

## Bodies of four climbers found near Pakistan avalanche site: police

AFP | Islamabad

Search teams in Pakistan found four bodies after an avalanche on one of the world's highest mountains, with six people still missing from an expedition led by renowned British-Nepali climber Nirmal Purja, police said yesterday.

A spokesperson for police in the mountainous Gilgit-Baltistan region said search-and-rescue teams had reached the location the avalanche had struck on Thursday, cutting off contact with the international expedition that had been in the area.

Four bodies have been recovered, the police spokesperson said in a statement on Facebook, later adding that the two of them, of a Nepali climber and an Omani, were being transported to Skardu city on board a military helicopter.

The statement did not name the two climbers.

It added that the search operation ended for the day and will resume on Saturday.

The Alpine Club of Pakistan said the expedition comprised 10 people -- including five Nepalese, a Pakistani, an Omani, an American, and a climber from China. Police did not mention an American citizen and said two British nationals -- a man and a woman -- were in the missing team.

## Wildfire rages on Crete as strong winds hamper firefighting

AFP | Athens

Greek firefighters continued yesterday to battle a wildfire ravaging parts of the tourist island of Crete, although conditions had improved, authorities said.

"The situation around Rethymno is better," a fire department spokesperson told AFP.

But the blaze "has not yet been contained, there are still many hotspots," he added.

About 4,500 hectares (11,120 acres) had been scorched on Wednesday and Thursday south of the tourist town of Rethymno, according to meteo.gr, the weather service of the National Observatory of Athens, citing an analysis of satellite imagery from the European Union's Copernicus programme.

Strong winds and rugged terrain continued to hamper firefighting efforts, authorities said.

# Hamas agrees to disarm

Trump announces disarmament as part of ceasefire implementation roadmap

● Hamas accepts proposed roadmap

● Weapons to go to governing committee

● Israeli forces set for gradual withdrawal

AFP | Gaza City

Hamas said yesterday it had agreed to a deal announced by US President Donald Trump to end the war with Israel, that includes it handing over its weapons to a Palestinian governing committee and the gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

Israel did not immediately comment on the announcement, but shortly beforehand an Israeli political source had said the proposed agreement did not "satisfactorily" address Israeli demands for the full demilitarisation of the Gaza Strip.

The source also said that "the issue of Gaza did not come up at all" in this week's meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Trump in Washington.

The Palestinian Islamist group's weapons have been one of the key sticking points in implementing a ceasefire deal in place since October, but Trump announced late Thursday an agreement for Hamas's "complete disarmament", calling it a critical step toward a new Palestinian government in Gaza.

Hamas officials said that a committee established by Trump's Board of Peace to govern Gaza would oversee the process of storing the Islamist movement's weapons.

The group said it expected mediators and the Board of Peace to ensure Israel complied with the deal's terms, which include Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

Ghazi Hamad, a member of the group's negotiating team, said the movement was making "concessions for the sake of our people in the Gaza Strip, to save them from killing and displacement".



A Palestinian boy walks his bicycle through the rubble of a destroyed building after it was targeted by Israeli strikes

"Israel will not intervene in the issue of disarmament. The National Committee is the body that will undertake this task," he said, referring to the National Committee for Administration of Gaza (NCAG).

Despite the October ceasefire, violence has continued in Gaza, with Israeli strikes killing at least four people, including two children, on Thursday, according to health officials.

### Focus now on implementation

The Board of Peace confirmed in a post on X that Hamas had "agreed to a detailed Roadmap for implementing the next phases of the Gaza ceasefire".

"Our focus now turns to implementation," the organisation wrote, adding the NCAG will "soon begin a phased transition toward full authority".

Trump, in an earlier social media post, said that once Hamas is disarmed "Israeli forces will withdraw, and the International Stabilization Force will work with a new Palestinian police force to take responsibility for Gaza being safe for its residents and its neighbours".

Nickolay Mladenov, the Board of Peace's high representative for Gaza, said yesterday the deal "took months of very difficult



Hamas official Ghazi Hamad stated the movement made major concessions regarding its arsenal specifically to protect the population of the Gaza Strip from further displacement and casualties

negotiations".

"What happens next matters even more. Implementation and verification have to be real," Mladenov wrote on X.

"Withdrawal must move in lockstep with decommissioning," he added.

### 'No exceptions'

Egypt's state-linked Al-Qahera News said yesterday that Cairo will soon host a meeting soon of the truce mediators, which also include the United States, Qatar and Turkey, fo-

cused on the second phase of the ceasefire plan.

Earlier, a diplomatic source said: "We continue to advance the implementation roadmap that offers a balanced and pragmatic path forward, with all weapons decommissioned and a phased transition of responsibilities taking place to hand over full authority to the technocratic government."

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak publicly on the matter, said there would be "no exceptions for certain weapons or certain people. One authority, one law, one weapon".

The roadmap, the source said, would create "a process for the elimination of all tunnels, depots of weapons and any weapons production facilities".

The source said a verification mechanism would ensure compliance by each side.

A Hamas source familiar with the talks said earlier that the movement was "awaiting the Israeli response to the amendments we recently submitted to the mediators".

The source said the amendments concerned two articles in the roadmap presented by the Board of Peace.

## Sri Lanka sentences two ex-security officials to death over 2019 bombings



Sri Lankan soldiers inspect the scene following the blast (file photo)

AFP | Colombo

A Sri Lanka court sentenced two ex-security officials to death for failing to prevent the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, which killed 279 people including 45 foreigners.

In a majority decision, a three-judge bench ruled that the former police chief Pujith Jayasundara and former defence ministry secretary Hemasiri Fernando failed in their duties to stop the deadly attacks, blamed on a home-grown Islamist extremist group.

Jayasundara, 66, and Fernando, 76, can appeal against the sentence in the Supreme Court but have been remanded to judicial custody until granted bail.

Sri Lanka has not carried out the death sentence since 1976, maintaining an unofficial moratorium on capital punishment.

There are at least 800 people on death row, according to government figures shared with Parliament in February, with sentences usually commuted to life imprisonment.

The July 31 judgment at the special fast-track court came after the state appealed against a 2022 decision that acquitted the duo.

The court was told during the proceedings that an Indian intelligence agency had alerted Sri Lanka on April 4, 2019 to a possible suicide attack by Islamist extremists, but the authorities failed to take action.

The attacks on April 21 that year targeted three churches and three hotels.

More than 500 people were wounded.

## Israel carries out huge detonations near Lebanon's Beaufort castle

AFP | Beirut

Israeli forces carried out a series of detonations overnight near the Unesco-listed Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon, Lebanese state media reported yesterday, with Israel saying it had destroyed tunnels used by the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group.

"Israeli forces triggered very powerful explosions around midnight," specifically "in the area of the Beaufort fortress," the official National News Agency (NNA) said.

The Crusader-era castle, located in the southern area occupied by Israel, was added last week to Unesco's List of World



Smoke rises following Israeli bombardment in southern Lebanon close to the Beaufort Castle

Heritage in Danger.

A correspondent in a nearby

village reported hearing large explosions.

In a joint statement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and defence minister Israel Katz announced that the army had destroyed "terror tunnels in the Beaufort area" using approximately 700 tonnes of explosives.

They said the explosions came after a "blatant violation of the ceasefire agreement" by Hezbollah on Wednesday.

The Israeli army accused Hezbollah of violating their fragile ceasefire by launching an explosive drone at an Israeli military vehicle in southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah has not claimed

any attack on Israel since June 20.

While violence has declined since the US-Iran agreement signed last month and a Lebanon-Israel framework deal, Lebanon continues to report Israeli strikes and artillery shelling on the south, as well as detonations of buildings in southern villages.

The Iran-backed movement drew Lebanon into the wider Middle East war on March 2 with attacks on Israel.

Israel retaliated with a massive bombing campaign and a ground offensive, and its army continues to occupy areas of southern Lebanon extending about ten kilometres (six miles) into its territory.