

## Two dead as Russia fights off border attacks

AFP, Moscow

Russia's national guard yesterday said it was fighting off attacks from pro-Ukrainian groups in the region of Kursk, the latest in a recent string of clashes at the border.

In the neighbouring Belgorod region of Russia, officials announced that two people had been killed and nine more wounded in fresh aerial attacks on the border region overnight and early yesterday.

Three separate groups of Ukrainian militias, mainly comprised of anti-Kremlin Russians, this week claimed to have captured the village of Tyotkino in a joint operation.

"Rosgvardia units are involved in repulsing an attack by enemy diversion groups near the village of Tyotkino in the Kursk region," the national guard said yesterday.



A farmer holds a mock plough as he attends a Maha Panchayat or grand village council meeting as part of a farmers' protest to press for the better crop prices promised to them in 2021, in New Delhi, India, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Backlash intensifies at UK government's extremism definition

AFP, London

The UK government yesterday unveiled a new definition of extremism to determine which organisations get public funds and meetings with officials, prompting criticism from civic, political and religious groups.

The change, to what ministers call a "more precise and rigorous" definition, comes two weeks after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak warned of a "shocking increase in extremist disruption and criminality" that risked "mob rule".

Sunak's comments followed months of pro-Palestinian protests in British cities that have raised questions about policing and enforcing legislation against anti-Semitism.

The government previously defined extremism as "the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values" such as "mutual respect and tolerance".

The new wording describes extremism as "the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance" that seeks to achieve one of several aims.

These are to "negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others"; to "undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights"; or to "intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve" one of the two previous aims.

Sunak's ruling Conservative party has faced claims of Islamophobia, after a former deputy chairman accused London Mayor Sadiq Khan of links to Islamists.

### AI RISK TO ELECTIONS

## EU targets TikTok, X, other apps

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday wielded a powerful new digital law to press TikTok and seven other platforms on the AI risks for upcoming elections in the 27-nation bloc, including from deepfakes.

In a flurry of actions taken under the Digital Services Act (DSA), the European Commission quizzed TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, X, Google, YouTube, Snapchat and Bing on what they were doing to counter those risks.

The commission also announced a formal probe against Chinese internet retailer AliExpress for multiple suspected breaches of the DSA, among them the sale of illegal medicines and dietary supplements, and not preventing minors from accessing pornography.

Additionally, Brussels asked Microsoft's professional social network LinkedIn about how users' personal information is being used for targeting advertising.

"DSA now running at full speed" after coming into force last year, the European Union's top digital enforcer, commissioner Thierry Breton, posted on social media apps Bluesky and X.

"Enforcement teams (are) fully mobilised," he said.

On the information request to the eight platforms on steps to mitigate risks from generative AI, the commission said in a statement it was looking at issues "such as so-called 'hallucinations' where AI provides false information, the viral dissemination of deepfakes, as well as the automated manipulation of services that can mislead voters".

The formal requests made to those platforms, as well as the request to

LinkedIn, do not presuppose further action being taken. That would depend on the information gleaned.

The probe against AliExpress, on the other hand, gives Brussels the power to dig deep into its internal documents and processes and to take testimony.

Such level of action against

one official told journalists.

The announcement looking at the AI risk came a day after the European Parliament voted to adopt a major new law seeking to curb abuses of artificial intelligence. That legislation will take effect once formally signed off on by EU member countries.



a company, depending on the outcome, potentially exposes it to DSA fines running up to six percent of a platform's global turnover, or even a ban in egregious cases.

European Commission officials said the focus on generative AI and how major platforms were handling it stemmed from concerns on how it might be used to influence voting in June EU elections.

"We want to equip ourselves and we want to equip the platforms and alert the platforms to really be best prepared for all sorts of incidents that might come our way with regard to the upcoming elections, in particular, of course, the EP (European Parliament) election,"

Overall, Brussels' legal arsenal to impose order in the digital sphere has been massively beefed up in recent months with the DSA and a sister Digital Markets Act, and the AI Act, with the goal of better protecting European citizens and businesses while still fostering innovation.

The combined weight of those pieces of legislation are likely to serve as guideposts for other countries to follow, especially in the West.

The United States, which has an executive order on AI safety standards, is potentially headed towards an outright ban on TikTok if it stays under the ownership of Chinese company ByteDance.

## Biden blasts 'loser' Trump as campaign slugfest intensifies

AFP, Milwaukee

President Joe Biden needled "loser" Donald Trump Wednesday, in his first battleground campaign stop since the two rivals secured their parties' nominations for what promises to be one of the most rancorous elections in US history.

Speaking to supporters in Milwaukee in the crucial swing state of Wisconsin, the Democrat also blasted his hard-right Republican nemesis for describing immigrants as "vermin."

The return to the campaign trail came a day after incumbent Biden, 81, and Trump, 77, both won enough delegates to clinch their parties' nominations for a rematch in November.

"A lot of you helped me in 2020 and we made sure he was a loser. And we're going to make sure that happens again, right?" Biden told local supporters and volunteers in Milwaukee -- the same city where Trump and his party will hold the Republican National Convention in July.

Biden has taken to repeatedly calling Trump a loser, knowing it rankles the defeated former president, who still refuses to acknowledge he lost four years ago.

Wisconsin and Michigan, which Biden will visit on Thursday, were among the crucial states he flipped from Trump in their 2020 showdown and needs to win again to secure a second term.

Biden took on Trump over immigration, a key issue in the election with the Republican resorting to increasingly hardline rhetoric as he bashes the Democrat over record numbers of people crossing the border from Mexico into the United States.

The attacks underscored how bitter the next eight months of US politics promise to be, with the country's oldest ever pair of election candidates making no secret of the personal bitterness between them.

## Back me in 'difficult' time Putin urges countrymen as Russia goes to polls

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin yesterday urged Russians to stay the course in the face of a "difficult period", hours before polls open in a vote set to extend his headline rule.

The former KGB agent is set to secure another six-year term this weekend in a vote the Kremlin says will show society is fully behind his assault on Ukraine.

"I am convinced: you realise what a difficult period our country is going through, what complex challenges we are facing in almost all areas," Putin said in an address to Russians on the eve of the vote.

"And in order to continue to respond to them with dignity and successfully overcome difficulties, we need to continue to be united and self-confident," he added.

Victory in the March 15-17 contest will allow Putin to stay in the Kremlin until at least 2030, longer than any Russian leader since Catherine the Great in the eighteenth century.

Appointed by his predecessor Boris Yeltsin on the final day of 1999, Putin has ruled Russia as president or prime minister ever since.

His first years in office saw an economic boom as Moscow cashed in on its vast energy resources.

But under his rule, Russia became increasingly authoritarian at home, eventually cracking down and outlawing all forms of dissent.

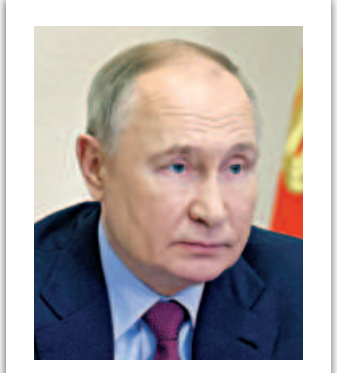
And abroad, Putin ramped up confrontation with the West and dispatched troops into Ukraine -- annexing Crimea in 2014 and backing separatist rebels in the eastern Donbas region before launching his full-scale offensive in 2022.

With all his major critics dead, in prison or exiled, Putin sees Russian society as united behind him.

"We have already shown that we can be together, defending the freedom, sovereignty and security of Russia," he said in a video message, while flanked by flags of the Russian tricolour and the president's state insignia.

"Today it is critically important not to stray from this path," he said.

The vote was a way for Russians to demonstrate their "patriotic feelings," he added.



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### e-Tender Notice (Re-Advertisement)

e-Tender are invited in e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Project Director, DCNUP, Dhaka South City Corporation for the procurement of:

SL.	Tender ID, Ref No.	Description of items	Start date and time	Last selling date and time	Tender closing date & time
1.	Tender ID: 960425, Ref. No. 46.207.014.09.10.183.2023, Date: 04.01.2023	Works: Improvement and Construction works of Moulvi Bazar Community Center, Haji Jummon Community Center and Mazed Sarder Community Center- Package No. DCNUP/W-8.1.1/SUT	14-Mar-2024 15:00 BST	31-Mar-2024 16:00 BST	01-Apr-2024 12:00 BST

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and offline/hard copy(s) will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

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Ref. No : 57.03.5659.300.18.01.24-215 Date : 13/03/2024.

### Invitation for e-GP Re-Tender

Invitation for Re-Tender to be Invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following goods

Sl.	Re-Tender Id	Package No.	Description	Tender Publishing Date & Time	Tender Last Selling Date & Time	Tender Closing & Opening Date & Time
1	962055	MPI/Rev/23-24/PG-08	Supply of Electrical Modern Equipments (Electrical Circuit Lab) (4112304)	18-03-2024	1/4/2024 13:00	1/4/2024 15:00
2	962056	MPI/Rev/23-24/PG-10	Supply of Electronics Modern Equipments Lab-2 (4112304)			
3	962057	MPI/Rev/23-24/PG-11	Supply of Electronics Modern Equipments Lab-3 (4112304)			

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for selling/downloading the e-Tender Documents from the e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to Scheduled date and time.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd), +8809609112233, +8801762625528, +8801762625529).

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