

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF BUYING A HOME

Joanne Hunt
Money Matters



John Collison seems to have missed a fundamental truth about Irish politics – the last thing a successful Irish politician wants is to be responsible for anything

John McManus
Business Opinion



‘IT’S TWO YEARS SINCE I’VE POSTED ANYTHING ON SOCIAL MEDIA’

Róisín Ingle
Life

Gaza truce under threat as Israel carries out new strikes

Hamas accused of ceasefire violations after gunmen open fire on Israeli troops

US vice-president JD Vance says ceasefire will hold despite escalation

MARK WEISS
in Jerusalem

The Gaza ceasefire was hanging in the balance last night as Israel struck targets across the enclave in response to what it termed two significant Hamas violations in the most significant escalation of the US-brokered truce to date.

Israeli air strikes and artillery fire were reported across Gaza, killing at least nine people, including five militants in a car that was hit in Khan Younis.

US vice-president JD Vance told reporters that the Gaza ceasefire will hold, despite yesterday’s escalation. “There are going to be little skirmishes here and there,” he said.

The first alleged Hamas violation occurred when Israel determined that a coffin handed over by Hamas on Monday night did not contain the body of one of the 13 remaining deceased hostages but more remains belonging to another captive whose body had been previously returned.

Forensic tests showed the remains belonged to Ofir Tzarfati, murdered at the Nova music festival in the Hamas-led October 7th, 2023, attack on southern Israel. His body was recovered from Gaza by Israeli forces in late 2023.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) released drone footage showing what it said was Hamas operatives carrying a white body bag, taken from a Gaza city building, with Tzarfati’s remains and placing it in a pit before covering it in earth and then alerting the Red Cross that they had found a body.

“This footage clearly shows that the Hamas terrorist organisation is attempting to create a false impression of efforts to locate the bodies, while in fact holding deceased hostages whose remains it refuses to release as required by the agreement,” the IDF said.

The second alleged major Hamas infringement came later yesterday when gunmen opened fire on Israeli troops near Rafah with anti-tank missiles and sniper fire. The IDF

responded with artillery fire. Hamas claimed it was not connected to the incident.

After security consultations, prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the IDF to carry out “major strikes”. Israel is co-ordinating its response with Washington and still wants to maintain the ceasefire, at least until Hamas returns all the bodies it can locate. According to IDF assessments Hamas knows where all but four to six of the bodies are, but is delaying their return to gain time while it continues to reassert its control in the half of Gaza from which Israeli troops withdrew.

‘Israeli violations’

Before the escalation, Hamas had announced that it would release the body of another hostage last night but then cancelled the move, citing “Israeli violations”.

“We emphasise that any Zionist escalation will hinder search, digging, and retrieval operations of the bodies, which will lead to a delay in recovering the bodies of the occupation’s dead,” Hamas said in a statement, also noting several Israeli strikes in recent days and the closure of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. According to Hamas more than 80 people have been killed since the ceasefire went into effect earlier this month.

Right-wing Israeli politicians urged a more forceful response to the Hamas violations. “We don’t need to ‘exact a price from Hamas’ for the violations, but rather destroy it completely,” said national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, head of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party.

Finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, head of the far-right Religious Zionist party, called for a resolute response.

“We cannot allow Hamas to mock Israeli citizens and cruelly and cynically play with the emotions of the families of the hostages who have fallen,” he said.

→ Israeli jets attack Gaza City: page 7



Promotion party
Ireland back in the A league

Republic of Ireland players celebrate after Abbie Larkin (number 19) scored her side’s only goal in the second leg of their Uefa Nations League promotion playoff against Belgium in Leuven last night. The 5-4 win on aggregate means Ireland return to the A division.

Report and player ratings:
Sports Wednesday
Photograph: Ryan Byrne/Inpho

Jamaica battered by strongest winds since 1935

Hurricane Melissa brings devastation to Caribbean with wind speeds of 295 km/h

Hurricane Melissa made landfall in Jamaica yesterday as a category 5 storm, one of the most powerful ever recorded in the Atlantic basin.

The storm struck the southwest of the island near the town of New Hope. The US National Hurricane Centre, which monitors

Atlantic storms, said it had maximum sustained wind speeds of 295 km/h (183 mph).

Widespread devastation was quickly apparent after the worst of the storm struck around 1pm local time. There was heavy flooding in southwest Jamaica within hours, as

well as numerous buildings with roofs torn off and many roads blocked by fallen trees and displaced rocks.

More than 240,000 customers were already without power due to the effects of the storm before it made landfall.

Melissa is the second Atlantic storm ever to make landfall with such strong winds. The only other storm to reach such wind speed at landfall occurred before hurricanes were officially named and was known as the “Labor Day Hurricane” of

1935, which killed hundreds and caused serious damage in the Florida Keys.

“It’s a catastrophic situation expected in Jamaica,” the World Meteorological Organisation’s tropical cyclone specialist Anne-Claire Fontan told a Geneva press briefing ahead of landfall. “For Jamaica, it will be the storm of the century for sure.”

Storm surges of up to 4m (13ft) were expected, she said, with rainfall set to exceed 70cm (27in), which is more than half

the average annual rainfall in Ireland. Catastrophic flash flooding and landslides were predicted, she said.

The US National Hurricane Centre expected the storm to move off the northern coast of Jamaica last night, striking eastern Cuba as a category 4 storm, with winds of around 230 km/h, and then the Bahamas and Turks and Caicos today. The storm was moving slowly, increasing the potential damage the winds and rain could cause. Taoiseach Micheál Martin is-

sued a statement strongly advising all Irish citizens in the region to seek appropriate shelter. Western Jamaica, which is the worst affected by the storm, includes most of the country’s tourist resort areas, including Montego Bay.

“The Jamaican authorities have also warned that heavy rainfall caused by the hurricane is also expected to cause serious flash flooding and landslides, even after the hurricane has passed,” Mr Martin said. – Reuters

Cork’s €600m BusConnects plan to come before Cabinet

CORMAC McQUINN
Political Correspondent

Proposals to overhaul the bus service in Cork city are to come to Cabinet for approval today, bringing the project a step closer to planning.

Minister for Transport Darragh O’Brien is expected to seek Government approval in principle for the BusConnects programme.

Cork city is expected to be one of the fastest-growing city regions in Ireland and its population is projected to increase to at least 315,000 people by 2040.

Cabinet approval would ultimately allow for a planning application to be lodged with An Coimisiún Pleanála.

BusConnects Cork is set to include 11 sustainable transport corridors with dedicated bus lanes intended to make

journeys faster, frequent and accessible along with improved cycling and pedestrian facilities.

It is understood the preliminary business case for BusConnects Cork has gone through a required external review and examination by the Government’s Major Projects Advisory Group, as required under infrastructure guidelines.

The completion of these steps paves the way for the detailed design and procurement phase of the project.

BusConnects Cork is part of the National Transport Authority’s (NTA) Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2020-2040.

It is hoped the project will bring about a reduction in peak bus journey times by up to 20 per cent and save around 2,700 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions by 2032.

In 2022 the NTA put the cost

of the Cork plan at €600 million.

Earlier this month Mr O’Brien told the Dáil that BusConnects was “a transformative programme of investment in the bus system, providing better bus services across five cities”.

As well as in Dublin, bus system revamps are also planned for Galway, Limerick and Waterford.

The BusConnects programme for Dublin has already seen changes to some services and various phases of a network redesign. There is an expectation that 12 segregated bus corridors will be completed in 2030.

There have been some hurdles to progressing the plans in the capital. The Irish Times reported in August that of the 12 corridors, judicial review proceedings have been taken in relation to seven.

Weather

Breezy with sunny spells and scattered showers, some heavy. Highs of 9-12 degrees in moderate to fresh winds.

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Sports Wednesday

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Mac DeMarco

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