

News in brief

◆ **A Taiwanese army unit** yesterday removed a "corroded" unexploded 227-kilogram bomb from a construction site for a TSMC semiconductor plant in the island's south, authorities said. The "severely corroded" bomb was found at the Nanzih Technology Industrial Park in Kaohsiung where the Taiwanese chipmaking giant is building a new fabrication plant. Construction workers were briefly evacuated from the site while the army bomb disposal unit recovered the bomb. The 500-pound bomb appeared to be from an "early period" but its exact vintage could not be determined due to its "unclear serial number", 8th Field Army spokeswoman Kung Chiung-yu told AFP. The bomb was later taken to a secure storage facility where it will be destroyed, Kung said.



Unexploded 'corroded' bomb found at TSMC construction site in Taiwan

◆ **The Kremlin yesterday** denied a US media report that Russian President Vladimir Putin and US president-elect Donald Trump shared a call about the Ukraine conflict. The Washington Post reported Sunday that Trump had urged the Russian leader not to escalate the war in Ukraine. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists that the report was "simply false information", denying any phone call took place. The Post, citing several people familiar with the call who spoke on the basis of anonymity, reported that Trump had reminded Putin of the sizable US military presence in Europe.

Kremlin denies call between Putin and Trump

They said Trump also expressed an interest in further conversations to discuss "the resolution of Ukraine's war soon." Steven Cheung, Trump's communications director, did not confirm the exchange, telling AFP in a written statement that "we do not comment on private calls between President Trump and other world leaders."

◆ **China will unveil** a new stealth fighter jet and attack drones at a major airshow this week, with analysts and rival powers watching closely for rare clues on Beijing's military hardware development.

China to unveil stealth jet and attack drones at Zhuhai airshow

The country's close ties with Moscow will also be on display at Airshow China, which showcases Beijing's civil and military aerospace sector every two years in the southern city of Zhuhai. This year it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), and advancements in its fighting strength have taken centre stage. Beijing has poured resources into modernising and expanding its aviation capabilities as it faces off against the United States and others around regional flashpoints like Taiwan. The new J-35A, described as a "medium-sized stealth multi-purpose fighter", looks similar in design to a US F-35, analysts say, though details are few.



SPOTLIGHT

'Only \$1 mn': Iraqi PM adviser suspected of bribe-taking

AFP | Baghdad, Iraq

Iraq's anti-corruption agency yesterday announced an investigation into a prime ministerial aide over an alleged audio recording in which he referred to a bribe as being too small.



Corruption is endemic in the state institutions of oil-rich Iraq, but the top echelons of power often evade accountability. The aide, Abdel Karim al-Faisal, denied the accusation and has denounced on Facebook the "fabricated" audio clip. In the recording obtained by Iraqi media, a man alleged to be Faisal criticised his interlocutor, during a phone call, for the bribe being "only \$1 million". The Commission of Integrity anti-graft body said in a statement it was acting under a directive from Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani in opening "an investigation into an audio recording attributed to the head of the Commission of Advisers to the Prime Minister's Office".

It added that it was acting "in coordination with a criminal court judge handling anti-corruption cases".

AFP was not able to authenticate the recording. In the past few weeks several leaks of alleged recordings have shaken Iraq.

Last month, the chief of the tax bureau, Ali Alawi, was

suspended for 60 days after an investigation opened following such a leak. An audio recording attributed to him led to accusations that he had granted tax reductions.

He was also placed in detention, a source with the Commission of Integrity told AFP, under cover of anonymity.

The former head of the integrity commission himself was fired, only to be given an advisory post at the justice ministry.

This came after judicial authorities in September had announced a probe into the integrity commission chief over alleged audio recordings attributed to the head of the Commission of Advisers to the Prime Minister's Office.

It is not unknown in Iraq for public officials to try to settle scores by trading accusations.

One of the country's biggest-ever corruption cases involved the theft of \$2.5 billion in public funds from 2021 to 2022. At the end of August, the judiciary issued arrest warrants for a businessman alleged to be the main suspect in that case, and for a former government official.

UAE says Mideast needs 'robust' US leadership



Rescuers from the Lebanese Red Cross search for victims and survivors at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the village of Rasm El-Hadath in the eastern Lebanese Bekaa valley

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

The Middle East needs "robust leadership" from the United States as the region faces multiple wars and crises, a top UAE official said yesterday as President-elect Donald Trump prepares to return to power.

UAE presidential advisor Anwar Gargash, speaking at the Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate conference, urged the new Trump administration to prioritise a "comprehensive" strategy instead of a "reactive and piecemeal" approach. Trump has suggested that as president, he would give freer rein to Israel as it battles Palestinian and Lebanese militants.

Gargash, in his keynote address, said that "as we navigate through turbulent times, US leadership and partnership remain indispensable".

"The United States has historically played a pivotal role in the Middle East, and its involvement is critical, especially during crises we are witnessing today.

"However, it is essential to recognise that involvement is never

Hezbollah says Israeli army 'unable' to occupy any Lebanese villages

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Hezbollah said on Monday that the Israeli military has been incapable of occupying even a single village in Lebanon since launching cross-border ground operations six weeks ago. Israeli troops on September 30 began what the military called "localised and targeted raids" against Hezbollah in Lebanon's southern border area, a week after escalating air strikes on Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.

"After 45 days of bloody fighting, the enemy is still unable to occupy a single Lebanese village," Hezbollah spokesman Mohammad Afif told a news

conference in south Beirut, a stronghold of the movement and a repeated target of Israeli air raids.

Hezbollah, armed and financed by Iran, had on October 23 issued a similar statement that said Israel's army "has not been able to fully establish its control or completely occupy any village" in southern Lebanon.

Israel has said its aim is to make its northern border safe for the return of tens of thousands of Israelis displaced when Hezbollah began cross-border fire, which it described as support for Hamas Palestinian militants in Gaza, more than a year ago.

enough. We need robust leadership that prioritises humanitarian considerations alongside strategic interests."

Gargash said that "with an incoming American administration, we must avoid reactive and piecemeal policies at the expense of

a comprehensive approach that aims to maintain regional security and stability."

"The UAE will continue to work closely with the United States in this strategic and institutionally-based relationship," Gargash said.



Flood-damaged vehicles are gathered on a plot after removing them from the streets of Alfajar, region of Valencia, eastern Spain, in the aftermath of deadly floods. Spain announced an aid package worth 10.6 billion euros (\$11.5 billion) to rebuild regions devastated by its worst floods in a generation that have killed 219 people.



TOP 3 TWEETS

01



Any Republican Senator seeking the coveted LEADERSHIP position in the United States Senate must agree to Recess Appointments (in the Senate!), without which we will not be able to get people confirmed in a timely manner. Sometimes the votes can take two years, or more. This is what they did four years ago, and we cannot let it happen again. We need positions filled IMMEDIATELY! Additionally, no Judges should be approved during this period of time because the Democrats are looking to ram through their Judges as the Republicans fight over Leadership. THIS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. THANK YOU!

@antoniogetterres

02



Glad to meet Russia's First Deputy PM Denis Manturov today. Happy to see that teams on both sides are working together to implement decisions taken during my recent visits and meetings with President Putin to further strengthen India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership.

@narendramodi

03



Donald Trump's newly named "Border Czar" Tom Homan to Democrat Governors and Sanctuary Cities: "If you don't want to help us, get the hell out of the way — because we're coming."

@IsraeliPM

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