



3,400 bombs seized in nine South American countries in Police raids



GLOBAL WEATHER table with columns for city, temperature, and weather conditions.

AFTER ALEPPO FALL, ISLAMIST REBELS CAPTURE SECOND SYRIAN CITY OF HAMA

BEIRUT

ISLAMIST-led rebels captured the central Syrian city of Hama on Thursday, days after seizing the country's commercial hub Aleppo in a lightning offensive against President Bashar al-Assad's forces.



An anti-government fighter carries a rocket to be used against regime forces in Hama on Wednesday | AFP

Following overnight clashes, the rebels stormed Hama "from several sides" and engaged in street battles with Assad's forces, Britain-based war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said.

The rebels said they seized Hama's prison and released its inmates. By the afternoon, Syria's army admitted losing control of the city, strategically located between Aleppo and Assad's seat of power in the capital Damascus.

to breach a number of axes in the city and entered it," the army said in a statement, adding units had regrouped outside Hama.

Aron Lund, a fellow of the Century International think tank, called the loss of Hama "a massive, massive blow to the Syrian government" because the army should have had an advantage there to reverse rebel gains "and they couldn't do it."

ist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) launched their offensive little more than a week ago, just as a ceasefire took hold between Israel and Assad's ally Hezbollah in Lebanon. In a video posted online, HTS leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani said his fighters had entered Hama to "cleanse the wound that has endured in Syria for 40 years", referring to a crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982, which led to thousands of deaths.

"I ask God almighty that it be a conquest with no revenge," he added. The rapid fall of the city came despite shelling and strikes by the Syrian and Russian air forces, as reported by state media late Wednesday. Maya, a 22-year-old student who gave only her first name for security concerns, said earlier Thursday that she and her family were staying at home as the fighting raged outside.

Families rejoice as they reunite after eight years



Bahria Bakur, top, hugs her son Md Jomaa and Ahmed Orabi, above, plays with his daughter | AFP



ALEPPO

THE fall of Syria's Aleppo to Islamist-led rebels has brought flight and displacement for some, but for others like Bahria Bakkur, it has led to long-awaited reunions.

After almost a decade apart, 43-year-old Bakkur was finally able to embrace her son, separated when government forces reclaimed control of their city.

The Islamist-led rebels' lightning assault on Aleppo has revived a war that had been mostly dormant for years. The fighting in northern Syria since last week has killed hundreds and heightened concerns for civilians, but for Bakkur, it meant being with her son again.

"I wasn't expecting this to happen. I thought I would die before getting to see him," said Bakkur, tears in her eyes.

She last saw her son Mohammed Jomaa, now 25 years old and a father of four, in 2016, when Syrian President Bashar al-

Assad's forces retook Aleppo's eastern districts after a brutal siege. Jomaa was one of tens of thousands who had fled the city earlier in the war, only to return in recent days. "It's an indescribable joy," he said. "I still can't believe I'm back in Aleppo."

Ahmed Orabi, 35, has also returned home to Aleppo, reunited with his young daughter.

Seven years ago, they fled to Idlib province, where many people were displaced to from elsewhere in Syria. But escalating air raids had again forced Orabi's wife to seek safety, returning to her family in Aleppo along with their daughter, Aeil.

Orabi, an opposition media activist, did not want to stay far from his family and hometown for so long, but could not return so long as Aleppo was under Assad's control. "Coming back was like a dream," he said. "When the battles started, I didn't wait. I wanted to see my daughter... I decided to go to her."

Qatar back as negotiator for Israel, Hamas war after short sabbatical

DOHA

QATAR has resumed its role as a mediator in efforts to secure a truce in the Israel-Hamas war following a brief suspension, a source with knowledge of the talks said on Thursday.

The Gulf emirate, along with the United States and Egypt, had been involved in months of unsuccessful negotiations for a Gaza truce and hostage release after nearly 14 months of war.

In November, Doha announced it had put its mediation on hold, saying it would resume when Hamas and Israel showed "willingness and seriousness". The source said that Qatar has now "returned to mediation", without elaborating.

Scores of hostages were released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails during a one-week pause in fighting brokered by Qatar last year.

Since then, successive rounds of negotiations have made no headway. US President-elect Donald Trump on Monday warned on social media of unspecified massive repercussions if hostages are not released by the time he takes office next month.

Trump has vowed staunch support for Israel and promised to reign back on occasional criticism voiced by outgoing President Joe Biden's administration. The president-elect has also indicated desire to secure deals on the world stage.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military's chief spokesman, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, apologised for publicly criticising a bill that would protect soldiers who disclose classified information to the prime minister.

Hagari, in a press conference on Wednesday, said the legal amendment considered by lawmakers was "dangerous for the army and the country's security". Hagari was swiftly reprimanded by Israeli military chief Herzi Halevi, and apologised in a message.



Palestinians check the site of an Israeli strike in Gaza City's Daraj neighbourhood on Thursday | AFP

WAR WATCH ISRAEL-GAZA: DAY 426. TOLL SO FAR 46,426. Includes a map of the region.

French PM Barnier resigns after losing vote in Parliament

PARIS

PRESIDENT Emmanuel Macron on Thursday sought a new prime minister to prevent France from sliding deeper into political turmoil after Michel Barnier's government was ousted in a historic no-confidence vote in parliament.

Contemporary France's shortest-serving premier, Barnier met Macron at the Elysee Palace to submit his resignation after Wednesday's parliamentary defeat forced his government to step down.

The vote was the first successful no-confidence action since a defeat for Georges Pompidou's government in 1962, when Charles de Gaulle was president.

"The prime minister today submitted the resignation of his government" to Macron, who has "taken note" of the resignation, the Elysee said. Barnier and his ministers remain "in charge of daily business until the appointment of a new government", it added.

It remains unclear when the new prime minister will be appointed. But, unlike on previous occasions, the president appears in a hurry to appoint the new premier to avoid a vacuum, according to multiple sources.

Macron, who only returned late Wednesday from a state visit to Saudi Arabia, was to meet both lower-house National Assembly speaker Yael Braun-Pivet and her upper-house Senate counterpart Gerard Larcher before giving an address to the nation.

Braun-Pivet, a member of the president's centrist faction, urged Macron to quickly choose a new premier, saying that France could not be allowed to "drift" for long.

Limiting any impression of political chaos is all the more important for Macron who on Saturday will host world leaders - including US president-elect Donald Trump - for the reopening of the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris after a devastating 2019 fire.

NOTICE: The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority, Karnataka (Constituted by Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India) has accorded Environmental Clearance for Proposed Establishment of 120 KLPD Multi Grain based Distillery plant - Rectified Spirit/Extra Neutral Alcohol (ENA) / fuel ethanol plant and Captive Power Plant of 4 MW Capacity Project at Part of Sy. Nos. 99/3, 99/5, 99/6 & 107/2D of Kenkoppa Village, Haveri Taluk & District by M/s. S R Ballary Biofuels Pvt. Ltd., S R Ballary Building, 3rd Cross, Shivaji Nagar, Haveri vide letter No. SEIAA 23 IND 2024 (EC Identification No. EC24B2504KA591875N) dated 30th November 2024.

Notice regarding the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority, Karnataka, dated 30/11/2024, concerning the proposed establishment of a distillery plant.

JANA SMALL FINANCE BANK E-AUCTION NOTICE. PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE THROUGH E-AUCTION UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT (SARFAESI ACT) 2002, READ WITH PROVISO RULE 8(6) & 9 OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES 2002.

CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICE: CHANGE OF NAME. Multiple notices for name changes, including KASHI BAI, PADMAPPA CHABBI, MAHABOOB BASHA MUNAF, AHAMED, SANCHITA KALAL, etc.

QuoteExpress: WHEN YOU REACH THE END OF YOUR ROPE, TIE A KNOT IN IT AND HANG ON. FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT