

‘No crazy war, please!’

Venezuela’s Maduro tells US after Trump authorises covert action; new US strike on alleged drug-smuggling boat kills 6

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Thursday pleaded against a “crazy war” as an escalating US military campaign sent tensions soaring.

Maduro’s comment came after US President Donald Trump said he had authorized covert action against the South American nation amid a military campaign targeting what Washington says are drug traffickers in the Caribbean and Pacific.

“Yes peace, yes peace forever, peace forever. No crazy war, please!” Maduro said in English in a meeting with unions aligned with the leftist leader.

The United States has deployed stealth warplanes and



navy ships as part of what it calls anti-narcotics efforts, but has yet to release evidence that its targets – eight boats and a semi-submersible – were smuggling drugs.

Speaking to reporters Thursday, Trump again denied that he had sent B-1B bombers to Venezuela, but said “we’re not happy with them. They’ve emptied their prisons into our country.”

The president said “we’re not going to necessarily ask for a declaration of war” from Congress, which has the constitutional power to do so.

“We’re just going to kill people who come into our country.” The US strikes, which began on September 2, have killed at least 37 people, according to an AFP tally based on US figures.

An overnight US strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat operated by a Venezuelan gang killed six people in the Caribbean Sea, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said yesterday.

Regional tensions have flared as a result of the campaign, with Maduro accusing Washington of seeking regime change.

Late Thursday, the government in Trinidad and Tobago – located just off Venezuela’s coast – announced that a US warship would dock in its capital from October 26-30.



Rescuers work at the site of a Russian airstrike amid ongoing attacks on Ukraine, in Kharkiv, yesterday. In a separate incident, a man detonated an explosive device at a railway station in northern Ukraine, killing three others before succumbing to his injuries, officials said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

‘No basic means to live’

Exhausted Gaza people struggle to rebuild

AFP, Gaza City

A fragile ceasefire has brought respite to Gazans exhausted by two years of fighting, but even without the daily bombing they are struggling to live amid the catastrophic destruction wrought by the war.

The reconstruction task ahead is enormous, given that vast swathes of the Palestinian territory were flattened during Israel’s military campaign and most of the population were displaced at least once.

Many in the southern city of Khan Yunis have now been told by Israeli forces to move again to avoid the so-called Yellow Line, behind which Israeli troops are stationed under the ceasefire deal with Hamas.

“I am tired of displacement, very tired. I prefer to die, just like my son. It is better for the dead,” Riyad Abu Anza said.

AFP footage showed Palestinians carrying buckets, brooms and backpacks through a sandy neighbourhood of rubble and tents.

Abu Alaa Skeik, from Gaza City, said his house was completely destroyed during the gruelling war,



sparked by Hamas’s unprecedented attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

The 52-year-old said that his family now lived in a tent next to what was left of his home.

“At first, our struggle was with the war – we were escaping death and bombardment. But today, our struggle is with life itself,” he said.

“We want to provide food, get water, rebuild our home and send our children back to school. We are exhausted,” he added.

Umm Mohammed Muhareb, who was displaced to the coastal area of Al-Mawasi, said that fear lingered despite the fighting largely halting.

“The situation now is calmer than before,” the 45-year-old told AFP.

“We don’t hear the sounds of bombing like we used to, but the fear is still in our hearts, because we never know when things might get worse again.”

The truce faced its toughest test on Sunday, when Israeli forces unleashed a wave of strikes in Gaza after two soldiers were killed.

The strikes killed at least 45 Palestinians, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

ASIA TRIP

Trump aims to clinch deal with China’s Xi

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump will test his deal-making prowess in a region battered by his hardball trade policies on a trip to Asia next week, as doubts hang over his highly anticipated meeting with China’s Xi Jinping.

Trump, who left Washington last night, is set for a five-day trip spanning Malaysia, Japan and South Korea, his first to the region and his longest journey abroad since taking office in January.

The Republican leader hopes to pile up trade, business and ceasefire deals before turning to the toughest challenge, a face-to-face with Xi on Thursday in South Korea.

The trip comes as Trump works to maintain the signature foreign policy achievement of his second term, a fragile ceasefire he helped strike in the Israel-Gaza conflict, while the Russian war in Ukraine rages and a trade war with China shows little sign of abating.

DIGITAL CONTENT

EU accuses Meta, TikTok of breaking rules

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday accused Meta and TikTok of breaking the bloc’s digital content rules, putting the companies at risk of hefty fines.

The European Union has a bolstered legal armoury that demands Big Tech prevent the spread of illegal content and ensure digital markets are open to competition.

Yesterday, the European Commission said Meta’s Facebook and Instagram platforms and TikTok breached the Digital Services Act (DSA), the EU’s content moderation law attacked by US President Donald Trump’s administration.

It is the first time the commission has accused Meta of breaching the DSA, which the US giant rejected. Although the announcement includes TikTok, owned by China’s ByteDance, it risks angering Trump, who has threatened to impose fresh tariffs on countries with regulations that seek to “harm” American technology.

Despite his threats, the EU has said it will enforce its rules.

BNP bloc at unease as partners can’t use paddy sheaf

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“For the sake of fair politics and a fair election, this needs to be reconsidered,” he said.

After the advisory council gave final approval to the amendment on Thursday, Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said the change aims to give voters a clear idea of each candidate’s party identity.

Of the 50 parties that took part in anti-government protests alongside the BNP, two alliances and five other parties have sought to contest 106 seats under a BNP-led coalition in the upcoming polls, slated for February.

BNP leaders said the party, which has pledged to form a national government if elected, is ready to share a significant number of seats with allies.

However, alliance partners fear defeat if they are barred from using BNP’s “paddy sheaf” symbol, arguing that local BNP activists are unlikely to support them under their own banners.

Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said, “When small parties contest under their

own symbols, big party activists don’t help them. If the RPO changes are enforced, there’s no point in forming an alliance.”

Fariduzzaman Farhad, coordinator of Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote and chairman of the National People’s Party, said rural voters hardly recognise small party symbols.

“It’s difficult to make a symbol familiar to everyone within two months. This will also complicate BNP’s seat-sharing decisions,” he said.

Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Mustafizur Rahman Iran echoed the concern.

“The paddy sheaf will be promoted nationally, but how will I benefit if I contest under my own symbol – the pineapple? There’s clearly a complication here,” he said.

Alliance leaders also criticised the government and the EC for amending the RPO without consulting political parties.

Samamona Jote’s Farhad said that unilateral decisions by the government were “creating problems for the election process and political parties.”

Bobby Hajjaj, chairman of the Democratic Movement, said, “Changing

election law without discussion is not logical or acceptable.”

Shahadat Hossain Salim, spokesperson for the I2-Party Alliance and Bangladesh LDP secretary general, said many smaller registered parties will “definitely face trouble” since they cannot use BNP’s symbol.

Meanwhile, leaders of four parties expressed partial support for the change but suggested that alliances should retain the option to use a common symbol.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, president of Nagorik Oikya under the Ganatantra Mancha, said, “Using a popular common symbol helps alliance partners. Removing that option brings no real improvement.”

Saiful Huq, general secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party, said, “Our party’s position is positive – registered parties should use their own symbols. But politically, it’s risky.”

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan, echoed the view that alliances should have flexibility in symbol use.

Cox’s Bazar airport

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said the gazette notification declaring Cox’s Bazar airport an international one would come into immediate effect in the public interest.

However, construction of the new terminal building – covering about 11,000 sq ft – has not yet been completed.

According to CAAB sources, the necessary facilities required for operating an international airport have not been fully established. Moreover, no foreign airlines have confirmed plans to operate flights to and from Cox’s Bazar yet.

Biman officials earlier said they were planning to operate flights on the Kolkata-Cox’s Bazar route via Dhaka later this month on a limited scale.

Launched in 2021, the upgradation project aims to transform Cox’s Bazar into a full-fledged international gateway.

A separate runway expansion project – extending the existing 6,775 ft runway to 10,700 ft to accommodate wide-body aircraft – is progressing steadily and is scheduled for completion by December 2026.

Two groups

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member secretary (media cell), told The Daily Star that the alteration was “purely personal” and unrelated to party activities.

“Even if they identify themselves as NCP members, they are not registered under our Mohammadpur or Bangshal units,” he said.

“They only show up at our events. We’ve decided that such individuals will no longer be allowed to participate in party activities.”

Riyan and Imtiaz could not be reached for comments.



This photo, taken Thursday and released yesterday by North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency via KNS, shows leader Kim Jong Un encouraging soldiers of the Overseas Military Operations Forces during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Memorial Museum of Combat Feats in Pyongyang.

PHOTO: AFP

India trials Delhi cloud seeding to combat smog

AFP, New Delhi

India trialled cloud seeding over its smog-filled capital for the first time, spraying a chemical from an aeroplane to encourage rain and wash deadly particles out of the air.

Cloud seeding is the practice of using aeroplanes to fire salt or other chemicals into clouds to induce rain.

New Delhi city authorities, working with the government’s Indian Institute of Technology

Kanpur, launched a test run on Thursday afternoon using a Cessna light aeroplane over the city’s northern Burari area.

“A trial seeding flight was done... in which cloud seeding flares were fired”, Delhi Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said in a statement late Thursday.

“This flight was the proving flight for checking the capabilities for cloud seeding, the readiness and endurance of the aircraft,

the capability assessment of the cloud seeding fitments and flares, and coordination among all involved agencies.”

It comes ahead of a planned rollout of the scheme.

Delhi’s Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said that “if conditions remain favourable, Delhi will experience its first artificial rain on October 29.”

It was not immediately clear what chemical was used in the test to encourage the rain.

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