

ENDING GAZA WAR Ministers from Muslim nations to visit China

REUTERS

Ministers from Arab and Islamic countries will visit China today on the first stop of a tour aims at ending the war in Gaza, Saudi Foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said.

The tour will be the first step in carrying out decisions reached at a joint Arab and Islamic summit held in Riyadh this month, Prince Faisal said on the sidelines of a conference in Bahrain in comments posted by his ministry on the social media platform X on Friday.

"The first stop will be in China, then we will move to other capitals to convey a clear message that a ceasefire must be announced immediately, and let in aid," the minister said.

"We have to work on ending this crisis and the war on Gaza as soon as possible," he added.

Iraq militia labels US sanctions 'ridiculous'

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's powerful pro-Iranian armed group Kataeb Hezbollah has denounced as "ridiculous" sanctions unveiled this week by the United States over recent attacks on US troops in Iraq and Syria.

American forces deployed in those two countries have been attacked more than 55 times since October, according to the Pentagon, coinciding with US ally Israel's war on Hamas in Gaza.

In a statement released late Saturday on Telegram, Kataeb Hezbollah spokesman Abu Ali al-Askari said attacks by "the Islamic resistance in Iraq" were part of a "strategy of attrition", dismissing sanctions as ineffectual.

"The inclusion of certain brothers in the so-called 'American sanctions list' is ridiculous," Askari argued, saying "such actions will not dissuade our courageous fighters".

The US Treasury said on Friday it had sanctioned six individuals affiliated with Kataeb Hezbollah.

It also said Kataeb Hezbollah was trained, funded and supported by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and "is behind a spate of recent attacks against US and partners in Iraq and Syria."

ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Internet ban in Manipur extended till Nov 23

AGENCIES

The government of India's Manipur state has extended the ban on internet services for another five days until November 23, considering the unfavourable law and order situation in the violence-hit state.

The state police chief's report to the government observed that there is apprehension that some anti-social elements might use social media extensively for the transmission of images, hate speech, and hate video messages inciting violence, which might have "serious repercussions for the law and order situation in the state," which has witnessed months-long ethnic violence.

The police report also highlighted incidents such as ambushes on security forces, protests over missing persons, highway blockades, and student demonstrations, which have heightened fears of anti-social elements exacerbating the situation, reports India Today.

The order extending the internet ban noted that such a move is necessary to "stop the spread of disinformation and false rumours" and to prevent any activities which might "cause serious disturbances to the peaceful co-existence and maintenance of public order".

Nearly 200 people have been killed since the ethnic clashes broke out between two tribal groups, the Kukis and Meiteis, on May 3. Several hundred people were injured in the violence, which is still ongoing in some locations.

The violence erupted first after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts of Manipur to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.



Relatives of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes mourn at Nasser hospital, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Gaza, West Bank should be 'reunited' under PA

Says Biden as questions swirl over future of the region

AFP, Washington

Gaza and the West Bank should eventually be "reunited" under a new Palestinian Authority (PA), US President Joe Biden said in an opinion piece Saturday, as questions swirl over the future of the region once Israel achieves its goal of crushing the Hamas group.

"As we strive for peace, Gaza and the West Bank should be reunited under a single governance structure, ultimately under a revitalized Palestinian Authority, as we all work toward a two-state solution," Biden wrote in the piece published in The Washington Post.

Israel's top ally Washington has given its full backing to the country after the war began on October 7.

But as the death toll from Israel's military campaign in Gaza continues to climb -- to 12,300 people, including more than 5,000 children, according to the Hamas government -- the United States has voiced concerns over the manner of the strikes and questions over the long-term future of the territory once Hamas is vanquished.

"A two-state solution is the only way to ensure the long-term security of both the Israeli and Palestinian people. Though right now it may seem like that future has never been further away, this crisis has made it more imperative than ever," Biden said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not reject Biden's plan, but said the Palestinian



Authority "in its current form is not capable of receiving responsibility for Gaza."

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas has not condemned the Hamas attack and his senior ministers are celebrating it, Netanyahu said.

"We can't have a civilian authority in Gaza that supports terror, encourages terror, pays terror, and teaches terror," he said at a news conference.

Abbas, meanwhile, appealed to Biden to use his "significant influence" on Israel "to intervene immediately to... stop this humanitarian catastrophe, this genocide against our innocent people."

In a meeting with top US diplomat Antony Blinken earlier this month, Abbas said the PA could only assume power in Gaza if a "comprehensive political solution" is found for the decades-

old Israel-Palestinian conflict encompassing the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

Abbas, 88, who has led the PA for 18 years, is widely unpopular and has been powerless against the rapid expansion of Israeli settlements and military control in the West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem.

In his letter Saturday, Biden also threatened sanctions against settlers committing violence against Palestinians in the West Bank amid the conflict in Gaza.

"I have been emphatic with Israel's leaders that extremist violence against Palestinians in the West Bank must stop and that those committing the violence must be held accountable," he said.

"The United States is prepared to take our own steps, including issuing visa bans against extremists attacking civilians in the West Bank," he added.

Taiwan reports renewed China military activity

REUTERS, Taipei

Taiwan reported renewed Chinese military activity around the island yesterday, with nine aircraft crossing the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait and warships carrying out "combat readiness patrols".

Democratically-governed Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, has complained for the past four years of regular Chinese military patrols and drills near the island, as Beijing seeks to pressure Taipei over its sovereignty claims.

With Chinese President Xi Jinping in San Francisco last week for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, where he met US President Joe Biden, the scale of that military activity around Taiwan had scaled off.

But Taiwan's defence ministry reported that starting yesterday morning it had detected nine Chinese aircraft crossing the Taiwan Strait's median line, which had previously served as an unofficial barrier between the two and which Chinese planes now regularly fly over.

The aircraft involved included Su-30 and J-10 fighters, as well as early warning and electronic warfare aircraft, the ministry said.

Maldives formally asks India to withdraw troops

REUTERS, Male

Maldives new President Mohamed Muizzu, who campaigned on altering the tiny Indian Ocean archipelago's "India first" policy, has requested India to withdraw its military from the country. Muizzu won the presidential election in September, ousting Ibrahim Solih in a runoff after promising to remove a small Indian military presence of some 75 personnel. India and China have been vying for influence in the region, with the coalition backing Muizzu considered to be leaning more towards China. "The Maldivian people had given him (Muizzu) a strong mandate to make the request to India and expressed the hope that India will honour the democratic will of the people of the Maldives," the president's office said in a statement on Saturday. India's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. At his inauguration on Friday, Muizzu said, "I will ensure that this country has no foreign military presence on its soil." Muizzu made the request to Kiren Rijiju, India's minister for earth sciences, who was representing India at the president's inauguration, it said. "It was agreed that the two governments would discuss workable solutions for continued cooperation," a senior Indian government official said on condition of anonymity, without clarifying whether India would return its military. Primarily known as a holiday destination in South Asia, with pristine white beaches and secluded resorts, the Maldives has also become a geopolitical hotspot.

Heavy rain in Kenya affects tens of thousands

AFP, Nairobi

Kenya yesterday said tens of thousands of people across the country had been impacted by heavy rainfall, flooding and landslides that had also interrupted cargo services at Mombasa port. The Horn of Africa has experienced intense rainfall linked to the El Nino weather phenomenon in recent weeks that has claimed dozens of lives, including at least 46 in various parts of Kenya. Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua said at least 80,000 households in Kenya had been affected

"with numbers rising every day". He said the government was responding to "save our people" including with helicopters and other emergency services to deliver aid and rescue marooned families. "This situation has continued to threaten lives," he said in a statement issued yesterday, urging the public to avoid floodwaters and evacuate homes in low-lying areas. The prolonged rainfall was expected to extend into the first quarter of next year, he added. Officials said nine people have died in the coastal region since last week including two passengers in a car belonging to the Kenya Revenue Authority that was swept off a flooded bridge in Kwale County on Friday morning. "A multi-agency team led by the Kenya Coast Guard Service is on scene trying to retrieve the bodies," the interior ministry said yesterday. Kenya Railways said floods and landslides had caused an "unexpected delay" in deliveries to Mombasa port and along the cargo rail line to Nairobi. "Consequently, this has affected normal train operations, including cargo transfers, loading as well as offloading activities at the Port of Mombasa," the state-owned railway said.



Workers build a path in the hill as part of an alternate plan to reach to 41 workers trapped in a tunnel after a portion of the tunnel collapsed in Uttarkashi in the northern state of Uttarakhand, India yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran rapper released on bail after year in jail

AFP, Tehran

Iranian authorities have released on bail a popular rapper jailed for more than a year over supporting nationwide protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death in custody.

Toomaj Salehi, 32, was arrested in October 2022 after publicly backing the wave of demonstrations which erupted a month earlier, triggered by the death of 22-year-old Amini, an Iranian Kurd, who had been taken into custody over an alleged breach of strict dress rules for women.

In July, Salehi was sentenced to six years in prison on charges of "corruption on earth", which carries a maximum penalty of death.

The musician's lawyer said that upon appeal, the top court had found "flaws in the initial sentence" and ordered that Salehi be "released from prison today on bail".