

## Western arms 'prolong suffering' of Ukrainians

### Says Kremlin; Kyiv bolsters defences in east as Russia sends waves of attacks

AGENCIES

The Kremlin yesterday moves by France and other Western countries to supply Ukraine with weapons – including light tanks – would only make life more difficult for Ukrainians.

"Fundamentally, these deliveries cannot and will not change anything... (they) can only prolong the suffering of the Ukrainian people," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in response to a question on France's decision last week to send armoured vehicles to Ukraine.

French President Emmanuel Macron last week pledged to send light tanks to Kyiv, reports AFP.

The move to supply the French-made AMX-10 RC to Ukraine – a light model in service since the 1980s – would make France the first Western country to send tanks to Ukraine.

The Kremlin said President Vladimir Putin and Macron remain in contact. Peskov said the leaders being in touch has been "very useful, despite deep differences."

After Macron committed to send tanks to Kyiv, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz also faced renewed calls to send tanks to Kyiv.

Meanwhile, Ukraine said it was strengthening its forces around Bakhmut in the eastern Donbas region and repelling constant attacks there by Russian mercenary group Wagner.

Kyiv had sent reinforcements to Soledar, a small town near Bakhmut where the situation was particularly difficult, Ukrainian officials said.

"The enemy again made a desperate attempt to storm the city of Soledar from different directions and threw the most professional units of the Wagnerites into battle," Ukraine's military said in a statement.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of the Wagner mercenary group, has been trying to capture Bakhmut and Soledar for months at the cost of many lives on both sides.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A demonstrator reacts next to members of security forces as supporters of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro leave a camp outside the Army Headquarters, in Brasilia, Brazil, yesterday. Brazilian security forces locked down the area around Congress, the presidential palace and the Supreme Court yesterday, a day after Bolsonaro's supporters stormed the seat of power in riots that triggered an international outcry.

## PAKISTAN FLOOD RECOVERY

# Donors pledge over \$8bn in aid

REUTERS, Geneva

Pakistan said yesterday that donors had committed to give more than \$8 billion to help it recover from last year's devastating floods in what is seen as a major test for who pays for climate disasters.

Officials from some 40 countries as well as private donors and international financial institutions are gathering for a meeting in

Geneva as Islamabad seeks help covering around half of a total recovery bill of \$16.3 billion.

Waters are still receding from the floods caused by monsoon rains and melting glaciers which killed at least 1,700 people and displaced around 8 million.

Pakistan Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb sent a tweet saying that pledges had reached \$8.57 billion - more than it had

initially sought.

Among the donors were the IDB (\$4.2 bn), the World Bank (\$2 bn), the Asian Development Bank (\$1.5 bn) as well as the EU and China, she said. France and the US also made contributions. Earlier, UN chief Antonio Guterres called for massive investments to help Pakistan recover from what he called a "climate disaster of monumental scale".

## Israeli sanctions 'new war'

Says Palestinian PM

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh yesterday described a raft of Israeli measures as a "new war" against the Palestinian Authority aimed at pushing it "to the brink". Israel's new right-wing government said Friday it will withhold millions of dollars in tax revenues from the Palestinian Authority (PA). This followed the Authority's successful lobbying for a UN General Assembly vote referring Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories to the International Court of Justice. The Palestinian premier said the retaliatory measures amounted to "a new war against the Palestinian people, their capabilities and their funds, and a war against the national authority (PA) and its survival." Such sanctions were "aimed at undermining the authority and pushing it to the brink – financially and institutionally," Shtayeh said at the start of a weekly cabinet meeting. The deductions amount to around \$40 million, which the Israeli government said will be distributed to "families of victims murdered in Palestinian terrorist attacks".

## Iran sentences 3 more to death

AFP, Tehran

Iran has sentenced to death three more people accused of killing members of the security forces during protests triggered by Mahsa Amini's death, the judiciary said yesterday. The Islamic republic has been rocked by civil unrest since September 16 death in custody of Amini, 22, following her arrest for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code for women. The latest sentences bring to 17 the total number of people condemned to death in connection with four months of protests.

## Memoirs written to combat 'spin and distortion'

Prince Harry tells British channel ITV

AFP, London

Prince Harry said he decided to publish his memoirs to defend himself against years of tabloid spin, as British television aired his first interview on the book's explosive revelations.

"Thirty-eight years, 38 years of having my story told by so many different people with intentional spin and distortion felt like a good time to own my story and be able to tell it for myself," he told British channel ITV.

But the fallout from the 38-year-old's revelations has cast doubt on his future in the royal family.

Although the Duke of Sussex's ghost-written book, *Spare*, officially launches today, its contents were widely leaked after it was mistakenly put on sale early in Spain.

"I fled my home country with my wife and my son fearing for our lives," Harry told British channel ITV of his move to California two years ago, referring to the British media as "the antagonist".

He repeated accusations of the royal family being "complicit" in hostile tabloid reports about him and his wife Meghan.

The book includes an allegation that his brother Prince William, the heir to the throne, attacked him during a row about Meghan, an account of how he lost his virginity, an admission of drug

use and a claim that he killed 25 people while serving in Afghanistan.

British media reported on Sunday that the book had deeply hurt William and the boys' father, King Charles III, but that the monarch wanted to reconcile with his son. The palace has not issued any official reaction.

The ITV programme *Harry: The Interview* featured the prince reading extracts from the audiobook of his memoirs, which he narrates himself.

In one, he tells movingly of how his father broke the news of the 1997 death of his mother princess Diana in a car crash to his "darling boy."

Harry revealed he only "cried once" after Diana was killed and said he felt guilty at being unable to express grief while greeting crowds of mourners whose hands were wet with tears.

He also talked about later going to see the route Diana's car took before the crash, asking a driver to take him through the road tunnel in Paris at the same speed.

"I've been asked if I want to open up another inquiry," Harry said of Diana's death. "I don't really see the point at this stage." The book focuses on his combative relationship with William, saying his elder brother physically attacked him as they argued over Meghan.



## Global piracy acts drop to 14-year low

AFP, Brest

Worldwide acts of piracy fell to their lowest level last year since statistics were first established in 2008, a maritime security body said yesterday.

The Maritime Information Cooperation and Awareness Center (MICA), the France-based branch of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) which is headquartered in Malaysia, said there had been 300 reported acts of piracy and robbery last year.

The IMB had already reported in its quarterly report in October that such acts were at their lowest level since 1992.

In the Gulf of Guinea, off the west coast of Africa, just three ships were attacked in 2022 compared to 26 in 2019, the MICA said.

In the same area, the number of kidnappings dropped to two last year, from 146 in 2019.

## KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

# Rare rhinos dodge poachers for first time since 1977

REUTERS, New Delhi

No rhinos were poached last year in the world's largest reserve for the endangered great one-horned rhinoceros, India's Assam state, in what authorities said was the first time since 1977.


Filled with elephant-grass meadows, swampy lagoons, and dense forests, the Kaziranga National Park in northeast India's Assam is home to 2,200 rhinos, or two-thirds of their world population. It has attracted British royalty as well as cricket stars, but poaching had become a big concern.

Poachers killed more than 190 rhinos in Assam between 2000 and 2021 but none was killed last year, according to data shared by Assam Police with Reuters. The last time there was no poaching was in 1977.

A record 27 rhinos were killed in Assam each year in 2013 and 2014, the data showed, as poachers sought to sell their horns for thousands of dollars in East Asia.

Assam Police said 58 poachers were arrested last year, five injured and four killed.

"We need to keep the pressure on the poaching gangs," said Assam's special director general of police, Gyanendra Pratap Singh, who heads a task force to tackle poaching. "We have to ensure that the graph of poaching stays flat at nil for a few years" until that becomes the norm, he said.



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Email: [bdoffice@kokilabenhospitals.com](mailto:bdoffice@kokilabenhospitals.com)