

News in brief

Colombian president says will meet Trump in US on February 3



Colombian President Gustavo Petro announced Wednesday

that he will meet with his US counterpart Donald Trump on February 3 to address diplomatic tensions and Washington's military campaign in Latin America.

"We'll see the results of that meeting," Petro said during a televised meeting with his ministers. Petro's US visit will come on the heels of a bitter war of words with Trump in the last year, including Washington's threats to take military action in Colombia, as well as the US-led attack on Caracas to depose leftist leader Nicolas Maduro.

A federal immigration agent shot a man Wednesday

US immigration officer shoots Venezuelan man in Minneapolis



in Minneapolis, city officials said, urging the public to "remain calm" a week after agents shot and killed an American woman in the same city. "We understand there is anger," officials for the midwestern city wrote on X, adding "the City of Minneapolis again demands that ICE leave the city and the state immediately." Department of Homeland Security officials confirmed the shooting in a post on X, saying "an illegal alien from Venezuela" was targeted for a traffic stop and resisted arrest.

New Zealand warned Pacific neighbour over oil smuggling 'shadow fleet'



A "shadow fleet" of 19 tankers

suspected of smuggling oil for Russia and Iran was flagged by New Zealand with Cook Islands authorities in 2024, according to a confidential list obtained by AFP. The small Pacific island is home to a flourishing international shipping registry, allowing foreign vessels to sail under its flag for a modest fee of a few thousand dollars. There is mounting evidence the archipelago has become a haven for foreign smugglers, who sail under the Cook Islands flag to escape scrutiny as they flout Western sanctions.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

ISS astronauts splash down on Earth after first-ever medical evacuation



The four members of the SpaceX Crew-11 (file photo)

AFP | Washington

post earlier this week: "First and foremost, we are all OK. Everyone on board is stable, safe, and well cared for."

"This was a deliberate decision to allow the right medical evaluations to happen on the ground, where the full range of diagnostic capability exists. It's the right call, even if it's a bit bittersweet."

The Crew-11 quartet arrived at the ISS in early August and had been scheduled to stay onboard the space station until they were rotated out in mid-February with the arrival of the next crew.

James Polk, NASA's chief health and medical officer, said "lingering risk" and a "lingering question as to what that diagnosis is" led to the decision to bring back the crew earlier than originally scheduled.

American astronaut Chris Williams and Russian cosmonauts Sergey Kud-Sverchkov and Sergei Mikayev, who arrived at the station in November aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft, remained on the

A video feed from NASA showed the capsule carrying American astronauts Mike Fincke and Zena Cardman, Russian cosmonaut Oleg Platonov and Japanese astronaut Kimiya Yui land off the coast of San Diego at 12:41 am (0841 GMT).

A health issue prompted their mission to be cut short, after spending five months in space. The US space agency has declined to disclose any details about the health issue but stressed the return was not an emergency situation.

The affected crewmember "was and continues to be in stable condition," NASA official Rob Navias said Wednesday. Fincke, the SpaceX Crew-11 pilot, said in a social media post on the

Greenland standoff draws European reinforcements

Multinational military mission arrives as US persists in its bid for control

European military mission arrives in Greenland

Russia condemns NATO's Arctic buildup

Greenland PM calls for diplomacy

AFP | Nuuk

A European military mission was taking shape in Greenland yesterday, drawing a sharp rebuke from Russia, as Denmark said Washington still aimed to take control of the mineral-rich Arctic island.

Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen insisted meanwhile that "dialogue and diplomacy are the right way forward", hailing in a Facebook post the fact that a dialogue was now "underway".

The developments came a day after a White House meeting failed to resolve "fundamental disagreement" over Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory that President Donald Trump insists the United States needs to ensure its security.

Two Danish troop transport planes landed in Greenland on Wednesday. Britain, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have also announced the deployment of military personnel as part of a reconnaissance mission to Greenland's capital Nuuk, under Denmark's "Arctic Endurance" exercise organised with NATO allies.

The modest military reinforcements -- 13 soldiers from Germany



Greenlandic flags are fixed on a building in Nuuk, Greenland

ny, for example -- are meant to prepare armed forces for future exercises in the Arctic, according to European defence sources.

"A first team of French service members is already on site and will be reinforced in the coming days with land, air, and maritime assets," French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday.

Germany's defence ministry said the aim was to "explore the framework conditions for possible military contributions to support Denmark in ensuring security in the region".

'NATO consensus'

The foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland met with US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington on Wednesday.

Danish Prime Minister Mette



Donald Trump has dismissed Denmark's \$14 billion investment in Arctic security as inadequate, derisively comparing the nation's defensive efforts to owning just "two dogsleds" compared to US requirements

Frederiksen said in a statement yesterday that "a working group" was being set up to discuss how

Arctic security could be improved.

"However, this does not change the fact that there is a fundamental disagreement, because the American ambition to take over Greenland remains intact," Frederiksen said, hailing the arrival of European military personnel in Greenland.

"There is consensus within the NATO alliance that a strengthened presence in the Arctic is crucial for European and North American security," she said.

Trump has argued that if the United States does not take Greenland, "China or Russia will", deriding Danish efforts to increase security for Greenland as amounting to "two dogsleds".

Denmark says it has invested almost \$14 billion in Arctic security.

Trump to host Venezuelan opposition leader sidelined by US

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump is scheduled to meet yesterday with Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, whose pro-democracy movement he has sidelined since toppling her country's leader, and whose Nobel Peace Prize he openly envies.

Machado's White House visit comes a day after Trump used glowing terms to describe his first known call with Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodriguez, confirming his satisfaction with the allies of Nicolas Maduro remaining in power, for now at least.

Trump called Rodriguez a "terrific person" and hailed "terrific progress" made since US special forces seized Maduro and his wife in a deadly raid.

Rodriguez said the call was "productive and courteous," and characterized by "mutual respect."

"Many topics were discussed," Trump said on social media, "in-



Nobel peace prize laureate Maria Corina Machado addresses a press conference (file photo)

cluding Oil, Minerals, Trade and, of course, National Security."

Notably absent was any mention of a political transition, an issue that Washington has recently downplayed compared to economic concerns, especially access to Venezuelan oil.

Machado, who campaigned for

years to end Maduro's rule, will seek yesterday to bring the issue back into the foreground.

Nobel sharing?

Machado, 58, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year for her activism in pursuit of democracy in Venezuela, despite

threats of imprisonment by Maduro's government.

Venezuela's opposition has argued and presented evidence that Maduro stole the 2024 election from Machado's party, namely candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia -- claims supported by Washington.

Venezuela's electoral authorities, seen as allied with Maduro, never released data from the vote.

Hundreds of people were arrested in post-election protests, and while Gonzalez Urrutia fled to Europe for asylum, Machado remained in the country in a hidden location, appearing only intermittently at rallies.

She appeared in Oslo, Norway last month to collect her Nobel prize after a daring escape by boat, and has not yet returned to her home country.

Trump has openly fumed about not being awarded the prize, calling it a "major embarrassment" for Norway.