



Russian army determined to seize strategic Ukrainian town

AFP | Kyiv

Russian forces are fighting to surround the war-battered frontline town of Avdiivka and capture a strategically-located factory nearby, a Ukrainian military spokesman said yesterday.

Moscow's forces in the southern region of Kherson meanwhile carried out fatal shelling of a village retaken by Ukrainian forces one year ago.

Avdiivka, an industrial hub in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, has long been a symbol of Ukrainian resistance after it was briefly captured by pro-Russian forces in 2014.

Jailed Iranian Nobel winner Mohammadi ends hunger strike

AFP | Paris

The family of imprisoned Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi says she has ended a hunger strike after she received medical treatment without wearing the obligatory head covering.

In a message posted on her Instagram account, the activist's family said she was transferred to a hospital for exams on Wednesday. She suffers from heart and lung conditions.

France to build 'ice-packed' vessel for polar research

AFP | Paris

President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday France will build an ice-capable vessel as part of a billion-euro plan to boost polar research.

Addressing a conference on the polar regions and glaciers, he urged world powers to act in the face of the climate emergency despite raging geopolitical tensions.

He said mankind faced a "civilisational" challenge and called for "an unprecedented level of cooperation" despite the "resurgence of geopolitical tensions".

HRH Prince Salman to take part in Arab-Islamic summits today



HRH Prince Salman arrives in Riyadh Riyadh

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday arrived in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to lead Bahrain's delegation at the Extraordinary Session of the Council of the League of Arab States at the Summit Level, and the Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference, both held in Riyadh.

The summits will be held today.

HRH Prince Salman is taking part in the two summits on behalf of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and in response to the invitation extended to His Majesty by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

His Royal Highness was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, HE Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, the Minister of Finance and National Economy, HE Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, the Min-

ister of Labour, HE Jameel bin Mohammed Ali Humaidan, the Minister of Legal Affairs, HE Yousif bin Abdulhussain Khalaf, and the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, HE Hamad bin Faisal Al Malki, along with other senior officials.

Upon arrival, HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister was received by the Governor of Riyadh Province, HRH Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Deputy Governor of the Riyadh Province, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Ab-

dulrahman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Director General of the General Administration for the European Countries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, HRH Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Ambassador of Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, HE Shaikh Ali bin Abdulrahman bin Ali Al Khalifa, and a number of senior officials.

His Royal Highness made a statement in which he extended his gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

and to the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, for hosting the meeting.

Unified efforts

The conferences are being held amid developments in the Gaza Strip, which have unprecedented repercussions for the region and require intensified and unified Arab and Islamic efforts.

'There is no safe place left in Gaza'

Palestinian civilians flee as hospital and school are targeted in deadly Israeli strikes

AFP | Gaza

Palestinians said deadly strikes yesterday hit hospitals and a school where desperate civilians in Gaza City have sought refuge from intense combat that has sent thousands of others fleeing.

"There is no safe place left. The army hit Al-Shifa. I don't know what to do," said 32-year-old Abu Mohammad, who was among those seeking refuge at the hospital. "There is shooting... at the hospital. We are afraid to go out."

Al-Shifa's director and Gaza's government, which reported a death toll of 13, blamed Israeli forces for a strike on the hospital.

The hospital received the bodies of another 50 people killed in a strike on Gaza City's Al-Buraq school, the Al-Shifa director said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said Israeli snipers had also shot at Al-Quds hospital, killing at least one person.

Heavy fighting was raging near Al-Shifa hospital, with Israel saying it had killed dozens of Palestinian fighters and destroyed tunnels that are key to



The bodies of people killed in bombardment that hit a school housing displaced Palestinians, as they lie on the ground in the yard of Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City yesterday. (AFP)

Hamas' capacity to fight. **Bombing and gunfire**

"Last night, I wasn't optimistic that any of my children or I would come out unharmed, given the intensity of the bombing and gunfire," said Jawad Haruda, who was among thousands walking south in an exodus away from Gaza City.

"We couldn't wait for the morning, and everyone in

Al-Shifa hospital left," he added. Witnesses told AFP that hundreds of people sheltering at Gaza City's Al-Rantisi hospital fled on instruction from the Israeli military, which was surrounding it with armoured vehicles.

Amid the fighting, the International Committee of the Red Cross warned the health system in the Gaza Strip had "reached a point of no return".

In Israel, medical services re-

"We condemn the military aggression witnessed in the Gaza Strip, the targeting of civilians, and the continued violations of international humanitarian law by the Israeli occupation forces."

- HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN BIN ABDULAZIZ AL SAUD, SAUDI CROWN PRINCE AND PRIME MINISTER OF SAUDI ARABIA

of Israeli forces in Gaza, ahead of weekend summits that will focus on the unfolding violence in the Palestinian territory.

"We condemn the military aggression witnessed in the Gaza Strip, the targeting of civilians, and the continued violations of international humanitarian law by the Israeli occupation forces," HRH Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told a summit with African leaders.

"We stress the necessity of stopping this war and forced displacement and creating conditions for the return of stability and achieving peace."

The war has derailed progress towards a normalisation deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia, which HRH Prince Mohammed said in September was drawing "closer" every day.

His comments at the Saudi-Africa summit came one day before the Gulf kingdom hosts two emergency meetings of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation today.

Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairman of the African Union Commission, also condemned the "obscene violence" afflicting Palestinians.

