

News in brief

◆ **More than 2,000 people** fleeing Myanmar have crossed into neighbouring northeastern India as an offensive against the military widens, Indian media reported yesterday. The Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported more than 2,000 Myanmar citizens from western Chin state had crossed into India's Mizoram state since Monday, with at least 17 people taken to hospital for their wounds. Almost 50,000 people have been displaced by fighting in northern Myanmar after an alliance of ethnic armed groups launched an offensive against the junta two weeks ago, according to the United Nations. PTI, quoting government statistics, said Mizoram was already home to more than 30,000 Myanmar nationals. The first group of refugees -- including police officers and soldiers -- fled into Mizoram when violence escalated in 2021.



Thousands flee to India amid intense fighting in Myanmar

◆ **Chinese President Xi** Jinping left Beijing yesterday, state media reported, on his way to San Francisco where he will hold highly anticipated talks with his US counterpart Joe Biden. "On the evening of November 14, President Xi Jinping left Beijing on a special plane. At the invitation of United States President Biden, he will go to San Francisco for the China-US presidents' meeting," state broadcaster CCTV reported. The two leaders will meet on the sidelines of the APEC summit in the Californian city, their first encounter in a year despite trade tensions, sanctions, and the question of Taiwan feeding quarrels between the world's largest economies. Positive momentum from November 2022 talks between Xi and Biden in Bali was derailed when the United States shot



down an alleged Chinese spy balloon, delaying a planned visit by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

◆ **Sri Lanka's Supreme Court** issued Tuesday a symbolic ruling that the powerful Rajapaksa brothers -- including two ex-presidents -- were guilty of triggering the island's worst financial crisis by mishandling the economy. The case was filed by corruption watchdog Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) and other four activists against top former officials including former presidents Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Mahinda Rajapaksa. It also included their younger brother, ex-finance minister Basil Rajapaksa, two former central bank governors and other top treasury officials. "We sought a declaration from the court that the mishandling or inaction on the economy by the former heads of the state and senior officials did violate the fundamental rights of people," Transparency International lawyer Nadishani Perera told AFP.

Sri Lanka top court rules Rajapaksa brothers guilty of economic crisis

SPOTLIGHT

Indian rescuers battle for third day to free 40 trapped tunnel workers



Rescue workers at the site after a tunnel collapsed in the Uttarkashi district of India's Uttarakhand state

AFP | Dehradun, India

More than a hundred rescuers in northern India struggled for a third day yesterday to save dozens of workers trapped underground after the road tunnel they were building collapsed. Excavators have been removing debris since Sunday morning from the site in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand to create an escape tunnel for the 40 workers, who are all alive. "Our biggest breakthrough is that we have established contact and there is a supply of oxygen and food," Uttarkashi district's top civil servant Abhishek Ruhela told AFP on Tuesday. "Whatever is necessary for their survival is being done." Oxygen was being pumped into the tunnel and small food items such as dry fruit were

being provided to the workers, he added. The State Disaster Response Force said Tuesday rescuers had spoken to the trapped workers via radio. Ranjit Kumar Sinha, a senior disaster management official, told reporters at the site he was hopeful the workers could be freed by Wednesday, adding that there was enough oxygen where they were trapped "for about five to six days". The son of one of the trapped workers, Akash Singh Negi, managed to speak to his father on Tuesday. "I was allowed to speak to my father for a few seconds using the pipe through which oxygen is being supplied to the stranded workers," Negi was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India news agency. "He said they were safe and asked us not to worry," Negi said.

US unveils third round of Hamas sanctions

AFP | Washington, United States

The United States in conjunction with the United Kingdom yesterday announced a third round of sanctions on Hamas since last month's attack on Israel, again targeting the group's Iranian backers. The sanctions target "key Hamas officials and the mechanisms by which Iran provides support to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad," another group operating in the Gaza Strip, a statement from the US Treasury Department said. "Iran's support, primarily through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, enables Hamas and PIJ's terrorist activities, including through the transfer of funds and the provision of both weapons and operational training," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in



White smoke from tear gas fired by Israeli troops spreads behind burning tyres on a barricaded street during clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian youths

Those targeted by the sanctions include Palestinian Islamic Jihad's representative to Iran, Nasser Abu Sharif, as well as a Lebanon-based money exchange, Nabil Chouman & Co, that allegedly handles transfers between Hamas and Tehran. According to the Treasury, Hamas's global asset holdings are estimated to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. "The United States will continue to work with our partners, including the UK, to deny Hamas the ability to raise and use funds to carry out its atrocities," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in a statement.

Police identify 'flower tattoo' British woman 31 years after murder: Interpol

AFP | Lyon, France

A woman found murdered 31 years ago in a river in Belgium has been identified over three decades later thanks to her flower tattoo and an international appeal, Interpol said yesterday. The Lyon-based global police organisation said she was Rita Roberts, a British national. Roberts, found lying against a grate in a river in Antwerp on June 3, 1992, had a tattoo of a black flower with green leaves and the inscription "R'Nick" on her right forearm. "A family member in the United Kingdom recognised the tattoo on the news and notified Interpol and Belgian authorities," it said in a statement. The breakthrough followed an international appeal on Interpol's Identify Me web page where police share previously confidential information about unsolved cases hoping for input



Rita Roberts was murdered in 1992 when she was 31

from the public. Thanks to the page, launched in May this year, 22 women found dead in recent decades in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands have been identified, Interpol said. Information volunteered had also allowed other cold cases to make progress. Rita Roberts had now been "formally identified" by her family who travelled to Belgium to meet with investigators. "Whilst the news has been difficult to process, we are incredibly grateful to have uncovered what happened to Rita," the family was quoted in the statement as saying. Belgian police hope for further input from the public to clear up the circumstances of Roberts' violent death, Interpol said.

War brings hell to Gaza's p...

AFP | Rafah, Palestinian Territories

With eyes wide open and his tiny fists clenched tightly, Mohammed Kullab is just a few days old, having started life in Gaza amid the chaos of the Israel-Hamas war. "Nobody should be born in such circumstances," sighed his mother Fadwa Kullab, who has sought shelter at a UN school building in Gaza's southern city of Rafah. Kullab now has seven children but said Mohammed's "birth was the most difficult experience of my life". Like other mothers of newborns AFP spoke to in Gaza, she said her baby son had been refusing her breast milk. "I'm not eating well," Kullab said, stressing that she had successfully breastfed her other six children. Breastfeeding mothers are advised to drink at least three litres



Trauma surgeons cover the body of a pregnant woman whose baby was rescued after an emergency Caesarean section operation, and who died after Israeli bombardment, at the Kuwaiti hospital in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip

(more than six pints) of water a day and eat well to produce sufficient milk -- but finding clean water and food in Gaza is becoming harder by the day. The already poverty-stricken

and 240 kidnapped, among them 35 children including a 10-month-old, Israeli officials say. The war unleashed by the attack has seen Israel relentlessly bombard and besiege Gaza and launch a ground invasion. More than 11,200 Palestinians have been killed, most of them women and children, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. Nearly two thirds of Gaza's 36 hospitals, already overwhelmed with war-wounded, have been knocked out of service due to a lack of fuel to power their generators. Gaza City's biggest hospital Al-Shifa, packed with patients and displaced, is now inside a fierce urban combat zone, with its director reporting scores of dead buried in a mass grave in the complex. Among those who died were seven premature babies in its disabled neonatal unit, Gaza's

Moving patient

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The World Health Organization insisted yesterday that moving the most vulnerable patients from Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital has become an "impossible task". The Israeli mission in Geneva had at the weekend slammed the WHO, the UN humanitarian agency OCHA and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for criticising Israel's month-long call for civilians and patients to leave the Palestinian enclave's main hospital. Israel has faced growing international pressure over its offensive since the October 7 Hamas attacks. Israel says 1,200 people, mainly civilians, were killed in the attacks and 239 people taken hostage. Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry says at least 11,240 people have been killed in Israel's air and ground campaign since. "The international community could have facilitated the transfer of patients, but they did nothing, except call out Israel and give Hamas a free pass," the mission said. But the WHO said moving the most fragile patients would inevitably lead to deaths. "The reason we said that people can't be evacuated is first of all ... the people in the hospitals were very vulnerable, very sick. So moving them was an impossible task," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told journalists in Geneva. She said it would be "asking doctors and nurses to move people knowing that that would kill them". "And again, why would you need to move them? A hospital should never be under attack. A hospital is a place a safe haven. This is agreed under international