

News in brief

◆ **Electricity supply** returned to all Iraq's provinces on Tuesday, a government official told AFP, expecting the grid's full recovery within a day after a nationwide power outage. Electricity shortages are a frequent complaint in Iraq, suffering from endemic corruption and dilapidated public infrastructure. Most households rely on private generators, acquired to compensate for daily power cuts to public electricity. On Monday, the electricity ministry said that "a record rise in temperatures" coupled with a surge in demand resulted in the shutdown of transmission lines, which then led to a total outage. A senior ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP yesterday that "since midnight, all provinces have seen the return" of power supply.

◆ **France yesterday** condemned "the heavy toll paid by local journalists" in Gaza and called on the Israeli authorities to guarantee "safe and unhindered access" for international media. On Sunday, five Al Jazeera journalists were killed in an Israeli strike on their tent in Gaza City. Among the victims was Anas al-Sharif, a prominent Al Jazeera correspondent aged 28. A freelance reporter was also killed in the strike that targeted the Al Jazeera team. Condemning the strike, the French foreign ministry said that the journalists were targeted while "carrying out their reporting duties". Israel confirmed it had targeted Sharif, whom it labelled a "terrorist" affiliated with Hamas, saying he "posed as a journalist".

◆ **At least nine** Pakistani soldiers were killed when dozens of militants staged an attack in the country's restive southwestern Balochistan province, government officials said yesterday. The attack on Monday happened the same day the US State Department listed the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) as a foreign terrorist organisation after a string of deadly assaults claimed by the group. A senior government official of Washuk district, where the assault took place, said dozens of militants attacked a police station and a border force compound. "The army was attacked by terrorists on their way to respond. The terrorists killed nine soldiers," he told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media. "There were around 40 to 50 terrorists on motorbikes who attacked government buildings and ransacked them," said a senior official from the province's interior department who asked not to be named, confirming to AFP that nine soldiers were killed.



Iraq electricity gradually back after nationwide outage

Militants kill 9 Pakistani soldiers in Balochistan: govt officials



SPOTLIGHT

Scientists find 74-million-year-old mammal fossil in Chile



Paleontologists working in the Río de la Chinas valley, in the Magallanes region of Chile

AFP | Santiago, Chile

Scientists have discovered the fossil of a tiny mouse-sized mammal that lived in the time of the dinosaurs in Chilean Patagonia.

"Yeutherium pressor" weighed between 30 and 40 grams (about one ounce) and lived in the Upper Cretaceous period, about 74 million years ago.

It is the smallest mammal ever found in this region of South America, dating back to the era when it was part of a continental land mass known as Gondwana.

The fossil consists of "a small piece of jaw with a molar and the roots of two other molars," said Hans Puschel, who led the team of scientists from the University of Chile and Chile's Millennium Nucleus research center on early mammals.

The discovery was published this month in the British scientific journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

Researchers found the fossil in the

Rio de las Las Chinas Valley in Chile's Magallanes region, about 3,000 kilometers (1,864 miles) south of Santiago.

Despite its similarity to a small rodent, "Yeutherium pressor" was a mammal that must have laid eggs, like the platypus, or carried its young in a pouch like kangaroos or opossums.

The shape of its teeth suggests that it probably had a diet of relatively hard vegetables.

Just like the dinosaurs with whom it co-existed, the tiny mammal also went extinct at the end of the Cretaceous period, about 66 million years ago.

This illustration, created by Mauricio Alvarez and obtained from Universidad de Chile depicts the "Yeutherium pressor," an animal that lived during the Late Cretaceous period, approximately 74 million years ago.



New row between Israel defence minister and military chief

Tensions have been simmering between the chief of staff and Netanyahu

● **Zamir was opposed to a plan to take control of Gaza City**

● **Reports said Zamir favoured encircling Gaza's largest city**

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel's defence minister yesterday reprimanded the country's military chief over appointments made without his approval, as



tensions simmered between the military and the executive ahead of a planned expansion of the war in Gaza.

A statement from the defence minister Israel Katz's ministry said that deliberations conducted by chief of staff Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir on military appointments "took place... without prior coordination or agreement" with the minister.

The statement added that this was "in violation of accepted procedure" and that Katz

therefore "does not intend to discuss or approve any of the appointments or names that were published."

In an army statement published shortly afterwards, Zamir responded that he was "the sole authority authorised to appoint officers from the rank of colonel upwards".

"The chief of staff makes the appointment decisions -- after which the appointment is brought to the minister for approval," the statement added.

Tensions have been simmering for two weeks between the chief of staff and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government over the next steps in the military operation in Gaza, aimed at freeing the remaining hostages and defeating Hamas.

Israeli media reported that Zamir was opposed to a plan ap-

proved by the security cabinet on Friday to take control of all of densely populated Gaza City.

Israeli media reported that Zamir favoured encircling Gaza's largest city, rather than conquering it.

The Israeli army controls around 75 percent of the Palestinian territory which has been devastated by 22 months of war.

Zamir, who was appointed in March after his predecessor was dismissed, said last week that he would continue expressing the military's position "without fear, in a pragmatic, independent, and professional manner".

Katz meanwhile said that the army chief could "express his views", but that the military would ultimately have to "execute" any government decisions on Gaza.

Over 50,000 migrants cross Channel since UK PM elected: figures

AFP | London, United Kingdom

More than 50,000 people have made the perilous Channel crossing to the UK in small boats since Keir Starmer became prime minister last July, official figures showed on Tuesday.

Starmer came to power promising to "smash the gangs" of people smugglers operating the boats, but 474 more people made the crossing on Monday, bringing the total to 50,271 since he came to power on July 5, 2024.

The issue of cross-Channel migration has become a major headache for

Starmer's year-old Labour government, as support for the upstart anti-immigrant Reform UK party soars.

More than 27,000 migrants have made the Channel crossing in rudimentary vessels this year alone.

Kemi Badenoch, leader of the Conservative Party that was defeated last year, on Tuesday said that she would "quickly" stop the crossings if she was in power.

"Stopping people from coming here in the first place -- if they

think they're going to be sent to Rwanda and not get here, get a free hotel, get benefits, then they won't come here," she said.

London and Paris last month unveiled a "pilot" programme to return to France some of the migrants arriving in the UK on small boats, with the first detentions made last week.

Starmer called the deal "groundbreaking" and capable of stemming the record numbers of people who have embarked on the journey so

far this year.

Although Starmer did not say how many people might be returned to France, media reports suggest it could initially total around 50 people a week.

Reform UK leader Nigel Farage called the deal "a humiliation for Brexit Britain".

Migrants try to board a smuggler's boat in an attempt to cross the English Channel off the beach of Gravelines, northern France



US woman found guilty of UK murder plot

AFP | London, United Kingdom

An American woman was on Tuesday found guilty at a UK court of participating in a 2019 plot to murder a British man caught up in a bitter feud between families.

After a years-long police hunt, Aimee Betro, 45, was extradited earlier this year from Armenia where she was living, to face trial in the central English city of Birmingham.



Aimee Betro

Prosecutors told the court Betro had covered her face in a niqab as she climbed out of a car in September 2019 and tried to shoot Sikander Ali at point-blank range.

But the handgun jammed and Ali fled in his car which was parked outside his home.

Prosecutors said Betro was part of a plot with co-conspirators Mohammed Aslam, 56, and his 31-year-old son, Mohammed Nabil Nazir.

Betro had met Nazir on an online dating site, and told the jury she was in love with him.

Both men were jailed last year for their roles in the "violent" feud which erupted after they were injured in a brawl at Ali's father's clothing store in July 2018.

"Betro tried to kill a man in a Birmingham street at point-blank range. It is sheer luck that he managed to get away unscathed," said prosecutor Hannah Sidaway.