

Iran again closes strait amid ceasefire



Hassan Ammar/Associated Press

Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike on a building Wednesday in Beirut, Lebanon.

Discrepancies over agreement's terms arise as Israel continues attacks in Lebanon

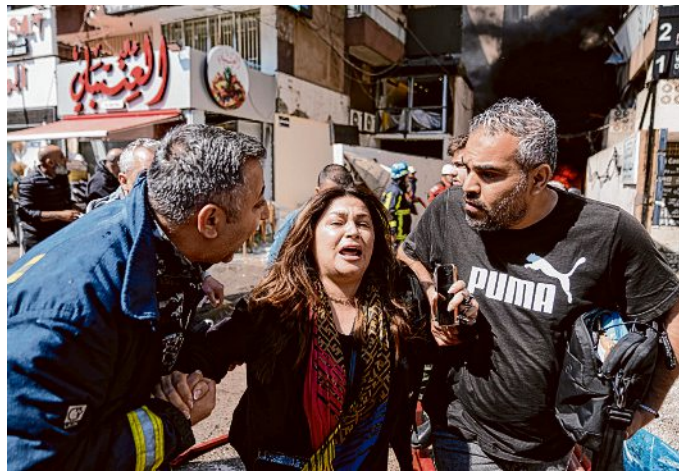
By Bassem Mroue, Jon Gambrell, Samy Magdy and Sam Metz

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEHRAN, Iran — A ceasefire deal to pause the war in Iran appeared to hang by a thread Wednesday after the Islamic Republic closed the Strait of Hormuz again in response to Israeli attacks in Lebanon. The White House demanded that the channel be reopened and sought to keep peace talks on track.

The U.S. and Iran both claimed victory after reaching the agreement, and world leaders expressed relief, even as more drones and missiles hit Iran and Gulf Arab countries. At the same time, Israel intensified its attacks on the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, hitting commercial and residential areas in Beirut. At least 182 people were killed Wednesday

Iran continues on A5



Bilal Hussein/Associated Press

A woman is assisted at the site of an Israeli airstrike that struck an apartment building Wednesday in Beirut.

City OKs plan to limit HPD's cooperation with ICE

Proposal erases Whitmire's recent changes to policy

By Matt deGrood and Abby Church

STAFF WRITERS

City Council approved a proposal from three council members limiting Houston police officers' cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents on Wednesday, with Mayor John Whitmire in support.

The proposal by Council Members Alejandra Salinas, Edward Pollard and Abbie Kamin eliminates a requirement that officers wait 30 minutes for federal agents to pick people up on noncriminal ICE administrative warrants, and requires police leaders to compile reports on the department's cooperation with ICE.

The proposal passed 12-5, with conservative Council Members Amy Peck, Fred Flickinger, Mary Nan Huffman, Willie Davis and Twila Carter opposed.

The item erases a policy change Whitmire and Police Chief Noe Diaz announced just a few weeks ago after the Houston Chronicle reported that HPD officers in at least two cases had transported drivers to ICE agents, despite ICE administrative warrants being civil documents that do not on their own give officers the authority to make arrests.

Whitmire's policy tweak said officers should wait 30 minutes for an ICE agent to pick up a person detained with a civil ICE warrant, and said the officer should call their sergeant to the scene.

Salinas, Kamin and Pollard felt that change didn't sufficiently limit how the Houston Police Department works with ICE, and filed their proposed ordinance under Proposition A, a 2023 city charter amendment that allows any three council members to add an item to a meeting agenda as long as it's legal. The charter typically gives only the mayor the power to place items on the agenda.

City Attorney Arturo Michel ruled that a provision in their proposal giving officers discretion on when to call ICE agents could run afoul of state law and risked losing state and federal grant funding, blocking that from reaching a vote. The three council members "strongly disagreed" with that interpretation, noting that other Texas cities have made it discretionary for their officers to call ICE.

The proposal's two other provisions were approved Wednesday.

Whitmire said Wednesday he believed the proposal's remaining provisions were consistent

ICE continues on A3

Ex-Midtown official admits to stealing funds for affordable housing

By Nicole Hensley and Mike Morris

STAFF WRITERS

Former Midtown Redevelopment Authority official Todd Edwards pleaded guilty Wednesday to charges of theft and money laundering, admitting in court that he misused public funds meant to build affordable housing in Third Ward.

Judge Lance Long plans to decide Edwards' punishment following a two-day hearing as early as June, at which witnesses from both sides are expected to testify.

Edwards stood to be imprisoned anywhere from five to 99 years, but Harris County prosecutors agreed to cap his punishment at 20 years. The judge can consider probation and also add fines or restitution.

Inger Chandler, one of Edwards' defense attorneys, said she hopes the judge will consider probation "as that would give Mr. Edwards the opportunity to repay that restitution" through ongoing employment. The restitution amount she has been given, she said, is \$1.3 million.

"The taking of responsibility is a big step towards sort of healing

"I'm disappointed it had to come to this. I wish it was a different outcome. Again, all we wanted was the lots cut."

Third Ward civic leader Ken Rodgers

any of the damage that's been done in this case," Chandler said, "and I think that him taking responsibility for the money that was lost is an important step for him."

The other charges Edwards faces, abuse of official capacity and misapplication of fiduciary property, remain pending and could be used by prosecutors to argue for a stiffer punishment.

Edwards conceded in court that he committed the offenses with Veronica Ugorji of Cortez Landscaping and Kenneth Jones of KCK Demolition and Landscaping as part of his plea agreement.

Both are charged with money laundering and abuse of official

Edwards continues on A3



Toyota Center

Toyota Center is slated for a remodel, which is scheduled to be completed by fall 2027 and includes a nearly 20,000-square-foot atrium with a glass facade.

Toyota Center renovation to 'completely transform' arena

By Matt Young

STAFF WRITER

Toyota Center, home of the Rockets, is getting a \$180 million facelift beginning this summer that will include the addition of a nearly 20,000-square foot atrium with a glass façade, creating a covered outdoor gathering space that will change the look of the front door of the downtown arena.

Mayor John Whitmire hailed the project as one that will come "at no cost to Houston taxpayers"

with \$95 million coming from the state in form of grants from the Texas Department of Economic Development and Tourism for upgrades to the arena that were necessary for it to host the 2028 Republican National Convention. Rockets owner Tilman Fertitta is footing the rest of the bill. Whitmire said the new look "will completely transform" the arena.

Work will begin at some point this summer after the conclusion of the current Rockets season and is expected to be done by the fall of

2027, which will be in time for the Rockets' 2027-28 season and the Republican convention, which was awarded to the city in 2024.

"It is definitely not an incremental tax," Rockets president of business operations Gretchen Sheirr said. "The money was in the (state's) budget and allocated for a grant and I'm very thankful for the state of Texas that they're investing in the largest city in the state and the fastest-growing one and showing the importance of

Arena continues on A5