

771

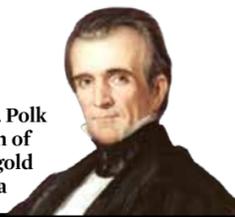
Charlemagne becomes the sole King of the Franks after the death of his brother Carloman

1456

Earthquake strikes Naples, killing an estimated 35,000 people

1848

US President James K. Polk triggers the Gold Rush of 1849 by confirming a gold discovery in California



1969

Four-node ARPANET network is established between the University of California, Los Angeles, Stanford Research Institute, U.C. Santa Barbara, and the University of Utah

Israel launches fresh strikes on south Lebanon after warnings

Israeli strikes target Hezbollah, a day after the first direct civilian talks in decades

● Raids hit southern Lebanon towns

● Pope's visit provided brief reprieve

AFP | Beirut

Israeli raids hit south Lebanon yesterday as Israel's military said it was striking Hezbollah targets, a day after Lebanese and Israeli civilian representatives held their first direct talks in decades.

Despite a November 2024 ceasefire that was supposed to end more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed armed group, Israel has kept up strikes on Lebanon and has also maintained troops in five south Lebanon areas it deems strategic.

The visit from Sunday to Tuesday of Pope Leo XIV had provided Lebanon with a window of reprieve from Israeli air strikes, which had intensified in recent weeks, and the pontiff urged an end to hostilities during his visit.

But yesterday, the Israeli army said it "began conducting strikes on Hezbollah terror targets in southern Lebanon", after warning it would strike buildings in south Lebanon's Mahrouna and Jbaa.

It subsequently issued warnings it would strike further Hezbollah "military infrastructure" in Majadal and Baraasheet, also



United Nations peacekeepers patrol with Lebanese army forces in vehicles of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the Buwayda region of Marjayoun near the border with Israel in southern Lebanon

in the south.

Lebanon's official National News Agency said "Israeli warplanes launched a strike on the town of Mahrouna" while other raids targeted buildings in Jbaa, Majadal and Baraasheet.

An AFP photographer saw smoke rising from the site of the strike in the town of Jbaa.

Lebanon's government has committed to disarming Hezbollah but the group has rejected the idea and many in the country fear a return to expanded Israeli military operations.

'Not yet at peace talks'

Lebanese and Israeli civilian representatives held surprise talks Wednesday under the auspices of the ceasefire monitoring mechanism at the UN peacekeeping force's headquarters in Lebanon's Naqura near the border with Israel.

Representatives of the ceasefire monitoring committee -- the United States, France, Lebanon, Israel and the UN force -- regularly convene in Naqura.

Lebanon and Israel have tech-

nically been at war since 1948, and Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam cautioned the new diplomatic contact did not amount to broader peace discussions.

The United States has been piling pressure on Lebanon to rapidly disarm Hezbollah, and has pushed for direct talks between the two neighbours.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the atmosphere at the talks was "positive", and that there had been agreement "to develop ide-

BETTER
YOU
KNOW

Lebanese and Israeli civilian representatives held their first direct talks in decades on Wednesday, but Lebanon's Prime Minister emphasized these were not yet peace talks

as to promote potential economic cooperation between Israel and Lebanon".

Israel also made it clear it was "essential" that Lebanese militant group Hezbollah disarm regardless of any progress in economic cooperation, the premier's office added.

Salam said the new discussions were strictly limited to fully implementing last year's truce.

"We are not yet at peace talks," he told journalists, including AFP, on Wednesday.

He said the talks only sought "the cessation of hostilities", the "release of Lebanese hostages" and "the complete Israeli withdrawal" from Lebanon.

Until now, Israel and Lebanon, which have no formal diplomatic relations, have insisted on limiting participation in the ceasefire mechanism to military officers.

Probe found Hegseth's Signal use could have put US troops at risk: reports



U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth looks at his mobile phone during an event at the White House

AFP | Washington

The Pentagon's independent watchdog said US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's use of commercial messaging app Signal to discuss strikes on Yemen could have put American troops at risk, US media reported.

The probe by the inspector general's office concluded that Hegseth did not, however, violate rules on classification because he has the authority to declassify information, the reports said, citing sources familiar with

the results of the investigation.

The watchdog's conclusion -- which has been transmitted to Congress -- is nonetheless likely to reignite debate over conduct by Hegseth, who is already under fire over US strikes on alleged drug-trafficking boats that experts say amount to extrajudicial killings.

Asked earlier this week whether he retains confidence in Hegseth, Republican Senate majority leader John Thune said "others can make those evaluations," according to the Washington Post newspaper.

Chaos after India's biggest airline cancels 1,200 flights

AFP | New Delhi

Chaos gripped Indian airports yesterday after the country's biggest airline IndiGo cancelled over 1,200 flights, stranding thousands of passengers.

The company blamed the disruption on "unforeseen operational challenges," including technical glitches, bad weather and new rules for workers.

India's aviation watchdog ordered an investigation and demanded that IndiGo respond with plans to ease the interruptions, which have persisted since Monday.

Passengers vented their anger online, with one airport user on X describing "complete mayhem" with delays of up to eight hours and no staff on hand to help.

Some 1,232 IndiGo flights had been cancelled as of Wednesday, according to the company. The number of delays was not clear.

IndiGo said it was offering customers alternative travel arrangements and refunds while restoring its services.

The company acknowledged its "significantly disrupted" operations were partly due to



Labourers work atop an under-construction building as an IndiGo aircraft prepares to land at Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru

new crew rostering rules having a "negative compounding impact".

The rules came into effect last month and aim to give pilots and crew more rest periods to enhance passenger safety.

In a meeting yesterday with senior officials from the airline and from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, IndiGo acknowledged that "more cancellations will continue for the next 2-3 days," according to a statement issued by the aviation watchdog.

Airline officials also said that "corrective actions are underway" with the aim of fully re-

storing operations by February 10, the statement added.

It said the aviation body demanded IndiGo submit "a detailed roadmap covering projected crew recruitment".

The disruption is another setback to the no-frills carrier, which has built its reputation on punctuality.

Last week, 200 of its planes were affected when Airbus issued an alert for an urgent upgrade for 6,000 aircraft worldwide.

India is one of the world's fastest growing aviation markets, hitting 500,000 daily flyers last month for the first time.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Delighted to welcome my friend, President Putin to India. Looking forward to our interactions later this evening and tomorrow. India-Russia friendship is a time tested one that has greatly benefited our people. @KremlinRussia_E

@narendramodi

02



With my government, families who need early support the most will get it. That's why we've rolled out school-based nurseries and free breakfast clubs. And now, we are putting Best Start Family Hubs in the heart of communities, to provide families with local support.

@Keir_Starmer

03



Lumber, steel, aluminum -- key materials for building homes -- now cost more thanks to Trump's tariffs. Higher construction costs. Slower projects. Fewer affordable housing options for working people. Great work.

@GavinNewsom

04



It's often the most vulnerable Canadians who don't file their taxes and miss out on the benefits they need or have paid into. So we're introducing Automatic Federal Benefits -- pre-filing taxes for up to 5.5 million lower-income Canadians.

@MarkCarney

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)