

VOA NEWS

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I'm VOA's Joe Ramsey with your worldwide news update.

Officials issued stark warnings as Hurricane Milton closed in on Florida's Gulf Coast on Wednesday. Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener reports.

Panic-buying at gas stations gripped Florida as Hurricane Milton closed in on the Tampa Bay area on Wednesday.

"I've been here for 38 years and never had one that forced us to do this."

Meanwhile, officials continued to sound the alarm.

"It's looking like the storm of the century."

At a White House briefing, President Joe Biden urged Florida residents to follow local safety recommendations.

FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell said the impact of the latest storm could be devastating.

"Hurricane Milton is going to be a deadly and catastrophic storm. It will bring massive storm surge, high winds and severe flooding as it moves across the state of Florida."

The National Hurricane Center said Milton was expected to maintain hurricane strength as it crossed the Florida peninsula, posing storm surge danger on the state's Atlantic coast as well.

Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu talked on the phone Wednesday for the first time in seven weeks. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

It came amid the president's growing frustration with the prime minister, who's repeatedly ignored U.S. calls for cease-fires in Gaza and Lebanon.

The White House says the call lasted about a half hour, with Vice President Harris joining.

"It was direct. It was productive."

Spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre says they did discuss Israel's response to Iran's recent ballistic missile attack, and while she would not speculate.

Israel's defense chief says the retaliation will be "lethal" and "surprising."

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

This is VOA News.

The United Nations says a quarter million people have fled Israeli attacks in Lebanon over the past two weeks for the relative safety of Syria. VOA's Heather Murdock has more from Istanbul with Yan Boechat in Hasakah, Syria.

In recent days, hundreds of people have arrived outside this camp in northeastern Syria, hoping to find shelter and humanitarian aid. The camp called Washokani is five years old, housing families displaced by fighting in 2019 in Syria. But the newcomers are also war refugees, many for more than a decade. They fled Syria's civil war for Lebanon and have now returned, displaced by Israeli strikes on their adopted country.

Aisha Ahmed, a Syrian refugee who fled Lebanon a few days ago, says she left everything behind and has found no help in Syria. They have slept outside the gate of the camp for two days, she says, without even the use of a bathroom.

In northeastern Syria, more than 600 kilometers from the Lebanese border, officials say they have no provisions to assist thousands of returning refugees who are streaming in by car, by bus or on foot.

Heather Murdock in Istanbul with Yan Boechat in Hasakah, Syria, VOA News.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will meet NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer in London on Thursday. A boost for Ukraine after a summit of its main backers was canceled at a difficult moment in its fight against Russia.

Zelenskyy and Starmer have both described the war with Russia as being at a critical point and the Ukrainian leader is keen for the West to deliver long-range missiles and other support to try to change the balance on the battlefield.

Zelenskyy was in Croatia on Wednesday and will meet Pope Francis on Friday.

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry has been awarded to U.S. biochemist David Baker and British researchers Demis Hassabis and John Jumper for their work with proteins, the building blocks of life. AP correspondent Charles De Ledesma reports.

Baker designed a new protein in 2003 and then one imaginative protein creation after another. He shares his enthusiasm with AP about a future for this fast-moving field.

"I think there's huge prospects, there's fantastic prospects for making better medicines, medicines that are smarter that only work in the right time and place in the body, much more potent vaccines."

In turn, Hassabis and Jumper created an artificial intelligence model that's been able to predict the structure of virtually all of the 200 million proteins that researchers have identified.

I'm Charles De Ledesma.

That wraps up this update, but the world and news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website. I'm Joe Ramsey, VOA News.