



DEADLY ISRAELI STRIKE ON GAZA SCHOOL



(From left, clockwise) Displaced Palestinians watch as first responders prepare to transport the corpses of people killed in an Israeli strike on a school in Gaza City yesterday that killed more than 90 people; a young girl cries inside the school after the attack; an injured man comforts his daughter after several members of his family were killed in an overnight Israeli strike.

PHOTO: AFP



POLITICAL TRANSITION IN VENEZUELA Maduro rejects Panama's offer

REUTERS, Panama City

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro gave a scathing response to an offer on Friday from his Panamanian counterpart, Jose Raul Mulino, to facilitate his departure to a third country to allow for a political transition.

Mulino told broadcaster CNN he would give Maduro safe passage to act as a "bridge" to a third country, in the aftermath of a July 28 election Maduro says he won but independent pollsters claim as an opposition landslide.

"If that's the contribution, the sacrifice that Panama has to make, by offering our soil so that this man and his family can leave Venezuela, Panama would do it without a doubt," Mulino said in an interview.

But Maduro accused the Panamanian president, who himself was elected to office just three months ago, of getting "carried away by the gringos," using a derogatory term for Americans.

"I will try to learn your name, President of Panama, but whoever messes with Venezuela runs aground," Maduro told reporters outside a courtroom where he filed an appeal to verify the electoral results.

Maduro has claimed a 51% victory in last month's election, while the political opposition maintains its candidate won by millions of votes. Venezuela's electoral authority has yet to release detailed vote tallies.



Escalations in Middle East serve no one

US tells Israel, releases \$35b to Israel to spend on weapons

REUTERS, Washington

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in a phone call on Friday that the escalation of tensions in the Middle East was "in no party's interest" while also stressing the need for a Gaza ceasefire, the State Department said.

There has been an increased risk of escalation into a broader Middle East war after recent killings of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas' leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran and of Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut drew threats of retaliation against Israel.

As a result, many fear a widening of Israel's war in Gaza that has already killed tens of thousands and caused a humanitarian crisis.

"The Secretary reaffirmed the United States' ironclad commitment to Israel's security and discussed how escalation is in no party's interest," the State Department said in a statement.

Blinken stressed the "urgent need to reach a ceasefire in Gaza"

that could release hostages held in the enclave and "create the conditions for broader regional stability," the State Department added.

Meanwhile, Washington will provide Israel \$3.5 billion to spend on US weapons and military equipment, the State Department said on Friday, with the release of the money coming months after the US Congress appropriated it during Israel's war in Gaza.

A State Department spokesperson said on Friday that the department notified Congress on Thursday that the government intended to release the billions of dollars worth of foreign military financing to Israel.

CNN reported earlier on the release of this amount which comes from a \$14 billion supplemental funding bill for Israel passed by the Congress in April.

Meanwhile, an Israeli airstrike on a Gaza school compound housing displaced families killed around 100 people, the Hamas-run Gaza government said on Saturday, while the Israeli military said it had

targeted Hamas militants and cast doubt on the Palestinian death toll.

Video from the site showed body parts scattered on the ground and more bodies being carried away and covered in blankets on the floor. Empty food tins lay in a puddle of blood and burnt mattresses and a child's doll lay among the debris.

In another video, men prayed over a dozen body bags laid out on the ground. It was not immediately clear whether all the videos were filmed on the ground floor of the Tabeen school complex, in Gaza City.

Gaza's Hamas-run media office said in a statement that the complex was attacked when people sheltering there were performing dawn prayers.

The Gaza health ministry says that since October 7, Israel's military assault on the Hamas-governed enclave has killed nearly 40,000 Palestinians while also displacing nearly the entire population of 2.3 million, causing a hunger crisis and leading to genocide accusations that Israel denies.

India, Maldives look to reset ties after spat

AFP, Male

India's foreign minister has called the Maldives a "priority" for New Delhi on his first trip to the archipelago nation since its pro-China president expelled Indian troops.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said late Friday he was in the Maldives to "take stock of our defence and security engagement", months after President Mohamed Muizzu's administration signed a military assistance pact with Beijing.

Known as a luxury holiday destination with pristine white sand beaches and secluded resorts, the atoll nation has also become a geopolitical hotspot.

India is suspicious of China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean, and Male's military deal with Beijing came as Muizzu ordered a garrison of Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives to assist with maritime patrols to leave.

Jaishankar, who will also meet Muizzu, said he wanted to highlight India's "continued support to Maldives in its quest for progress and prosperity".

Global east-west shipping lanes pass the nation's chain of 1,192 tiny coral islands, stretching around 800 kilometres (500 miles) across the equator.

India's government has traditionally considered the Maldives, home to around half a million people, within its sphere of influence.

"For India, neighbourhood is a priority and, in the neighbourhood, Maldives is a priority", Jaishankar said in a speech Friday.

Male's foreign minister Moosa Zameer called India "one of our closest friends", in a statement.

Zameer said the two countries had agreed to strengthen economic ties, saying Muizzu had asked to "begin negotiations" on a free trade agreement with New Delhi.

Defence links were also discussed, including "continuing joint exercises and expanding training opportunities for officers", he added.

In June, Muizzu visited New Delhi for Narendra Modi's inauguration as prime minister.

Muizzu's election successes hinged on a sustained campaign against India's outsized political and economic clout in the Maldives.

Its influence has been a periodic source of resentment in the Muslim-majority nation.

US POLLS CAMPAIGN Harris in Arizona, Trump in Montana



REUTERS, Glendale

US Vice President Kamala Harris campaigned in a packed arena in Arizona on Friday, hoping to put Republican candidate Donald Trump on the back foot in the West, while Trump held his own rally in Montana to support a Republican candidate for Senate.

The Democratic presidential candidate, less than a month into her bid for the White House, has been on a week-long tour after naming her running mate, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, with a focus on building excitement for her campaign in seven states that could tip the Nov 5 election.

That tour on Friday brought her to the Phoenix area, where she was visiting with volunteers at a campaign office and speaking to voters.

Also in the West, Trump held a rally in Bozeman, Montana, a state that Republicans have carried in every presidential race since 1996.

Protests go on across country

FROM PAGE 12

blocked till 7:00pm.

They chanted slogans such as "Save the Hindus", "Why are my temples and homes being looted? We want answers", "Hindu persecution in independent Bangladesh must not go on", "Religion is for individuals, the state is for everyone", "Who are you, who am I? Bangalee, Bangalee", and "Ensure the safety of the Hindus".

Speaking at the programme, Shanti Ranjan Mondal, president of Bhakta Sangha Bangladesh, said, "Many people are waiting near the border for refuge in neighbouring countries. Arrangements need to be made so they can return home with dignity."

The demonstrators warned they would wage tougher programmes if immediate steps are not taken to stop the attacks on the Hindus.

Puja Rani Saha, from Joypurhat's Khetlal area, said, "Someone in Dhaka can't even comprehend the extent of the persecution the Hindus of our locality

have been facing. We're citizens of this country, but we're always at the receiving end of the wrath during any unrest."

She said they came all the way to Dhaka to join the protests as their backs were now against the wall.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajote formed a human chain in front of the National Press Club to protest the attacks. They also demanded the reinstatement of reserved seats and a separate election to ensure the minorities' representation. Bangladesh Sanatan Party, after a meeting at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, issued a statement urging people to unite and come forward to stop the torture of minorities.

In Chattogram city, several thousand Hindus staged a sit-in at the Cheragi Pahar intersection, demanding the security of minorities.

They started gathering at the intersection from around 3:00pm and kept the intersection blocked for around three and a half

hours.

Rinku Sharma, an assistant director of the Hindu Welfare Trust, said, "We [Muslims and Hindus] have been living together in the region for years as Bangalees. But some miscreants are trying to use religious identities to ruin that bond."

In Barishal city, members of the Hindu community held a rally in front of the Ashwini Kumar Hall under the banner of "Nipiron Birodhi Mancha".

Addressing the rally, Bhanu Lal Dey, president of the Mahanagar Puja Uddjan Parishad, said they have been sleepless from fear and are not getting any kind of assistance from the law enforcement agencies.

They later brought out a procession that paraded through different streets in the city.

In Natore, Hindus held a rally at the Kanaikhal Old Bus Stand. They said temples are being vandalised and looted as criminals are taking advantage of the absence of law and order.

Members of the

Hindu community in Mymensingh also formed a human chain in front of the city's Firoz Jahangir Chattar. They later brought out a procession under the banner of "Shocheton Sanatani Samaj".

In Shariatpur, a group of people formed a human chain, under the banner of "Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajote", near the district's Central Shaheed Minar.

In Narayanganj, hundreds of Hindus brought out a procession, demanding justice for the attacks.

In Kushtia, students brought out a procession and held a rally, urging people to resist any attempts to attack minorities or their religious establishments.

Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad and Bangladesh Puja Uddjan Parishad on Friday reported at least 205 attacks on members of minority communities in 52 districts since the fall of the Hasina-led government on August 5.



Local residents from a village near the Russian border who fled due to Russian shelling, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, arrive in an evacuation centre in Sumy, Ukraine. Struggling to contain a major Ukrainian incursion, Russia yesterday said it had evacuated tens of thousands of people from its border region and launched a "counter-terror operation".

PHOTO: REUTERS