

Frenchwoman makes first spacewalk



ESA (European Space Agency) astronaut Sophie Adenot
AFP | Washington, United States

Sophie Adenot became the first French female astronaut to venture outside the International Space Station for a spacewalk yesterday, accompanied by American astronaut Anil Menon.

During the six-and-a-half hour mission, the two astronauts were to replace an antenna that allows the ISS to communicate with mission control in Houston, according to NASA.

"I'm out," Adenot, 44, said after exiting the ISS, some 400

kilometers (250 miles) above the Earth. "I feel very good now,"

Adenot, 44, became the second European woman to conduct a spacewalk after Italian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti's 2022 mission.

The two space travelers could be heard chatting and laughing in NASA footage of their adventure.

President Emmanuel Macron hailed Adenot's space walk as a cause for "French pride," leading a chorus of praise from political leaders in her home country.

Meta in court over child social media addiction

AFP | Oakland, United States

Opening arguments began yesterday in the federal trial of Meta, the social media titan accused of deliberately making Instagram and Facebook platforms addictive to children, with a coalition of states seeking \$200 billion dollars in penalties.

In what many experts have called social media's "big tobacco moment," Meta stands charged with harming children by using technology specifically designed to foster addiction among young users in a similar fashion to cigarettes. The case could be "the be-

ginning of a broader reckoning" for Meta, Stanford law professor Nora Freeman Engstrom told AFP via email, with the company facing the prospect of having to entirely overhaul its two enormously popular global platforms if it loses.

The company has denied all the allegations, insisting it had worked with parents, experts and law enforcement to incorporate protective safeguards for children.

Meta founder and chief Mark Zuckerberg is among the star witnesses expected to testify, along with Instagram head Adam Mosseri.

Philippine student killed in livestreamed school shooting

AFP | Manila, Philippines

A student livestreamed himself shooting another schoolmate dead before taking his own life at a high school in the Philippines on Tuesday, authorities said.

The school shooting, the country's second in as many months, took place at Ateneo de Zamboanga University, a Catholic private institution in western Mindanao.

"What we know so far is that (the shooter) went to the classroom of our known victim. He shot the victim, and after doing that, he went up to the fifth floor and shot himself," regional police spokeswoman Shella Chang told AFP.

In a separate statement, interior secretary Victor Remulla confirmed the ninth-grade suspect had livestreamed the



Police gather at Ateneo de Zamboanga University

incident on social media. The alleged shooter's Facebook account has since been disabled.

In the video, which was circulated by local media, the barrel of a gun can be seen moving down a hallway in the style of a first-person shooter video game before being pointed into a classroom and fired.

West Bank siege exposes Israeli army inaction on settler violence

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

The Israeli military is touted as the most powerful in the Middle East, striking targets deep into enemy territory. But for more than a week, Israeli troops have somehow failed to evict a small group of settlers sitting on rocks in the occupied West Bank.

Experts say the military has long shown inertia when its task is stopping surging violence against Palestinians, due to government backing for the settlement movement and the increasing influence of settler ideology within the army's ranks.

More than a week ago, a handful of settlers at Qusra near Nablus began besieging Palestinians inside their homes, blocking supplies and drawing international and even domestic condemnation.

The Israeli military repeatedly deployed troops, with the United States saying it had requested action by its ally as one of the besieged Palestinians is a US citizen.



Palestinian men watch as Israeli bulldozers demolish a Palestinian building, citing the lack of a building permit, in Qalandia south of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank

But beyond condemnatory statements, the detention of one Israeli, and the dismantling of settlers' tents, little was done to force them out.

Some of the first soldiers to arrive at the scene were even filmed praying with the settlers. The military later vowed disciplinary action.

By Monday, settlers on quad-bikes were back at the site shaking

hands and chatting with Israeli forces, according to videos shared with AFP by a besieged resident.

The government's support for extremist settlers puts the military in an "impossible situation," said Nimrod Novik, a senior advisor and special envoy to former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres.

The military is "forced to

choose between operating on the basis of its professional judgement and duty, which calls for applying harsh measures against violent settlers, or... adhere to government policy, which provides those terrorists with political backwind as well as resources," he told AFP.

"The result is paralysis with rare exceptions due either to the severity of the crimes or US intervention," Novik added.



The UN Security Council Resolution 2334 says the establishment of Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has "no legal validity" and is a major obstacle to a two-state solution.

Trump posts map showing Strait of Hormuz as US territory

● Trump first raised the idea of a US takeover on Friday, saying in a jovial-sounding tone he would soon declare it to be US territory

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump yesterday posted a map on his Truth Social platform showing the Strait of Hormuz as "NEW U.S. Territory," pressing his threat to claim sovereignty over the vital waterway.

Trump first raised the idea of a US takeover on Friday, saying in a jovial-sounding tone he would soon declare it to be US territory -- prompting Iran to retort that the strait "will remain Iranian."



US President Donald Trump posted a map on his Truth Social platform showing the Strait of Hormuz as "NEW US Territory". (Image: Truth Social/@realDonaldTrump)

Trump revisited the idea again Monday in comments to reporters in the Oval Office, suggesting it would be

a good idea.

This is not the first time that Trump, faced with a foreign policy obstacle, has threatened to annex foreign territory.

Since returning to power in 2025, he has threatened to make Canada the 51st US state, seize Greenland and has even alluded to taking control of the Gaza Strip, without following through on any of these threats. Before the Iran war erupted on February 28, the Strait of Hormuz was an open, international waterway.



Sri Lanka ex-minister arrested over theft of king's sacred stone

● Rambukwella had also been charged with the unrelated offence
AFP | Colombo, Sri Lanka

A former Sri Lankan minister was arrested yesterday for allegedly aiding the theft of a centuries-old sacred rock from the palace of the island's last Sinhala king, an anti-corruption body said.

Keheliya Rambukwella was detained over the theft of the heavy carved circular granite rock known as a "moonstone" --

part of a symbolic stepping stone entrance to the palace of Veera Parakrama Narendrasinghe, the king who reigned until 1739.

The Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC) said he had conspired in the removal of the valuable historic object in December 2022, and had also obstructed police investigations at the time.

"He conspired, aided and abetted the theft at a time when he was a minister," CIABOC said.

It said Rambukwella had also been charged with the unrelated offence of using state funds to



Keheliya Rambukwella employ six people for his private business.

The arrest came amid a separate, ongoing court case against him over the purchase of counterfeit medicines for state hospitals while he was health minister.

Police have told the court that he authorised the purchase of a life-saving cancer drug that turned out to be water.

Several other senior health ministry officials have also been indicted over the drug scam.

Rambukwella was health minister when Sri Lanka faced an acute shortage of medicines after defaulting on its \$46 billion foreign debt in April 2022, following its declaration of bankruptcy.