

## International

# Ukraine puts Dnipro toll at 21 after wave of Russian strikes

## Zelensky pleads for more Western military weapons

KYIV: Ukraine said Sunday that the death toll had risen to 21 after a Russian missile slammed into a tower block in the city of Dnipro during a massive wave of strikes causing power outages and blackouts across the war-torn country.

Officials said more than 40 people were still missing after the Dnipro strike Saturday, which came as Ukraine celebrated the Old New Year holiday and as Britain became the first Western country to offer Kyiv the heavy tanks it has long sought.

At least 21 people were killed and 73 others wounded in the attack on the Dnipro tower block, Ukraine's regional council head Mykola Lukashuk said. A 15-year-old girl was among the dead, officials said, after dozens of people were pulled from the rubble, including a woman brought out by rescuers on Sunday. "Rescue operations continue. The fate of more than 40 people remain unknown," regional governor Valentyn Reznichenko said.

The strike destroyed dozens of flats in the apartment block leaving hundreds of people homeless, said Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a senior official at the presidency. The Ukrainian army said the block was hit by an X-22 Russian missile that it lacked the capacity to shoot down. "Only anti-aircraft missile systems, which in the future may be provided to Ukraine by Western partners... are capable of intercepting these air targets," it said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday pleaded for more Western military weapons, saying that Russian "terror" could be stopped only on the battlefield. "What is needed for this? Those weapons that are in the warehouses of our partners," Zelensky said.

### British tanks

On Saturday, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged to provide Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, the first Western country to supply the heavy tanks Kyiv has been demanding. The tanks would arrive in Ukraine in the coming weeks, Downing Street said, adding that Britain would also train the Ukrainian Armed Forces on how to use them.

Russia's embassy in Britain warned that "bringing tanks to the conflict zone... will only serve to intensify combat operations, generating more casualties, including among the civilian population". Moldova, Ukraine's southwestern neighbor, said it had found Russian missile debris on its territory after Saturday's strikes. "Russia's brutal war against Ukraine directly impacts Moldova again," President Maia Sandu tweeted, posting photographs of the wreckage.

Ukraine's energy facilities were still reeling Sunday from what was a 12th wave of large-scale Russian attacks on energy infrastructure in recent months. The attacks targeted power infrastructure in the Kharkiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia and Kyiv regions, Energy Minister German Galushchenko said.

On Sunday, operator Ukrenergo said energy infrastructure was "being restored" but that the attacks had "increased the energy deficit". "The period of outages may increase," it acknowledged. Zelensky said Ukraine shot down 20 of the more than 30 Russian missiles fired.

"Unfortunately, energy infrastructure facilities have been also hit," he said, adding that the regions of Kyiv and Kharkiv, home to the country's epony-



DNIPRO: Residents carry their belongings from a residential building destroyed after a missile strike, in Dnipro on January 15, 2023, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

mous second city, were suffering the most. The strikes came amid uncertainty about the fate of Soledar, a salt mining outpost that Russia claimed to have captured, despite denials from Ukraine.

Both sides have conceded heavy losses in the

battle for the town, which had a pre-war population of about 10,000. On Sunday, the US-based Institute for the Study of War said that "Ukrainian forces are highly unlikely to still hold positions within the settlement of Soledar itself". —AFP

## Pakistan provincial assembly dissolved

LAHORE: The provincial assembly in Pakistan's most populous province, Punjab, was dissolved late Saturday, in a move orchestrated by former prime minister Imran Khan as part of a bid to force early general elections. The country has been gripped by political instability since Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote and replaced last April by a shaky coalition led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The South Asian nation is also battling a severe economic crisis. It is drowning in debt, facing galloping inflation and dwindling foreign exchange reserves as the economy tries to claw to recovery from last year's devastating monsoon floods. Punjab Governor Baligh Ur Rehman on Saturday signed a letter ordering the appointment of a caretaker chief minister, replacing Khan's coalition partner Chaudhry Pervez Elahi's government.

Elahi had advised the governor to dissolve the assembly earlier this week, with Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party seeking a provincial election. Khan's party continues to command popularity, and is expected to also dissolve the provincial assembly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where it holds power in a coalition government.

Fresh elections to the Punjab assembly — which governs vital services for roughly half of Pakistan's 220 million citizens — must now be held within 90 days. Provincial polls in Pakistan have historically been held at the same time as general elections, although the synchronicity is not constitutionally mandated. —AFP



JIPAPAD: This handout photo shows residents wading chest-deep through a flooded road in Jipapad town, Eastern Samar province. —AFP

## Death toll in Philippine storms rises to 27

MANILA: At least 27 people have died in storms across the Philippines this month, authorities said Sunday, as forecasters warned of continued heavy rains in the disaster-prone country. Heavy downpours and flooding have plagued the nation's southern and central islands since the Christmas weekend, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes. Since the start of the year, at least three storms have killed 27 people across the

country, the civil defense office said in a report on Sunday. Eleven people were reported injured and three are missing.

The state weather forecaster PAGASA warned Sunday of heavy rains over the Bicol peninsula and Quezon province in the southern tip of the main island of Luzon. "Under these conditions, flooding and rain-induced landslides are likely in areas that are highly... susceptible to these hazards," PAGASA said in an advisory. More than 83,000 people are sheltering in evacuation centers, according to the civil defense office, and over 1,200 houses have been damaged by floodwaters and heavy rains. The Philippines is ranked among the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change, and scientists have warned that storms are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer. —AFP

## Girl, 7, critical after shooting outside London church

LONDON: A seven-year-old girl was fighting for her life in hospital Saturday and five other people were injured after a shooting following a requiem mass for a mother and daughter in London, police said. Mourners ran screaming from the scene outside a Roman Catholic church in the capital as gunshots rang out. "Initial enquiries suggest the shots were fired from a moving vehicle which was then driven away from the scene," London's Met Police said in a statement as they launched an urgent appeal for witnesses.

The priest who conducted the service, Father Jeremy Trood, told the PA news agency it had been a requiem mass for Sara Sanchez, 20, and her mother, who both died within a month of each other in November. The younger woman had succumbed to leukaemia while her mother died after suffering a blood clot on arrival from Heathrow from Colombia, the MyLondon news website reported. "I heard this almighty bang and I thought this was not normal, and the next minute everyone was screaming and shouting," a neighbor told PA.

In addition to the seven-year-old girl, four women and another girl, 12, were wounded in the incident near the busy Euston train station. The other girl was discharged from hospital after treatment for minor leg injuries. A 21-year-old woman is also in a central London hospital. Police said her injuries were not life-threatening. —AFP

## Amir receives message from...

Continued from Page 1

special fraternal relations tying the two countries, bolstering unity, joint Arab work and latest developments on regional and international fronts.

On his part, the Crown Prince conveyed his

## At least 67 killed in Nepal...

Continued from Page 1

remains of wings and passenger seats. A local official had earlier said that "some survivors" had been taken to hospital, but this was not confirmed by the aircraft's operator Yeti Airlines or other officials.

Yeti spokesman Sudarshan Bartaula told AFP that 15 foreigners were on board, including five Indians, four Russians and two South Koreans, with one passenger each from Argentina, Australia, France and Ireland. The rest were Nepalis.

The flight from Kathmandu slammed into the gorge between Pokhara's domestic and brand new international airport on Sunday, shortly before 11 am (0515 GMT). An unverified clip shared on social media purportedly showed the plane flying low over a residential area before banking sharply to the left, followed by a loud explosion. "I was walking when I heard a loud blast like a bomb went off," said witness Arun Tamu, 44, who was around 500 meters (yards) away and who posted live video of the blazing wreckage on social media. "A few of us rushed to see if we can rescue anybody. I saw at least two women were breathing. The fire was getting very intense and it made it difficult for us to approach closer," the former soldier told AFP.

It was unclear if anyone on the ground was injured. Rescue workers rushed to the site littered with debris,

greetings and appreciation to King of the Hashemite kingdom, and to the crown prince Al-Hussien bin Abdullah, wishing them good health and the people of Jordan further progress and prosperity.

Attending the meeting were Chief of the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Sabah and chief of the Crown Prince's office retired Lieutenant General Jamal Al-Thayab, Jordanian Ambassador to the country Saqr Abu Shatal, and foreign ministry officials. —KUNA

trying to put out several raging fires that were sending thick black smoke billowing into the sky.

Nepal's air industry has boomed in recent years, carrying goods and people between hard-to-reach areas, as well as ferrying foreign mountain climbers. But it has been plagued by poor safety due to insufficient training and maintenance. The European Union has banned all Nepal carriers from its airspace over safety concerns. The Himalayan country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, flanked by snow-capped peaks with approaches that pose a challenge for even accomplished pilots. The weather is also notoriously capricious and hard to forecast, particularly in the mountains, where thick fog can suddenly obscure whole mountains from view.

Last May, all 22 people on board a plane operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air — 16 Nepalis, four Indians and two Germans—died when it crashed. Air traffic control lost contact with that twin-propeller Twin Otter shortly after it took off from Pokhara and headed for Jomsom, a popular trekking destination.

Its wreckage was found a day later, strewn across a mountainside at around 4,400 meters (14,500 feet) above sea level. After that crash, authorities tightened regulations, with planes to only be cleared to fly if there was favorable weather forecast throughout the route. Nepal's deadliest aviation accident was in 1992, when all 167 people aboard a Pakistan International Airlines plane died when it crashed on approach to Kathmandu. Just two months earlier, a Thai Airways aircraft had crashed near the same airport, killing 113 people. —AFP

## Timeline: Nepal air crashes

KATHMANDU: At least 67 people died when a plane crashed in Nepal on Sunday, officials said, the deadliest aviation disaster to hit the Himalayan nation in three decades. Nepal's air transport sector has been plagued by accidents due to poor maintenance, insufficient training and lax standards.

The country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, with approaches flanked by towering mountains that challenge even accomplished pilots. Here is a timeline of major air disasters to hit the country in recent years:

### May 29, 2022

A Twin Otter plane operated by Nepali carrier Tara Air crashes shortly after takeoff from Pokhara in western Nepal, killing 22 people.

### April 14, 2019

A small plane veers off the runway while taking off near Mount Everest, hitting two helicopters and killing three people. Three people were also injured.

### March 12, 2018

A flight from the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka crash-lands at Kathmandu airport, skidding into a football field where it bursts into flames. Fifty-one people are killed in what was the deadliest aviation accident in the country for decades.

### February 24, 2016

A Twin Otter aircraft operated by Tara Air crashes

into a hillside in Myagdi district, killing all 23 people on board.

### February 16, 2014

Eighteen people are killed when a Nepal Airlines flight crashes in Arghakhanchi district, with rescuers finding body parts and debris strewn across the mountainous countryside.

### September 28, 2012

A plane flying 19 people towards Mount Everest goes down in flames on the outskirts of the Nepali capital, killing everyone on board including seven Britons and five Chinese citizens.

### May 14, 2012

Fifteen people die when an Agni Air plane carrying Indian pilgrims crashes near the treacherous high-altitude airport of Jomsom in northern Nepal, while six make a miraculous escape.

### September 25, 2011

A small plane taking tourists on a sightseeing trip around Mount Everest crashes into a hillside near Kathmandu, killing all 19 people on board.

### December 15, 2010

All 22 passengers and crew on board a passenger plane that crashes in eastern Nepal are killed. Most of the victims are pilgrims from Bhutan, with one US citizen also among the dead.

### August 24, 2010

A small Agni Air plane crashes in bad weather near Kathmandu, killing all 14 people on board including four Americans, a Japanese and a British national. —AFP

## Egypt unveils ancient royal...

Continued from Page 1

Egypt has unveiled several major archaeological discoveries in recent years, most notably in the Saqqara necropolis south of the capital Cairo.

Critics say the flurry of excavations has prioritised finds shown to grab media attention over hard academic research. But the discoveries have been a key component of Egypt's attempts to revive its vital tourism industry, the crowning jewel of which is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids. The country of 104 million inhabitants suffers a severe economic crisis.

Egypt's tourism industry accounts for 10 percent of GDP and some two million jobs, according to official figures, but has been hammered by political unrest and the COVID pandemic. —AFP