

CHINESE DRONE Beijing slams US over potential ban

AFP, Beijing

China said yesterday it would take "all necessary measures" in response to the United States announcing it was considering restrictions on commercial Chinese drones for national security reasons.

On Thursday, the US Commerce Department said it was considering new rules to address risks posed by drones made with technology from foreign adversaries such as China and Russia. The efforts could lead to regulations or bans on Chinese drones.

Responding to a question, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning accused the US of "generalising the concept of national security, interfering and restricting normal economic and trade exchanges, and undermining the security and stability of global production and supply chains".

Court strikes down US net neutrality rules

AFP, San Francisco

A federal appeals court on Thursday ruled that US regulators overstepped their authority by reinstating "net neutrality" rules governing internet service providers, dealing a blow to the Biden administration.

In a published opinion, the appellate court in the state of Ohio said an order last year by the Federal Communications Commission "resurrected the FCC's heavy-handed regulatory regime."

The battle over how much control US regulators should have over service providers has been going on for years. Under Biden, the FCC expanded its oversight.

"This order -- issued during the Biden administration -- undoes the order issued during the first Trump administration, which undid the order issued during the Obama administration, which undid orders issued during the Bush and Clinton administrations," the court said in its opinion.

Net neutrality advocates argue that internet service is a vital utility in modern life and that companies providing it should be regulated to stop abuses such as giving speed advantages to those who pay more.



People wait at the entrance of the Al-Masnaa eastern Lebanese border crossing with Syria yesterday, after Syria imposed new restrictions on the entry of Lebanese citizens, following what the Lebanese army said was a border skirmish with armed Syrians.

PHOTO: AFP

SOUTH OF ALEPOO Israel strikes Syrian army positions

Defence, research facilities targeted; Israeli military destroys Hezbollah rocket launchers in south Lebanon

AFP, Beirut

Israel bombed Syrian army positions south of Aleppo later on Thursday, the latest such strikes since the overthrow of longtime strongman Bashar al-Assad, a war monitor and local residents said.

Residents reported hearing huge explosions in the area, while the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the strikes targeted defence and research facilities.

The observatory said that at least seven massive explosions were heard, resulting from an Israeli airstrike on defence factories south of Aleppo.

There was no immediate information on whether the strikes caused any casualties.

A resident of the al-Safira area told AFP on condition of anonymity: "They hit defence factories, five strikes... The strikes were very strong. It made the ground shake, doors and windows opened -- the strongest strikes I ever heard... It turned the night into day."

Since rebels overthrew Assad in early December, Israel has conducted hundreds of strikes on Syrian military assets, saying they are aimed at preventing military weapons from falling into hostile hands.



Meanwhile, the Israeli military said it struck Hezbollah rocket launchers in south Lebanon later on Thursday, despite a fragile ceasefire with the militant group.

The truce, which took effect on November 27, has been marked by mutual accusations of violations from both sides.

The Israeli military said Thursday's strike targeted medium-range rocket launchers in the Nabatieh area.

Lebanon's official National News Agency reported at least three Israeli strikes in the area.

"Prior to the strike a request was sent to the Lebanese armed forces

to neutralise the launchers that posed a threat to Israeli civilians and... troops," the military said in a statement. "The launchers were struck only after the request was not addressed by the Lebanese armed forces."

Under the terms of the ceasefire, the Lebanese army is to deploy alongside UN peacekeepers in the south as the Israeli army withdraws over a 60-day period.

Hezbollah is to withdraw its forces north of the Litani River -- some 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the border -- and dismantle its military infrastructure in the south.

7 out of 10
UK doctors
suffer from
'compassion
fatigue': poll

AFP, London

Seven out of 10 UK family doctors are worn out and suffering from "compassion fatigue", finding it hard to empathise with their patients, a poll published Thursday said.

The survey of 1,855 doctors across the UK carried out by the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland showed a vast majority are physically and emotionally too exhausted to show much compassion to those seeking their help.

Some 71 percent of GPs and 62 percent of all doctors reported these findings, with those aged between 25 to 34 being the worst affected.

Family doctors are "particularly vulnerable" because of their "prolonged exposure to patients' suffering and trauma" and their heavy workloads, the union's chief medical officer John Holden said.

The survey also found that 85 percent of GPs who had had suicidal thoughts blamed it on their working conditions which have deteriorated due to a lack of resources.

Almost half of those polled, some 44 percent, feared their increasing lack of compassion could lead them to make a mistake.

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The Daily Star

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NEW ORLEANS CARNAGE Suspect faced family, money struggles

REUTERS, Beaumont

Shamsud-Din Jabbar, the Texas man accused of crashing a truck into New Year's Day revelers in New Orleans, killing 14 and injuring dozens, was an Army veteran struggling to get past a recent divorce but who showed no signs of anger just weeks prior to the attack, his half-brother said.

Federal officials and local law enforcement in New Orleans say Jabbar had an Islamic State flag on his truck and posted a series of videos to social media professing his allegiance to the deadly militant group shortly before barreling into the Bourbon Street crowd on Wednesday morning.

But what caused the 42-year-old Jabbar, a US citizen raised in Texas, to be radicalised remains unknown. Abdur Rahim Jabbar, the suspect's half-brother, said he had not noticed anything off-kilter when the two last spoke a few weeks ago, though he knew he was having trouble getting business ventures off the ground and was coming off his second divorce.

"He was maybe looking for some types of answers," Abdur Jabbar told Reuters in an interview at his home in Beaumont, Texas, noting that his brother had recently renewed his Muslim faith after abandoning it in his 20s and 30s.

"He was smart, funny, charismatic, loving, compassionate, humble, and literally wouldn't hurt a fly. That's why it's so devastating," he added.

Migrant jungle crossings fell 41pc in 2024: Panama

AFP, Panama City

The number of US-bound migrants passing through the Darien jungle fell by 41 percent in 2024, with around 302,000 attempting the dangerous journey from Colombia, Panama's president said Thursday.

Following an agreement signed with Washington in July, Panama has closed several routes in the Darien region and deported more than 1,500 migrants on flights to Colombia, Ecuador and India with US financial support.

"We have achieved a 41 percent reduction in the flow of migrants crossing the Darien jungle," President Jose Raul Mulino said in a speech to Congress. "We work every day to ensure that illegal migration does not reach (Panama City) or the rest of the country," he added.

The remarks came less than three weeks before US President-elect Donald Trump takes office, having vowed mass deportations of migrants without papers.

Despite dangers including fast-flowing rivers, wild animals and criminal gangs, the Darien is a key corridor for Venezuelan and other migrants traveling overland from South America through Central America and Mexico in the hope of reaching the United States.

According to Panamanian immigration authorities, 302,203 people crossed the Darien in 2024, compared with 520,085 in 2023.

Mulino said on December 19 that at least 55 migrants had died and 180 children had been abandoned while making the crossing in 2024.

Panamanian authorities suspect that the death toll may be higher, as many bodies cannot be recovered from the inaccessible jungle. Panama and Mexico have come under increased pressure from the United States to tackle the highly contentious migration issue.



"By jeopardising the future of the protectorate it has backed for three decades in an effort to destabilise Moldova, Russia is revealing the inevitable outcome for all its allies -- betrayal and isolation."

Moldova PM DORIN RECEAN denounces Russian gas cut-off



A girl folds her blanket as others sit next to a fire at an open ground on a foggy winter morning in the old quarters of Delhi, India yesterday. Thick smog engulfed the Indian capital yesterday, prompting warnings of possible flight disruptions from airport and airline officials, as worsening air quality cut visibility to zero in some areas.

Biden blocks US-Japan steel deal

AFP, Washington

President Joe Biden yesterday announced he has blocked the controversial \$14.9 billion sale of US Steel to Japan's Nippon Steel, citing a strategic need to protect domestic industry.

"This acquisition would place one of America's largest steel producers under foreign control and create risk for our national security and our critical supply chains," Biden said. "That is why I am taking action to block this deal."

Biden's decision follows extended political wrangling over competing trade demands.

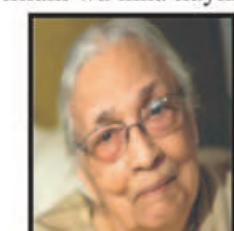
KULKHANI

Mariam Begum

(1923-2025)

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَا مُرْسَلٌ

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un



With deep sorrow, we announce the passing of Mariam Begum at the age of 101. She is survived by two daughters, one son, their spouses, four grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and two brothers (Anis-ud-Dowla and Asaf-ud-Dowla).

A dua will be held at Asr on Sunday, 5th January 2025 at Gulshan Society Jame Masjid.

Her beloved surviving children,

Nelofar Khandker (Taj) Shumona Hasan (Ratna) Rownak Khandker