



People attend a "No Kings" protest against US President Donald Trump's policies, in Times Square in New York City yesterday. Large demonstrations are expected to hit the streets yesterday from New York to San Francisco to vent their anger over Trump's hardline policies.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'Just a wasteland'

UN aid chief foresees 'massive job' ahead on tour of ruined Gaza; strike on bus kills 9; ICC rejects Israeli bid to withdraw arrest warrants against Netanyahu

AFP, Jerusalem

The United Nations' aid chief took stock of the monumental task of restoring basic necessities in the devastated Gaza Strip yesterday, as Israel and Hamas exchanged more human remains.

In a short convoy of white UN jeeps, relief coordinator Tom Fletcher and his team wound their way through the twisted rubble of shattered homes to inspect a wastewater treatment plant in Sheikh Radwan, north of Gaza City.

"I drove through here seven to eight months ago when most of these buildings were still standing and, to see the devastation, this is a vast part of the city, just a wasteland, and it's absolutely devastating to see," he told AFP.

The densely packed cities of the Gaza Strip, home to more than two million Palestinians, have been reduced to ruins by two years of bombardment and intense fighting between Hamas and the Israeli army.

Just over a week since US President Donald Trump helped broker a truce, the main border crossing to Egypt has yet to be reopened, but hundreds of trucks roll in daily via Israeli checkpoints and aid is being distributed.

Hamas has returned the final 20 surviving hostages it was holding and has begun to hand over the remains of another 28 who died.

On Friday night, it turned over a body identified by Israel as Eliyahu Margalit, 75, who died in the October 7, 2023 attack that ignited the war in Gaza.

Yesterday, in line with the terms of the ceasefire deal, Israel returned the bodies of 15 more Palestinians to Gaza, the health ministry in the Hamas run territory said.

Surveying the damaged pumping equipment and a grim lake of sewage at the Sheikh Radwan wastewater plant, Fletcher said the task ahead for the UN and aid agencies was a "massive, massive job".

The British diplomat said he had met residents returning to destroyed homes trying to dig latrines in the ruins.

"They're telling me most of all they want dignity," he said. "We've got to get the power back on so we can start to get the sanitation system back in place."

"We have a massive 60 day plan now to surge in food, get a million meals out there a day, start to rebuild the health sector, bring in tents for the winter, get hundreds of thousands of kids back into school."

According to figures supplied to mediators by the Israeli military's civil affairs agency and

authority, said Saturday that it had recovered the bodies of nine Palestinians from the Shabab family after Israeli troops opened fire on a bus.

The military said it had fired on a vehicle that approached the so-called "yellow line", to which its forces withdrew under the terms of the ceasefire.

Under the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, negotiated by Trump and regional mediators, the Palestinian group has



released by the UN humanitarian office, on Thursday some 950 trucks carrying aid and commercial supplies crossed into Gaza from Israel.

Relief agencies have called for the Rafah border crossing from Egypt to be reopened to speed the flow of food, fuel and medicines, and Turkey has a team of rescue specialists waiting at the border to help find bodies in the rubble.

Some violent incidents have taken place despite the ceasefire. Gaza's civil defence agency, which operates under Hamas

returned all 20 surviving hostages and the remains of 10 out of 28 deceased ones.

Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court Friday rejected Israel's bid to appeal against arrest warrants for its Israeli PM Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant over the Gaza war.

In a ruling that made headlines around the world, the ICC in November found "reasonable grounds" to believe Netanyahu and Gallant bore "criminal responsibility" for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza.

## NUCLEAR DEAL WITH WEST Iran 'terminates' all mechanisms

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday said that it was no longer bound by restrictions on its nuclear programme as a landmark 10-year deal between it and world powers expired, though Tehran reiterated its "commitment to diplomacy".

The 2015 deal – signed in Vienna by Iran, China, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States – saw the lifting of international sanctions against the Islamic republic in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear programme.

But the pact had already been in tatters after Washington unilaterally withdrew during President Donald Trump's first term, with Iran later pulling back from its commitments.

The reimposition last month of UN sanctions at the urging of three of the deal's European signatories rendered the accord effectively moot.

From now on, "all of the provisions of the deal, including the restrictions on the Iranian nuclear programme and the related mechanisms are considered terminated", Iran's foreign ministry said in a statement on the day of the pact's expiration.

"Iran firmly expresses its commitment to diplomacy," it added.

Western powers have long accused Iran of secretly seeking nuclear weapons – something it has repeatedly denied, insisting its nuclear programme is solely for civilian purposes such as energy production. The deal's "termination day" was set for October 18, 2025, exactly 10 years after it was enshrined in the UNSC resolution 2231.

## AFGHAN-PAK BORDER CLASHES

### Doha talks to go ahead

At least 10 Afghans killed in strikes as Kabul accuses Islamabad of breaking truce

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan and Afghan officials were due to meet in Qatar yesterday, a day after Islamabad launched air strikes that killed at least 10 people in Afghanistan and broke a ceasefire that had brought two days of calm to the border.

The strikes targeted what Pakistan security sources said was a militant group linked to the Pakistani Taliban in the Afghan border areas, following an attack that killed Pakistani paramilitary troops in North Waziristan, a district in Pakistan's northwest.

Kabul accused Islamabad late on Friday of violating the truce, which had briefly paused nearly a week of cross-border clashes that killed dozens of troops and civilians on both sides.

"The talks will focus on immediate measures to end cross-border terrorism against Pakistan emanating from Afghanistan and restore peace and stability along the Pak-Afghan border," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement.

Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif and intelligence chief General Asim Malik were part of the Doha delegation, state TV reported.

The Afghan Taliban's defence ministry confirmed on social media platform X that a delegation led by defence minister Mohammad Yaqoob had reached the Qatari capital.

A senior Taliban official told AFP that "Pakistan has broken the ceasefire and bombed three locations in Paktika", a province in Afghanistan's east, warning that "Afghanistan will retaliate".

However, Afghan Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid yesterday said that, while Kabul held the "right to respond to these violations", its forces had been



ordered to refrain from undertaking new military operations "in order to maintain the dignity and integrity of its negotiating team".

A provincial hospital official told AFP on condition of anonymity that 10 civilians, including two children, were killed and 12 others wounded in the latest strikes.

A senior Pakistani security official told AFP that its forces had carried out "precision aerial strikes" targeting the Hafiz Gul Bahadur Group, a faction linked to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which Islamabad blames for Friday's North Waziristan attack.

Security issues are at the heart of the tensions, with Pakistan accusing Afghanistan of sheltering militant groups led by the TTP – a claim Kabul denies.

Pakistan's army chief General Asim Munir said that "proxies have sanctuaries in Afghanistan" and were "using Afghan soil to perpetrate heinous attacks inside Pakistan".

Defence minister Asif went further, accusing Kabul of acting as a "proxy of India" and "plotting" against Pakistan.

In response, Afghan deputy interior minister Mullah Mohammad Nabi Omari said: "We neither brought the TTP here, nor supported them, nor did they come during our time."

## CYBERSCAM OPS IN CAMBODIA 64 South Koreans repatriated

AFP, Seoul

Sixty-four South Koreans who had been detained in Cambodia for alleged involvement in cyberscam operations returned home yesterday and were under arrest, a police official told AFP.

South Korea had sent a team to Cambodia on Wednesday to discuss cases of fake jobs and scam centres involved in kidnapping dozens of its nationals. Seoul had said around 60 South Koreans had been detained by authorities in Cambodia over the alleged crimes, and vowed to bring them home.

The repatriation follows a public outcry in South Korea over the torture and killing of a Korean college student in Cambodia this year, reportedly by a crime ring.

All 64 have been taken into custody as criminal suspects upon arrival at the Incheon airport and will be transferred to the police stations with jurisdiction over their respective cases, the official said.

The repatriated individuals are implicated in various crimes linked to voice phishing, romance scams and so-called "no-show" fraud schemes, Park Sung-joo, head of the National Office of Investigation, told reporters at the airport.

Seoul has said about 1,000 South Koreans were estimated to be among a total of around 200,000 people working in scam operations in Cambodia.

The multibillion-dollar illicit industry has ballooned in Cambodia in recent years, with thousands of people perpetrating online scams, some willingly and others forced by the organised criminal groups running the fraud networks, experts say.

Amnesty International says abuses in Cambodia's scam centres are happening on a "mass scale".



Demonstrators hold placards during a march on Oxford Street, against the implementation of digital ID cards, in central London yesterday. UK government last month announced plans for the digital ID in a bid to curb illegal migration, but the move faces strong opposition in a country that has long resisted identity cards. A petition against the move has collected more than 2,889,412 signatures.

PHOTO: AFP



He [Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro] has offered everything... You know why? Because he doesn't want to \*\*\* around with the United States.

DONALD TRUMP on the ongoing tensions with Venezuela