

60 more killed in Gaza

Israel threatens Hamas with 'annihilation' as Trump says Gaza ceasefire close

AGENCIES

Israeli strikes killed at least 60 people in Gaza yesterday as Tel Aviv warned of annihilating Hamas if it does not accept a hostage deal in Gaza.

It came amid dire conditions on the ground, with the United Nations warning that Gaza's entire population was at risk of famine.

Amid the bloodshed, US President Donald Trump announced that a ceasefire agreement was "very close".

Defence Minister Israel Katz said Hamas must agree to a ceasefire proposal presented by US envoy Steve Witkoff or be destroyed, after the Palestinian group said the deal failed to satisfy its demands.

"The Hamas murderers will now be forced to choose: accept the terms of the 'Witkoff Deal' for the release of the hostages -- or be annihilated."

Negotiations to end nearly 20 months of war in Gaza have so far failed to achieve a breakthrough, with Israel resuming operations in March following a short-lived truce.

In the United States, Trump told reporters "they're very close to an agreement on Gaza", adding: "We'll let you know about it during the day or maybe tomorrow."

Food shortages in Gaza persist, with aid only trickling in after the partial lifting by Israel of a more than two-month blockade.



Jens Laerke, a spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency, called Gaza "the hungriest place on Earth".

"It's the only defined area -- a country or defined territory within a country -- where you have the entire population at risk of famine," he said.

Later, the UN condemned the "looting of large quantities of medical equipment" and other supplies "intended for malnourished children" from one of its Gaza warehouses by armed individuals.

Aid groups have warned that desperation for food and medicine among Gazans was causing security to deteriorate.

Israel has doubled down on its settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, while defying calls from French President Emmanuel Macron and other world leaders for a two-state solution.

This week Israel announced the creation of 22 new settlements in the

Palestinian territory, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

London said the move was a "deliberate obstacle" to Palestinian statehood while Egypt called it "a provocative and blatant new violation of international law and Palestinian rights".

The 57 member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, which includes Egypt, also condemned Israel's decision.

On Friday, Katz vowed to build a "Jewish Israeli state" in the West Bank.

Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory are considered illegal under international law and seen as a major obstacle to a lasting peace in the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Katz framed the move as a direct rebuke to Macron and others pushing for recognition of a Palestinian state.

Macron on Friday said that recognition of a Palestinian state, with some conditions, was "not only a moral duty, but a political necessity".

Israel's foreign ministry accused the French president of undertaking a "crusade against the Jewish state".

On Friday, Gaza's civil defence agency told AFP that at least 45 people had been killed in Israeli attacks, including seven in a strike targeting a family home in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip.

The latest casualties bring Gaza's total death toll during the war to 54,381, it said, with 124,054 others wounded.

US SC lets Trump revoke legal status for 5 lakh migrants

AFP, Washington

The US Supreme Court handed President Donald Trump a major victory Friday in his immigration crackdown, giving his administration the green light to revoke the legal status of half a million migrants from four Caribbean and Latin American countries.

The decision puts 532,000 people who came from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela to the United States under a two-year humanitarian "parole" program launched by former president Joe Biden at risk of deportation.

And it marked the second time the highest US court has sided with Trump in his aggressive push to deliver on his election pledge to deport millions of non-citizens.

The ruling sparked a scathing dissent from two justices in the liberal minority who said the six conservatives on the bench had "plainly botched" the decision and undervalued the "devastating consequences" to those potentially affected.

The revoked program had allowed entry into the United States for two years for up to 30,000 migrants a month from the four countries, all of which have dismal human rights records.

But as Trump takes a hard line on immigration, his administration moved to overturn those protections, winning a ruling from the Supreme Court earlier this month that allowed officials to begin deporting around 350,000 Venezuelans.

The latest case resulted from Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem canceling an 18-month extension of the temporary protected status of the migrants.

Trump 'tough love' better than no love Says EU's diplomatic chief

AFP, Singapore

The European Union's diplomatic chief Kaja Kallas yesterday said the continent was beefing up defence spending after "tough love" from the Trump administration, as she called for stronger ties to counter China's "economic might".

Speaking at the Shangri-La defence forum in Singapore, Kallas was responding to comments by US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, who called President Donald Trump's insistence on more military spending "tough love".

"It's love nonetheless, so it's better than no love," Kallas quipped when asked later about Hegseth's speech.

Brussels' relationship with Washington was not broken, Kallas stressed, saying she spoke to Hegseth on Friday.

"You heard his speech. He was actually quite positive about Europe, so there's definitely some love there," she said.

Trump has consistently pressed Nato countries to increase defence spending.

Kallas disagreed with suggestions that Washington should focus on the Indo-Pacific region and Europe concentrate on its own patch.

"I really think if you look at the economic might of China, I think... the big countries or the superpowers sometimes overestimate their own strength," she said.



China 'preparing' to use military force in Asia

Says Pentagon chief; Beijing slams speech as 'provocation'

AFP, Singapore

US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth yesterday warned that China was "credibly preparing" to use military force to upend the balance of power in Asia, vowing the United States was "here to stay" in the region.

The Pentagon chief made the remarks at an annual security forum in Singapore as the administration of US President Donald Trump spars with Beijing on trade, technology, and influence over strategic corners of the globe.

China's embassy in Singapore blasted the speech, accusing Washington of escalating tensions in the region and "profiting from creating risks of war".

Trump has launched a trade war with China since taking office in January, has sought to curb its access to key AI technologies and deepened security ties with allies such as the Philippines, which is engaged in escalating territorial disputes with Beijing.

"The threat China poses is real and it could be imminent," Hegseth said at the Shangri-La Dialogue



Hegseth says threat from China 'real', urges Asian allies to 'quickly upgrade' their defences

Says US 'here to stay' in Indo-Pacific

attended by defence officials from around the world.

Beijing is "credibly preparing to potentially use military force to alter the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific", he said.

Hegseth warned that the Chinese military was building the capabilities to invade Taiwan and "rehearsing for the real deal".

The United States was "reorienting toward deterring

aggression by communist China", Hegseth said, calling on US allies and partners in Asia to swiftly upgrade their defences in the face of mounting threats.

Hegseth described China's conduct as a "wake up call", accusing Beijing of endangering lives with cyber attacks, harassing its neighbours, and "illegally seizing and militarising lands" in the disputed South China Sea.

Hegseth's hard-hitting address drew a critical reaction from the Chinese embassy in the city-state.

"The speech is steeped in provocations and instigation," the embassy wrote on its Facebook page.

"Mr Hegseth repeatedly smeared and attacked China and relentlessly played up the so-called 'China threat'," the statement said, accusing the United States of being the "biggest troublemaker" in the region.

Beijing did not send any top defence ministry officials to the summit, dispatching instead a delegation from the People's Liberation Army National Defence University led by Rear Admiral Hu Gangfeng.

India floods kill five in northeast

AFP, Guwahati



Torrential monsoon rains in India's northeast triggered landslides and floods that swept away and killed at least five people in Assam, disaster officials said yesterday.

Rivers swollen by the lashing rain -- including the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries -- broke their banks across the region.

Assam State Disaster Management Authority officials on Saturday confirmed five deaths in the last 24 hours.

A red alert warning had been issued for 12 districts of Assam after non-stop rains over the last three days led to flooding in many urban areas.

The situation was particularly bad in the Guwahati. City authorities have disconnected the electricity in several districts to cut the risk of electrocution. CM Himanta Biswa Sarma said his government had deployed rescue teams.

India's annual monsoon season from June to September offers respite from intense summer heat and is crucial for replenishing water supplies, but also brings widespread death and destruction.

The deaths recorded are among the first of this season, with scores often killed over the course of the rains across India, a country of 1.4 billion people.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Railway, featuring a table with tender details and contact information.

Floods in Nigeria kill at least 150

AFP, Abuja

Flash flooding earlier this week in central Nigeria killed more than 150 people, a local disaster response spokesman told AFP yesterday, while displacing 3,000, levelling more than 250 homes and washing away two bridges.

The sharp jump from the previous death toll of 115 came as bodies were recovered nearly 10 kilometres away from the town of Mokwa, the epicentre of the floods, Ibrahim Audu Husseini, a spokesman for the Niger State Emergency Management Agency, told AFP.

As Husseini warned that the toll could still rise -- with bodies being swept away down the powerful Niger River -- President Bola Tinubu said that search-and-rescue operations were underway, with the disaster response being aided by security forces.

Buildings collapsed and roads were inundated in the town, which is located more than 350 kilometres by road from the capital Abuja, an AFP journalist in Mokwa observed on Friday.

Government of Bangladesh tender notice for construction work, including details of the tender and contact information.