

News in brief

◆ **China said Wednesday**

that it would not participate in denuclearisation talks with the United States and Russia, after President Donald Trump said he hoped to include Beijing in negotiations. Trump on Monday said the United States was trying to pursue denuclearisation with both countries. "I think the denuclearisation is a very -- it's a big aim. But Russia's willing to do it and I think China is going to be willing to do it too," Trump told reporters at the White House. "We can't let nuclear weapons proliferate. We have to stop nuclear weapons," he added. Russia and the United States -- former Cold War rivals -- possess almost 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons between them, but Moscow pulled out of the last remaining arms control agreement with Washington in 2023.



China says will not participate in denuclearisation talks with US, Russia

◆ **Tokyo logs record 10 days of 35C or more: weather agency**



◆ **Tokyo experienced** a record 10 consecutive days of temperatures 35C or above, the weather office said yesterday. This "is the first time since the survey started" in 1875 that such a run has been recorded, the Japan Meteorological Agency told AFP, saying that Wednesday marked the 10th day of the heat streak. Heatwaves are becoming more intense and frequent worldwide because of human-caused climate change, scientists say, and Japan sweltered through its hottest ever June and July this year. Japan's summer last year was the joint hottest on record, equalling 2023, and was followed by the warmest autumn since records began 126 years ago.

◆ **Russian authorities** said Wednesday that a ban on petrol exports would be extended to October 31 in a bid to lower fuel prices that have soared after Ukrainian attacks on refineries. Ukraine routinely targets Russian refineries and oil depots to hamper Moscow's ability to fund its offensive.

Russia, one of the world's biggest oil producers, has taken several measures in recent months to ease fuel prices that reached near-record highs this month. The government announced on Telegram that it had implemented "a new temporary ban on exports of petrol for cars", saying it wanted to "maintain a stable situation for the domestic fuels market". Recent Ukrainian attacks have also disrupted air and railway travel, prompting more people to drive during the summer travel season, further increasing petrol demand.

Russia extends petrol export ban as prices soar



SPOTLIGHT

SpaceX answers critics with successful Starship test flight



The upper stage of SpaceX's Starship rocket splashing down in the Indian Ocean after lifting off from Starbase, Texas

AFP | South Padre Island, United States

SpaceX's Starship megarocket roared into the skies Tuesday on its tenth test flight, turning in a strong performance after a series of fiery failures had begun to cast doubt on its future.

Towering 403 feet (123 meters), Starship is the most powerful launch vehicle ever built and key to founder Elon Musk's vision of carrying humanity to Mars, as well as NASA's plans to return astronauts to the Moon. The stainless steel colossus blasted off from the company's Starbase in southern Texas at 6:30 pm local time (2330 GMT), greeted by loud cheers from engineering teams, as seen in a live webcast.

A few minutes into launch, the first-stage booster known as Super Heavy splashed down

into the Gulf of Mexico, triggering a sonic boom on its way. Unlike other recent tests, SpaceX opted not to attempt a catch with the giant "chop stick" arms of the launch tower, instead testing how it would perform if an engine cut out.

Attention then shifted to the upper stage -- also known individually as Starship and intended to one day carry crew and cargo -- to demonstrate its capabilities as it soared into space. For the first time, SpaceX was able to successfully deploy eight dummy Starlink internet satellites, with onboard cameras beaming back live views of a robotic mechanism pushing each out one by one.

It was not all smooth sailing. Some heat tiles fell away and a small section of a flap burned off during the vessel's fiery descent, as it was enveloped in pink and purple plasma.

Israeli forces seize nearly \$450,000 in West Bank raid

Israel carries out frequent raids across the West Bank

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israeli police said yesterday that security forces seized roughly 1.5 million shekels (\$447,000) during a raid in the occupied West Bank a day earlier.

Israeli forces targeted a currency exchange in Ramallah on Tuesday, leaving dozens of Palestinians wounded, according to the Red Crescent. Israel carries out frequent raids across the West Bank, where tensions have remained high throughout the Gaza war, but incursions into central Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian Authority, are relatively rare.

A statement from a police spokesman yesterday said Israeli border police and the military "raided a money exchange business in the heart of Ramallah that was used to transfer funds to the Hamas terror organisation".

"Forces seized significant sums of money in both foreign and local currencies, with a total value of approximately 1,528,832 shekels, including US dollars, Jordanian dinars, euros, and other foreign currencies," the statement said.

"Nine wanted suspects accused of involvement in terror activity were arrested and taken, together with the seized evidence, for investigation," it added.



Israeli troops deploy during a raid in Nablus city in the occupied West Bank

Since the start of the Gaza war, sparked by Hamas's October 2023 attack on Israel, Israeli raids on Palestinian population centres in the West Bank, particularly in the territory's north, have intensified.

Previous Israeli operations, earlier this year and in Decem-

ber 2023, have similarly targeted currency exchange offices in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

Israeli troops or settlers in the occupied West Bank have killed at least 972 Palestinians, since the beginning of the Gaza war,

according to an AFP tally based on Palestinian Authority figures.

In the same period, at least 36 Israelis, both civilians and security forces, have been killed in attacks or during military operations in the territory, according to Israeli figures.

IAEA chief says inspectors have arrived at Iran

Washington, United States

UN nuclear inspectors began work yesterday at the key Iranian site of Bushehr, the chief of their agency said Wednesday, after Tehran agreed to limited cooperation in the wake of Israeli and US strikes.

"They are there now," International Atomic Energy Agency director general Rafael Grossi told reporters in Washington. "Today they are inspecting Bushehr."

Erdogan jubilant as 'Steel Dome' air defence system delivered

Istanbul, Turkey

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday hailed a milestone for Turkey as its "Steel Dome" air defence system was delivered to the military, saying regional conflicts had pushed Ankara to boost its defence capacities. "Today we are providing our army with the (Steel) Dome system, consisting of 47 vehicles worth \$460 million, which will inspire confidence in friends and fear in enemies," Erdogan said.

NGO says starving Gaza children too weak to cry

AFP | United Nations, United States

The head of Save the Children described in horrific detail yesterday the slow agony of starving children in Gaza, saying they are so weak they do not even cry.

Addressing a Security Council meeting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the president of the international charity, Inger Ashing, said famine -- declared by the UN last week to be happening in Gaza -- is not just a dry technical term.

"When there is not enough food, children become acutely malnourished, and then they die slowly and painfully. This, in simple terms, is what famine is," said Ashing.

She went on to describe what happens when children die of hunger over the course of several weeks, as the body first consumes its own fat to survive and when that is gone, literally consumes itself as it eats muscles and vital organs.

"Yet our clinics are almost silent. Now, children do not have the strength to speak or even cry out in agony. They lie there, emaciated, quite literally wasting away," said Ashing.

She insisted aid groups have been warning loudly that famine was coming as Israel prevented food and other essentials from



Palestinian women and children wait to receive food portions from a charity kitchen in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip

entering Gaza over the course of two years of war triggered by the Hamas attack of October 2023.

"Everyone in this room has a legal and moral responsibility to act to stop this atrocity," said Ashing.

The United Nations officially declared famine in Gaza on Friday, blaming what it called systematic obstruction of aid

by Israel during more than 22 months of war.

A UN-backed hunger monitor called the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Initiative said famine was affecting 500,000 people in the Gaza governorate, which covers about a fifth of the Palestinian territory including Gaza City.