GOLAN SETTLEMENTS Israel seeking to 'expand borders'

Warns Turkey; Kremlin says fate of Russian military bases in Syria undecided

AFP, Ankara

Turkey yesterday denounced an Israeli plan to double the population living in the occupied and annexed Golan Heights as a bid to "expand its borders".

"This decision is a new stage in Israel's goal of expanding its borders through occupation," the foreign ministry said in a statement condemning the move.

Israel's government on Sunday evening approved a plan to double the population of the annexed Golan Heights, just days after its troops seized a UN-monitored buffer zone bordering Syria as rebel forces moved on Damascus.

"This step by Israel is a source of grave concern, taken together with Israel's entry into the area of separation in violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, its advance into adjacent areas and airstrikes in Syria," it said, warning the move would "seriously undermine" efforts to bring stability to Syria after Bashar al-Assad's

The Golan Heights is a mountainous plateau at Syria's southwestern edge, most of which was captured by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin admitted yesterday that the fate of Russian military bases in Syria following the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad was still unclear.

The Tartus naval base and Hmeimim air base are Russia's only military outposts outside the former Soviet Union and have been key to the Kremlin's activities in Africa and the Middle East.

The ousting of Moscow's long-time ally Assad in a shock rebel offensive has brought their future into question.

"There are no final decisions on this," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday.

"We are in contact with representatives of the forces that now control the situation in the country," he added.



Members of Syria's White Helmets civil defence service prepare to transport bodies uncovered at a mass grave in Damascus. Syria yesterday. Bashar al-Assad said his departure from Syria was not planned and that Moscow requested his evacuation from a military base that was under attack, in the former president's first statement since his ouster.

Gaza death toll surpasses 45,000

Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip has killed at least 45,028 Palestinians and wounded 106,962 since October 7, 2023, the Palestinian enclave's health ministry said

The campaign has displaced nearly the entire population and left much of the enclave in ruins. A bid by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States to reach a truce, which would also include a hostage deal, has gained momentum in recent weeks, yet there has been no news of a breakthrough.

Meanwhile, relatives of Palestinians killed by Israel in Khan Younis gathered around their white-shrouded bodies yesterday before carrying them to their graves.

Palestinian health officials said on Sunday at least 20 people, including children, were killed in the strike at the school sheltering displaced

families in the city in the southern Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said yesterday it had struck Hamas members operating from a compound that previously served as a UN-run school. It said the compound served also as a training camp to prepare and plan attacks against Israeli forces.

Women wept as the bodies of the family members were carried away on medical stretchers by men who laid them on the ground to perform funeral prayers.

"People were safe, staying in their homes (shelters) after they prayed the dinner prayer. They were sitting, sleeping, and staying put in their places," said Manal Tafesh, whose brother and his children were among those killed.

"Our children are gone, our children are gone. Our youth are gone. Our children are gone, and our lineage ended. When will this darkness end?" she told Reuters outside the

India plans to supply LNG to Lanka: Modi

REUTERS, New Delhi

India plans to supply liquefied natural gas to Sri Lanka's power plants and will work on connecting the power grids of the two countries as well as lay a petroleum pipeline between the neighbours, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday.

Modi was speaking at a joint press briefing with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in New Delhi. Dissanayake is on his first official visit to India after winning presidency September and securing parliamentary polls victory last month.

RUSSIAN KURSK FRONT

30 North Korean soldiers killed, injured: Ukraine

AGENCIES

Ukraine said yesterday that North Korean units fighting for Russia sustained losses of at least 30 soldiers killed or wounded around several villages on the front in Russia's Kursk region over the weekend.

The Ukrainian military spy agency's statement came after President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that Russia was using North Korean troops in significant numbers for the first time to conduct assaults in Kursk, a Russian region where Ukraine launched a cross-border incursion in August. The statement is the first time Kyiv has claimed

North Korean losses on this scale and in some detail. It said the casualties occurred around the villages of Plekhovo, Vorozhba and Martynovka in the Kursk region. It provided no evidence, reports

Meanwhile. President Vladimir Putin said yesterday his troops had the upper hand across the entire front line in Ukraine and were accelerating their advance.

"Russian troops are firmly holding the strategic initiative along the entire line of contact," Putin told his military generals in a televised meeting.

Germany's Olaf Scholz loses confidence vote

AFP, Berlin

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz yesterday lost a confidence vote in parliament, paving the way for an early general election on February 23.

Out of the Bundestag deputies, 394 voted against Scholz while only 207 expressed confidence in the chancellor, with 116 abstentions.

Scholz had been expected to lose the vote after his three-way coalition fell apart last month.

Scholz's three-party coalition fell apart last month after the promarket Free Democrats quit in a row over

debt, leaving his Social Democrats and the Greens without a parliamentary majority just when Germany faces adeepening economic crisis.



Protesters wave light sticks with placards reading "Arrest Insurrectionist Yoon Suk Yeol!" during a rally calling for the punishment of the South Korea president in downtown Seoul, South Korea yesterday. Impeached Yeol vesterday resisted investigators' calls for him to answer questions over his failed bid to declare martial law this month.

'It's as if an atomic bomb fell on Mayotte'

Says a resident after Cyclone Chido pummels the French territory in Indian Ocean

CNN ONLINE

Reports of widespread damage are emerging from Mayotte after a 100year cyclone ripped across the French Saturday, inflicting archipelago devastation that one resident likened to an atomic bomb, with hundreds and possibly even thousands

of feared victims. "The situation catastrophic, apocalyptic," Bruno Garcia, owner of Hotel Caribou in Mamoudzou, Mayotte's capital, told

CNN-affiliate BFMTV. "We lost everything. The entire hotel is "There is nothing left. It's as if an atomic

bomb fell on Mayotte." Mayotte lies in the Indian Ocean of Madagascar. Made up of two main even thousands, the AP reported.

islands, its land area is about twice the size of Washington DC.

Cyclone Chido, a category 4 storm, tore through the southwestern Indian Ocean over the weekend, impacting northern Madagascar before rapidly intensifying and slamming Mayotte with winds above 220

kilometers per hour. "Honestly, what we are experiencing is a tragedy, you feel like you are in the aftermath of a nuclear war... I saw an entire neighborhood disappear," Mohamed Ishmael, a Mamoudzou

resident, told Reuters. At least 14 people have been completely destroyed," Garcia said. confirmed dead by the French health minister, but the true death toll is expected to be much higher, with local officials predicting the number off the east coast of Africa, just west of victims could be in the hundreds or

FUEL SHORTAGES Iran shuts power plants

AFP, Tehran

has suspended operations at several power plants over fuel shortages that have been intensified by rising demand during a spell of freezing weather.

The country is an energy giant and holds one of the world's largest reserves of natural gas, but it has been forced to ration electricity in recent weeks and close schools and government buildings.

President Masoud Pezeshkian apologised to the nation vesterday for the shortages and promised they would be resolved by next year. The western Lorestan province was the latest to take action, partially closing a gaspowered plant yesterday because of "increased consumption of gas among household consumers", according to IRNA.



- Executive Vice President (EVP)
- Senior Vice President (SVP)



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