

News in brief

◆ **A shipment of ammunition** bound for the German armed forces was stolen last week from a contractor's truck, an army spokesman said yesterday. The ammunition disappeared "from the trailer of the civilian carrier's transport vehicle, which had been parked overnight", the spokesman said. German media reported that boxes containing about 20,000 rounds were stolen from the truck after it was parked outside a hotel near the eastern city of Magdeburg. An initial check revealed that about 10,000 rounds of combat ammunition for pistols, 9,900 rounds of blank manoeuvre ammunition for assault rifles and so-called smoke ammunition were stolen, said news weekly Der Spiegel. The driver had apparently spontaneously decided to spend the night in the hotel in the town of Burg, according to the magazine.



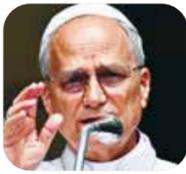
**German army says ammunition shipment stolen from delivery truck**

**Venezuela reauthorizes deportation flights from US: ministry**

◆ **Venezuela** announced yesterday that it had reauthorized flights carrying migrants deported by the United States, days after suspending them due to President Donald Trump's demand that Venezuelan airspace be considered "closed." The aviation authority "has received a request from the US government to resume flights repatriating Venezuelan migrants from that country to Venezuela," said a statement from the Ministry of Transportation. "On the instructions of President Nicolas Maduro, this is authorized." Trump has ramped up pressure on Venezuela, accusing Maduro's government of being a drug cartel and carrying out military strikes on boats off the country's coast that Washington says were carrying drugs.

◆ **Pope Leo XIV** told a crowd in Lebanon yesterday that the Middle East needed new approaches to rejecting violence and overcoming divisions, while urging Christians in the region to "have courage". He made the appeal on his third day in the country at the end of his first trip abroad as pontiff, after arriving on Sunday from Turkey. Pope Leo said he wanted "to come as a pilgrim of hope to the Middle East, imploring God for the gift of peace for this beloved land, marked by instability, wars and suffering". "The Middle East needs new approaches in order to reject the mindset of revenge and violence, to overcome political, social and religious divisions, and to open new chapters in the name of reconciliation and peace," he said at the conclusion of a mass in Beirut attended by some 150,000 people.

**Pope says Middle East needs 'new approaches' to reject violence**



SPOTLIGHT

**Cyclone turns Sri Lanka's tea mountains into death valley**



Volunteers help unload dry rations from a helicopter to marooned residents in Nuwara Eliya, 100 kilometres east of Colombo

**Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka**

In the mist-draped mountains of Sri Lanka's tea country, rescuers were still plucking bodies from the red-brown mud on Tuesday after last week's cyclone, the island's worst natural disaster in decades.

At least 465 people were killed, according to disaster officials, with another 366 missing.

Sri Lanka's Air Force has been combing the landslide-struck landscape, surveying the damage and ferrying food and other essential supplies to marooned residents.

Though the rain has stopped, recovery has just begun.

As the first journalist for foreign media to join a relief mission over the tea-growing region, AFP photographer Ishara Kodikara saw a swathe of the country destroyed after slips

of soil flattened everything in their paths, including roads and the vehicles that were on them.

The roof of some houses peaked through the mud, while the rest of the buildings were swallowed by the torrents of soil unleashed by Cyclone Ditwah.

Jagged tears in the mountainsides revealed churned-up expanses of earth, with a few patches of the lush vegetation still clinging nearby in stark contrast. There was no sign of human life in the wrecked landscape.

In the central Welimada area, now inaccessible to heavy vehicles, rescue workers pulled 11 bodies from the mud on Monday and appealed for help to search for dozens more.

In some places, entire slopes have been sheared away, leaving ochre wounds slicing through the dense plantation greenery.

**If Europe wants war with Russia, 'we are ready': Putin**

Zelensky calls for peace, Putin defiant ahead of US-Russia talks

◆ **Kushner and Witkoff were due to meet Putin**

◆ **Discuss a new version of US plan to end the war**

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Donald Trump's son-in-law and special envoy headed to the Kremlin yesterday for high-stakes talks on Moscow's offensive in Ukraine, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for an end to the fighting and a "dignified peace".

Jared Kushner and envoy Steve Witkoff were due to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin after days of frenzied diplomacy from Florida to Geneva to Abu Dhabi left Washington "optimistic" it could help end Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II.

They are expected to present Putin with a new version of US plan to end the war, hammered out in recent days after an earlier version raised fears in Kyiv and elsewhere in Europe that it made too many concessions to Moscow.



Russia's President Vladimir Putin visits a command post for the joint force grouping, amid the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict

A Ukrainian delegation could then meet with Witkoff and Kushner as soon as Wednesday, potentially in Brussels, a senior Kyiv official told AFP.

The US wants to "report directly to us after their meeting" with Putin, Zelensky said during a visit to Ireland, where he is shoring up European support.

But any plan must actually end the war -- for good -- and not just lead to a pause in the devas-

tating fighting that began with Moscow's offensive in February 2022, he said.

"Our common task is to end the war, not just to achieve a pause in hostilities," Zelensky said, adding: "A dignified peace is needed."

Putin, however, appeared to threaten the opposite shortly before the US talks began.

"We are not planning to go to war with Europe, but if Europe

wants to and starts, we are ready right now," he told reporters, accusing Europeans of obstructing US efforts to end the fighting.

In Brussels, NATO chief Mark Rutte said he was "confident" US efforts will "eventually restore peace in Europe". Russian forces have advanced fast in November in eastern Ukraine, and Kyiv has been rocked by graft scandals that ended with the resignation of its top negotiator -- Zelensky's right-hand man.



Moscow launched a total of 5,660 missiles and long-range drones at Ukraine last month, daily reports published by Kyiv's air force showed, marking a two percent increase over the previous month.

**Garuda Shakti 2025**

10th edition of India-Indonesia special forces exercise to commence in Bakloh

◆ **The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and mutual understanding**

◆ **India and Indonesia on Thursday agreed to deepen the defence cooperation**

◆ **Indonesia welcomed India's proposal to establish a Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee**

AFNI | New Delhi

The 10th edition of India-Indonesia joint special forces exercise, Garuda Shakti, will take place from December 3-12 in Bakloh, as per the Indian Army.

The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and mutual understanding through Special Forces-specific operations, including counter-terrorism drills, heliborne missions, combat shooting, drone and C-UAS employment and surgical strike planning in semi-mountainous



terrain, further strengthening the robust defence partnership between the two nations, as per the Indian Army.

It wrote on X, "Exercise Garuda Shakti 2025: The 10th edition of the India-Indonesia Joint Special Forces Exercise GARUDA SHAKTI will be conducted at the Special Forces Training School, Bakloh from 03 to 12 December 2025. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability and mutual understanding through Special Forces-specific operations, including counter-terrorism drills, heliborne missions, combat shooting, drone and C-UAS employment and surgical strike planning in semi-mountainous terrain, further strengthening the robust

defence partnership between the two nations."

The exercise comes on the heels of the recent visit of Indonesia's Defence Minister Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin to India.

India and Indonesia on Thursday agreed to deepen the defence cooperation between the two nations by stepping up the maritime security coordination and enhancing collaboration in defence technology.

During the 3rd India-Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue discussions, co-chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Indonesian counterpart, Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin, both leaders centred their talks on strengthening defence industry partnership, expanding mili-

tary-to-military engagements and reinforcing a shared strategic vision for a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

According to a release by the Ministry of Defence, both sides reiterated the significance of a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and noted the strong convergence between the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.

They also agreed to intensify cooperation in maritime domain awareness, cyber resilience and joint operational readiness, and to deepen engagement through regional frameworks, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association under India's chairmanship.

Indonesia further welcomed India's proposal to establish a Joint Defence Industry Cooperation Committee to advance work on technology transfer, joint R&D, certification harmonisation and supply-chain linkages.

Both ministers expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the Dialogue and committed to sustaining high-level exchanges and practical cooperation across defence and security areas to strengthen peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (ANI)