

SOUTHERN LEBANON
Hezbollah downs Israeli drone

REUTERS, Amman

Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah said on Sunday it downed an Israeli drone that was on a combat mission in southern Lebanon.

The drone that was brought down above the Al Aishiyeh area in southern Lebanon was "waging its attacks on our steadfast people," a statement said by the group said.

Israeli forces and Lebanon's armed group Hezbollah have been exchanging fire for over six months in parallel to the Gaza war, in the most serious hostilities since they fought a major war in 2006.

Hezbollah said the drone was an Israeli Hermes 450, a multi-payload drone made by Elbit Systems, an Israel-based weapons manufacturer. The fighting has fuelled concern about risk of further escalation.

At least 370 Lebanese, including more than 240 Hezbollah fighters and 68 civilians, have been killed in the fighting according to a Reuters tally. Eighteen Israelis, including soldiers and civilians, have been killed on the Israeli side of the border, according to Israeli tallies.



A wounded Palestinian woman is escorted to an ambulance before she is transported to hospital after an Israeli strike on al-Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Russia hits TV tower in Ukraine's Kharkiv
Claims second gain in two days in Donetsk region

REUTERS, Kharkiv

A Russian air attack on Ukraine's second biggest city, Kharkiv, hit TV broadcast infrastructure, prompting disruptions with the signal, a local official said.

"At the moment, there are interruptions in the digital TV signal," regional governor Oleh Syniehubov said. There were no casualties, he added.

Russia said yesterday its forces had taken control of the village of Novomykhailivka 40 km southwest of the Ukrainian city of Donetsk, the second advance it has announced in two days. Reuters could not independently verify the Russian gain, reported by the defence ministry.

Ukraine's General Staff said in its regular morning report that Kyiv's forces continued to hold back Russian attempts to advance near the village.

Drone, rocket attacks targeted US forces in Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

US forces in Iraq and Syria faced two separate rocket and explosive drone attacks in less than 24 hours, Iraqi security sources and US officials told Reuters yesterday, the first reported after a near three-month pause.

At least one armed drone was launched at the Ain al-Asad air base that hosts US troops in the western Iraqi province of Anbar, a US official said.

That followed five rockets fired from northern Iraq towards US forces at a base in Rumalyin in remote northeastern Syria, on Sunday, said US and Iraqi officials. There were no reports of

casualties or significant damage from the drone attacks.

On Saturday, a massive explosion at a military base in Iraq killed a member of an Iraqi security force that includes Iran-backed groups.

The force commander said it was an attack while the army said it was investigating and that there were no warplanes in the sky at the time. The US military denied involvement.

Near-daily rocket and drone strikes on US forces began in mid-October and were claimed by a group of Iran-backed Shia armed groups known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, who cited US backing for Israel's offensive in Gaza. The attacks stopped in late

January under pressure from Iraqi authorities and Iran, following deadly US retaliatory airstrikes in Iraq, after three US soldiers were killed in a drone strike on a small base on the Iraqi-Jordanian border.

Iraqi PM Mohammed Shia al-Sudani returned at the weekend from a week-long visit to the US where he met President Joe Biden in an effort to turn a new page in US-Iraqi relations.

The US invaded Iraq in 2003 and toppled Saddam Hussein, withdrawing in 2011 before returning in 2014 at the head of an international military coalition at Baghdad government's request to help fight Islamic State insurgents.

AI MEDDLING IN INDIA POLLS
Deepfakes of Bollywood stars spark worries

REUTERS, Mumbai

In fake videos that have gone viral online, two of India's A-lister Bollywood actors are seen criticizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and asking people to vote for the opposition Congress party in the country's ongoing general election. In a 30-second video that shows Aamir Khan and another 41-second clip of Ranveer Singh, the two Bollywood actors purportedly say Modi failed to keep campaign promises and failed to address critical economic issues during his two terms as prime minister. Both AI-generated videos end with the Congress election symbol and slogan: "Vote for Justice, Vote for Congress". Both actors have said the videos are fake. Facebook, X and at least eight fact-checking websites have said they are altered or manipulated, which the Reuters digital verification unit has also confirmed. Reuters could not ascertain who created the videos. Khan was "alarmed" by the viral "fake" video and Singh's team was looking into the matter, according to a spokesperson for both actors. Singh wrote on X on Friday: "Beware of deepfakes, friends". The two videos have been viewed on social media more than half a million times since last week.

More than 25,000 West Bengal teachers fired
Asked to return salary

NDTV ONLINE

In a big setback to the Mamata Banerjee government, the Calcutta High Court yesterday cancelled the 2016 recruitment process for government-sponsored and aided schools. As many as 25,753 appointees are set to lose their jobs and will be asked to return their salaries along with 12 percent interest, according to the order. A bench of Justices Debangsu Basak and Md Shabbar Rashidi said the school teachers recruited illegally after submitting blank OMR sheets must return their salaries within four weeks. The court has made an exception in its order, ensuring that Soma Das who is undergoing cancer treatment, retains her job on humanitarian grounds.

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Environmental activists hold up placards reading "Let's end plastic pollution!" as they display plastic waste with an earth balloon during a campaign event to mark the international Earth Day in Seoul, South Korea yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Trump schemed to corrupt 2016 polls
Say prosecutors in hush money trial

REUTERS, New York

New York prosecutors yesterday began telling a jury why Donald Trump's alleged cover-up of a hush money payment to a porn star during his 2016 campaign broke the law, as the first-ever criminal trial of a former US president got underway.

"This case is about conspiracy of fraud," prosecutor Matthew Colangelo told the jury. "The defendant, Donald Trump, orchestrated a criminal scheme to corrupt the 2016 presidential election."

Lawyers for the Republican presidential candidate will also make their opening statement in what may be the only one of Trump's four criminal prosecutions to go to trial before his November 5 election rematch with Democratic President Joe Biden.

Though Trump called for supporters to protest peacefully at courthouses "all over the Country," few were on hand to greet him when he arrived at the downtown courthouse. Trump suggested tight security measures were responsible for the sparse turnout, but the streets surrounding the courthouse were open to the public.

"Lower Manhattan surrounding the Courthouse, where I am heading now, is completely CLOSED DOWN. SO UNFAIR!!!" he wrote on social media.

Prosecutors say Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen's \$130,000 payment to porn star Stormy Daniels for her silence about an alleged sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier deceived voters in the waning days of Trump's 2016 campaign, when he was facing other revelations of sexual misbehavior.

As the trial opened, Justice Juan Merchan ruled that prosecutors would be able to ask Trump, if he testifies, about two other court cases: one that found he fraudulently misstated the value of his real estate assets, and another that found he defamed writer E. Jean Carroll after she accused him of rape.

Merchan also said prosecutors would be able to show jurors a transcript of a tape from the 'Access Hollywood' TV show in which Trump makes vulgar comments, though jurors will not be allowed to see the tape itself.



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