

News in brief

South Korea says 'considerable' chance Kim, Trump will meet next week



South Korea's unification minister said yesterday he believed there was a "considerable" chance that US President Donald Trump will meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during a visit to the peninsula next week. Trump is expected in South Korea on Wednesday for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum. US media have reported officials from his administration have privately discussed setting up a meeting between Trump and North Korean leader Kim, who he last held talks with in 2019.

Ireland voted yesterday to elect a new president, with left-wing independent Catherine Connolly expected to beat her challenger in an election critics say failed to offer a real choice.

Ireland picks president in vote criticised over lack of choice



North Korea building memorial for troops killed in Ukraine war



North Korea has begun building a memorial for soldiers killed fighting in Russia's war with Ukraine, state media said yesterday, with leader Kim Jong Un hailing a "historic peak" in ties with Moscow. The so-called Memorial Museum of Combat Feats will be built in the capital Pyongyang, where Kim and Russia's ambassador to North Korea attended a

groundbreaking ceremony, according to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Kim, addressing the event, said the museum "is a sacred sanctuary dedicated to

SPOTLIGHT

Trump completes demolition of White House East Wing: satellite images



A satellite photo shows the White House in Washington, DC, after the demolition of the East Wing

AFP | London

Demolition workers have finished tearing down the White House's entire East Wing to make way for US President Donald Trump's giant new \$300 million ballroom, satellite pictures showed Thursday.

The completion of the wrecking work came as the White House released a list of donors to the ballroom including Apple, Google and Meta.

A gray and brown patch of rubble can now be seen in the area that used to be occupied by the iconic building, according to the images shared with AFP by Planet Labs PBC and dated Thursday.

Satellite photos taken just under a month earlier show the wing that housed the offices of the US first lady intact.

The complete destruction of part of one of the world's most famous landmarks is a far more extensive demolition than previously announced by Trump -- and happened virtually without warning.

When the former property

magnate unveiled his plans in July, Trump said that the 90,000-square-foot ballroom "won't interfere with the current building" and that it would be "near it but not touching it."

But after work started this week, Trump said Wednesday that he had decided after consulting architects that "really knocking it down" was preferable to a partial demolition.

He insists the 1,000-seat ballroom is essential because state dinners and other large events currently have to be held in tents that are temporarily erected on the White House lawn.

Trump also said that the new ballroom would cost \$300 million, raising the cost from the \$250 million quoted by the White House days before, and the \$200 million it cited in July.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told an AFP reporter in a briefing that \$300 million was now the definitive number but said that "it's not going to cost the taxpayers a dime."

Starmmer pushes long-range missile aid for Ukraine

Zelensky meets Starmmer as London hosts key summit on Ukraine assistance

Starmmer pushes for use of frozen Russian assets

Ukraine seeks deeper strikes inside Russia

Allies coordinate on air defense supplies

AFP | London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky during a meeting in London yesterday that there was more that Western allies could do to bolster Kyiv's long-range missile capability.

Starmer hosted Zelensky at his Downing Street residence ahead of an in-person and virtual get-together of Ukraine's key backers in the UK capital.

"I think there's further we can do on capability, particularly... long-range capability, and of course, the vital work for coalition of the willing when it comes to the security guarantees that are necessary," the UK leader said.

Kyiv's Western allies have raised pressure on Moscow as



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky are greeted by Ukrainian school children

the war enters its fourth winter, with the United States and European Union both announcing new sanctions this week on Russian energy aimed at crippling its war economy.

EU leaders also took steps towards funding Ukraine's defence for another two years, although they stopped short of greenlighting a mammoth "reparations

loan" backed by frozen Russian assets.

Starmer hugged Zelensky as the Ukrainian president arrived in Downing Street for initial one-to-one discussions ahead of the so-called "coalition of the willing" meeting, telling him this week had seen "huge steps forward".

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and the Neth-

erlands' Dick Schoof were set to attend the London summit, with other leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron joining virtually.

Earlier yesterday Zelensky held after another meeting with Britain's King Charles III -- their third this year.

The Ukrainian national anthem played at the almost 1,000-year-old Windsor Castle west of London before he had an audience with the king.

'Reparations loan'

The latest diplomatic activity followed Zelensky's visit to Washington last week, when President Donald Trump rebuffed his pleas for long-range Tomahawks to hit targets deep inside Russia.

The nearly four-year war continues to grind on despite US and European efforts to force Russian President Vladimir Putin to the negotiating table, with Moscow battering Ukraine's energy grid this week in deadly drone and missile attacks.



The UK will accelerate an air defense program to supply Ukraine with over 5,000 missiles, including 140 to be delivered this winter



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky walks with Britain's King Charles III as they inspect a Guard of Honour

Picasso painting that vanished in Spain found: police

AFP | London

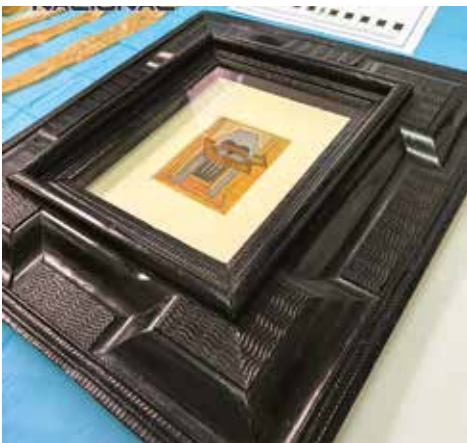
Spanish police said yesterday that a Pablo Picasso painting that vanished en route to an exhibition has been found, raising doubts if it was ever loaded onto a transport truck.

"Still Life with Guitar", a 1919 gouache and pencil work valued at around 600,000 euros (\$700,000), disappeared in early October while being transported from Madrid to the southern city of Granada.

The artwork, which belongs to a private collector in the Spanish capital, was set to be displayed as part of a new exhibition at the CajaGranada Foundation.

But when the truck's contents were unpacked on October 6, the curator noticed that the Picasso piece was missing.

All items delivered by the truck had been under video surveillance since their arrival three days earlier, the CajaGranada Foundation said in a statement.



"Still Life with Guitar", a 1919 gouache and pencil work by Pablo Picasso

The missing painting was reported to police, who confirmed its recovery yesterday, though they did not disclose where it was found.

"Initial investigations suggest that the painting may not have been loaded onto the transport truck," said a National Police statement.

Police released images of their scientific experts examining the package containing the recovered piece.

The foundation expressed hope that "Still Life with Guitar" would still be displayed as part of the exhibition, which opened on October 9 and runs until January 11.

Picasso's works are frequently targeted by thieves due to their high value. Two of his paintings recently sold for more than \$140 million at auction.

In 1976, more than 100 Picasso works were stolen from the Palais des Papes in Avignon, France. All the pieces were eventually recovered.

Picasso, born in Malaga in 1881 and who died in 1973, is regarded as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century.