

DECEPTIVE TACTICS

Meta bans Russian state media outlets

REUTERS, New york

Facebook owner Meta said on Monday it was banning RT, Rossiya Segodnya and other Russian state media networks from its platforms, claiming the outlets had used deceptive tactics to carry out covert influence operations online.

The ban, strongly criticised by the Kremlin, marks a sharp escalation in measures by the world's biggest social media company against Russian state media, after years of more limited steps such as blocking the outlets from running ads and reducing the reach of their posts.

"After careful consideration, we expanded our ongoing enforcement against Russian state media outlets, Rossiya Segodnya, RT and other related entities are now banned from our apps globally for foreign interference activity," the social media company said in a written statement.

MEDIC'S MURDER

Indian police chief in Kolkata sacked after protests

AFP, Kolkata

Indian authorities in Kolkata have sacked the city's police chief and top health ministry officials after furious protests at the brutal rape and murder of a doctor.

The discovery of the 31-year-old doctor's bloodied body at a state-run hospital in the eastern megacity on August 9 has stoked nationwide anger at the chronic issue of violence against women.

The murder has triggered protests across India and repeated strikes by medics demanding safer conditions for women.

While many protests and strikes have since calmed in the rest of India, regular demonstrations continue in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal state.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced the removal of the Kolkata police commissioner and two health departments officials after a meeting with medics late Monday.

"We have agreed to remove the director of health services and director of medical colleges," Banerjee told reporters after the meeting.

TREATMENT OF MINORITIES

India condemns Iran supreme leader's comments

REUTERS, New Delhi

India has condemned comments made by Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on the treatment of Muslims in the South Asian nation, calling his remarks "misinformed and unacceptable".

"We cannot consider ourselves to be Muslims if we are oblivious to the suffering that a Muslim is enduring in Myanmar, Gaza, India, or any other place," Khamenei said in a social media post on Monday.

In response, India's foreign ministry said it "strongly deplored" the comments.

"Countries commenting on minorities are advised to look at their own record before making any observations about others," the foreign ministry spokesperson said.

The two countries have typically shared a strong relationship, and signed a 10-year contract in May to develop and operate the Iranian port of Chabahar.

India has been developing the port in Chabahar on Iran's south-eastern coast along the Gulf of Oman as a way to transport goods to Iran, Afghanistan and central Asian countries, bypassing the ports of Karachi and Gwadar in its rival Pakistan.

Khamenei, however, has been critical of India in the past over issues involving Indian Muslims and the troubled Muslim-majority region of Kashmir.

India and Iran tend to share a good relationship, illustrated by strong economic ties.



A drone view shows the flood-affected area following heavy rainfall in Ostrava, Czech Republic yesterday. Flooding sparked by Storm Boris in central Europe has burst dams, knocked out power and killed at least 18 people, authorities said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'It is unimaginable'

UN chief condemns 'collective punishment' of Palestinians; lashes out at Israel's handling of its offensive in the devastated territory

AFP, United Nations

Nothing justifies Israel's collective punishment of the people of Gaza as they endure "unimaginable" suffering, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told AFP on Monday.

Guterres lashed out at Israel's handling of its offensive in the devastated Palestinian territory, now almost in its second year, as the UN prepares to host world leaders starting next week.

"It is unimaginable, the level of suffering in Gaza, the level of deaths and destruction have no parallel in everything I've witnessed since (becoming) secretary-general," said Guterres, who has led the embattled international organization since 2017.

"We all condemn the terror attacks made by Hamas, as well

justifies the collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and that is what we are witnessing in a dramatic way in Gaza," he added, decrying the widespread carnage and hunger blighting Gaza.

The health ministry in Hamas

deadlocked, with Israel and Hamas accusing each other of resisting a deal.

"They are endless," Guterres said of the talks, saying it would be "very difficult" to reach a compromise but that he remained



run Gaza said yesterday that at least 41,252 people have been killed in the Israeli offensive. More than 200 humanitarian workers, mostly UN staff, have also been killed.

"Accountability should be a must" for all civilian deaths, Guterres said acknowledging "serious violations" had been perpetrated by both Israel and Hamas.

Against that backdrop the UN leader has repeatedly called for an immediate ceasefire, but talks overseen by the United States, Egypt and Qatar remain

hopeful.

With Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refusing to return his calls since October, Guterres is not counting on a breakthrough during the General Assembly's high-level week from Sunday when he would typically receive all visiting heads of state and government.

"As far as I understand, it was already said publicly that it is not his intention to ask for any meeting with me. So of course, the meeting will very probably not take place," Guterres said, brushing off the apparent snub.

TAIWAN STRAIT

China says it tailed US aircraft

AFP, Beijing

The Chinese military tailed a US aircraft that was passing through the politically sensitive Taiwan Strait yesterday, Beijing's army said, vowing to "resolutely defend national sovereignty".

"On September 17, a US P-8A anti-submarine patrol aircraft flew through the Taiwan Strait," Li Xi, a senior captain and spokesperson for the Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, said in a statement.

The Command "organised fighter jets to tail and stand guard against the US aircraft's flight, dealing with it in accordance with the law", Li said.

"Theater troops are on constant high alert to resolutely defend national sovereignty and security and regional peace and stability."

Beijing views self-ruled Taiwan as a renegade province and claims jurisdiction over the body of water that separates the island from the Chinese mainland.

China accused Germany on Saturday of heightening security risks in the Taiwan Strait after two military vessels from the country sailed through the waterway.

PAGER EXPLOSIONS

8 killed, dozens of Hezbollah members hurt

AFP, Beirut

Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said eight people were killed and some 2,750 wounded in pager explosions across the country yesterday, with Hezbollah earlier saying the pagers were used by its members.

The blasts "killed eight people, including a girl", he told a televised press conference. "About 2,750 people were injured... more than 200 of them critically" with injuries mostly reported to the face, hands and stomach, he added.

The incident was the first of its kind since Hezbollah began trading near-daily fire with Israel in support of ally Hamas after the Israeli offensive began in Gaza on October 7.

Another source close to Hezbollah told AFP that the incident was a result of an "Israeli breach" of its communications.

An AFP photographer in Beirut's southern suburbs saw ambulances rushing injured Hezbollah members to hospitals in the area.

An AFP correspondent in eastern Lebanon said dozens of people had been wounded in similar incidents in the group's Bekaa Valley stronghold.

Lebanon's official National News Agency reported "an unprecedented enemy security incident" with "handheld pagers detonating" in several regions.

'All of a sudden we heard shots'

Trump recounts apparent assassination attempt, returns to campaign trail

CNN ONLINE

Former US president Donald Trump publicly recounted Sunday's apparent assassination attempt against him in detail for the first time, praising US Secret Service, other law enforcement and the witness who took a photo of the suspect's car that helped lead to his apprehension.



"I was playing golf with some of my friends, it was on a Sunday morning and very peaceful, very beautiful weather, everything was beautiful, it's a nice place to be. And all of a sudden we heard shots being fired in the air, and I guess probably four or five, and it sounded like bullets," Trump said Monday during an X Spaces conversation before returning to the campaign trail.

"But what do I know about that? But Secret Service knew immediately it was bullets, and they grabbed me, and I think probably the other one, Steve is one of the people. Steve Witkoff, a great friend of mine."

Trump recounted how the agent saw the barrel of the gun through the bushes. He then described how law enforcement were able to detain the gunman with the help of a witness who saw the suspect run from the bushes and took a picture of his car.

Ryan Wesley Routh, 58, has been charged with possession of a firearm while a convicted felon and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number in connection with the incident. He appeared in federal court Monday morning.

Records show a phone associated with Routh was located at golf course starting at 1:59 am on Sunday morning, 11-1/2 hours before the incident.

Von der Leyen reveals EU's new top lineup

AFP, Strasbourg

After weeks of fierce political horse-trading, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen yesterday unveiled her new top team to help steward the EU through the next five years of global uncertainty.

Faced with Russia's war in Ukraine, the potential return of Donald Trump as US president and competition from China, the formation of the new commission comes at a crucial moment.

To confront the challenges, von der Leyen handed powerful economic portfolios to France, Spain and Italy -- putting a hard-right candidate from Rome in a top role. "It's about strengthening our tech sovereignty, our security and our democracy," the commission chief said as she announced the team at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.



Rescuers carry out an operation to rescue beached dolphins stranded in the Fier d'Ars bay on the Ile de Re (Re Island), off France's western Atlantic coast yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP