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AFP

■ Israeli tanks are deployed in the Upper Galilee region of northern Israel near the border with Lebanon. The US said Israel had informed it about limited ground operations inside Lebanon.

Israeli ground assault on Lebanon imminent

LEBANESE ARMY REPOSITIONS, REGROUPS FORCES AT BORDER

BEIRUT

Lebanon's army is repositioning troops stationed on its southern border, a Lebanese military official told AFP yesterday, after the US said Israel had informed it about limited ground operations inside Lebanon.

The Lebanese army is "repositioning and regrouping forces" at the southern border following threats of an Israeli incursion against Hezbollah targets, the official said, requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah's deputy leader Naim Qassem said yesterday the group was ready to face any Israeli ground operation, warning that the battle could last a long time.

In a televised address, Qassem also said Hezbollah would choose a new chief "at the earliest opportunity" after Israel killed its leader Hassan Nasrallah in an air strike on Friday.

Qassem said Hezbollah would continue "confronting the Israeli enemy in support of Gaza and Palestine, in defence of Lebanon and its people, and in response to the assassinations and the killing of civilians".

"We will face any scenario and we are ready if Israel decides to enter by land, the resistance forces are ready for

UAE PRESIDENT DIRECTS \$100M AID FOR LEBANON

President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan has directed the delivery of an urgent \$100 million relief package to the people of Lebanon.

This initiative is part of the UAE's continuous efforts to support Lebanon through its current challenges, underscoring the nation's unwavering commitment to assisting the Lebanese people.

—WAM

any ground confrontation. We know the battle may be long," he said on Hezbollah's Al-Manar television channel, in first address by a senior Hezbollah leader since Nasrallah's death.

Qassem said Nasrallah was killed while meeting with Iranian General Abbas Nilforoushan and Hezbollah's top commander in southern Lebanon Ali Karake, in the presence of the group leader's head guard and another Hezbollah member close to him.

"We will select a new secretary-general for the party at the earliest opportunity and

according to the party's selection mechanism," he said.

"Be assured that the choices will be easy because they are clear and we are united," Qassem added, without saying when the selection would take place, or when Nasrallah's funeral would be held.

While Qassem automatically takes over the Hezbollah leadership after Nasrallah's death, the group's decision-making Shura Council must meet to elect a new secretary-general.

Beirut strike

Most of Israel's strikes have targeted Hezbollah strongholds in eastern and southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut, the group's main bastion.

On Monday, a drone strike hit a building in the Cola district in central Beirut, with an armed Palestinian group saying it had killed three of its members.

The strike, the first in the centre of the city in years, sparked panic, with 41-year-old resident Mohammad Al Hoss saying "the kids were in shock" after his house was damaged.

Iran will not deploy forces to Lebanon or Gaza to confront Israel, its foreign ministry said on Monday, as Israeli strikes target its allies in the region.

—AFP

SEE ALSO P9

Dubai Airports raises 2024 passenger forecast

DXB's annual traffic to hit 93m against earlier estimate of 91.8m

DUBAI

BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN

Chief Reporter

The world's busiest hub, Dubai International Airport (DXB), has raised its 2024 passenger forecast to 93 million, exceeding the earlier estimate of 91.8 million. The record of 93 million was earlier forecasted for the end of 2025. However, DXB is ahead of schedule, according to its CEO, Paul Griffiths.

Speaking to the media yesterday at the sidelines of the Future Hospitality Summit (FHS) World, Griffiths said, "We're hoping to see 93 million (by the end of this year) and 100 million maybe a couple of years away."

DXB delivered a strong H1 2024 with 44.9 million passengers, and according to Griffiths, the airport has also recorded an 8 per cent growth in summer traffic compared to the same period in 2023. He said, "We've had a very strong first half this year. Every time we revise our

forecast, it is always upward. So, that's a very positive trajectory."

Given the fast-growing passenger numbers at DXB, Griffiths said Dubai Airports has been encouraging airlines that can't secure their preferred times at DXB to consider DWC as an alternative hub.

DWC to handle more flights

"We have had some interesting discussions with airlines planning to put more flights into DWC. What will be happening is additional flights that we can't find timings for at DXB will be accommodated at DWC," he explained.

Moreover, the proposed \$35 billion passenger terminal at Dubai World Central is still in the detailed design phase. Contracts are yet to be awarded for the construction of the mega hub, which, upon completion, can accommodate up to 260 million passengers a year.

"There is a huge amount of work ahead. The start of construction depends on when the design will be completed and signed off. It will be a little while before we have finalised the plans," Griffiths said.

SEE ALSO P6

Key UAE caterer confirms IPO date

DUBAI

BY MANOJ NAIR

Business Editor

Abu Dhabi National Hotels plans to list its catering arm, adding to the growing number of initial public offerings in the Middle East.

The owner of hotels including the Ritz-Carlton and Park Hyatt in Abu Dhabi plans to offer 900 million shares — representing 40 per cent of ADNHC Catering's share capital — in the IPO, which opens on October 7. The price range will be announced on the same day and the offer price will be determined through a book building process, the company said in a statement. The share sale could raise about \$300 million to \$400 million, Bloomberg News reported in July.

The Middle East has seen a flurry of share sale announcements over the past months, including from an exploration and production unit in Oman, two flour millers in Saudi Arabia and a food delivery firm in Dubai.

To help attract investors, the firm plans to pay out Dh60 million (\$16.3 million) in dividends for 2024 and triple it to Dh180 million for 2025.

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NATION

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