UN overwhelmingly calls for aid truce between Israel and Hamas

NEW YORK CITY: The United Nations General Assembly on Friday overwhelmingly called for an immediate humanitarian truce between Israel and Palestinian militants Hamas and demanded aid access to the besieged Gaza Strip and protection of civilians.
The resolution drafted by Arab states is not binding but carries political weight, taking the global temperature as Israel steps up ground operations in Gaza in retaliation for the worst Hamas attack on civilians in Israel's 75-year-old history on Oct. 7.

Israel keeps tight curbs on Al-Aqsa Mosque, only 5,000 pray

JERUSALEM: Israeli security forces stopped young Palestinians from reaching Al-Aqsa Mosque on Friday, requiring them to say prayers outside Jerusalem's Old City, before letting several thousand elder worshippers enter under continued tight curbs.
The authority in charge, the Jerusalem Islamic Endowments Department, said 5,000 worshippers performed Friday prayers at the holy site. That compares to about 50,000 on average prior to the conflict.

Why McDonald's, Starbucks and other American brands have long paid the price of politics in the Middle East

RIYADH: Whenever conflicts erupt in the Middle East, American consumer brands are often among the first targets of public anger. The war in Gaza has been no different, with McDonald's and Starbucks branches in Lebanon attacked and consumer boycotts announced throughout the region.

These attacks and boycotts echo similar scenes from the time of the Second Intifada in the early 2000s and the Iraq War era, which prompted a ban on Coca-Cola that remained in place in many Arab countries for decades, giving its rival Pepsi a market advantage enjoyed to this day.

Lebanon accuses Israel of ‘scorched earth policy’ over shelling

BEIRUT: Lebanese firefighters on Thursday were struggling to contain a series of night fires believed to have been started by Israeli phosphorus shells fired into forests and orchards near the country’s southern border.

Residents of the border town of Aita Al-Shaab urged UN peacekeeping forces, Lebanese troops and Civil Defense personnel to join in efforts to extinguish fires that have ravaged nearby farming land.

Eyewitnesses said the fires detonated land mines and cluster bombs left behind by Israeli bombardments.

Sudan’s paramilitary RSF claims capture of second city

CAIRO: The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces that have been battling Sudan’s army for control of the country said they had seized Nyala, its second largest city, on Thursday.

The seizure of the capital of South Darfur state in the west of the country could mark a turning point in Sudan’s six-month war, and comes as the two sides are due to restart negotiations in Jeddah.
The army did not respond to a request for comment, and a network blackout made it difficult to immediately verify the claim.