

## Islamist-led Syria rebels capture Hama

AFP, Beirut

Islamist-led rebels captured the central Syrian city of Hama yesterday, days after seizing the country's commercial hub Aleppo in a lightning offensive against President Bashar al-Assad's forces.

The rebels led by Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) launched their offensive little more than a week ago, just as a ceasefire took hold between Israel and Assad's ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Following overnight clashes, the rebels stormed Hama "from several sides" and engaged in street battles with Assad's forces, Britain-based war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said.

The rebels said they seized Hama's prison and released its inmates. By the afternoon, Syria's army admitted losing control of the city, strategically located between Aleppo and Assad's seat of power in the capital Damascus.

The rapid fall of the city came despite shelling and strikes by the Syrian and Russian air forces, as reported by state media late Wednesday.

The Observatory, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria, says 727 people, mostly combatants but also including 111 civilians, have been killed in Syria since the violence erupted last week.

It marks the most intense fighting since 2020 in the civil war sparked by the repression of pro-democracy protests in 2011.

The rebels launched their offensive in northern Syria on November 27, the same day a ceasefire took effect in the war between Israel and Hezbollah in neighbouring Lebanon.

Until last week, the war in Syria had been mostly dormant for years, but analysts have said violence was bound to flare up as it was never truly resolved.

Shepherding the rebel alliance is HTS, which is rooted in Syria's Al-Qaeda branch.

The group has sought to moderate its image in recent years, but experts say it faces a challenge convincing Western governments it has fully renounced hardline jihadism.

The United States maintains hundreds of troops in eastern Syria as part of a coalition formed against Islamic State group jihadists.



Protesters wear ponchos in the rain as they take part in a candlelight rally calling for the ouster of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on the steps of the National Assembly in Seoul yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 'Cold War' can turn 'hot'

Warns Lavrov, accuses West of destabilising the 'Eurasian continent'

AFP, Ta'Qali

Russia's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov yesterday accused the West of destabilising the "entire Eurasian continent" and warned that the Cold War that the west is waging can turn "hot".

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga branded Lavrov a "war criminal" as they both attended an international summit in Malta, the latter's first visit to an EU member since the 2022 invasion.

Sitting between the representatives of San Marino and Romania, Lavrov railed against the EU, Nato and in particular the United States.

He said the West was behind a



"reincarnation of the Cold War, only now with a much greater risk of a transition to a hot one", according to a transcript of his remarks from RIA Novosti.

He also accused Washington of military exercises in the Asia-Pacific region that sought to "destabilise the entire Eurasian continent".

Sybiga accused Moscow of being "the biggest threat to our common security" as the two foreign ministers sat on the same huge table at a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was also in Ta'Qali, near Valletta, for the talks, though officials said he had no plans to meet Lavrov.

"Russia is not a partner; it is the

biggest threat to our common security. Russia's participation in the OSCE is a threat to cooperation in Europe," Sybiga told ministers from the 57-member body.

"When Russians say they want peace they lie," he said, adding: "Ukraine continues to fight for its right to exist."

"And the Russian war criminal at this table must know: Ukraine will win this right and justice will prevail."

Lavrov, who has been sanctioned by the European Union, had not visited an EU country since a December 2021 trip to Stockholm, again for an OSCE meeting, Russian media reported.

The OSCE was founded in 1975 to ease tensions between the East and the West during the Cold War, and now counts 57 members from Turkey to Mongolia, including Britain and Canada as well as the United States.

## Brain stimulation can help injured people walk: study

AFP, Paris

Scientists said that electrically stimulating a particular region in the brain could help people with injured spinal cords walk more easily, with one patient describing how the technique allowed him to conquer his fear of stairs.

The new technique is intended for people with spinal cord injuries where the connection between their brain and spinal cord has not been totally severed, and who still have some movement in their legs.

Wolfgang Jaeger, one of two patients who took part in an early trial, said that it immediately made a "big difference" to his mobility.

"Now when I see a staircase with just a few steps, I know I can handle it on my own," the 54-year-old said in a video released alongside a new study in the journal *Nature Medicine*.

The research was conducted by a Swiss team that has pioneered

several recent advances, including using electrical stimulation of the spinal cord to let several paralysed patients walk again.



the brain region they were looking for was in the lateral hypothalamus, which is otherwise known as a regulator for arousal, feeding and motivation.

A particular group of neurons in this region "appears to be involved in the recovery of walking after spinal cord injury," neuroscientist Gregoire Courtine at Switzerland's Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne told AFP.

Next, the team sought to amplify the signal from these neurons using a procedure called deep brain stimulation.

It involves a surgeon implanting electrodes in the brain region, which are connected to a device implanted in the patient's chest. When switched on, the device sends electrical pulses up to the brain.

First, the team tested their theory on rats and mice, finding that it "immediately" improved walking, the study said.

They were surprised to find that

This time around, the researchers wanted to figure out which region of the brain was most responsible for people recovering from spinal cord injuries.

Using 3D imaging techniques to map out the brain activity of mice with these injuries, the team created what they called a "brain-wide atlas".

They were surprised to find that

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Dated: 04/12/2024

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e-Tenders are invited in e-GP portal ([Http://www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) by Executive Engineer, Zone-5, Dhaka South City Corporation For the procurement of following package, which will be available at e-GP website form 03/12/2024 at 22.00 PM.

SI No.	Tender ID, Ref No & package No	Name of works	Last Selling date and Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	Tender ID- 1043975 egp/dscc/Z-05/23-24/P-55-Re	Construction Work of Dhalpur Tinsheed Cleaner Worker Residence Under Ward No-49 at Dhaka South City Corporation (Group-Ga)	18-Dec-2024 13:30	18-Dec-2024 15:30

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

DSCC/PRD/151/2024-2025

## Macron seeks new PM after Barnier resigns

AFP, Paris

President Emmanuel Macron yesterday sought a new prime minister to prevent France from sliding deeper into political turmoil after Michel Barnier's government was ousted in a historic no-confidence vote in parliament.

Contemporary France's shortest-serving premier, Barnier met Macron at the Elysee Palace to submit his resignation after Wednesday's parliamentary defeat forced his government to step down.

The vote was the first successful no-confidence action since a defeat for Georges Pompidou's government in 1962.

"The prime minister today submitted the resignation of his government" to Macron, who has "taken note" of the resignation, the Elysee said.

Barnier and his ministers remain "in charge of daily business until the appointment of a new government", it added.

It remains unclear when the new prime minister will be appointed.

But, unlike on previous occasions, the president appears in a hurry to appoint the new premier to avoid a vacuum, according to multiple sources who spoke to AFP.

## N Korea, Russia defence treaty comes into force

AFP, Seoul

A landmark defence pact between North Korea and Russia, signed by its leaders in June, has gone into effect after the two sides exchanged ratification documents, North Korea's official KCNA news agency said yesterday.

The formalisation of the treaty comes as the United States and South Korea have accused the nuclear-armed North of sending more than 10,000 soldiers to help Russia fight Ukraine.

Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the strategic partnership deal during the Kremlin chief's visit to Pyongyang.

It obligates both states to provide military assistance "without delay" in the case of an attack on the other. It came into effect from Wednesday when the ratification documents were exchanged in Moscow by the countries' vice foreign ministers Kim Jong Gyu and Andrei Rudenko, KCNA reported.