



Man sets himself on fire near Japan PM's office

Court delays trial of Istanbul mayor who upstaged Erdogan

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KHARKIV, Ukraine: Communal workers look at a residential building damaged after shelling in Kharkiv on September 21, 2022, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

Missiles hit apartments in Ukraine city

'The war is a disaster, it's terrifying, it's painful... it's miserable'

KHARKIV, Ukraine: Residents of Ukraine's second city Kharkiv found themselves under bombardment again Wednesday after Russian missiles struck apartment blocks wounding at least one civilian just as Moscow announced an escalation in its war.

"Our area was relatively quiet, and now you see what happened," Lyubov Grygorivna, 65, told AFP outside a badly damaged housing block. Kharkiv, a major hub in the northeast just 40 kilometres (24 miles) south of the Russian border, was attacked on the first day of the February 24 invasion, but its Ukrainian defenders held out and it has since been regularly bombed.

In recent weeks the city has been spared more intense bombardment as a Ukrainian counter-offensive swept Russian land forces from the region. Russia can, however, still launch missiles from its own territory.

Approaching retirement after 45 years working in the neighbourhood municipal services, Grygorivna was loudly directing clean-up crews clambering through rubble. "The war is a disaster. It's terrifying. It's painful... It's miserable. How can

you stand things like this?" she asked. "So many have lost their homes and winter is coming. It's terrible. Every night we go to bed



How can you stand things like this?

scared. But we keep on working. They shoot and we work," she added. The mayor of Kharkiv, Igor Terekhov, said four projectiles had struck the Kholodnogorsky district overnight, hitting two housing blocks, a building site and some civil infrastructure.

In one block, 10 residents were trapped until rescuers could arrive, but officials spoke of only one

wounded. Air raid sirens continued through the morning at the scene, mingling with bells from the gilded domes of the Saint Sofia Church, where Orthodox worshippers gathered to mark the nativity of the Virgin Mary.

Renewed bombardment

Lyubov Prokopivna, an 85-year-old retiree, surveyed the wreckage in her apartment on the upper floor of the nine-storey Slavi 11 block of modest privately-owned flats in the Zalintyne neighbourhood. She had been staying at her son's house at 2:00 am when the missile hit.

"I usually sleep in the bedroom. All the windows were broken, the TV, everything is a mess. If I had been here, I wouldn't have survived," she said. Anna Verbitska, 41, was asleep with her husband on a lower level. Her family were unharmed, but the windows blew in and the water is now cut off. She swept up the glass quietly, as 12-year-old daughter Sofia slept on the sofa, exhausted after a night caring for Tasya the cat.

"The heating system is damaged, and winter is

coming. The car was damaged too," she said, as four burly neighbours carried a stunned elderly lady down the dusty staircase in a blanket. The renewed bombardment of their homes was a bitter blow for many Ukrainians, coming as Russian President Vladimir Putin mobilised reservists in a bid to seize back the initiative in the conflict.

"I ask all the Russians, may God give them the wisdom to escape, to ignore (the mobilisation), to leave... to wake up finally, but not to come fight us," said 63-year-old Svitlana. "You see? They kill civilians. There's nothing here expect gardens and civilian homes. I'm turning to you, the international community, close the sky above Kharkiv. Don't let (Putin) destroy us," she said.

Another local resident, Galyna, 50, said she "can't understand the people he is calling on to fight us". "We are protecting our homeland. This is Ukraine and they are fighting a war... for what? Against who?" she said. "They want to liberate us from what? From our homes? From our relatives? From friends? What else? From life... they want to free us from being alive," she said. —AFP



BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan: Russian cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev (C) and Dmitry Petelin (R) and NASA astronaut Frank Rubio, members of the International Space Station (ISS) Expedition 68 main crew, walk to report to Russia's Roscosmos space agency head prior to the launch at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on September 21, 2022. —AFP

American, Russians blast off for ISS as war rages in Ukraine

BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan: A US astronaut and two Russian cosmonauts blasted off to the International Space Station (ISS) Wednesday on a Russian-operated flight, in a rare instance of cooperation between Moscow and Washington.

The Russian space agency Roscosmos and NASA both distributed live footage of the launch from Kazakhstan and commentators speaking over the feed said it was stable and that "the crew is feeling well".

NASA's Frank Rubio and Russia's Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitry Petelin make up the crew that launched from the Russia-leased Baikonur cosmodrome at 1354 GMT. Rubio is the first US astronaut to travel to the ISS on a Russian Soyuz rocket since President Vladimir Putin sent troops into pro-Western Ukraine on February 24.

In response, Western capitals including Washington have hit Moscow with unprecedented sanctions and bilateral ties have sunk to new lows. Space remained an outlier of cooperation between the two countries.

Russia's only active female cosmonaut Anna Kikina is expected to travel to the orbital station in early October aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon.

She will become only the fifth professional woman cosmonaut from Russia or the Soviet Union to fly to space, and the first Russian to fly aboard a spacecraft of SpaceX, the company of billionaire Elon Musk.

Russian cosmonauts and Western astronauts have sought to steer clear of the conflict that is raging back on Earth, especially when in orbit together. A collaboration among the United States, Canada, Japan, the European Space Agency and Russia, the ISS is split into two sections: the US Orbital Segment, and the Russian Orbital Segment.

Russia leaving ISS

At present, the ISS depends on a Russian propulsion system to maintain its orbit, about 250 miles (400 kilometres) above sea level, with the US segment responsible for electricity and life support systems. Tensions in the space field have grown after Washington announced sanctions on Moscow's aerospace industry-triggering warnings from Russia's former space chief Dmitry Rogozin, an ardent supporter of the Ukraine war.

Rogozin's recently appointed successor Yuri Borisov later confirmed Russia's long-mooted move to leave the ISS after 2024 in favour of creating its own orbital station. US space agency NASA called the decision an "unfortunate development" that would hinder scientific work on the ISS. Space analysts say that the construction of a new orbital station could take more than a decade and Russia's space industry—a point of national pride—would not be able to flourish under heavy sanctions. —AFP

Hurricane Fiona heads north toward Bermuda

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico: Hurricane Fiona continued its slow and devastating march northward after slamming the Turks and Caicos Islands on Tuesday and leaving a trail of destruction in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said Wednesday morning that the storm had grown stronger, registering maximum wind speeds of 130 miles per hour (210 kilometers per hour) as it barreled toward Bermuda.

The NHC said Fiona was 105 miles (170 kilometers) north of Turks and Caicos and had been upgraded to a Category 4 hurricane, the second highest level on the Saffir-Simpson scale. "Swells from Fiona are expected to reach Bermuda by early Thursday. The swells could cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions," the NHC said in its latest advisory.

At least five people have died as the storm churned across the Caribbean—one in the French overseas department of Guadeloupe and two each in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. "Hurricane Fiona has proven to be an unpredictable storm," Anya Williams, the deputy governor of Turks and Caicos, said in a broadcast.

Williams said no casualties or serious injuries had been reported in Turks and Caicos, but she urged residents to continue to shelter in place. Blackouts were reported on Grand Turk and several other islands in the archipelago and 165 people were admitted to shelters, she said, adding that Britain's Royal Navy and the US Coast Guard are standing by to provide assistance.

Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader has declared three eastern provinces to be disaster zones: La Altagracia—home to the popular resort of Punta Cana—El Seibo and Hato Mayor. Authorities said Tuesday that more than 10,000 people had been moved to "safe areas," while about 400,000 are without electricity.

Footage from local media showed residents of the east coast town of Higuey waist-deep in water trying to salvage personal belongings. "It came through at high speed," Vicente Lopez told AFP in Punta Cana, bemoaning the destroyed businesses in the area.



SAMANA, Dominican Republic: View of damages at a restaurant located on the Malecon de Samana, after the passage of Hurricane Fiona, in Samana, Dominican Republic. —AFP

'I have food and water'

US President Joe Biden has declared a state of emergency in Puerto Rico and dispatched the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to the island, which is still struggling to recover from Hurricane Maria five years ago.

"We're sending hundreds of additional personnel to support all affected communities," FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said Tuesday after a tour with Pedro Pierluisi, the island's governor.

Pierluisi said the storm had caused catastrophic damage on the island of three million people since Sunday, with some areas receiving more than 30 inches (76 centimeters) of rain. Michelle Carlo, medical advisor for Direct Relief in Puerto Rico, told CBS News that "a lot of people in Puerto Rico are suffering right now."

"About 80 percent of Puerto Ricans are still without power and about 65 percent are without water service," Carlo said. Across Puerto Rico, Fiona caused landslides, blocked roads and toppled trees, power lines and bridges, Pierluisi said.

A man was killed as an indirect result of the power blackout—burned to death while trying to fill his generator, according to authorities. On Monday afternoon, Nelly Marrero made her way back to her home in Toa Baja, in the north of Puerto Rico, to clear out the mud that surged inside after she evacuated. "Thanks to God, I have food and water," Marrero—who lost everything when Hurricane Maria hit—told AFP by telephone. —AFP