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Kabul	3°	Snow
Herat	13°	Rain
Mazar	14°	Showers

USD	01	GBP	01	INR	1000	PKR	1000	EUR	01	IRR	1000	AED	01
AFN	103.97	AFN	131.11	AFN	1198	AFN	553	AFN	113.87	AFN	2.45	AFN	28.18

Israel hits Hamas positions in Gaza after rocket attacks

Israel's military said it launched air attacks on Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip, a day after rockets fired from Gaza landed in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Israeli military said the attacks late on Saturday hit a rocket manufacturing facility and a military post for Hamas.

"As fireworks lit up the skies to celebrate NewYear2022 around the world, a different type of fire came from Gaza-terrorist rocket-fire toward Israel," the Israel military said in a tweet on Sunday.

"In response, we just struck Hamas sites in Gaza, incl. a rocket manufacturing site & military posts used for terrorist activity."

It was not clear whether the rockets from Gaza on Saturday were meant to hit Israel, but Gaza-based groups often test-fire missiles towards the sea.

There were no reports of casualties from Saturday's attack. No sirens were sounded and Israel's Iron Dome rocket interception system did not deploy, the army said in a statement.

Apart from a single incident in September, there has been no cross-border rocket fire since a ceasefire ended an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas in May.

The ceasefire, brokered by Egypt and other mediators, has been fragile. Hamas says Israel did not take serious steps to ease the blockade it imposed on Gaza with Egypt's help when the group seized control of the coastal enclave in 2007.

More than 260 Palestinians, many of them civilians and children, and 13 Israelis were killed in the May assault on Gaza, during which Israel carried out relentless air raids across the coastal enclave, prompting Gaza fighters to fire rockets towards Israeli cities.

Israel keeps Gaza under blockade, tightly restricting movement out of the territory that is home to two million Palestinians. Egypt also maintains restrictions on the enclave. Both cite threats from Hamas for the restrictions.

The blockade restricts the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza and has ravaged the territory's economy and harmed the population of two million. **aljazeera**

North Korea's Kim Jong Un talks food not nukes for 2022

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un capped off his 10th year in power with a speech that made more mention of tractor factories and school uniforms than nuclear weapons or the United States, according to summaries by state media on Saturday.

North Korea's main goals for 2022 will be jump-starting economic development and improving people's lives as it faces a "great life-and-death struggle," Kim said in a speech on Friday at the end of the 4th Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), which began on Monday.

The meetings coincided with the 10-year anniversary of Kim effectively assuming leadership of the country after the death of his father in 2011.

Kim has used previous speeches around the New Year to make major policy announcements, including launching significant diplomatic engagements with South Korea and the US.

But summaries of his speech published in North Korean state media made no specific mention of the US, with only a passing reference to unspecified discussions of inter-Korean relations and "external affairs".

The domestic focus of the speech underscored the economic crises Kim faces at home, where self-imposed anti-pandemic border lockdowns have left North Korea more isolated than ever before.

"The basic tasks facing the part and the people the next year are to provide a firm guarantee for implementing the five-year plan and make remarkable changes in the national development and the people's living," Kim was quoted as saying.

Kim spent the majority of his speech detailing domestic issues, from an ambitious plan for rural development to people's diets, school uniforms and the need to crack down on "non-socialist practices".

He cited unspecified military advancements as a significant achievement of the past year and discussed "militant tasks" facing national defence in 2022. The tractor factory he discussed in the speech is also likely to be used to build launch vehicles for missiles, foreign analysts have said, and North Korea is believed to have expanded its arsenal despite the lockdowns.

The big focus on rural development is likely a populist strategy, said Chad O'Carroll, founder of NK News, a Seoul-based website that tracks North Korea.

"Overall, Kim might be aware that revealing sophisticated military development plans while people are suffering food shortages and harsh conditions outside of Pyongyang might not be such a good idea this year," he wrote on Twitter.

aljazeera

Fireworks show, celebrity performers planned across the UAE on NYE to ring in 2022

A host of firework displays are set to light up the skies at some of the United Arab Emirates' key landmarks on New Year's Eve as revellers set to ring in 2022.

In Dubai, there will be a total of 36 firework displays across 29 locations as the emirate.

End-of-year celebrations will take place at Dubai's iconic Burj Al Arab, with the landmark to host a musical line-up and a fireworks display, and the annual fireworks extravaganza at the Burj Khalifa where visitors can also expect to see pyrotechnics And spectacular light shows.

Dubai's Global Village is also set to host eight different firework shows, according to the Dubai Media Office, while Dubai's Atlantis hotel will ring in the New Year with a 30-band live performance, fireworks and a special guest appearance from international singing star Robbie Williams.

At Ain Dubai, in Dubai's Bluewater's, residents can watch fireworks, drone shows and several performances.

At Expo 2020 Dubai, spectators can enjoy a drone countdown to 2022, and two firework displays, earmarked for midnight and at 3am.

Billed as the longest New Year celebration in the world, spanning the time zones of all participating countries at the event, the Expo festivities will take place at various locations across the site over a 13-hour period.

At the site, 12 international and Dubai-based DJs are lining up to give 2021 a record-breaking send-off, with acts including, Armin van Buuren, DJ Skip, Kanika Kapoor, Anyasa and Dimitri Vegas.

There will also be a Time-Square-style ball drop at al-Wasl Plaza ahead of the clock chiming midnight.

Dubai Festival City Mall is also hosting a New Year's Eve spectacular with a laser, light and fountain show, fireworks and live entertainment, with Dubai's La Mer is also scheduled to put on a firework display at midnight.

In Abu Dhabi, the emirate is attempting to break three Guinness World Records as part of the Sheikh Zayed Festival's New Year's eve celebrations, including a 40-mimute firework display and a gigantic drone show at al-Wathba, with the emirate's Yas Island will close 2021 with firework displays and live music.

Abu Dhabi's Corniche will host a New Year's Eve celebration with a firework display, while at al-Maryah Island, with Arab pop stars Hussain al-Jassimi, Balqees and Elissa are to perform at a concert ahead of a fireworks show.

US removes Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea from AGOA trade programme

The United States has cut Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea out of a duty-free trade programme over alleged human rights violations and recent coups.

In a statement on Saturday, the US Trade Representative (USTR) said it terminated the three countries from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) "due to actions taken by each of their governments in violation of the AGOA Statute".

It said the US was deeply concerned "by the gross violations of internationally recognised human rights being perpetrated by the government of Ethiopia and other parties amid the widening conflict in northern Ethiopia", as well as by "the unconstitutional change in governments in both Guinea and Mali".

There was no immediate comment from the Washington embassies of the three African countries.

The AGOA trade legislation provides sub-Saharan African nations with duty-free access to the US if they meet certain eligibility requirements, such as eliminating barriers to US trade and investment and making progress towards political pluralism.

In 2020, 38 countries were eligible for AGOA.

In its Saturday statement, the USTR said Ethiopia, Mali and Guinea may still rejoin the pact if they met the statute's provisions.

"Each country has clear benchmarks for a pathway toward reinstatement and the Administration will work with their governments to achieve that objective," it said.

UAE to ban non-vaccinated citizens from traveling abroad from January 10

The United Arab Emirates will ban non-vaccinated Emirati citizens from traveling abroad from Jan. 10, according to the state news agency WAM, citing the foreign ministry and the National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority on Saturday.

The report said that fully vaccinated citizens would also require a booster shot to be eligible to travel. The ban would not apply to those with medical or humanitarian exemptions.

The UAE has pushed a comprehensive vaccination campaign for its nearly 10 million population.

On Saturday, the UAE announced 2,556 new daily coronavirus cases, an increasing of 130 infections, bringing the total number of recorded cases in the country to 764,493.

alarabiya

Cape Town: Major blaze rips through South Africa parliament building

A large fire is raging at the Houses of Parliament in the South African city of Cape Town.

Video footage shows a plume of black smoke filling the sky, with huge flames coming out from the roof of the building.

Dozens of firefighters are at the site battling the blaze; it is not yet clear what caused the fire.

It comes hours after Archbishop Desmond Tutu's state funeral at St George's Cathedral, near parliament.

Officials said the fire started on the third floor offices and quickly spread to the National Assembly (the parliament's lower house) chamber, reports the BBC's Nomsa Maseko in Cape Town.

No injuries have been reported and there's no indication of what may have started it, our correspondent adds.

Fire and rescue service officials said it could take another four hours to put the fire out completely because of the carpets and wooden floors in the building.

The minister responsible for government infrastructure, Patricia de Lille, earlier said the fire in the Chamber of the Council of Provinces (the upper house) had been contained, but the National Assembly was still burning:

Tune into #Newzroom405 for more developments on this story.

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites.View original tweet on Twitter

A member of the Cape Town mayoral committee for safety and security, JP Smith, told reporters the roof had partially collapsed and that the fire detection alarm did not sound at the start of the fire:

"The roof of the building has collapsed on the one side and the fire has spread to the new assembly, according to the officers. "They've detected large cracks in the wall, which is of concern. "The firefighters report that they were on scene for some time before the fire detection system first triggered and then sounded the alert. So it does appear that that system was somewhat delayed." **bbc**

Israel signs deal to buy $3.1 bln in US helicopters, refueling planes

the United States to buy 12 Lockheed Martin Corp CH-53K helicopters and two Boeing Co KC-46 refueling planes,

the Israeli Defense Ministry said on Friday, estimating the total price at around $3.1 billion.

The deal, signed on Thursday, is part of an upgrade of Israel's air force capabilities and includes an option to buy six additional helicopters, a ministry statement said.

It said the first helicopters were due to arrive in Israel in 2026. Brigadier-General Shimon Tsentsiper, chief of material for the air force, told Israel's Army Radio on Thursday that the refueling planes on order would not be delivered before 2025.

He said Israel was trying to bring forward the delivery of the KC-46s, and eventually wanted a total of four of them.

Israeli media have speculated that the refueling planes could be crucial for carrying out a long-threatened air strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Tsentsiper said the air force's current refueling capacities were sufficient for its missions. **alarabiya**