

Russia attacking with ‘heavy fire’ in south: Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian troops are facing “heavy fire” from advancing Russian forces in the southern Zaporizhzhia region after Moscow made its most significant territorial gain in nine months last week, Ukrainian army figures said yesterday.

Moscow’s forces are back on the offensive across eastern and southern Ukraine, and have forced Kyiv into a hasty withdrawal from the town of Avdiivka in eastern Donetsk region, securing their first major gain since the capture of Bakhmut in May 2023.

Senior Ukrainian commander Oleksandr Tarnavsky said yesterday that Russia was now launching multiple attacks near the village of Robotyne – one of the few places where Ukraine had managed to regain ground during last year’s counter-offensive.

Russia was trying to advance with “small assault groups with the involvement of several units of armoured vehicles,” he said in a Telegram post.

“These offensive attempts are being halted, the enemy is being eliminated in the outskirts of Robotyne,” Tarnavsky, who commands Ukraine’s forces in the area, said in a post on Telegram.

Reports from Russian military bloggers had earlier said Moscow’s forces were in the southern edges of the village.

“The situation is dynamic here, the enemy is inflicting heavy fire,” Tarnavsky’s spokesperson Dmytro Lykhoviy said earlier yesterday on state TV.

Like many settlements across eastern Ukraine, Robotyne has been completely flattened by months of artillery fire.

Ukraine’s defences have been stretched in recent weeks by shortages in ammunition and manpower.

Lykhoviy said the Russians were “regrouping” after Ukraine withdrew from Avdiivka and “will probably transfer units to other sectors.”

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A man carries a girl pulled from the rubble of the Baraka family home in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip after it was hit by an Israeli air strike. Deadly fighting raged on in the enclave yesterday after Israel warned that, unless Hamas frees all hostages, it will push on with its offensive during the holy month of Ramadan. PHOTO: AFP

By killing Alexei, Putin killed half of me – half of my heart and half of my soul... I will continue the work of Alexei Navalny, continue to fight for our country.

Alexei Navalny’s widow YULIA NAVALNAYA

US-owned cargo ship attacked twice off Yemen

EU launches Red Sea mission to protect shipping from Houthi rebels

AFP, Dubai

The European Union launched a naval mission yesterday to protect Red Sea shipping from Yemen’s Houthi rebels as a US-owned cargo vessel repeatedly came under fire in the region.

The Iran-backed Houthis, who control much of war-torn Yemen, have been harassing the vital shipping lane since November in a campaign they say is in solidarity with Palestinians during Israel’s offensive in Gaza.

The EU aims to have the mission – called Aspides, Greek for shield – up and running in a “few weeks” with at least four vessels, an official said on Friday, ahead of yesterday’s official launch.

“Europe will ensure freedom of navigation in the Red Sea, working alongside our international partners,” European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

The United States is already spearheading its own naval coalition in the area and has conducted retaliatory strikes on the Houthis in Yemen along with Britain.

The dozens of Houthi attacks have roiled shipping in the Red Sea, forcing some companies to take alternative routes including a two-week detour around the tip of southern Africa. In the latest incident, a Greek-flagged, US-owned cargo ship was attacked twice in two hours in the Gulf of Aden, which adjoins the Red Sea, maritime security firm Ambrey said.

India offers farmers support prices on corn, cotton, pulses

REUTERS, Ambala

The Indian government has offered guaranteed support prices for pulses, corn and cotton in a bid to break a deadlock with protesting farmers, Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said after week-long clashes between security forces and protesters. The farmers’ unions said they would decide on the proposal within a day or two, after reaching consensus among themselves. Tear gas and barricades were used to deter the farmers, who form an influential voting bloc, months ahead of a general election due by May. Sunday’s comments followed marathon talks with farmers’ unions after the protesters were halted at a distance of about 200 km from New Delhi. Goyal said the government had proposed five-year contracts for a minimum support prices (MSPs) to farmers who diversify their crops to grow cotton, pigeon peas, black matpe, red lentils and corn, paid by co-operative groups it promotes.

CHILD PROTECTION BREACH EU starts formal probe into TikTok

REUTERS, Brussels

The European Union will investigate whether ByteDance’s TikTok breached online content rules aimed at protecting children and ensuring transparent advertising, an official said yesterday, putting the social media platform at risk of a hefty fine. EU industry chief Thierry Breton said he took the decision after analysing the short video app’s risk assessment report and its replies to requests for information, confirming a Reuters story. “Today we open an investigation into TikTok over suspected breach of transparency & obligations to protect minors: addictive design & screen time limits, rabbit hole effect, age verification, default privacy settings,” Breton said on X. The EU’s Digital Services Act requires in particular very large online platforms and search engines to do more to tackle illegal online content and risks to public security. TikTok’s owner, China-based ByteDance, could face fines of up to 6 percent of its global turnover if TikTok is found guilty of breaching DSA rules.

CORPORATE BOOKING

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