

Russia ups attacks after ‘lull’: Kyiv

AFP, Kyiv

Russian forces have escalated attacks near Toretsk, a frontline town in eastern Ukraine that has remained relatively calm over recent months of fighting, officials said yesterday.

Ukrainian forces lacking critical manpower and arms have struggled to hold the line in the eastern Donbas region, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia.

The military said in a briefing late Tuesday that Russia had “intensified” its assaults near Toretsk and “launched five assault operations at once,” targeting surrounding towns and villages.

Military analysts reported Russian advances towards Toretsk.

One resident of the town, 67-year-old Oleksandr told AFP journalists by telephone that he had experienced an uptick in Russian bombardments, corroborating official reports.



Palestinians rush during Israeli bombardment in the area of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Israeli tanks backed by warplanes and drones advanced deeper into the western part of Rafah, killing eight people, according to residents and Palestinian medics. PHOTO: AFP

India floods, heatwaves kill 11 people

Four buried alive in landslide

REUTERS, Guwahati

India was battling extreme weather yesterday that caused severe heatwaves, landslides and floods, killing at least 11 people this week, among them a woman and her three daughters buried alive in a northeastern state, officials and media said.

The capital, New Delhi, sweltered through its hottest night in six years on Tuesday, with hospitals in the city of 20 million reporting at least five deaths from heatstroke this week, the Times of India newspaper said.

Floods and landslides triggered by incessant rain in the northeastern state of Assam killed at least six people on Tuesday night, officials said.

“A landslide buried a woman and her three daughters alive,” a disaster management official said.

“Their house was on a slope, and they died on the spot around midnight,” he said, adding that the bodies were retrieved after a three-hour search operation by rescuers. “A three-year-old was killed too.”

Billions across Asia are grappling with extreme heat this summer, in a trend scientists say has been worsened by human-driven climate change.

Israel ready for ‘all-out war’ in Lebanon

Say officials after Hezbollah releases threatening drone footage of the Israeli port city of Haifa

AGENCIES

Israel is ready for an “all-out war” in Lebanon and has plans approved for an offensive targeting Hezbollah, officials said.

The claims from Israel’s foreign minister and military late on Tuesday followed Hezbollah’s release of threatening drone footage. The climbing tension conflicts with United States efforts to avert an escalation amid months of low-level hostilities across the Israel-Lebanon border.

The nine-minute drone footage of the Israeli port city of Haifa filmed in daytime, showed civilian and military areas,

More than 400 people have been killed in Lebanon over the past eight months, with 25 deaths in Israel.

including malls and residential quarters, in addition to a weapons manufacturing complex and missile defence batteries.

Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz responded vehemently in a post on X, calling out Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah for boasting about filming the ports of Haifa, which are operated by foreign companies from China and India.

“We are very close to the moment



of decision to change the rules against Hezbollah and Lebanon. In an all-out war, Hezbollah will be destroyed and Lebanon will be severely hit,” he wrote.

Later, the Israeli military said in a statement that Ori Gordin, head of its Northern Command, which includes the front line with Hezbollah, has approved plans to mount a ground assault across Israel’s northern border, reports Al Jazeera online.

“As part of the situational assessment, operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated, and decisions were taken on the continuation of increasing the readiness of troops in the field,” it said.

Israel and Hezbollah have been

engaged in border fighting since the start of the offensive on Gaza on October 7. The confrontation is increasingly expanding, with both sides saying they are ready to go to war. Nasrallah has said in the past that Hezbollah will only stop its attacks if Israel halts its invasion of Gaza.

Hezbollah recently said that it has carried out more than 2,100 military operations against Israel since October 8 in what it says is an effort to support Palestinians.

More than 400 people have been killed in Lebanon over the past eight months, with 25 deaths in Israel. At least 90,000 people have been displaced in Lebanon, and more than 60,000 have been forced from their homes in northern Israel.

Taiwan ‘won’t bow’ to China’s pressure

Says President Lai

AFP, Taipei

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te said yesterday that China was attempting to force the self-ruled island into submission but that it would not bow to pressure.

China claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has said it will never renounce the use of force to bring it under Beijing’s control.

In recent years, Beijing has upped military and political pressure on the Taipei government, with the latest show of force coming three days after Lai’s inauguration, when China conducted war games around the island.

Speaking at a press conference marking his first month in office, Lai said: “The annexation of Taiwan is a national policy of the People’s Republic of China”.

“In addition to military force, they have increasingly employed non-traditional methods of coercion to try to force Taiwan into submission,” he said.

“However, Taiwan will not bow to the pressure. The people of Taiwan will resolutely defend national sovereignty and uphold the democratic and free constitutional way of life,” he added.

US lawmakers meet Tibet’s Dalai Lama

Pressure China on talks

REUTERS, Dharamsala

A group of US lawmakers who met the Dalai Lama in India yesterday said they would not allow China to influence the choice of his successor, comments expected to anger Beijing, which calls the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader a separatist.

The remarks come as Washington and Beijing seek to steady rocky ties while India pushes China to secure lasting peace on their disputed Himalayan frontier, four years after a military clash strained ties.

The lawmakers also signalled that Washington would pressure Beijing to hold talks with Tibetan leaders, stalled since 2010, to resolve the Tibet issue, with a bill they said President Joe Biden would sign soon.

Although Washington recognises Tibet as a part of China, the bill appears to question that position and any change would be a major shock to Beijing, analysts said.

The bipartisan group of seven, led by Michael McCaul, a Republican representative from Texas, who also chairs the House foreign affairs committee, met the Nobel peace laureate at his monastery in the northern Indian town of Dharamsala.

“It is still my hope that one day the Dalai Lama and his people will return to Tibet in peace,” McCaul told a public reception after the meeting.

SHIPWRECK OFF COAST

Italy coastguard recovers six migrant bodies

Over 60 reported missing

AFP, Rome

Italy’s coastguard said yesterday it had recovered six bodies after a migrant boat sank this week off the southern coast with more than 60 people reported missing, including many children.

Twelve people were rescued after the sailing boat sank around 120 nautical miles off the coast of Calabria overnight Sunday-Monday, although one of them died after disembarking.

Italy’s ANSA news agency reported that she was a 25-year-old woman of Iraqi origin.

The coastguard said yesterday it continued to search the area around the semi-submerged boat, which is still visible, on sea and in the air.

“Following the searches carried out so far, six lifeless bodies have been recovered,” it said.

ANSA said they were four

men and two women. Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has been helping the survivors, who reported that 66 people had been missing after the shipwreck, “including at least 26 children, some of them a few months old”.

Shakilla Mohammadi, cultural mediator for the medical charity, on Tuesday said those rescued were “traumatised, their pain tangible”.

“I talked to one young man who had lost his girlfriend,” she said.

“Entire families from Afghanistan are believed to have died. They left Turkey eight days ago and had been taking on water for three or four days,” she added.



Biden relaxes visa rules in election-year move

REUTERS, Washington

US President Joe Biden on Tuesday announced a sweeping effort to provide a path to citizenship to hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the US illegally who are married to US citizens, an election-year move that contrasts sharply with Republican rival Donald Trump’s plan for mass deportations.

At a White House event, Biden criticised Trump for separating migrant families at the US-Mexico border and using incendiary language about immigrants in the US illegally, including comments that they were “poisoning the blood of our country.”

“It’s hard to believe it’s being said, but he’s actually saying these things out loud. And it’s outrageous,” Biden said. “I’m not interested in playing politics with the border or immigration. I’m interested in fixing it.”

The new Biden program will be open to an estimated 500,000 spouses who have lived in the US for at least 10 years as of June 17, officials said on Tuesday. Some 50,000 children under age 21 with a US-citizen parent also will be eligible.

Biden, a Democrat seeking a second term in the November 5 presidential election, took office vowing to reverse many of Trump’s restrictive immigration policies. But faced with record levels of migrant arrests at the US-Mexico border, Biden has toughened his approach.

Earlier this month, the president barred most migrants crossing the US-Mexico border from requesting asylum, a policy that mirrored a similar Trump-era asylum ban and drew criticism from immigration advocates and some Democrats.



Local residents look at damage at the site of a Russian drone attack, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, on the outskirts of Lviv, Ukraine yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Chad ammo depot blaze kills nine

Dozens hurt

AFP, N’Djamena

A fire that tore through a huge military ammunition depot in Chad’s capital N’Djamena killed at least nine people and wounded dozens more, officials said yesterday, warning the toll could rise.

The blaze, which started late on Tuesday, sent powerful blasts into the night sky and exploding ordnance shook buildings miles away.

Chad’s Health Minister Abdelmadjid Abderahim told journalists that the toll was in danger of rising as many of the 46 wounded were in an “extremely serious” condition. A visit to the scene yesterday revealed unexploded shells and other munitions scattered on the ground.

Government spokesman Abderaman Koulamallah said the cause was not “criminal” but an investigation was under way.