

Indo-Pacific
a focal point
of US foreign
policy'

Rubio tells Asean
ministers

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met counterparts in Southeast Asia yesterday during his first visit to the region since taking office, reassuring them it is a priority for Washington, despite President Donald Trump's tariffs.

Washington's top diplomat joined foreign ministers of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Kuala Lumpur at a meeting that includes Australia, China, the European Union, Japan, Russia, South Korea



and Russia, and others.

The visit is part of an effort to renew US focus on the Indo-Pacific and look beyond conflicts in the Middle East and Europe.

"It is our view, and the reality that this century and the next, the story of the next 50 years, will largely be written here in this region, in this part of the world," Rubio told the gathering of Asean ministers.

"When I hear ... that perhaps the United States or the world might be distracted by events in other parts of the planet, I would say distraction is impossible," added Rubio, who doubles as national security adviser.



Displaced Palestinians make their way toward the Mawasi area as they flee amid an Israeli ground offensive in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

52 killed in Israeli strikes

Says Gaza civil defence agency as 'difficult' truce talks continue

AGENCIES

Gaza's civil defence agency yesterday said 52 people, including eight children, were killed in Israeli bombardments on the Palestinian territory.

Nearly half of those deaths were recorded in the central city of Deir el-Balah, where at least 17 people were killed, it said.

The series of strikes came just hours after Hamas, which runs Gaza, announced it was willing to release 10 Israeli hostages as part of ceasefire talks in Qatar. The Palestinian group also said it opposes any ceasefire deal that includes a large Israeli military presence in Gaza.

US President Donald Trump extended timeframe for the truce, saying there is a "very good chance" of a deal in Gaza this week or next, but Hamas said talks in Qatar have been "difficult" because of Israel's stubbornness, reports Al Jazeera online.

Gaza's civil defence agency official

Mohammed al-Mughair said the latest wave of Israeli bombings hit central and southern Gaza. Eight children and two women were among the dead, he said, adding Israeli aircraft targeted "a gathering of citizens in front of a medical point".

Two people were killed in separate strikes on the Nuseirat camp while four lost their lives at the Bureij camp, both in central Gaza,

Trump says ceasefire deal close, this week or next

Israeli soldiers kill Palestinian man in West Bank

Mughair said.

Five people living in tents in the Al-Mawasi area of Khan Yunis in the south, he added. Israel's strikes have killed at least 57,680 Palestinians in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

In the occupied West Bank, Palestinian authorities said Israeli troops killed a 55-year-old man -- an incident the Israeli army said involved a stabbing attack.

The Ramallah-based health ministry said the body in charge of coordination with Israel informed it that soldiers "shot and killed" the man in Rummanah, near Jenin, in the morning.

Meanwhile, the United States said on Wednesday it was imposing sanctions on Francesca Albanese, the United Nations' special rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, who has been very critical of US ally Israel's offensive in Gaza.

Iran threats
within UK
'significantly
increased'

Says intel watchdog

AFP, London

The threat posed by Iran in the UK has "significantly increased", with Iranian spies behind more than a dozen attempts to kill or kidnap British-based individuals since 2022, parliament's intelligence watchdog warned yesterday.

The UK government's response has been too focused on "crisis management" while concerns over Iran's nuclear programme have overly dominated, the Intelligence and Security

Committee of Parliament also concluded.

Its report comes amid growing alarm in Britain at alleged Iranian targeting of dissidents, media organisations and journalists in the UK, which has included accusations of physical attacks.

Iran in March became the first country to be placed on an enhanced tier of the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS), which aims to boost Britain's national security against foreign influences.

"Iran poses a wide-ranging, persistent and unpredictable threat to the UK, UK nationals, and UK interests," Kevan Jones, chairman of the watchdog committee, said in the report's conclusions.

"Iran has a high appetite for risk when conducting offensive activity and its intelligence services are ferociously well-resourced with significant areas of asymmetric strength."

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