

News in brief

◆ **Elon Musk said on Saturday** his rocket company SpaceX would continue to fund its Starlink internet service in Ukraine, citing the need for "good deeds," a day after he said it could no longer afford to do so. Musk tweeted: "the hell with it ... even though starlink is still losing money & other companies are getting billions of taxpayer \$, we'll just keep funding ukraine govt for free". Musk said on Friday that SpaceX could not indefinitely fund Starlink in Ukraine. The service has helped civilians and military stay online during the war with Russia. Although it was not immediately clear whether Musk's change of mind was genuine, he later appeared to indicate it was. When a Twitter user told Musk "No good deed goes unpunished", he replied "Even so, we should still do good deeds".



Elon Musk says SpaceX will keep funding Starlink in Ukraine despite losing money

◆ A magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck in the Pacific Ocean between Central America and the Galapagos Islands on Sunday morning, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) said, but there were no initial reports of damage. The quake hit at a depth of 10 kilometers (6 miles), according to the USGS, and the U.S. Tsunami Warning Center said no warning had been issued for a potential tsunami. A spokesperson for civil protection authorities in Panama said they had not received word of any impact. Authorities in Ecuador, of which the Galapagos Islands are part, likewise did not have any immediate reports of damage from the quake.

Quake strikes in Pacific off Central America, no reports of damage

◆ The defence ministry in Minsk on Sunday said just under 9,000 Russian troops would be stationed in Belarus as part of a "regional grouping" of forces to protect its borders. "The first troop trains with Russian servicemen who are part of the (regional grouping) began to arrive in Belarus," Valeriy Revenko, head of the defence ministry's international military cooperation department, wrote on Twitter. "The relocation will take several days. The total number will be a little less than 9,000 people." More information would be provided at a briefing for military attachés, he added. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said last week that his troops would deploy with Russian forces near the Ukrainian border, citing what he said were threats from Ukraine and the West.

Belarus says it will host just under 9,000 Russian troops

◆ Chinese former Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli made his first public appearance on Sunday since Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai accused him of sexual assault last year, attending the 20th Communist Party Congress. Zhang, 75, walked onstage at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing behind President Xi Jinping and other retired and current leaders, and sat in the front row of the podium for the opening of the twice-a-decade meeting. He has made no public comment on the accusation. Peng made her accusation on social media in November in a post that was soon scrubbed from China's internet. She later denied having made the accusation. Her post led the Women's Tennis Association to suspend tournaments in China and caused an international outcry over her safety.

China ex-official Zhang makes first appearance since sexual assault claim



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Gunmen kill 11 at Russian army

- **Russia launches criminal probe after 11 recruits shot dead**
- **Ukraine official says incident caused by row over religion**
- **Fighting rages in eastern Ukraine, southern Kherson region**
- **Kyiv says Russian forces in south dogged by lack of supplies**

Reuters | Kyiv

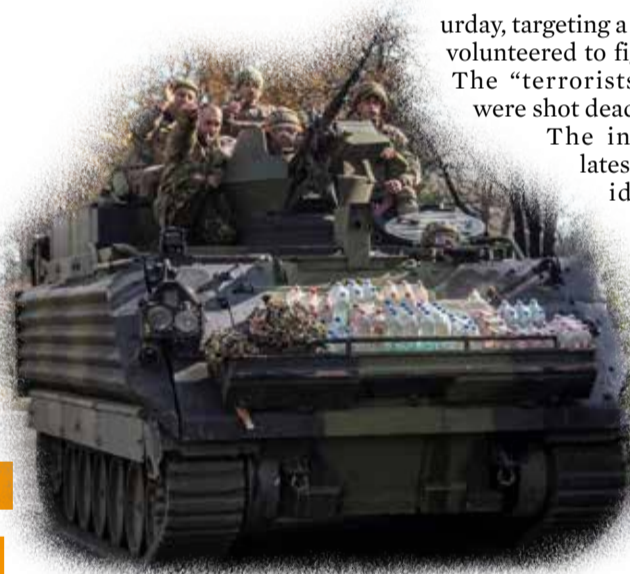


A view shows the city administration building hit by recent shelling in the course of Ukraine-Russia conflict in Donetsk, Russian-controlled Ukraine

Russia has opened a criminal investigation after gunmen shot dead 11 people at a military training ground near the Ukrainian border, authorities said yesterday, as fighting raged in eastern and southern Ukraine.

Russia's RIA news agency, citing the defence ministry, said two gunmen had opened fire during a firearms training exercise on Saturday, targeting a group who had volunteered to fight in Ukraine. The "terrorists" themselves were shot dead, it said.

Ukrainian servicemen ride atop of an M113 armoured personnel carrier (APC) in the town of Lyman



Russia says its forces repelled Ukrainian advances in several regions

Reuters

Russia's defence ministry said yesterday its forces had repelled efforts by Ukrainian troops to advance in the Donetsk, Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, inflicting what it described as significant losses against the en-

emy.

The battlefield reports could not immediately be verified.

Russia also said it was continuing air strikes on military and energy targets in Ukraine, using long-range precision-guided weapons.

Crimea, the peninsula it annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Russia's defence ministry said the attackers were from a former Soviet republic, without elaborating. A senior Ukrainian official, Oleksiy Arestovych, said the two men were from the mainly Muslim, Central Asian republic of Tajikistan and had opened fire on the others after an argument over religion.

"As a result of the incident at a shooting range in Belgorod region, 11 people died from gunshot wounds and another 15 were injured," Russia's Investigative Committee said, announcing the criminal investigation. It gave no

other details.

Some Russian independent media outlets reported that the number of casualties was higher than the official figures.

The governor of Belgorod region, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said no local residents were among those killed or wounded.

Two witnesses later told Reuters they had seen Russian air defence systems repelling air strikes in Belgorod. Gladkov said two people had been wounded after the shelling, according to preliminary reports.

Putin said on Friday Russia should be finished calling up reservists in two weeks, promising an end to a divisive mobilisation that has seen hundreds of thousands of men summoned to fight in Ukraine and many fleeing the country.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a strong Putin ally, said last week that his troops would deploy with Russian forces near the Ukrainian border, citing what he said were threats from Ukraine and the West.

The Belarusian defence ministry in Minsk on Sunday said

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	98,825,641	1,090,374	629,848,573
2 India	44,628,828	528,895	
3 France	36,216,634	155,816	
4 Brazil	34,791,770	687,195	6,571,240
5 Germany	34,608,835	151,420	
6 S. Korea	25,120,465	28,840	Recovered: 608,881,245
7 UK	23,798,793	191,681	
8 Italy	23,099,983	177,988	New cases +162,498
9 Japan	21,757,595	45,870	
10 Russia	21,304,554	388,901	New deaths +372
11 Turkey	16,919,638	101,203	
12 Spain	13,462,593	114,641	
13 Vietnam	11,492,598	43,155	
14 Australia	10,309,725	15,475	

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	515,645		24,613		442,182	48,850
Saudi Arabia	818,731		9,380		805,354	3,997
UAE	1,032,844		2,346		1,011,757	18,741
Kuwait	660,667		2,564		657,113	990
Oman	398,424		4,260		384,669	9,495
Qatar	460,970		682		457,428	2,860

Biden will act 'methodically' in re-evaluating US-Saudi relationship, Sullivan says

Reuters | Washington

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said yesterday that President Joe Biden will act "methodically" in re-evaluating the US relationship with Saudi Arabia, but options include changes to security assistance to the major oil producer.

Sullivan, speaking on CNN, said Biden had no plans to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at a G20 leaders summit in November and no changes were "imminent."

"And so the President isn't going act precipitously, he is going to act methodically, strategically and he's going to take his time to consult with members of both parties, and also to have an opportunity for Congress to return so that he can sit with them in person and work through the options,"

'They were all young': Turkish village mourns miners

AFP | Ahatlar (Turkey)

Sitting on the stairs of his house overlooking the Black Sea, the father of a dead miner accepts condolences from relatives and neighbours. His scarred Turkish village lost three of its young men in this Friday's mining disaster.

Three out of 41 miners killed in the coal mine explosion in the town of Amasra on Friday were from Ahatlar, a village on its outskirts, where funeral services were held on Sunday.

"My son is gone. I am falling apart, this is ruining me," said grieving Kemal Yildirim, father of Saban, who was in his early 20s when he died.

"Friends gave me the sad news. We hurried to the pit on Friday. He was one of the last remaining ones to be pulled out at 7 am the next day," he said.

The young miner's pregnant wife is expecting twins. He was employed by the state-owned Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises' mine in 2019 after graduating from university.

A relative hung flags outside the house. Shoes piled up on the doormat, and women covering their heads with scarves packed into



Funeral services were held in the village of Ahatlar on Sunday

a room, while men waited under a blue canvas outside, protected from the rain.

Hundreds of people from neighbouring villages also gathered outside the house as an imam led the funeral service. Saban's wife hugged the coffin, which was covered with a Turkish flag.

"Take me, not him," said the

grieving father, so moved he could barely breathe.

Officials said 28 miners were wounded and 58 survived following the blast, which according to preliminary findings was caused by firedamp -- a term referring to a build-up of methane gas.

"Gas smell" Saban had told his wife "the mine had been smelling of gas