

News in brief

◆ **The European Union** yesterday said it had begun paying 400 million euros (\$430 million) in emergency funding to the Palestinian Authority to help address its "critical" budget problems. Brussels said the first 150-million-euro tranche includes grants to help pay the salaries of civil servants in the West Bank and support vulnerable families. The rest of the funds will be disbursed in August and September "subject to progress in the implementation of the reform agenda of the Palestinian Authority (PA)", the EU said in a statement. The authority has long faced a fiscal crisis, but its finances have been hit further by the Gaza war in Gaza as Israel has withheld tax revenue meant for the Palestinian territory.



EU begins paying 400 mn euros emergency aid to Palestinian Authority

◆ **President Volodymyr Zelensky** said Ukraine and the entire world wants to see Russia take part in global forums aimed at ending the grinding conflict in Ukraine. Leaders and top officials from more than 90 countries gathered at the Swiss resort of Burgenstock in June for a first peace summit, which Russia derided as a waste of time. But Zelensky has recently indicated that

Moscow should be represented at the second summit tentatively planned for this year, a change of approach after Kyiv explicitly excluded Moscow from the first high-level meeting. "The majority of the world today says that Russia must be represented at the second summit, otherwise we will not achieve meaningful results," Zelensky said. "Since the whole world wants them to be at the table, we cannot be against it," he told AFP and other French media during an interview Tuesday in western Ukraine.

◆ **The United States sanctioned** two people and four firms on Wednesday for facilitating the procurement of weapons on behalf of Yemen's Huthi rebels. The group began launching attacks on ships in the Red Sea following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, forcing many shipping companies to alter their routes and triggering retaliatory strikes by the United States and its allies. Wednesday's sanctions targeted

"procurement operatives, shipment facilitators and suppliers" based in Yemen and China who sourced dual-use equipment for use in the Huthi's advanced weapons systems, the Treasury Department said in a statement. It said that those sanctioned had "directly supported" the Yemeni rebels' efforts to procure "military-grade materials abroad," which were then shipped to Huthi-controlled areas of Yemen, enabling their ongoing attacks. The Huthis "have sought to exploit key jurisdictions like the PRC (People's Republic of China) and Hong Kong in order to source and transport the components necessary for their deadly weapons systems," US Treasury under secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence Brian Nelson said.

'Whole world' wants Russia at next peace summit: Zelensky



US sanctions Huthi weapons procurement network



SPOTLIGHT

Russia seizes almost 200 km2 of Ukraine in July

AFP | Paris, France



Russia consolidated its territory gains in eastern Ukraine in July, taking control of almost 200 square kilometres (77 square miles), according to an AFP analysis yesterday. The analysis, based on data from the US-based Institute for the Study of War (ISW), shows an increase over the previous month but a big slowdown compared to May, when Russian forces launched a ground offensive in the border region of Kharkiv, which has since been stopped.

In that month Russian forces seized 449 square kilometres, an average of 14.5 square kilometres per day, their biggest monthly gains since March 2022, just after President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine.

Since the beginning of 2024, Russia has conquered 1,246 square kilometres of Ukrainian territory, well above the 584 square kilometres seized over the whole of 2023.

But that represents just 0.2 percent of Ukraine's territory in 2014, when Ukraine descended into war as pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine began to fight for independence. And it has not resulted in a decisive breakthrough for Moscow's forces.

From July 1 to July 30, Russian forces conquered 198

square kilometres, or an average of 6.6 square kilometres per day.

More than three-quarters, or 155 square kilometres, are in the eastern region of Donetsk, parts of which have been controlled by Kremlin-backed separatists since 2014.

The region is a springboard for Russia as it seeks to seize Pokrovsk, Toretsk and Chasiv Yar, as they prepare attacks on Kramatorsk and Sloviansk.

In June, Russia had seized 129 square kilometres, or 4.3 square kilometres per day.

Since the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, Russia has taken 65,776 square kilometres of Ukrainian territory.

If territory already annexed by Russia such as the Crimean peninsula and eastern zones already under Russian control before the invasion are included, Russian now occupies 107,956 square kilometres or 18 percent of Ukraine according to its internationally recognised borders.

AFP's calculations are based on information provided by a daily ISW report that relies on public information published by the two warring sides and satellite images.

'It's a thunderbolt,' say Palestinian

AFP | Palestinian Territories

The killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in an air strike in Tehran yesterday came as a "thunderbolt" to war-weary Gazans, with some expressing disappointment Iran was unable to "protect him".

"This news is like a thunderbolt, something unbelievable," said Wael Qudayh, 35, a resident of the central city of Deir al-Balah.

Yesterday, Hamas and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards announced that Haniyeh had been killed in Tehran in an Israeli air strike.

He was in the Iranian capital to attend the swearing-in on Tuesday of President Masoud Pezeshkian.

"Qatar was able to protect Haniyeh for 10 months, but Iran was unable to protect him even for a few hours," said Youssef Saeed, 40, also a resident of Deir el-Balah.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Hossam Abdel Razek, 45, an employee in a private institution in Ramallah, said Haniyeh's killing showed that the "blood of Palestinians is cheap".

"The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Iran proves that we, the Palestinian people, have no protector, that our blood is cheap, and that the Arab and Islamic nation sold us out to America and Israel," he said.

Sami Naem told AFP in Deir al-Balah that the assassination "will affect the negotiations" for a ceasefire between Israel and

Hamas chief burial in Doha Friday after Tehran funeral ceremony

Doha, Qatar

The burial of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh is to be held in Doha on Friday a day after a public funeral ceremony in Tehran, the Palestinian group said yesterday.

Haniyeh "will be given an official and public funeral ceremony in the Iranian capital, Tehran, tomorrow," Hamas said in a statement, explaining his body would be transported to



People hold up the Palestinian flag and a portrait of assassinated Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Doha.

the Qatari capital later the same day.

It said funeral prayers will be held at Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab Mosque, Doha's largest mosque, after Friday prayers, with the burial carried out at a cemetery in Lusail, north of the Qatari capital. The Hamas statement added the ceremony in Doha would be held "with popular and factional attendance and the participation of Arab and Islamic leaders".

Hezbollah say was in Beirut

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Hezbollah said yesterday that senior military commander Fuad Shukur was inside a south Beirut building hit by Israel the previous day but that his fate remained unknown.

The Israeli military said its Tuesday strike had "eliminated" Shukur, a top Hezbollah commander it blamed for carrying out a weekend rocket attack on the annexed Golan Heights that killed 12 children in a Druze Arab town.

Hezbollah said in a statement that "the great jihadist commander brother Fuad Shukur (Hajj Mohsen) was present" in

Qatar questions future

AFP | Doha, Qatar

Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani yesterday cast doubt over the success of future mediation between Israel and Hamas following the killing of the group's political chief Ismail Haniyeh.

"Political assassinations & continued targeting of civilians

in Gaza while talks continue leads us to ask, how can mediation succeed when one party assassinates the negotiator on other side? Peace needs serious partners," Sheikh Mohammed, who has led Qatar's mediation efforts, wrote on X.

Later on Wednesday, Sheikh Mohammed received a call from US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken with the pair confirming

Strip said Haniyeh had achieved "martyrdom" because of the way

he was killed. "This is what every Palestinian

Here is a list of previous killings over th

YOU KNOW WHAT

- 1996: booby-trapped phone**
Yehya Ayash, Hamas's bomb-making expert, is killed on January 5 by a booby-trapped telephone in the Gaza Strip.
- 1997: poisoning attempt**
Israeli intelligence agents poison Khaled Meshaal, a key Hamas leader, in the Jordanian capital Amman on September 25. But Jordanian officials capture the assailants and demand an antidote in exchange for their release, saving Meshaal's life.
- 2002: building bombed**
Salah Shehadeh, head of the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, is killed along with 15 other people, nine of them children, on July 22 when an Israeli warplane drops a one-tonne bomb on a building in Gaza.
- 2003: strike on car**
On August 22, senior Hamas leader Ismail Abu Shanab is killed in an Israeli strike on his car in Gaza.
- 2004: founder killed**
On March 22, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the wheelchair-bound founder of Hamas, is killed along with seven others in a helicopter strike as they leave dawn prayers at a Gaza City mosque.
- 2009: Gaza offensive**
On January 1, Nizar Rayan, a leading proponent of the use of suicide bombers by

Al Jazeera says Israeli strike kills two of its journalists in Gaza

Doha, Qatar

Two Al Jazeera journalists were killed yesterday in an Israeli strike in Gaza, the Qatar-based channel reported as war rages in the Palestinian territory between Israel and Hamas.

"Al Jazeera Arabic journalist Ismail al-Ghoul and his cameraman Rami al-Refie have been killed in an Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip," the network reported adding the strike "targeted a car near the Aidia area, west of Gaza City".

The network's office in Gaza has already been bombed in the conflict and two other correspondents killed.

Last month, an Israeli court confirmed it had extended a ban on the network

Switzerland urges nationals to leave Lebanon

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

Switzerland yesterday urged its nationals to leave Lebanon, noting the highly volatile situation in the country.

"The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs recommends that Swiss nationals leave the country by their own means, if this seems possible and safe," the Swiss foreign ministry said in its updated Lebanon travel advice.

"The decision to leave the country is taken voluntarily, at the risk and expense of the person leaving the country."

It said the Swiss embassy in Beirut remained open and would continue to provide its regular services.

"Swiss nationals who decide to remain in the country or travel to Lebanon despite the FDFA's recommendations should, however, be aware that if the security sit-



uation worsens, Switzerland would be able to provide only limited services, if any, and would have only limited possibilities to provide assistance in an emergency," the foreign ministry said. It said a significant deterioration of the security situation throughout Lebanon was possible at any time, while "targeted airstrikes can also endanger uninvolved persons". Just under a thousand Swiss nationals were living in Lebanon at the end of 2022, the ministry says.

Israelis fear f

AFP | Haifa, Israel

Concerns grew among Israelis yesterday over the fate of dozens of hostages still held captive in Gaza following the killing of Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

Haniyeh's killing "was a mistake as it threatens the possibility of having a hostage deal," said Anat Noy, a resident of the coastal city of Haifa, in her 50s.

"We woke up today with a sense of fear in our hearts that this can escalate even more. There is no calm... we are afraid."

As the political chief of the Palestinian movement Hamas, Haniyeh was overseeing the negotiations for a deal to end the war in Gaza and release hostages held in the territory in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israel.

Both Israel and Hamas have blamed each other for the delay in striking the deal.

"We will be happy when the hostages come back home and the war will be over," said another