

# Israel mourns deaths of 45 in stampede at religious festival

BY JOSEF FEDERMAN  
AND ISAAC SCHARF  
The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — The holiday of Lag BaOmer is one of the happiest days on the calendar for Israel's ultra-Orthodox community — a time of mass celebrations in honor of a revered sage. But in a split second Friday, the festive gathering in northern Israel turned into one of the country's worst-ever tragedies, with at least 45 people crushed to death and dozens injured in a stampede.

The disaster prompted a national outpouring of grief as devastated families rushed to identify their dead relatives and bury them ahead of the Jewish Sabbath. There was also anger toward authorities over an accident that experts had long feared, further clouding Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hopes of remaining in office.

Netanyahu, who briefly visited Mount Meron at midday,



Sebastian Scheiner/AP

**Ultra-Orthodox Jews mourn Friday at the scene where fatalities were reported among the thousands of participants during Lag BaOmer festival at Mt. Meron in northern Israel.**

offered his condolences. "In these moments our people unite and that is what we are doing at this moment as well," he said.

The stampede erupted around 1 a.m. as people began to leave and thronged a narrow, tunnel-like passage.

According to witnesses, people began to fall on a slippery ramp, causing others to trip and sparking panic.

Avigdor Hayut, who survived the stampede, described slipping on the ramp and getting trapped in the crowd with his two sons, ages 10 and 13.

"My son screamed, 'I'm dying,'" he told Israel's public TV station Kan. A policeman tried to pull him and his younger son out of the crowd but couldn't move them.

"The policeman threw up and started crying, and I understood what he was looking at, what I couldn't see," said Hayut, 36, who suffered a broken ankle and ribs. "I thought this was the end." He said he began to pray and "simply waited."

Hours later, in hospital with Shmuel, his 10-year-old, they learned that his other son, Yehuda, had died.

Lag BaOmer is very popular with Israel's ultra-Orthodox community. The main event takes place each year at Mount Meron. Tens of thousands, mostly ultra-Orthodox, celebrate to honor Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a 2nd-century sage and mystic who is believed to be buried there. This year, authorities said some 100,000 people attended.

## WORLD BRIEFING

### U.S. extends face-mask requirement on planes

WASHINGTON — If you're traveling on a plane, train or bus, don't put that face mask away yet.

The Transportation Security Administration said Friday it will extend its mask requirement, which also applies in airports and train stations, through Sept. 13. The rule took effect Feb. 1 and was set to expire May 11.

The agency said that children up to 2 and people with certain disabilities will continue to be exempted from the mask rule.

Violations can carry fines of up to \$1,500 for repeat offenders.

Separately, a spokeswoman for the Federal Aviation Administration said Friday that the FAA will continue its zero-tolerance policy against disruptive airline passengers as long as the TSA mask rule is in effect. The FAA is seeking much larger civil penalties — some topping \$30,000 — against a small number of passengers that it accuses of interfering with airline crews.

### U.S. to restrict travel from India over COVID-19

WASHINGTON — The U.S. will restrict travel from India starting Tuesday, the White House said Friday, citing a devastating rise in COVID-19 cases in the country and the emergence of potentially dangerous variants of the coronavirus.

Biden signed a proclamation barring entry to most foreigners who have been in India in the past 14 days, with exceptions for legal permanent residents, spouses and close family members of U.S. citizens, and some others. He cited the spread of the virus and its variants.

With 386,452 new cases, India now has reported more than 18.7 million since the pandemic began, second only to the United States. The

Health Ministry on Friday also reported 3,498 deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 208,330. Experts believe both figures are an undercount.

Biden spoke Monday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the growing health crisis and pledged to immediately send assistance.

This week, the U.S. began delivering therapeutics, rapid virus tests and oxygen to India, along with some materials needed for India to boost its domestic production of COVID-19 vaccines. Additionally, a U.S. team of public health experts was expected to be on the ground soon to help Indian health officials move to slow the spread of the virus.

### Number of Americans vaccinated tops 100M

The number of Americans fully vaccinated against COVID-19 reached another milestone Friday: 100 million.

While the overall number of lives lost to COVID-19 in the U.S. has eclipsed 575,000, deaths have plummeted to an average of about 670 per day from a peak of around 3,400 in mid-January.

Thirty-nine percent of the nation's adult population has been fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Over 55% of adults have received at least one dose, up from 30% a month ago.

However, about 8% of those who have gotten one dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine have not returned for their second shot, officials said. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, said it is important to complete the course to gain maximum protection against the virus.

"Make sure you get that second dose," he said at a White House briefing.

— Bulletin wire reports



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Andrew Ketsdever was named the new interim Vice President of OSU-Cascades.

## Ketsdever

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Johnson, who has worked with Ketsdever for about three years, said the internal hire was a smart move. Ketsdever is already familiar with OSU-Cascades' research and academic programs, Johnson said.

"He'll be able to keep our momentum going and be really good for continuity," Johnson said.

Before arriving in Bend, Ketsdever was a civilian aerospace engineer for two decades with the U.S. Air Force. He also spent 10 years in numerous professional and administrative positions at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs.

Ketsdever said his long career in engineering makes him a natural problem-solver — a good quality for a vice president.

"We look at situations as interesting problems for us to solve, and that doesn't go away in this position," he said. "In fact, it may be even more important to have those problem-solving skills at my disposal."

Johnson agreed that Ketsdever's background would help him lead OSU-Cascades, along with his people skills.

"I think he's a really good listener and a good communicator," she said. "He'll be a real steady hand at the helm."

Ketsdever's main task as

interim vice president is to continue the expansion and growth of OSU-Cascades, he said. This fall, a new academic building — the campus' fourth building — will open, and it will host a new doctorate physical therapy program.

"The goal for me is to really keep the incredible momentum that Becky Johnson has built for us, and to continue to build this university for Central Oregon," he said.

Acting OSU President Edward Feser chose Ketsdever to be the interim vice president because of his connections and experience at the Cascades campus.

"Andrew brings a broad understanding of the needs of

OSU-Cascades, excellent experience and credentials," he wrote in an email. "Based on my consultations with faculty, staff and students, he enjoys the strong support of the OSU-Cascades community."

Feser will soon start a national search for a permanent OSU-Cascades vice president, according to a university press release.

Ketsdever didn't rule out running for that permanent vice president spot, but he'd prefer to return to his previous role next year, he said.

"A year from now, I hope to be the dean of academic affairs," he said.

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## WASHINGTON

# Nuclear waste tank may be leaking

BY NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS  
The Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — An underground nuclear waste storage tank in Washington state that dates to World War II appears to be leaking contaminated liquid into the ground, the U.S. Department of Energy said Thursday.

It's the second tank believed to be leaking waste left from the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The first was discovered in 2013. Many more of the 149 single-walled storage tanks at the site are suspected of leaking.

Tank B-109, the latest suspected of leaking, holds 123,000 gallons of radioactive waste. The giant tank was constructed during the Manhattan Project that built the first

*A multibillion dollar environmental cleanup has been underway for decades at the sprawling Hanford site.*

atomic bombs and received waste from Hanford operations from 1946 to 1976.

The Hanford site near Richland in the southeastern part of the state produced about two-thirds of the plutonium for the nation's nuclear arsenal, including the bomb dropped in 1945 on Nagasaki, Japan, and now is the most contaminated radioactive waste site in the nation.

A multibillion dollar environmental cleanup has been underway for decades at the sprawling Hanford site.

The Washington state Department of Ecology and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency were notified Thursday that the tank was likely leaking.

"There is no increased health or safety risk to the Hanford workforce or the public," said Geoff Tyree, a spokesman for the Energy Department. "Contamination in this area is not new and mitigation actions have been in place for decades to protect workers, the public and the environment."

The tank had been previously emptied of pumpable liquids, leaving a small amount of liquid waste inside, the agency said. Systems in the area capture and remove contaminants that reach the groundwater and ensure the protection of the Columbia River, the agency said.

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