

Demining group detonates unexploded Israeli rocket

The Mine Advisory Group (MAG), a consultative group involved in removing land mines in the South, on Tuesday detonated a 500-pound unexploded Israeli rocket that Israel had dropped on the southern village of Arama.

The new head of the National Demining Office, retired army brigadier Qassem Jammoul, supervised the explosion.



3rd breast cancer awareness campaign near

The Health Ministry, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Hoffmann-La Roche will launch the third breast cancer awareness campaign across Lebanon in the coming hours, and a statement will be distributed as a condition of his release.

Members of Raad's family in Bidnaya in the Bekaa said they had received a similar notice from the ministry by telephone.



AUB health program offers executives an alternative

The American University of Beirut Medical Center inaugurated Tuesday its Executive Health Program, aiming to deliver tailored-made medical services to busy executives with little time to secure medical care in the traditional way. The program offers six packages based on age, gender, potential risk factors, and the individual's past medical and family history.



Israeli army troops at the border reinforce border positions and build new ones near the Fatima crossing

Israeli troops reinforce border positions

UNIFIL sends team to observe developments

Mohammed Zaatri
Daily Star staff

SIDON: Israeli forces on Tuesday began to reinforce existing border positions and to build new ones near the Fatima crossing and the Israeli town of Metallah. Meanwhile, Israeli patrols could be seen increasing their watch on neighboring hillsides.

Hizbullah fighters used their binoculars to watch these developments from their positions on the other side of the border, taking notes on the Israeli action.

Israeli bulldozers, guarded by military vehicles, cut dry grass and hauled concrete blocks

from one-site to another in what appeared to be routine activity.

Other Israeli teams did maintenance work on the barbed wire separating Lebanon from Israel, while another Israeli team was setting up a new position opposite the Lebanese border town of Kfar Kila.

Residents of neighboring Lebanese towns said that the maintenance works had started on Saturday.

The object of the exercise was to reinforce the Israeli border positions, which were built just after the May 2000 Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon.

In a similar development, the

Lebanese security forces and police, which were based in the South, have sent some patrols to check the developments.

The UNIFIL forces also sent armored vehicles, carrying medium machine guns to check on what the Israelis were doing.

Two months ago, the Israeli Army conducted similar reinforcement work near the Miskavaam Israeli settlement, adjacent to the Lebanese border town of Adasheh.

Three new positions were then set up by the Israelis, with accompanying patrols increasing in the neighboring Israeli groves.

Seif al-Islam Brigades claims it had freed the hostage earlier in the day

Compiled by Daily Star staff

BEIRUT: Mohammed Raad, a truck driver who was kidnapped in Iraq, was expected to be released on Tuesday, according to his captors and a statement by Foreign Minister Jean Obeid. However, a late statement issued by the Lebanese charge d'affaires in Iraq, Hassan Hijazi, to Obeid informed him that Raad would not be released from Falouja where he was held, due to the risky security situation that would not permit his transfer to Baghdad.

A militant group calling itself the Islamic Movement of Holy Warriors in Iraq, Seif al-Islam Brigades, had appeared earlier in the day on the Al-Arabiya satellite channel and on the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation on Tuesday, claiming it had released the Lebanese hostage, kidnapped

in Iraq earlier this month.

In Beirut, the Lebanese Foreign Ministry said earlier that "Raad will be released in the coming hours, and a statement will be distributed as a condition of his release."

Members of Raad's family in Bidnaya in the Bekaa said they had received a similar notice from the ministry by telephone.

After the announcement of his son's release, Youssef expressed his thanks to "all parties" involved in the freeing of his son.

He added: "We support the Iraqi resistance against the occupation."

According to the kidnapers in the videotape, Raad was freed "in response to an appeal from the Muslim Clerics Association," Iraq's leading Sunni clerics' organization.

They added that they had also listened to appeals from "Lebanese officials who insisted that the mujahideen had no reason for targeting Lebanese people."

"We announce today that we released him in response to appeals by a committee

of Muslim scholars," a man said in the video, flanked by two rifle-toting men. Behind him was a black banner that read, "Islamic Movement for Iraq's Mujahideen."

A man, identified as Raad, was shown looking down and holding what appeared to be his passport.

"He (Raad) worked for the occupying American forces in Iraq. And anyone who helps the occupier in any way is a partner

SECURITY CONCERNS PREVENT TRANSFER TO BAGHDAD

Release of kidnapped truck driver stalls in Iraq

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ESCWA member countries must face critical water crisis

Leila Hatoum
Special to The Daily Star

BEIRUT: The Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) on Monday released a much-touted English language version of a study it had previously issued in October 2003 entitled: "The Optimization of Water Resource Management."

The study, which detailed water management efforts during the 1990s, said that ESCWA countries were facing a critical water crisis - one which had been growing steadily each year. It said detailing measures taken by ESCWA member countries "to upgrade their water resource management and their water facilities" were the study's main purpose. "The question of the optimal management of water resources" is

"crucially" important, the study concluded.

"The region," straining under "a galloping population increase... already exploits all of its annual surface water resources, while its aquifers are also fast becoming depleted."

It is "imperative" for ESCWA countries to "adopt realistic policies and institutional arrangements," that will enable them to control demand for water, and "apportion the available quantities along economically efficient lines," the study added.

Not all of the study was bleak, however. During the 1990s some success had been achieved by "creating an enabling environment for the strengthening of Integrated Water Resource Management, including policies, legislation and funding."

Freedom Tent protesters march to EU embassy

Consul accepts memo from demonstrators

Majdoline Hatoum
Special to The Daily Star

BEIRUT: Demonstrators from Beirut's Tent of Freedom in downtown Beirut took their case to the European Union embassy on Tuesday, asking for a swift European intervention to save Arab detainees in Israeli prisons and for the creation of an investigating committee to examine human rights conditions.

After meeting with EU Embassy Consul Francisco Ocueta, Mohammed Safa, the director general of the Follow up Committee for the Support of Lebanese Detainees in Israeli Prisons said that Ocueta promised to send the memo to the European Parliament.

"Ocueta assured us that the European Union respects the right of detainees and considers that they are having a hard time in Israeli prisons," Safa said.

"This tent, set up before the United Nations ESCWA House, is a scream in the face of the world to act," said Ghoni MP Alcedine Tiro during his visit to the tent Monday.

detainees leading the hunger strike, which started Aug. 15, by depriving them of medication and the saline mixture they use to stay alive. Israel might also attempt to break the will of the strikers, the memo added, by locking them in solitary confinement and depriving them of showers and soap.

The memo asked the European Union to send an investigative committee to examine the situation of detainees and pressure the Israeli government to release women, children and prisoners with serious illnesses.

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Khali Fleihan, left, meets with EU Ambassador Biadou at the Foreign Ministry. Talks between the EU and protesters focused on the December 2003 plane crash in Beirut, strengthening bilateral ties.

Excessive weight caused Benin plane crash

Khali Fleihan
Daily Star correspondent

BEIRUT: Benin's Foreign Minister Rogatien Biadou on Tuesday told reporters in Lebanon that the December 2003 Cotonou airline disaster was caused by excessive weight on board the aircraft.

The UTA airliner which crashed shortly after take-off from Benin's airport in Cotonou killed more than 100 passengers, many of them Lebanese.

Biadou said that the people of Lebanon and those of Benin were friends. "This is why I have decided to spend my holidays in Lebanon," the visiting foreign minister told reporters after conferring with Foreign Minister Jean Obeid at the Foreign Ministry.

He added that the air crash "which was a very painful event, was due to the plane's overload," Biadou said that international authorities who analyzed the crash confirmed the cause.

In an answer to a question regarding the responsibility of Cotonou Airport, which allowed the plane take off, Biadou said that "the decision to take off is not in the hands of the airport, but in those of the pilot."

He said both the plane's pilot and air crew were responsible for the disaster and that measures had been taken afterwards to increase safety, specifically for planes bound for Lebanon.

Biadou also predicted that the inquiry into the air crash would be finished in October.

He added that he would discuss the issue Wednesday with Public Works and Transport Minister Hajji Mikati.

Obeid, who was present at Biadou's news conference, said that discussions with the visiting minister also focused on strengthening bilateral relations between Lebanon and Benin.

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LEBANON'S ACTIVITIES

Harb expresses concern over possible amendment

Batroun MP Butros Harb, who is running for president, paid a visit on Tuesday to former President Amin Gemayal at the latter's home in Bikfaya.

Discussions centered on the latest developments in the presidential contest.

They both expressed concern about reports of an imminent constitutional amendment paving the way for President Emile Lahoud to renew or extend his current six-year mandate.

"At a time when Syrian Vice-President Abdel-Halim Khaddam was reported by the press to be opposing any change in the Syrian constitution, how can there be any such amendment to the Lebanese constitution?" Harb asked, as he spoke to reporters after the visit.

"Maybe the Syrian vice-president has joined the Lebanese who are opposed to constitutional changes," Harb said.

Gemayal told reporters that there was a "bloodless revolution" taking place in Lebanon. He added that the revolution targeted the 1989 Taif Accord, which brought to an end the 15-year civil war.

Bsharri visits Sfeir, declines comment

Presidential candidate Mikhail Youssef Bsharri on Tuesday paid a visit to Maronite Patriarch Nasrallah Butrus Sfeir at his summer residence in the northern town of Diman. However, Bsharri declined to make any public statement before or after the visit.

Chidac visits Druze religious leader

Another presidential candidate, Charles Chidac, paid a visit to Druze religious leader Sheikh Bahjat Ghathit. Chidac, who was heading a delegation of his party, the Republican Reform Party, praised Ghathit's public positions and described them as "nationalist and wise."

Zeid announces candidacy

A new presidential candidate, Shukri Abi Zeid, on Tuesday announced his decision to run for the post.

Abi Zeid made the announcement during a news conference at the Press Federation, as he lashed out at the "Zionist lobby, which is controlling the US decision-making process."

He said that, if he was elected for the post, he would hold an immediate meeting with the Higher Judicial Council and give priority to the problems of industrialists and farmers.

He added that he would also use a Lebanese expatriate fund worth \$1 billion to subsidize the Lebanese industrial and agricultural sectors and to bring down the taxes and electric power rates.



Three people, including a pregnant woman, were injured Tuesday in a car accident on the Sidon-Jezzine main road. After being admitted to surgery for an emergency caesarean section, Nisame Mustafa Hijazi, 25, whose car was hit, lost the baby. A car driven by Shadi Baraj, 36, hit Hijazi's car, badly injuring her and passenger Salam Jardal, 28. Jardal and Baraj were also admitted to the Labib Medical Center in Sidon. Hijazi was seven months pregnant. An investigation was opened into the accident.

STATEMENTS

Raad condemns US aggression in Najaf

A ceremony was held on Tuesday in the Nabatiyah town of Houmin Fawq under the auspices of the Loyalty to the Resistance parliamentary bloc's president Mohammed Raad to honor students who excelled in official exams.

In a speech, Raad condemned aggressions in the Iraqi city of Najaf, calling it a "US example of democracy that targeted any voice opposing US occupation." If this voice imposes itself in Iraq, we should expect further pressure on the region, he said.

"This is why we want a president capable of facing this pressure and danger with us, and not a president who will slip in the projects of compromises... at the expense of the people."

CORRECTION

In Kaelen Wilson-Goldie's review, "The Unsettling of Jalal Toufic," which ran in the review section of The Daily Star on Saturday, Aug. 22, there were a number of errors and omissions.

The captions for the images should have read as follows: Toufic at work at the Rawda cafe in Beirut last summer; photographer Youssef Zaatar; stills from Toufic's video projection "Singing Face" (2003); stills from Toufic's video projection "Ashura: This Blood Spilled in My Veins" (2002); stills from Toufic's "The Sleep of Reason: This Blood Spilled in My Veins" (2002).

Information regarding the five books Toufic has written and published should have read as follows:

"Distraction, Second Edition" (Taumba Press, 2003), 134 pages, \$12.95; "Vampires: An Unsettling Essay on the Undead in Film, Second Edition" (Post-Apollo Press, 2003), 377 pages, \$26; "Unsettling Love, or Love Dies" (Post-Apollo Press, 2003), 49 pages, \$16; "Fortune-telling" (Atelos, 2000), 275 pages, \$12.95; and "Over-Sensitivity" (Sun & Moon Press, 1996), 303 pages, \$13.95. The Daily Star apologizes for these errors and omissions.