

LEBANON STRIKES
Trump
'vents anger'
in call with
Netanyahu

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Donald Trump's telephone call Monday with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu became quite heated as the US president pressed the Israeli leader to scale back plans for military operations in Lebanon, according to two people familiar with the conversation.

Trump at points used "expletives" to convey his disapproval of the planned offensive, which threatened to upend his efforts to broker a preliminary agreement with Iran.

At one point, the president reminded Netanyahu of how he'd supported him in the past and warned him that bombing Lebanon could isolate Israel further, the sources said.

The White House didn't comment on the acrimonious tone of the call, which was reported by Axios.



Smoke rises from southern Lebanon after Israeli strikes, seen from Nabatieh, yesterday. Israel warned it may hit Hezbollah strongholds in Beirut if attacks on northern towns continue.

PHOTO: REUTERS

18 killed as Russian strikes rock Ukraine

Dozens injured in drone, missile barrage; Kyiv apartment buildings damaged

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Russia pummelled Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles early yesterday, killing at least 18 people, after having threatened a large-scale attack and warning foreign citizens to leave Kyiv.

Authorities in the Ukrainian capital had been sounding the alarm that Russia was preparing another massive barrage, the latest in a string of deadly strikes that have escalated the four-year war and dented already slim hopes for peace.

AFP journalists in the capital heard air raid sirens wailing over the city before a series of loud



- » Ukraine warned of major attack; thousands take shelter
- » Overnight strike was a response to Kyiv's 'terrorist acts': Russia

explosions that lasted throughout the night sent residents with bags and blankets rushing to shelter in crowded metro stations.

Ukraine's foreign minister said the latest Russian attack was a sign of Russian desperation, that President Vladimir Putin was bombing civilians since his forces were struggling on the battlefield.

"Putin is a war criminal and loser who has no cards except terror. Moscow is losing on the battlefield. No number of missiles can change this," Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga said in a statement on social media.

The Russian Defence Ministry said yesterday that its massive overnight strike on Ukraine was a response to what it called "terrorist acts" against targets inside Russia and said it had struck a range of Ukrainian military targets, reports Reuters.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said the latest attack showed Europe needed to develop its own air defence systems and that support from the United States remained crucial.

His Prime Minister, Yulia Svyrydenko, meanwhile said that "every delay" in supporting Ukraine's air defence system "costs lives". The Ukrainian air force said Russia had launched 73 missiles and 656 drones, adding it had downed 602 of the drones and 40 of the missiles.

Moscow has bombarded Ukraine almost daily since launching its invasion in February 2022.

Nepal ruling party chief, not new PM, visits India

AFP, New Delhi

Nepal's ruling party chief called for closer economic and strategic cooperation with India yesterday, on the first high-level visit since deadly 2025 anti-corruption youth protests toppled the previous government.

But this trip to a key ally was not by Nepal's new prime minister -- 36-year-old rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah.

Shah has shunned meetings with several foreign envoys to Nepal and, according to his aides, has said he will not travel abroad for his first year in power to focus on the many domestic challenges, not least the ailing economy.

The first visit to key ally India instead was made by Rabi Lamichhane, a former deputy prime minister and interior minister, who is president of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).

It won a landslide victory in March parliamentary elections, led by Shah. Former television host Lamichhane retains a pivotal role in power, and the lawmaker is expected to meet Indian PM Narendra Modi, RSP spokesman Manish Jha told AFP.

Nepal must ensure a delicate diplomatic balance between its two neighbours, India and China.

US ARREARS
UN agency blocks
Trump official's
appointment

AFP, Geneva

The International Labour Organization, the UN's labour agency, has scrapped the appointment of Trump administration official Sheng Li as its deputy director-general over Washington's failure to pay its dues.

The agency's director-general Gilbert Hounghbo "has decided to rescind the appointment of the deputy director-general, considering continued delays in the payment of arrears", the ILO said in a statement.

"Mr Sheng Li (United States of America) will therefore not assume the position of deputy director-general in July as previously foreseen."

Li is a high-level official at the US Department of Labor. His appointment to the Geneva-based ILO was announced in April.

As of June 1, the United States had accumulated arrears of more than 173 million Swiss francs (\$220 million) in ILO membership contributions for the past two years, according to data on the agency's website. Washington must also pay its 2026 dues, amounting to nearly 84 million Swiss francs.

The United States is not the only country behind on its payments to the ILO.

The decision to drop Li "is without prejudice to the possibility of the United States settling its arrears and thereby regaining its position as the largest contributor in assessed contributions."

EU reaches deal on 'return hubs' migration reform
Rights groups criticise new measures

AFP, Brussels

The EU reached a deal Monday on a new tightening of migration rules allowing for so-called "return hubs" to be set up outside the bloc, as countries seek to boost deportations.

European lawmakers and countries struck a provisional compromise on the reform, which was launched in response to political pressure to curb migration -- paving the way for its final approval.

"Today's agreement shows that we are bringing our European house in order," said Magnus Brunner, the European Union's commissioner for migration. "With the new rules, we have more control over who can come to the EU, who can stay and who needs to leave."

Criticised by rights groups, the new measures will notably allow nations to open centres outside the EU's borders to which migrants whose asylum applications have been rejected could be sent.

They also establish a strict obligation for migrants subject to expulsion to leave and cooperate with authorities, envisaging harsher penalties, including detention, for those who refuse to do so.

"This deal will give governments much broader powers to detain and deport people," said Marta Welandier of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an NGO. "It looks set to normalise immigration raids, expand the use of detention in prison-like facilities outside EU territory ... where they could face persecution, torture or worse."



THEFT FROM NEWS
NYT publisher
slams AI companies

AFP, Marseille

The New York Times publisher on Monday slammed artificial intelligence companies for "brazen theft of intellectual property", warning they threaten the future of journalism during a speech at the World News Media Congress in the French city of Marseille.

AI companies' "hijacking of the public square is made possible by the original sin that animates their A.I. products -- a brazen theft of intellectual property that has occurred at an unprecedented scale," said A G Sulzberger, according to his published remarks.

"Tech giants strip-mine news websites without permission or compensation," he said, adding that the news sector "has been too quiet, too passive and too fragmented in the face of abuses by the companies leading the A.I. revolution".

Sulzberger, whose company is suing OpenAI, the creator of ChatGPT, and Microsoft over the use of copyrighted work, delivered an indictment against AI companies before news executives gathered for the 77th WAN-IFRA World News Media Congress, in a speech that was met with loud applause.

"Our profession has been too quiet, too passive and too fragmented in the face of abuses by the companies leading the AI revolution," he said. Sulzberger said AI companies are "consolidating their outside control over our data and our attention" but are "failing to embrace a core responsibility that comes with this power -- to ensure the public has access to trustworthy news and information".

"I fear we are careening toward a future with fewer and fewer journalists to do the expensive, difficult work of original reporting," he said.



Palestinians gather to receive food from a charity kitchen, in Gaza City, yesterday. The UN warned on Friday that an Israeli plan to take control of 70 percent of Gaza will increase suffering among children already hit by the impacts of severe overcrowding.

PHOTO: REUTERS

EBOLA IN CONGO
Suspected cases drop to 116: WHO

Hundreds ruled out

REUTERS, Geneva

The World Health Organization (WHO) said there have been 321 confirmed cases of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo outbreak and 116 suspected cases, marking a large drop in the number of suspected cases as hundreds were ruled out after investigation.

The agency said yesterday there had been 48 deaths and six people had recovered in Congo. The Congolese authorities first put out the new case numbers on Monday.

In Uganda there have been nine confirmed cases and one associated death, WHO spokesperson Christian Lindmeier told reporters in Geneva.

Later, Uganda's health ministry confirmed six more new cases of Ebola, bringing the total confirmed in the country so far to 15.