidential commission was appointed to probe coal imports by a state entity. His resignation, along with the ministry secretary's, aims to facilitate an independent investigation, officials said. Jayakodi, who survived a no-confidence vote last week, is the first minister to quit from the ruling National People's Power government elected in 2024.

Philippine forces kill 10 militants in South

MANILA

PHILIPPINE forces killed 10 suspected Muslim militants Friday in the deadliest clash so far this year in the south where troops have been fighting remaining rebels waging a considerably weakened separatist insurgency, officials said. Decades of seces-

sionist violence in the south, homeland of minority Muslims in the largely Roman Catholic nation, considerably eased in 2014 after the largest armed group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which had thousands of armed guerrillas, signed a Muslim autonomy deal with the government. A number of small-

er armed groups which refused to get involved in the peace talks, but, continued to wage sporadic guerrilla attacks for a separate Muslim state. Amerol Mangoranca's fighters, once aligned with the Islamic State group, were blamed for recent attacks, including a January ambush that killed four soldiers. AP

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