

Killing of war blogger was terrorist act

Says Kremlin, cites evidence linking Ukraine to bombing; woman suspect held

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia yesterday accused Ukraine of organising the murder of a prominent war blogger in a St Petersburg cafe and arrested a young Russian woman shown in a police video admitting planting the bomb that killed him and injured over 30 others.

The Kremlin called Vladlen Tatarsky's murder a "terrorist act," citing the statement from the National Anti-terrorism Committee as evidence that Ukraine might have been behind the killing. "The active phase of the investigation is now under way," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We see quite vigorous steps to detain suspects. Let's be patient and wait for the next announcements from our special services, which are working on this."

Ukraine, which did not take responsibility for Sunday's attack, blamed "domestic terrorism" for the murder of Maxim Fomin, a Russian military blogger and cheerleader for Russia's invasion of Ukraine who called himself Vladlen Tatarsky.

Darya Trepova, the 26-year-old Russian woman arrested over his murder, confessed in a video released by the interior ministry that she had planted the bomb that killed him.

But unconfirmed Russian media reports said she had told investigators that she had been set up and had not known she was carrying a bomb.

Footage of the moment the blast ripped through the cafe released by the Fontanka.ru news outlet showed a powerful explosion shaking the length of the ground floor venue, bringing down parts of its outside terrace in the process.

Tatarsky's murder appeared to be the second assassination on Russian soil of a figure closely connected to the conflict in Ukraine, after the car bomb killing of Darya Dugina, daughter of a nationalist ideologue, outside Moscow last summer. Russia also accused Ukraine at the time. Kyiv denied involvement.

With over 500,000 followers on the Telegram messaging service, Tatarsky - who had himself fought in Ukraine in the past - mixed ultra-nationalist messaging with criticism of the way Moscow is prosecuting what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine.



A visitor stands next to children drawings in the basement of a school where villagers were kept for almost a month by Russian troops in the village of Yahidne, north of Kyiv, a year after the liberation of the settlement, yesterday amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

'Duty to deter Israeli escalation' in Jerusalem: Jordan King

AFP, Amman

Jordan's King Abdullah II expressed on Sunday a commitment to "safeguard" Jerusalem's holy sites, in a meeting in Amman with Muslim and Christian religious leaders from the city.

A statement from the royal court said the king told the delegation, led by Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, that Jordan "will always be with you".

"It is the duty of every Muslim to deter Israeli escalations against... holy sites in Jerusalem," the king said according to the statement.

The meeting follows tensions with the Israeli government over a minister's remarks denying the existence of the Palestinian people and fears of a flare-up in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan,

which began on March 23.

The king touted a long-term commitment to preserving "peace and harmony" at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound - Islam's third holiest site which Jordan administers. It is built on top of what Jews call the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site.

On Friday, Israeli police shot dead an Arab Israeli medical student at the compound. The force said he had grabbed and fired an officer's gun, a claim Mohammed al-Asibi's family rejects.

King Abdullah also hailed "Jerusalemites'... efforts to safeguard" the holy sites and "stressed the need to stop the displacement of Christians, as well as the repeated attacks on churches, religious figures and Christian property in Jerusalem", according to the statement.

On Friday, church leaders in Jerusalem appealed to the Israeli government to ensure Christians are able to worship freely during Easter and its run-up, expressing concern at mounting violence and acts of desecration over the past year.

During Sunday's meeting the Jordanian king "called on the international community to take a stand against the exclusionary and racist statements made recently by some Israeli officials", the statement said.

Last month, the foreign ministry in Amman said it had summoned Israel's ambassador to receive a "strongly worded letter of protest" following a widely condemned speech by far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

At an event in Paris, Smotrich said "there isn't a Palestinian people".

NABLUS RAID Israeli forces kill two Palestinians

AFP, Nablus

Israeli forces shot dead two Palestinians yesterday in a morning raid in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said, in what the army described as "counterterrorism activity". "Two martyrs shot by the occupation (Israel) in Nablus," the ministry confirmed in a brief statement, without elaborating on their identities. The Israeli army said it had carried out the raid to apprehend two individuals linked to a shooting attack in which two Israeli soldiers were injured last month in the West Bank town of Huwara. "During the activity, a number of armed gunmen fired at the forces who responded with live fire. Hits were identified," the army statement said, adding that two individuals were arrested. Israeli forces have carried out a number of deadly raids in the flashpoint city of Nablus in recent months with the emergence of a militant group Lions' Den, which has been blamed for a number of attacks on Israeli targets. The Lions' Den said its members were involved in "confronting the occupation forces' storming of the city of Nablus". The raid came two days after a peak in violence that saw two killed in confrontations with Israeli forces.

Trump to fly to NY for court surrender

REUTERS, NEW YORK

Former US President Donald Trump was set to fly from Florida to New York City yesterday, ahead of his scheduled arraignment related to hush money paid to a porn star before the 2016 election, as security tightens in Manhattan. Trump, the first former US president to face criminal charges, is due to be arraigned, fingerprinted and photographed at the downtown Manhattan courthouse today. His lawyers have said he will enter a plea of not guilty. The specific charges included in the grand jury indictment have not been disclosed; today's arraignment marks Trump's first appearance in court in the case. In a social media post late on Sunday, Trump said he planned to leave his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach at noon for the Trump Tower in Manhattan before heading to the courthouse this morning. A court official said the arraignment was planned for 2:15 pm (18:15 GMT) today. Trump then will return to Florida and deliver remarks at Mar-a-Lago at 8:15 pm today, his office said.



Families hold a banner reading "justice for the families; stop to the killing of our children" during a white march following an overnight flare up in drug gang violence in Le Castellat district of Marseille, southern France, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US journalist appeals Russian detention

AFP, Moscow

US journalist Evan Gershkovich, who was arrested in Russia last week on spying claims that he denies, is appealing his detention, a Moscow court said yesterday.

Gershkovich, 31, is believed to be the first foreign journalist arrested on spying allegations since the collapse of the Soviet Union. His arrest has drawn outrage from the West.

A spokeswoman for Moscow's Lefortovo district court said: "The date of the hearing on his detention appeal will be announced this week."

Advertisement for Bangladesh Sycamore Light Company Limited (BSCL) regarding recruitment. Includes company logo, contact info, and a table of job positions.

ECONOMIC WOES Egypt's Sisi makes snap KSA visit

AFP, Riyadh

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi met Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler on a brief visit late on Sunday, state media said, as the North African country grapples with severe economic difficulties.

Sisi was greeted at Jeddah airport by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and was waved off again several hours later by the 37-year-old, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

Few details were given about the meeting, but import-dependent Egypt's economic fortunes have plunged since Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent wheat prices soaring, fuelling rampant inflation.

Saudi Arabia, which will host an Arab League summit next month, is also engaging in significant de-escalation in the turbulent region, signalling a return to diplomatic relations with arch-rival Iran after a seven-year gap.

"They discussed developments in the regional and international situation and the efforts exerted in addressing them, in addition to tackling all issues of common concern," SPA said.

Sisi's visit comes after Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed Al-Jadaan said in January that oil-rich Riyadh would stop providing unconditional aid to Egypt, setting off a brief spat between state-linked media in both countries.

Official notice from Bangladesh regarding recruitment for the National Election Commission. Includes details on the exam, syllabus, and application process.