

Yemen's ex-president Hadi dies in Saudi Arabia

AFP | Washington

Yemen's former President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi has died at 80 years old, the Yemeni presidency said yesterday.

Three days of mourning, with lowered flags and condolence books, was declared to commemorate Hadi, who oversaw a tumultuous period when the Houthis seized large swathes of Yemen, triggering a devastating civil war.

The presidency's statement praised his "wise leadership," saying he "led the Yemeni state through one of the most complex phases the country has ever experienced, amid war, coup, and unprecedented humanitarian and economic crises."



Rescue workers and local residents inspect the damage to a building following an Israeli air strike in the Choueifat area, south of Beirut

Israeli strike hits south of Beirut as Lebanon says raids kill 14

Lebanon and Israel prepare for Pentagon talks as violence threatens renewed escalation

Israel launched strike near Beirut

Ceasefire violations accusations continue

AFP | Beirut

Israel's military said it launched an airstrike in the Beirut area yesterday as a Lebanese source said an apartment was hit, the second such raid since an April ceasefire announcement.

The escalation comes as Lebanon and Israel prepare for talks between military delegations at the Pentagon on Friday, and for US-brokered talks early next week -- the fourth round since the latest Israel-Hezbollah war erupted on March 2.

After heavy strikes that Lebanese authorities said killed at least 14 people including three children, Israel's military said it "precisely struck in Beirut",

without identifying the target.

A Lebanese military source, requesting anonymity, told AFP that "an Israeli strike targeted an apartment in the Choueifat area".

AFP TV footage showed smoke rising from the area on the edge of Beirut's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold.

An AFP correspondent said the first two floors of a residential building were damaged, and saw residents packing cars and leaving.

It was the second Israeli strike on south Beirut since a ceasefire between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah that was supposed to have taken effect on April 17 but has never been observed.

Both sides accuse each other of violating it and justify their attacks by the other's alleged truce breaches.

Hezbollah yesterday claimed several attacks with rockets and drones on Israeli troops in south Lebanon.

Spokesperson for the United Nations Interim Force in Leb-



An Israeli airstrike hit a building inside Tyre's archaeological district, prompting local residents to accuse Israel of deliberately targeting the ancient coastal city's rich history and civilisation

anon (UNIFIL) peacekeepers Kandice Ardiel told AFP that last month's agreement "had a positive effect in lessening the violence, but (we) have seen an escalation in recent weeks, and an intense escalation in recent days".

The force said in a statement that "Wednesday saw around 670

projectiles fired -- the highest level since 17 April".

'Cultural landmarks'

On Wednesday, Israel's military declared all areas south of Lebanon's Zaharani River -- around 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the border and including the cities of Tyre and Nabatieh -- to be "combat zones" and told residents to evacuate.

This week, Israel vowed to ramp up operations in Lebanon and said it was expanding ground operations there.

Yesterday afternoon Israel's military issued another evacuation warning for swathes of Tyre and surrounding areas.

Israeli airstrikes hit Tyre and Sidon, both southern cities, early yesterday.

AFP footage showed a fireball followed by smoke as a strike hit a building in Tyre's archaeological district.

Resident Ghazouane Halawani told AFP he believed Israel wanted to attack the ancient city's "history and its civilisation".

"We're staying here. This is our country, our land, our life," he added.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Raggi said on X that he had begun "intensive diplomatic contacts" after Israeli attacks on Tyre struck "its historic old neighbourhoods, churches, mosques, and cultural landmarks that have stood resilient for thousands of years".

Israeli soldier killed

Lebanon's health ministry said a strike in Tyre killed two Syrians including a child, and another in Sidon killed five people, including two women.

An AFP correspondent said the Sidon raid destroyed the first two floors of a residential building.

The ministry said another strike hit a vehicle in south Lebanon's Adloun, killing six people "including two children, their mother and their father".

Lebanon's military said another strike killed a soldier "while he was driving" in the Nabatieh region.

Trump voices support for Armenia PM ahead of tense vote

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump voiced support on Wednesday for Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in the upcoming elections, which polls show as an exceedingly tight race.

The June 7 parliamentary vote is seen as a litmus test for Pashinyan's moves to loosen Armenia's dependence on Moscow while forging closer ties with the West.

The South Caucasus nation is also still reeling from Azerbaijan's 2023 military takeover of the Karabakh region and the mass exodus of its 100,000 ethnic Armenians.

Australia charges woman with terrorism over IS links

AFP | Sydney

Australian police charged yesterday a woman linked to the Islamic State group with membership of a terrorist organisation and entering a known conflict zone.

Hundreds of women from Western nations were lured to the Middle East as IS gained prominence in the early 2010s, in many cases following husbands who had signed up as jihadist fighters.

A joint counter-terror police team said they will allege that the woman, 34, travelled to Syria between 2013 and 2014 with a man to join Islamic State.

The man is now believed to be imprisoned in the Middle East, they added.

Ukraine to buy up to 20 Gripen jet fighters, Sweden to donate 16

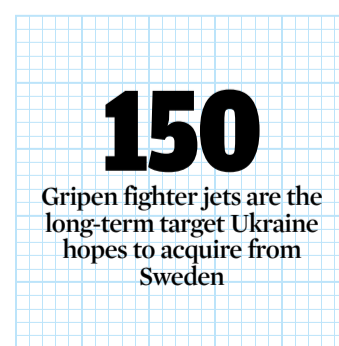
AFP | Stockholm

Ukraine plans to buy up to 20 latest model Gripen fighter jets and Sweden will donate 16 older models, the two countries announced yesterday as Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Sweden.

Ukraine plans to allocate 2.5 billion euros (\$2.9 billion) from an EU loan for the new aircraft,

the Swedish government said in a statement. Regarding the latest model Gripen E jets, "the aim is to quickly conclude a final agreement with deliveries as of 2030", Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said at a joint press conference with Zelenskyy at an air base in Uppsala, 70 kilometers (45 miles) north of Stockholm.

The 16 donated aircraft will



be delivered in early 2027, Kristersson said.

"This is a historic decision for Sweden, but it also strengthens Ukraine's air defense significantly," he added.

The two countries signed a letter of intent in October on Kyiv's purchase of 100 to 150 Gripen E aircraft.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine, bat-

ting Russia's invasion since 2022, hoped to buy all 150 planes.

"We hope we will be able to secure financing for all of them," he said.

Sweden in 2024 suspended plans to send Gripen jets to Ukraine after partner countries requested that priority be given to providing US F-16 fighters.