

News in brief

Netanyahu mocks corruption trial as ‘Bugs Bunny’ farce



corruption case against him as a “Bugs Bunny trial” and defended his pardon request in a video published on social media. The three-minute video, released late last night, came a week after Netanyahu formally requested a pardon from Israeli President Isaac Herzog, arguing that his prosecution was dividing the nation. US President Donald Trump also sent a letter last month to Herzog with the same request. In the video, Netanyahu denounced the proceedings a “political trial” designed to force him from office, reiterating his longstanding denial of any wrongdoing.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the ongoing

The Pentagon said it has endorsed the tripartite AUKUS security pact with the United Kingdom and Australia, which would involve Canberra’s acquisition of at least three Virginia-class nuclear submarines within 15 years. The administration of Donald Trump said earlier this year it was reviewing a 2021 deal for the nuclear-powered attack subs signed under his presidential predecessor Joe Biden. The Department of Defense completed its five-month review, which endorsed the AUKUS agreement and determined it is “in alignment with President Trump’s America First agenda,” Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement.

Pentagon endorses Australia submarine pact



New US strike on alleged drug boat in Pacific kills four



A strike on an alleged drug-trafficking boat in the eastern Pacific Ocean killed four people on Dec 4, the US military said, amid a growing controversy over a campaign that has taken more than 87 lives. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and President Donald Trump’s administration have especially come under fire over an incident in early September in which US forces targeted the wreckage of a vessel that had already been hit, killing two survivors. A senior Democratic lawmaker who saw footage of that incident on Dec 4 said it showed a US attack on “shipwrecked sailors”, while others have described it as a possible war crime.

A strike on an alleged drug-trafficking boat in the eastern Pacific Ocean killed four

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Penguins queue in Paris zoo for their bird flu jabs



Humboldt penguins are released after the vaccination against avian influenza

AFP | Paris

A curious seagull strolled nonchalantly through the penguin enclosure at a zoo in Paris.

It looked harmless enough but the seagull could pose an existential threat to the penguins with a devastating bird flu outbreak killing hundreds of millions of birds across the world over the last few years.

That is why 41 Humboldt penguins were queued up near their pool in the Paris Zoological Park on a cold December morning at the start of influenza season.

A zookeeper whispered some reassuring words to one called Cissou as a veterinarian injected him with his annual bird flu vaccine shot.

After getting his jab, Cissou waddled off back into his enclosure.

Around 10 zoo staff took the chance to weigh and measure the penguins, collecting feathers, taking blood samples, examining their feet and

checking their microchips.

In a month, the young penguins born this year will get a booster shot.

The zoo, which is in Vincennes park in the east of the French capital, has never detected a case of bird flu.

But it is home to wild birds such as crows, magpies, geese and parakeets, and an outbreak would be catastrophic for the zoo animals.

Last week French health authorities warned this bird flu season is already looking like it will be the worst in a couple of years.

Bird flu was detected in Antarctica for the first time early last year, causing concern among scientists about the fate of the penguins there.

Sylvie Laidebeure, a vet at the Paris zoo, told AFP “these animals are generally threatened in their natural habitat” as she inserted a needle into the breast of a Humboldt penguin, which are classified as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

America First strategy realigns foreign policy

Trump strategy shifts from global role and vows ‘resistance’ in Europe

Focus shifts from global to regional

Latin America now top priority

Calls to end mass migration

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump laid out a radical realignment of US foreign policy yesterday, shifting the longtime superpower’s focus from global to regional, brutally criticizing Europe as facing “civilizational erasure” and putting a top priority on eliminating mass migration.

The national security strategy, meant to flesh out Trump’s norms-shattering worldview, elevates Latin America to the top of the US agenda in a sharp reorientation from longstanding US calls to focus on Asia to face a rising China.

“In everything we do, we are putting America First,” Trump said in a preamble to the long-awaited paper.

Breaking with decades of attempts to be the sole superpower, the strategy said that the “United States rejects the ill-fated concept of global domination for itself.”

It said that the United States would also prevent other powers, namely China, from dominating but added: “This does not mean wasting blood and treasure to curtail the influence of all the world’s great and middle powers.”

The strategy called for a “re-adjustment of our global military presence to address urgent threats in our Hemisphere,” starting with migration.

“The era of mass migration must end,” the strategy said.

The strategy made clear that the United States under Trump would aggressively pursue similar objectives in Europe, in line with far-right parties’ agendas.

In extraordinary language in addressing close allies, the strategy said the administration would be “cultivating resistance to Europe’s current trajectory within European nations.”

Germany quickly hit back, saying that it does not need “outside advice.”

The strategy pointed to Europe’s slide in share of the global



US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump attend the National Christmas Tree Lighting at the Ellipse in Washington, DC



In everything we do, we are putting America First

DONALD TRUMP

economy -- which is the result largely of the rise of China and other emerging powers -- and said: “This economic decline is eclipsed by the real and more stark prospect of civilizational erasure.”

“Should present trends continue, the continent will be unrecognizable in 20 years or less.”

As Trump seeks an end to the Ukraine war that would likely favor Russia gaining territory, the strategy accused Europeans of weakness and said the United States should focus on “ending the perception, and preventing the reality, of NATO as a perpetually expanding alliance.”

Updated ‘Monroe Doctrine’

Trump since returning to office in January has ordered sweeping curbs on migration, after a political career built on fanning fears that America’s white majority is losing its status.

The strategy speaks in bold terms of pressing US dominance in Latin America, where the Trump administration has been striking alleged drug traffickers

at sea, intervening to bring down leftist leaders including in Venezuela, and loudly seeking to take charge of key resources such as the Panama Canal.

The strategy cast Trump as modernizing the two-century-old Monroe Doctrine, in which the then young United States declared Latin America off-limits to rival powers.

“We will assert and enforce a ‘Trump Corollary’ to the Monroe Doctrine,” it said. The strategy paid comparatively little attention to the Middle East, which has long consumed Washington. Pointing to US efforts to increase energy supply at home



The strategy employs stark language, warning that Europe could become “unrecognizable in 20 years or less” if current demographic and economic trends continue

and not in the oil-rich Gulf, the strategy said: “America’s historic reason for focusing on the Middle East will recede.”

The paper said it was a US priority for Israel to be secure, but stopped short of the fulsome language on Israel used even in the first Trump administration.

China still competitor

On China, the strategy repeated calls for a “free and open” Asia-Pacific region but focused more on the nation as an economic competitor.

After much speculation on whether Trump would budge on Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy claimed by Beijing, the strategy made clear that the United States supports the decades-old status quo, but called on allies Japan and South Korea to contribute more to ensure Taiwan’s defense from China.

The strategy predictably puts little focus on Africa, saying the United States should transition away from “liberal ideology” and an “aid-focused relationship” and emphasize goals such as securing critical minerals.

US presidents usually release a National Security Strategy in each White House term. The last, released by Joe Biden in 2022, prioritized winning a competitive edge over China while constraining a “dangerous” Russia.

Flooding kills two as Vietnam hit by dozens of landslides

AFP | Hanoi

Heavy rain in Vietnam triggered flooding that killed at least two people and caused more than a dozen landslides, state media said yesterday, adding to what authorities called the “most unusual” year of natural disasters in

the country’s history.

South-central Vietnam has been lashed by weeks of heavy rain, submerging hundreds of thousands of homes in coastal tourism hotspots and causing deadly landslides in mountainous regions.

Downpours inundated thou-

sands more homes in Lam Dong province on Thursday and killed at least two people, the Voice of Vietnam news outlet reported.

It added that 16 landslides struck the province, damaging roads and bridges and forcing the evacuation of hundreds of homes.



A man walks through flood waters on a street in Vietnam’s Lam Dong province