

Early voting starts in 3 US states

AFP, Arlington

With more than a month before the November 5 presidential election, some Americans are already lining up to cast their ballots in this tightly contested race.

Early in-person voting kicked off Friday in the US states of Virginia, South Dakota, and Minnesota as voters pick between Vice President Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump.

"You just feel that we're part of the process," said 56-year-old Tom Kilkenny, who came to a polling station in Arlington, Virginia, where people were lining up before it even opened early in the morning.



His wife Michelle, 55, said she was happy to set a good example for her friends and neighbours by voting early.

"When you... speak with them, I can myself say 'I voted already' and then start spreading the word," said Michelle Kilkenny, whose blue T-shirt was covered in Democratic Party pins.

Each of the country's 50 states has its own voting procedures: early voting by mail or in person, election day voting or a combination of the three.

For some Americans casting their ballot as soon as it becomes possible is a family tradition.



Rescuers sift through the rubble at the scene of an Israeli strike that targeted Beirut's southern suburbs a day earlier, as search and rescue operations continue in Lebanon yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Two top Hezbollah leaders killed in Israel's Beirut strike

Lebanon says 35 more killed; Gaza rescuers says strike on school kills 21

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon's Hezbollah movement, which has been exchanging fire with Israel for months, yesterday announced that two commanders of its elite operations unit had been killed by an Israeli strike on Beirut, which authorities said left 37 people dead.

Health Minister Firass Abiad said three children were also killed in Friday's strike on an underground meeting room, which AFP journalists said left a huge crater in a densely populated neighbourhood of the capital's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati in a statement yesterday, decried "horrific massacres" and said he had cancelled a trip to the United Nations General Assembly "in

light of the developments linked to the Israeli aggression on Lebanon".

Israel's military said it also targeted a Hamas command centre in Gaza City that it alleged was "embedded inside" a school, where rescuers said 21 people were killed in adjacent buildings used as a shelter.

Friday's strike also followed sabotage attacks on pagers and two-way radios used by Hezbollah on Tuesday and Wednesday, which killed 39 people. Hezbollah blamed Israel, which has not commented.

Israeli troops and Hezbollah fighters have battled each other along the Israel-Lebanon border since the Israeli invasion of Gaza.

Hezbollah says it is acting in support of Hamas.

Months of near-daily cross-border

exchanges have killed hundreds in Lebanon, mostly fighters, and dozens in Israel and the annexed Golan Heights, forcing tens of thousands on both sides to flee their homes.

GAZA SCHOOL STRIKE

Yesterday, Gaza's civil defence agency said an Israeli strike on Al-Zaytoun School C, which had been turned into a displaced shelter, killed 21 people including 13 children and six women, one of them pregnant.

In late August, the United Nations said Israel had struck at least 23 school shelters since July 4. Israel's retaliatory military offensive has killed at least 41,391 people in Gaza, most of them civilians, according to figures provided by the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Iran unveils new drone, missile amid rising tensions

AFP, Tehran

Iran unveiled a new ballistic missile and an upgraded one-way attack drone at a military parade yesterday, state media said, amid soaring regional tensions and allegations of arming Russia.

Iran stands accused by Western governments of supplying both drones and missiles to Russia for use in its war with Ukraine, a charge it has repeatedly denied.

The solid-fuel Jihad missile was designed and manufactured by the aerospace arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards and has an operational range of 1,000 kilometres (more than 600 miles), state news agency IRNA said.

The Shahed-136B drone is an upgraded version of the Shahed-136, with new features and an operational range of more than 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles), it added.



New President Masoud Pezeshkian attended the annual parade in Tehran, commemorating the 1980-88 war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

"Today, our defensive and deterrent capabilities have grown so much that no demon even thinks about any aggression towards our dear Iran," he said.

"With unity and cohesion among Islamic countries... we can put in its place the bloodthirsty, genocidal usurper Israel, which shows no mercy to anyone, women or children, old or young."

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivered a similar tirade against Israel to delegates to an annual meeting of Muslim clerics hosted by Iran, calling on Islamic countries to "completely cut off their economic relations" with Israel and "weaken political ties."



Image shows a building next to a slope which collapsed due to flooding caused by heavy rains in the city of Suzu, Ishikawa prefecture in Japan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Two ammo depots struck in Russia: Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine said yesterday it had successfully struck two Russian weapons depots in the southern Krasnodar and western Tver regions, with Moscow announcing more than 1,000 evacuations.

Kyiv regularly hits Russian infrastructure with drones as Moscow's offensive drags on for more than two and a half years.

The Ukrainian army said it had hit a depot near the city of Tikhoretsk in Krasnodar, calling it one of Moscow's "three largest ammunition storage bases" important to the Russian army's logistics for its Ukraine invasion.

It also said it struck an arsenal in Tver region's Oktyabrsky village, resulting in a "fire and detonation".

The governor of the Krasnodar region, Veniamin Kondratyev, announced the evacuation of 1,200 people after a drone attack had caused a fire that "spread to explosive objects" near Tikhoretsk.

Videos on social media showed a massive explosion in the dark resembling fireworks at first before blowing up loudly, with online reports that an ammunition depot was struck.

Kondratyev called it a "terrorist attack by the Kyiv regime" and said an unnamed village near the fire had been evacuated, with most people staying with relatives but others placed in temporary accommodation in Tikhoretsk.

Videos on social media later showed sirens ringing around the city of some 50,000 people in the daylight, with smoke rising into the air in the distance.

AFP could not immediately verify the authenticity of the images.

Krasnodar is separated from occupied Ukraine by the Azov Sea and had been relatively spared from the type of attacks on Russian border or other southern regions, but has seen increased attacks over the last year.

Authorities in the western Tver

region also announced a night-time drone attack near the city of Toropets, which lies in the western part of the region.

Its governor Igor Rudenya said the "consequences of falling debris" from the attack were being "cleared".

He said there was no evacuation in Toropets but announced a temporary closure of the federal M-9 highway, promising it will reopen soon.

The attack also caused some disruption on passenger trains, with railway services saying a train going from Moscow to the western city of Pskov was sent on an alternative route, while another train was delayed.

Russia's defence ministry earlier said it had downed 101 Ukrainian drones, mostly over the border Bryansk region and 18 over Krasnodar.

Russia has recently announced shooting down Ukrainian drones almost daily.

One dead, seven missing as flood hits central Japan

AFP, Tokyo

One person was killed and at least seven were missing yesterday, officials said, as "unprecedented" rains triggered floods and landslides in Japan's quake-hit region of Ishikawa, where authorities told tens of thousands to evacuate.

A dozen rivers in the region, on the west coast of central Japan that was hit by a large quake on New Year's Day, had burst their banks by 11:00am (0200 GMT), land ministry official Masaru Kojima said.

One person was killed, three people were missing and two people were seriously injured in Ishikawa, the region's government said in a statement, with two of the missing reportedly carried away by strong river currents.

Another four people, who were working for the land ministry to restore a road in Wajima, were also missing, ministry official Koji Yamamoto told AFP.

"About 60 people have been working to restore a road hit by the quake but a landslide occurred" yesterday morning, Yamamoto said.

"I asked (contractors) to check the safety of workers... but we are still unable to contact four people," he said.

Rescue workers were on their way to the site but were "blocked by landslides".

About 20 workers were taking shelter inside a tunnel they had been working to restore, Yamamoto said.

Japan's Kyodo news agency said as many as 10 people were missing in Wajima.

Many buildings were inundated, with landslides blocking roads, some 6,000 households without power and an unknown number of households without running water, the Ishikawa government said.

Communication services were also cut for some people, operators said.

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