



Russia downs Ukrainian drone west of Moscow, two airports reopen

Russian air defenses on Friday downed a Ukrainian drone as it flew towards an unspecified target in Moscow, Defence Ministry said, the latest in a flurry of drone attacks on the Russian capital. Earlier, Moscow's Vnukovo airport and Kaluga airport, some 150 km southwest of the capital, were temporarily shut due to a suspected drone flight. They later reopened, Reuters reported.

"... an attempt by the Kyiv regime to carry out

a terrorist attack by an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) on a facility in Moscow was thwarted," the ministry said in a statement, adding the drone was jammed and crashed in a forest west of Moscow.

"There are no casualties and no damage," it said. Earlier, Vnukovo airport said it had been compelled to suspend all flights "for reasons beyond the control of the airport", adding that some flights had been redirected to other

airports in the Moscow region. It gave no further information.

Flights later resumed at both Vnukovo and Kaluga airports.

Drone air strikes deep inside Russia have increased since a drone was destroyed over the Kremlin in early May. Civilian areas of the capital were hit later in May and a Moscow business district was targeted twice in three days earlier this month.

Russia said on Thursday that it had downed 13

Ukrainian drones seeking to attack Moscow and also the largest city in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

In recent days, Ukrainian remotely piloted boats, also referred to as drones, have attacked a Russian fuel tanker and a navy base at Russia's Novorossiysk port on the Black Sea. Ukraine typically does not comment on who is behind attacks on Russian territory, although officials have publicly expressed satisfaction over them.

On Thursday, Ukrainian authorities ordered a mandatory evacuation of nearly 12,000 civilians from 37 towns and villages near the northeastern front line as Russia ramped up the assault to capture territory already once seized during the conflict, AFP reported.

Ukraine urged civilians to evacuate the eastern Kharkiv region, where Russian forces reportedly are making a concerted effort to punch through the front line.



Russian law enforcement officers stand guard near the accident scene following a reported Ukrainian drone crash in Moscow, Russia, on August 11, 2023.

● REUTERS

20 Syrian soldiers killed in Daesh bus attack



The Daesh terror group ambushed a bus carrying Syrian soldiers in the eastern part of the country, killing and injuring a number of them.

SANA quoted a military source as saying the bus was hit overnight on a desert road in the Dayr al-Zawr Province.

Meanwhile, the Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen quoted a Syrian security source as saying that 20 soldiers were killed and ten more wounded in the attack.

Daesh members in recent weeks have increased their surprise attacks in Syria's north and northeast, where they maintain hideouts.

The group, which seized wide swathes of Syria and neighboring Iraq from 2013, went underground since it lost its last territory in eastern Syria in 2019.

Global COVID cases up 80% as new subvariant rises

The number of new COVID-19 cases reported worldwide rose by 80% in the last month, the World Health Organization said on Friday, days after designating a new "variant of interest". The WHO declared in May that COVID is no longer a global health emergency, but has warned that the virus will continue to circulate and mutate, causing occasional spikes in infections, hospitalisations and deaths, AFP reported.

It said that nations reported nearly 1.5m new cases from July 10 to August 6, an 80% increase compared to the previous 28 days. However, the number of deaths fell by 57% to 2,500. The WHO warned that the reported number of cases and deaths do not reflect the true numbers, in part because countries carry out far less testing and monitoring than during earlier stages of the pandemic. Many of the new cases came in the Western Pacific region, which saw infections jump by 137%, the WHO said.



Challenges and shifts in Pakistan's economic landscape: From loan agreements to currency depreciation



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

The government of Pakistan has mortgaged the Islamabad International Airport for the Chinese loan. The government has signed an agreement approving the issuance of a sovereign guarantee worth \$3 billion on Chinese debt. The outgoing Cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) made this decision en route to transferring the call to the caretaker government for a decision on importing 1 million metric tons of wheat. After the ECC meeting, the

Ministry of Finance conveyed that the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission had submitted a summary regarding government guarantees for Chashma Nuclear Power Project Unit 5.

The ECC sought approval for a sovereign guarantee for the Chashma 5 project under the IMF program. According to the terms of the agreement, China will levy an interest rate of 3% on a 21b RMB loan for a period of 20 years, with repayments commencing after eight years, and China requiring sovereign guarantees with high interest rates.

According to the financial agreement, the sovereign

guarantee issued by the government of Pakistan was the basic condition for the ratification of the agreement by China.

China National Nuclear Corporation Overseas Limited has offered a supplier credit of 21.3b for a 1,200 MW nuclear power plant construction.

According to the Ministry of Finance, the ECC has also approved a summary of the State Support Agreement for the outsourcing of Islamabad International Airport through international competitive bidding. The most negative impact of this approval will be on the employees of the Civil Aviation Authority and Pakistan International Air-

lines that has already faced severe losses. Pakistan's Democratic Movement (PDM) is selling national assets, including precious metal reserves, to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and some Western investors.

Conversely, following the arrest of Imran Khan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's chairman and former Prime Minister, the Pakistan Stock Exchange is experiencing a sharp downturn due to economic uncertainty. The bearish trend led to an 81% decrease in share prices on Wednesday. The SE 100 index fell to 47954 points. Adding to economic concerns, the value of the dollar is continuously increasing

due to a shortage of dollars in the country. The dollar's appreciation raised Pakistan's external debt by 7%, with the dollar reaching Rs 288 in the interbank market on Tuesday and Rs 296 in the open market on Wednesday, up from Rs 303.



● REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia launches lunar lander



REUTERS - Russia launched its first moon-landing spacecraft in 47 years on Friday in a bid to be the first nation to make a soft landing on the lunar south pole, a region believed to hold coveted pockets of water ice.

The Russian lunar mission, the first since 1976, is racing against India, which launched its Chandrayaan-3 lunar lander last month, and more broadly with the US and China, both of which have advanced lunar exploration programs targeting the lunar south pole.

A Soyuz 2.1 rocket carrying the Luna-25 craft blasted off from the Vostochny cosmodrome, 5,550 km east of Moscow, at 2:11 a.m. on Friday Moscow time (1111 GMT on Thursday).

Niger tensions flare up

AP - Tensions are escalating between Niger's new military regime and the West African regional bloc that has ordered the deployment of troops to restore Niger's flailing democracy.

The ECOWAS bloc said on Thursday it had directed a "standby force" to restore constitutional order in Niger after its Sunday deadline to reinstate ousted President Mohamed Bazoum expired. Two Western officials told AP that Niger's junta had told a top US diplomat they would kill Bazoum if neighboring countries attempted any military intervention to restore his rule.

Hawaii death toll climbs to 55 with 1,000 missing



REUTERS - Maui's wildfires have killed at least 55 people, a toll expected to rise, and unleashed destruction on the resort town of Lahaina that will take years and billions of dollars to rebuild, according to Hawaiian officials.

The fast-moving inferno, which started on Tuesday, spread from the brush outside of town and ravaged the historic city of Lahaina that was once the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom.

Hawaii Governor Josh Green said that around 1,000 people are still unaccounted for, as he said that the Aloha State is headed for its deadliest disaster in state history.