

Israeli jets fly low over Beirut

Says Israeli minister as tens of thousands mourn Hezbollah's slain leader in mass funeral

AFP, Jerusalem

Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israeli Air Force jets flying over the funeral of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut yesterday were sending a "clear message" to anyone threatening Israel.

Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut in September.

Tens of thousands of black-clad mourners vowed support for

Israel's military strikes southern and eastern Lebanon.

Hezbollah at the Beirut funeral of the slain leader, after the group was dealt major blows in its last round of hostilities with Israel.

Women wailed as a truck carrying the coffins of Nasrallah and Hashem Safieddine -- Nasrallah's chosen successor killed in another Israeli air strike -- slowly moved through the crowd, topped with two black turbans and draped in Hezbollah's yellow flag.

Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were in attendance, with representatives of Iraq's main pro-Iran factions also expected to come.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed "resistance" against Israel.

"The enemy should know that resistance against usurpation, oppression, and arrogance is never-ending and will continue until the desired goal is achieved," Khamenei said in a statement published on his official website.

As crowds gathered in Beirut, the official National News Agency (NNA) reported Israeli strikes in Lebanon's south, including a location about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the border, but also in the east.

Israel's military said it had struck "sites containing rocket launchers and weapons" in those areas.

The Israeli army in a tweet ahead of the start of the funeral said "the world is a better place".



A vehicle transports a mock coffin for former Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who was killed in Israeli airstrikes in Beirut, during a symbolic funeral in Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Gaza ceasefire gravely endangered

Says Hamas after Israel delays release of over 600 Palestinian prisoners

AFP, Jerusalem

Hamas yesterday said Israel has gravely endangered a five-week-old Gaza truce by delaying the release of Palestinian prisoners under the deal because of the manner it has freed Israeli hostages.

The first phase of the truce ends early in March and details of a planned subsequent phase have not been agreed.

With tensions again hanging over the deal -- which halted more than 15 months of offensive

Israel deploying tank division in a West Bank city

40,000 Palestinians displaced from Jenin, other refugee camps

-- Israel yesterday announced an expansion of military operations in the occupied West Bank.

The military said a tank division will be sent in to the West Bank city of Jenin, the first such deployment to the territory in 20 years.

Since the Gaza ceasefire's first phase began on January 19, Hamas has released 25 living Israeli hostages in ceremonies before



crowds at various locations in Gaza.

Armed masked fighters escort the captives onto stages adorned with slogans. The hostages have spoken and waved in what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called "humiliating ceremonies".

The Red Cross has previously appealed to "all parties" for the swaps to be carried out in a "dignified and private" manner.

In the seventh such transfer, Hamas released six Israeli captives on Saturday but Israel put off the planned release of more than 600 Palestinian prisoners in exchange.

Senior Hamas official Bassem Naim said postponing the release exposes "the entire agreement to grave danger".

Naim said the mediators, "especially the Americans", must pressure Israel's government "to

implement the agreement as it is and immediately release our prisoners."

Alongside the Gaza offensive -- which displaced almost the entire population of 2.4 million -- violence has also soared in the West Bank.

Yesterday, Israel's military said "a tank division will operate in Jenin" as part of "expanding" operations in the area, where the military began a major raid against Palestinian militants just after the Gaza truce began.

The United Nations has said the military activities have led to "forced displacement" of 40,000 Palestinians from Jenin and other refugee camps.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said he has told troops "to prepare for a prolonged presence in the cleared camps for the coming year.

Germans vote in national election

Polls suggest shift to far-right

REUTERS, Berlin

Germans were voting in a national election yesterday that is expected to restore power to Friedrich Merz's conservatives while the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party is forecast to achieve its best result yet in Europe's ailing economic powerhouse.

Polls opened at 0800 local time (0700 GMT) and closed at 1800 (1700 GMT) when vote counting will start and exit polls will be released. About 60 million people in Germany were eligible to vote.

Merz's CDU/CSU bloc has consistently led polls but is unlikely to win a majority given Germany's fragmented political landscape, forcing it to sound out coalition partners.

Those negotiations are expected to be tricky after a campaign that exposed sharp divisions over migration and how to deal with the AfD in a country where far-right politics carries a particularly strong stigma because of its Nazi past.

That could leave unpopular Chancellor Olaf Scholz in a caretaker role for months, delaying urgently needed policies to revive Europe's largest economy after two consecutive years of contraction.

Report on work by today or resign

Musk orders US federal workers

REUTERS, Washington

The Trump administration sent emails on Saturday evening to US federal government employees telling them to detail their work accomplishments from the previous week by tonight or risk losing their jobs.

The emails came shortly after Elon Musk, the billionaire head of the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency, posted on the social media site X that not responding to the email request would be viewed as a resignation.

"All federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week," Musk posted on X. "Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation."

Musk issued his post just hours after President Donald Trump posted on his own social media network, Truth Social, that DOGE should get more aggressive in its attempts to downsize and reshape the 2.3 million-strong federal workforce.

As of Saturday evening, emails were sent to employees across federal agencies, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others with the subject line, "What did you do last week?"

The email, seen by Reuters, asks employees to reply with five bullet points summarising "what you accomplished at work last week," and to copy their managers.

It was sent from a human resources address from the Office of Personnel Management, and gives employees until 11:59 pm EST today to respond.

TERROR CONTENT

Australia fines Telegram

AFP, Sydney

Australia's online watchdog said yesterday it has fined Telegram more than US\$600,000 for missing a deadline to reveal how it tackles "terrorist" and child sexual abuse content.

The encrypted messaging firm replied more than five months after the May 6, 2024 limit for disclosing its online safety compliance, eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant said.

In March last year, the watchdog asked Telegram and other platforms what they were doing to detect "terrorist", violent extremist, and child sexual exploitation content, she said in a statement.

Japan's emperor hopes for peace, 80 yrs after WWII end

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Emperor Naruhito renewed his wish for world peace on his birthday, marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, the imperial agency said yesterday.

"I hope that this year, the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, will be an occasion... to remember the preciousness of peace in our hearts, and to renew our commitment to peace," Naruhito said in a speech to the IHA ahead of his 65th birthday. "I believe that it is important to pass on the tragic experiences and history of war from the generation that experienced it to the generation that does not know of it," he said.



THREE YEARS OF RUSSIAN INVASION

Ukraine contends with how to heal from war

AFP, Kyiv

When the physiotherapist at the rehabilitation centre in Kyiv asks the group of wounded Ukrainian veterans to all stretch out their legs, some chuckle.

"Only if you still have anything to stretch!" says Oleksandr, a 31-year-old serviceman whose leg had to be amputated below the knee after he stepped on a land mine.

The atmosphere in the gym filled with veterans undergoing rehab mixes dark humour and flirtation with the physiotherapist with the weight of psychological scarring.

Oleksandr said he "quickly accepted" his life had changed after he was wounded in eastern Ukraine last November.

He is receiving help from the Pushcha Vodysia centre, one of 488 rehabilitation facilities across Ukraine.

The World Health Organisation has estimated that almost 10 million Ukrainians are suffering psychologically because of the stress of war launched by the Kremlin nearly three years ago.

The government believes some five million veterans will need support after the war -- an enormous challenge for a health system inherited from the Soviet Union.

"We've all seen old Soviet films with veterans of the war in Afghanistan in the street, vodka in their hands," Oleksandr said.

Attitudes towards therapy have changed radically since the start of Russia's invasion.

Occupational therapist Maksym Andrusenko said one centre had offered him a job as a driver before the war suggesting to him that back then skillsets like his were "not taken seriously".

He laughed off once prevalent Soviet-style methods like mud baths suggesting they did "more harm than good". He told AFP the war had forced an overhaul in rehabilitation practices citing the introduction of yoga and music therapy to trauma patients.

"Our foreign colleagues say we have achieved in a short time what some countries would have taken 10 years to do," he said. The health ministry told AFP that Ukraine has 11,000 rehabilitation experts.

Almost 10 million Ukrainians are suffering psychologically because of the stress of war: WHO



This handout picture released by Senafront (National Border Service) shows police officers rescuing migrants who had naufragated near Mansukum, Guna Yala territory, Panama, on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP