

# Ukraine hits bridge linking Crimea

## Zelensky claims Russia considering attack on Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant

REUTERS

Ukrainian missiles struck one of the few bridges linking the Crimea Peninsula with the Ukrainian mainland early yesterday, cutting one of the main supply routes for Russian occupation forces in southern Ukraine as Kyiv pushes to drive them out.

Vladimir Saldo, the head of the Russian-installed administration in occupied parts of Ukraine's Kherson province, released video of himself on the Chonhar road bridge, where craters had been blasted through the asphalt.

"Another meaningless act perpetrated by the Kyiv regime on orders from London. It solves nothing as far as the special military operation is concerned," he said, vowing to repair the bridge and restore traffic.

He threatened to retaliate by targeting a bridge linking neighbouring Moldova to Nato-member Romania: "A very serious response is coming very soon."

The Chonhar bridge hit overnight is one of just a handful of access roads to Crimea, which is linked to the Ukrainian mainland

by a narrow isthmus.

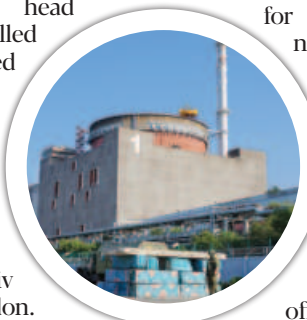
Alternative routes require hours-long detours over roads in poor condition. Russia's RIA news agency quoted Russian-installed transport officials in Crimea as saying repairing it could take weeks.

The bridge is beyond range of the battlefield rockets Ukraine has used for a year, but within reach of newly deployed weapons such as British and French air-launched cruise missiles, allowing Kyiv to hit logistics routes Russia had deemed safe just weeks ago.

The strike was "a blow to the military logistics of the occupiers," said Yuriy Sobolevsky, a Ukrainian official on the governing body for the Kherson region.

Russian investigators said four missiles had been fired by Ukrainian forces at the bridge.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that Moscow's forces were considering launching a "terror attack" at the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, a recurring flash point of concern throughout Russia's invasion.



Guatemalan migrants deported from the United States walk on the airport runway upon their arrival at the Air Force Base in Guatemala City on Wednesday. Ten million of Guatemala's 17.6 million people live in poverty. This induces thousands of them to leave for the US, convinced that if they stay in their country, they will never escape poverty.

PHOTO: AFP

## PARIS CLIMATE SUMMIT WB unveils debt payment pause for disaster-hit nations

REUTERS, Paris

The World Bank chief announced a raft of measures yesterday to aid countries hit by natural disasters, including a pause in debt repayments to the lender, at a gathering of world leaders in Paris to give impetus to a new global finance agenda.

Some 40 leaders, including about a dozen from Africa, China's prime minister and Brazil's president, were in French capital alongside international organisations at the "Summit for a New Global Financial Pact".

It aims to boost crisis financing for low-income countries, reform post-war financial systems and free up funds to tackle climate change by getting top-level consensus on how to promote a number of initiatives struggling in bodies like the G20, COP, IMF, World Bank and United Nations.

"It is clear that the international financial architecture has failed in its mission to provide a global safety net for developing countries," United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, calling the system outdated, dysfunctional and unjust.

In remarks to a panel yesterday, new World Bank president Ajay Banga outlined a "toolkit", including offering a pause in debt repayments, giving countries flexibility to redirect funds for emergency response, providing new types of insurance to help development projects and helping governments build advance-emergency systems.

# West Bank violence surges

## Israel destroys alleged attacker's home; rampage follows killing of four Israelis by gunmen

AFP, Nablus

Israeli forces yesterday demolished the home of a Palestinian accused of killing a soldier in the occupied West Bank, which has been hit by a new outbreak of violence.

This week, at least 17 people have been killed in the territory, in Israeli military incursions or in attacks by Palestinians or Israeli settlers.

So far this year, more than 200 people have died in violence linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Soldiers entered Nablus, a Palestinian city in the north of the West Bank, during the night and left at dawn after destroying Kamal Jouri's home in an apartment building, witnesses told AFP.

The army said it "demolished... the home of Kamal Jouri, the terrorist who carried out a gun attack" in October which "caused the death of soldier Ido Baruch".

Jouri was arrested in February and is in Israeli custody along with Osama Tawil, who is also accused of taking part in the attack and whose home was destroyed on June 15, the Israeli army said.

The army said that during the operation to demolish Jouri's home, "rioters opened fire on the soldiers, causing damage to a military vehicle".

Israel regularly destroys the homes of Palestinians who carry out deadly attacks against Israelis. It argues it is a deterrent, though critics say it amounts to collective punishment.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967.

Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the

territory is now home to around 490,000 Israelis who live in settlements considered illegal under international law.

Deadly violence has flared in recent days in the northern West Bank, a stronghold of Palestinian armed groups where Israel has stepped up military operations.

The northern West Bank has seen a spate of attacks on Israelis as well as attacks by Jewish settlers on Palestinian communities over the past week.

On Monday, an Israeli military raid in the Palestinian refugee camp of Jenin left seven people dead, including an Islamic Jihad fighter and two 15-year-olds.

The army, which fired missiles from a helicopter to clear the way for its troops, encountered strong resistance.

On Tuesday, four Israelis were killed when two Palestinian gunmen attacked a petrol station near the Eli settlement. The assailants were shot dead.

In response, Netanyahu's office said his government would fast-track settlement expansion at Eli, despite repeated calls by the United Nations for Israel to halt such construction.

Israeli anti-settlement organisation Peace Now said Netanyahu's announcement was intended "to appease fervent and fanatic settlers".

On Wednesday, Israelis poured into the Palestinian village of Turmus Ayya, between Ramallah and Nablus, setting fire to houses and vehicles, witnesses and the Israeli army said.

One Palestinian was killed, either during the attack or in the chaos that followed during clashes with Israeli police.



Children cool off in a water fountain amid an orange alert for heatwave, at a shopping area in Beijing, China yesterday. The temperature in Beijing breached 41 degrees Celsius yesterday and shattered the record for the hottest day in June as heatwaves that had seared northern China a week earlier returned to the Chinese capital.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## SUDAN EXPLOSIONS Warring parties trade blame

AFP, Khartoum

Explosions rocked Khartoum yesterday, more than two months after fighting broke out between two rival Sudanese generals, with each side accusing the other of attacks on civilians.

Witnesses in the east of the capital reported artillery fire, while others in the northern suburbs said there was heavy shelling from an army barracks, with the force of blasts shaking walls of houses.

Fighting since April 15 between the regular army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) headed by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo has claimed more than 2,000 lives.

The latest in a series of ceasefires that have all been systematically violated ended on Wednesday morning, and fighting resumed within minutes.

The three-day US and Saudi brokered ceasefire had brought a brief respite to the millions of civilians trapped by fighting and suffering shortages of essentials.

The army accused the RSF of "taking advantage of the truce to mobilise its forces and commit several violations against civilians".

## Maldives ex-president quits ruling party

AFP, Male

Former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed has quit the ruling party, he said late Wednesday, amid a deepening rift within the government ahead of September presidential elections. "After taking into account how things are happening in the country at the moment, I don't think the best course of action is for me to stay in this party," Nasheed tweeted late Wednesday, as he stepped down from the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) he founded in 2001. "I have resigned from the party." However, Nasheed said he would remain in his post as speaker of parliament.

## RESTAURANT BLAST 31 people killed in northwest China

REUTERS, Beijing

A gas explosion at a barbecue eatery on Wednesday night in China's northwestern Ningxia region killed 31, according to state-run Xinhua news agency, in one of the country's deadliest restaurant blasts in recent years. The explosion at the two-storey establishment sparked discussion on Chinese social media about the safety of barbecue restaurants, which have gained new popularity this year with the lifting of zero-Covid curbs and hype among online influencers. Seven people were still undergoing treatment for burns and cuts from broken glass after the blast.

## 603-NIGHT FREE STAY India police probe hotel conman

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police are investigating a suspected fraudster who spent nearly two years in a five-star hotel without paying after reportedly bribing staff to fix records, local media said yesterday. Ankush Dutta booked a room at Roseate House hotel in New Delhi on May 30, 2019 and was supposed to check out the next day. But he extended his stay for 603 nights until he left on January 22, 2021, leaving behind unpaid bills of \$70,000. "Accounts were falsified to conceal the actual outstanding dues," the police complaint read. Hotel managers also filed a police complaint against several employees for forgery, with officials saying they suspected staff members were bribed to manipulate in-house software systems.

## INDIA'S MANIPUR Two soldiers hurt in fresh violence

TNN, New Delhi

Two soldiers were hurt in a new round of violence in Manipur yesterday morning when armed groups opened fire on them in the N Boljang neighbourhood of Imphal without warning. Both soldiers are receiving medical treatment and are in good health, according to Army officials. Soon after, security forces launched a search operation in the area and recovered one INSAS light machine gun. Earlier, an Indian Army soldier has been injured after armed miscreants resorted to unprovoked firing from Kanto Sabal towards Chingmang village during the night of June 18-19.

## EU holds crisis talks with Serbia, Kosovo

AFP, Brussels

The European Union yesterday held crisis talks with the leaders of Serbia and Kosovo, as the bloc seeks to ease the latest spike in tensions.

"I have called the leaders of Serbia & Kosovo to Brussels for urgent meetings to find the way out of the current crisis," the EU's foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell said.

"We need immediate de-escalation & new elections in the north with participation of Kosovo Serbs. This is paramount for the region & EU," Borrell tweeted.

The latest flare-up between the two sides came over the detention last week of three Kosovo police officers by Serbia after weeks of tension over disputed elections in Serb-majority northern Kosovo. Rioting by ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo saw 30 Nato peacekeepers injured in late May.

The EU had threatened Kosovo with political consequences such as suspending high-level visits and financial cooperation if it does not reverse course on the elections.