

Gaza war will grow if truce doesn't hold

Iran FM warns

AFP, Beirut

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian warned that the threat of the Gaza war spreading would grow unless a truce between Israel and Hamas lasts, in an interview as he visited Beirut.

"If this ceasefire starts tomorrow, if it does not continue... the conditions in the region will not remain the same as before the ceasefire and the scope of the war will expand," Amir-Abdollahian told the Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen television channel on Wednesday.

"We do not seek to expand the scope of the war," he added. "If the intensity of the war increases, every possibility is conceivable for the expansion of the scope of the war."

Israel and Hamas said Wednesday they had agreed a four-day truce in the Gaza war.



People flee following an Israeli strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday, amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas. The Gaza Strip is the "most dangerous place in the world to be a child," the head of the Unicef said.

PHOTO: AFP

US shoots down drones launched from Yemen

AFP, Baghdad

A US warship patrolling the Red Sea intercepted multiple attack drones launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen yesterday, the US Central Command said.

"On the morning (Yemen time) of November 23, the USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) shot down multiple one-way attack drones launched from Houthi controlled areas in Yemen," CENTCOM said on X.

"The ship and crew sustained no damage or injury," it added.

The Huthis have declared themselves part of an "axis of resistance" of Iran's allies and proxies retaliating against Israel's war with Hamas.

The conflict has raised the spectre of a broader Middle East conflagration, with the frontier between Lebanon and Israel also seeing near-daily exchanges of fire.

The Huthis in Yemen have launched a series of drones and missiles towards Israel since the October 7 start of the Israel-Hamas war.

On Wednesday, Israel said it had intercepted a "cruise missile" heading for the south of the country, a shot claimed by the Houthi rebels.

'We don't need a truce just so aid can come in'

Displaced Palestinians in Gaza remain sceptical about Israel-Hamas deal

AFP, Khan Yunis

Why a truce if they can't go home? At Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, war-weary displaced Palestinians remain sceptical about the Israel-Hamas deal to exchange hostages for prisoners.

Maysara Assabagh is just one of 1.7 million people from the territory's 2.4 million population forced from his home in northern Gaza by Israeli bombardment.

They fled straight into the jaws of an appalling humanitarian crisis in the south. "What truce are they talking about?" he asked on the 47th day of the war between Israel and the Hamas, demanding the displaced be allowed to go back to the north.

Completely penniless, he managed to find refuge at the Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis which now shelters some 35,000 displaced people.

"We don't need a truce just so aid can come in. We want to go home," Assabagh insisted. "This entire war is one big injustice."

On Wednesday, Israel and Hamas said a deal had been reached to free 50 hostages held in Gaza for 150 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails during a four-day truce.

It was the first sign of respite since the war began on October 7. But for 55-year-old Yasser al-Huwaiti, the truce is "dust in our eyes -- the war will start again afterwards".

Huwaiti used to live in Gaza City

in the north, but now his house is a tent at the Nasser hospital. "Today we're suffering because of the war, and tomorrow it will be because of our destroyed homes. Where will we live? How will we rebuild?"

Food and water are in short supply. Near the hospital, displaced people search for what they can

Salma Qassem, 55, is from Beit Hanun in the north of the densely populated territory, and she too just wants to go home.

"To me the only thing that matters is when we can return to our homes," she said. "But even if we do go back, where will we live? They've destroyed our homes. Our



find among market stalls.

The truce will provide barely enough time "to recover our martyrs from the streets and the ruins. We don't want a truce so aid can come in. We want a full ceasefire and to go home," Huwaiti said.

The Hamas government in Gaza says Israeli attacks have killed more than 14,000 people since the war began, among them more than 5,800 children.

children are sick because of the cold and not enough food, water and medicine," Qassem said.

"Sickness is increasing because of the waste everywhere and not enough clean water."

Qatar, which helped mediate the Hamas-Israel deal, said the accord would include "the entry of a larger number of humanitarian convoys and relief aid, including fuel designated for humanitarian needs".

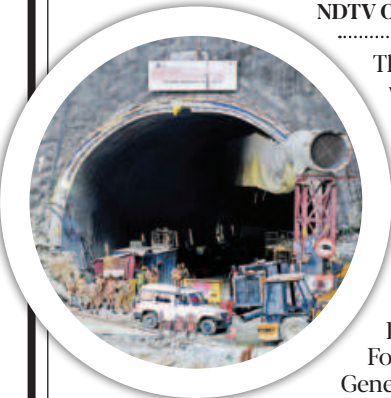
BID TO KILL SIKH SEPARATIST

India examining US inputs of 'foiled plot'

NDTV ONLINE

India said it is examining US inputs on the "nexus between organized criminals, gun runners, terrorists and others" amid reports that the US thwarted a plan to allegedly assassinate Khalistani separatist Gurbhagat Singh Pannun on American soil. "India takes such inputs seriously since it impinges on our own national security interests as well. Issues in the context of US inputs are already being examined by relevant departments," foreign ministry spokesman Aridam Bagchi said in response to media queries. The White House said the US is "treating a reported plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil with utmost seriousness" and has raised the issue with the Indian government "at the senior-most levels", reported news agency Reuters. Asked about the FT report, White House spokesperson Adrienne Watson said Indian counterparts had "expressed surprise and concern" and "stated that activity of this nature was not their policy." "We understand the Indian government is further investigating this issue and will have more to say about it in the coming days. We have conveyed our expectation that anyone deemed responsible should be held accountable," Reuters quoted her as saying. Quoting un-named sources, Financial Times has reported that the US informed India about concerns regarding an alleged plot to kill Gurbhagat Singh Pannun, the founder of SFI.

Indian rescuers close in on workers trapped in tunnel



NDTV ONLINE

The forty-one workers who are trapped under a collapsed tunnel in India's Uttarakhand will be pulled out on wheeled stretchers one by one through a big pipe that is still being drilled to reach them, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Director General Atul Karwal told news agency PTI yesterday. The rescuers had also considered the option of making the workers crawl out one by one. Their health condition, however, may prevent them from crawling out on their own, following 12 days of living under the debris of the tunnel without any natural light and full meals, though they have been given supplies via small "lifecycle" pipes. The NDRF personnel will slide in through the pipe and once they reach the workers, they will use the stretchers to send out workers one by one, Karwal said, according to PTI. Every worker will be made to lie low on the stretcher to prevent their limbs from scrapping the welded pipe's metal underside while NDRF personnel pull the stretcher with a rope, officials said. The rescue operation to bring out the 41 workers trapped in tunnel resumed yesterday morning after an iron mesh that had come in the path of the auger machine drilling an escape path was removed. The 800-mm diameter rescue pipe will be cleaned by the NDRF and its state counterpart to ensure no debris prevents the movement of the stretchers, Karwal said, adding the pipe is wide enough to bring out the workers. The NDRF chief said Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami talked to the trapped workers and they appeared to be in good spirits. "People who work in tunnels are mentally tough and they are aware of the huge efforts being carried out to evacuate them," Karwal said.

RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

WHO asks China for more data on outbreak

AFP, Beijing

The World Health Organization has asked China for more data on respiratory illnesses spreading in the north of the country, but Beijing offered no public comment yesterday.

Northern China has reported an increase in "influenza-like illness" since mid-October when compared to the same period in the previous three years, the WHO said.

"WHO has made an official request to China for detailed information on an increase in respiratory illnesses and reported clusters of pneumonia in children," the UN health body said in a statement on Wednesday.

China's National Health Commission told reporters last week that the respiratory illness spike was due to the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and the circulation of known pathogens, namely influenza and common bacterial infections that affect children, including mycoplasma pneumonia.

The Chinese capital of Beijing, located in the north of the country, is currently experiencing a cold snap, with temperatures expected to plummet to well below zero by today, state media said.

The city has "entered a high incidence season of respiratory infectious diseases", Wang Quanyi, deputy director and chief epidemiological expert at the Beijing Center for Disease Control and Prevention, told state media.

Beijing "is currently showing a trend of multiple pathogens coexisting", he added. The WHO gave no indication of China's response to the request for more information.



A Finnish Border Guard speaks to the migrants at the international border crossing at Salla, northern Finland yesterday. European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex said it will send more officers and other staff to Finland next week as the Nordic nation seeks to limit the number of asylum seekers coming via Russia.

PHOTO: AFP

J&K journo walks out of jail after 21 months

AFP, Srinagar

Authorities in Indian-administered Kashmir released a prominent journalist on bail yesterday, nearly two years after he was arrested on charges of "glorifying terrorism" in the disputed territory and "spreading fake news".

Fahad Shah, a correspondent for US newspaper Christian Science Monitor and editor of The Kashmir Walla news portal, was arrested in February 2022 after police officers questioned him repeatedly for his reporting.

But a court granted him bail last week, agreeing with an earlier ruling that Shah's preventative detention was untenable.

"It's good to be back among my family and friends who stood by me. It was a difficult and traumatic period," Shah told AFP from his home in Srinagar.