

## Iran's supreme leader says does not seek war in written message

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei in his latest written message said that the Islamic republic does not want war with the United States and Israel, but would protect its rights as a nation, state television reported yesterday.

"We did not seek war and we do not want it," he said in the message read out on state TV, coinciding with 40 days since his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed on February 28, the first day of the war.

"But we will not renounce our legitimate rights under any circumstances, and in this respect, we consider the entire resistance front as a whole," he added, in an apparent reference to Lebanon where Israel is fighting a war with Tehran's ally Hezbollah.

## IMF expects to provide vulnerable economies hit by Iran war up to \$50bn

AFP | Washington, United States

The International Monetary Fund expects to have to provide up to \$50 billion in immediate financial assistance to countries affected by the Middle East war, its managing director said yesterday, with the crisis likely to have lasting economic effects.

"Given the spillovers of the Middle East war, we expect near-term demand for IMF balance-of-payments support to rise to somewhere between \$20 billion and \$50 billion, with the lower bound prevailing if the ceasefire holds," Kristalina Georgieva said, according to prepared remarks shared with AFP.

The IMF chief also highlighted the ripple effects of the crisis, including food insecurity for at least 45 million people.

## Beirut bans weapons

Lebanon's cabinet instructed security forces to restrict weapons in Beirut exclusively to state institutions, a day after Israeli strikes across the country, including in the heart of the capital.

Information Minister Paul Morcos said the decision prompted objections from Hezbollah's two ministers in the cabinet.



People who fled Beirut's southern suburbs threatened by the latest Israeli bombing warning take refuge on Beirut's summerland beach

# Israel seeks Lebanon talks

At least 203 people were killed and 1,000 wounded in the bombardment on Wednesday

● Even as Netanyahu spoke, Israel's military issued a new evacuation order for Beirut's southern suburbs

● Russia says Mideast ceasefire must cover Lebanon

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered his ministers yesterday to begin direct talks with Lebanon, pushing for Hezbollah's disarmament amid mounting concern that its ongoing strikes could cause the fragile US-Iran truce to unravel.

A Lebanese government official told AFP shortly after Netanyahu's announcement that Beirut "wants a ceasefire" declared before starting any negotiations with Israel, a day after deadly strikes across the country.

At least 203 people were killed and 1,000 wounded in the bombardment on Wednesday, the Lebanese health ministry said, while Hezbollah said it was engaged in close quarters combat against Israeli forces on the ground on Thursday in the south Lebanon town of Bint Jbeil.

## Lebanon PM asks Pakistan to confirm country's inclusion in Mideast truce

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam asked his Pakistani counterpart yesterday to confirm Lebanon's inclu-

sion in the Iran war ceasefire, a day after Israeli strikes on the country killed more than 200 people.

In a statement, Salam's office said he phoned Shehbaz Sharif,

praising Islamabad's efforts in securing the truce and asking him to "confirm that the ceasefire includes Lebanon to prevent a recurrence of the Israeli attacks witnessed yesterday".

lishing peace relations between Israel and Lebanon."

Brussels, Moscow and Ankara demanded that the US-Iran ceasefire be extended to Lebanon.

"We view the situation in southern Lebanon with particular concern," Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz said, echoing statements from Paris and London.

"The severity with which Israel is waging war there could cause the peace process as a whole to fail, and that must not be allowed to happen," he warned. For their part, Iran's parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said Tehran sees Lebanon as an "inseparable part of the ceasefire" and President Masoud Pezeshkian said Israel's strikes rendered "meaningless" talks with US envoys planned for the end of the week in Pakistan.

## Attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon draw condemnation

AFP | United Nations, United States

Dozens of countries contributing troops to the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon called yesterday for a cessation of hostilities, after three blue helmets were killed as Israel and Hezbollah traded strikes.

The Indonesian peacekeepers died in late March. According to a preliminary UN investigation, one was killed by an Israeli tank shell, while the two others were killed by a homemade bomb likely planted by Iran-backed Hezbollah.

More than 60 countries that contribute troops to UNIFIL, the UN peacekeeping

mission in south Lebanon, denounced persistent attacks on blue helmets.

They included Indonesia, France, the United Kingdom, China and Turkey, and the group was joined by other nations like Russia.

"We condemn in the strongest terms the persistent attacks against UNIFIL, including the latest grave attacks which cost the lives of three Indonesian peacekeepers and injured several other peacekeepers from France, Ghana, Indonesia, Nepal and Poland," Indonesian Ambassador Umar Hadi said on behalf of all the countries.

Netanyahu's order for direct negotiations with Lebanon's government was focused on disarming Hezbollah and establishing peace, according to a statement from his office, but he offered no immediate respite from the bombardment.

"Lebanon wants a ceasefire before starting negotiations," said the Lebanese government official, who has knowledge of the matter and requested anonymity.

Even as Netanyahu spoke, Israel's military issued a new evacuation order for Beirut's southern suburbs, just a day after the wave of strikes.

"In light of Lebanon's repeated requests to open direct negotiations with Israel, I instructed the cabinet yesterday to begin direct negotiations with Lebanon as soon as possible," Netanyahu said. "Negotiations will focus on disarming Hezbollah and estab-

**300**

Lebanon's health ministry said Thursday that Israeli strikes across the country a day before killed more than 300 people and wounded at least 1,150.

## Australian couple moves house from wrong plot

AFP | Sydney, Australia

An Australian couple has moved house, literally, after realising it was placed on the wrong plot of land.

Melanie and David Moor said they set up their home to "relax" at a five-acre block two hours' drive west of Melbourne.

They put up the pre-fabricated house in March 2024, including installing the plumbing and electricity, for a new life in rural Victoria.

Five months later, they got the bad news.

"We got the call from the council to say that we had to



A house getting ready to be moved to its correct location after being built on a neighbouring section, in Camperdown, west of Melbourne

stop works because it was on the wrong block -- and we actually owned the block next door," Melanie Moor told AFP on Thursday.

"It's just been a nightmare."

The couple said the plot's boundaries were unclear and they had relied on the local council and the real estate agent for the right advice.

A spokesperson for the Corangamite Shire Council declined to comment.

AFP was unable to reach the real estate agent.

The couple moved their house about 100 metres (330 feet) by truck to the right plot on April 2. They are now living in a caravan while the home is secured to the correct site.

They also need to connect the house's power, water and septic amenities -- at a heavy finan-

cial cost. Melanie Moor has an autoimmune disease, and her husband has liver disease, the couple said.

"The idea was that I could actually relax a little bit and work from home," David Moor said.

Under an agreement with the owners of the plot where the house was originally put, the couple said they have until May 2 to restore that land to its original state.

But they are thankful their home is now in the right place.

"It was a relief seeing the truck take the house across the property," Melanie Moor said.