



Workers remove mud accumulated around buses near a landslide-affected area in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah in Maspenna in Sri Lanka yesterday. Tropical storms and monsoon rains have pummelled Southeast and South Asia in December, triggering landslides and flash floods that killed at least 639 people in Sri Lanka and nearly 1,000 in Indonesia. PHOTO: AFP

## Junta denies deadly Rakhine hospital strike

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's military junta yesterday denied killing civilians in a hospital air strike that left more than 30 people dead.

A military jet bombed late Wednesday the general hospital of Mrauk-U in western Rakhine state, bordering Bangladesh, two aid workers said.

"Those killed or injured were not civilians, but terrorists and their supporters," said an article in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar (GNLM).

The United Nations on Thursday demanded an investigation, saying the attack could constitute a war crime.

Health workers and patients were killed, and "hospital infrastructure was severely damaged, with operating rooms and the main inpatient ward completely destroyed," said World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on X.

Rakhine state is controlled almost in its entirety by the Arakan Army (AA), an ethnic minority separatist force active long before the military toppled the civilian government of democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The separatist force said in a statement that 33 people were killed and 76 wounded in the strike.

## 'Peace is not far away'

Says Erdogan after Putin meeting; US envoy to meet Zelensky, Europe leaders in Berlin on peace plan

AGENCIES

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, fresh from a meeting with Russia's Vladimir Putin, said he hopes to discuss a Ukraine-Russia peace plan with US President Donald Trump, adding that "peace is not far away".

Erdogan met Putin in Turkmenistan on Friday, and they evaluated "comprehensive peace efforts" to end the war, a statement from Erdogan's office said, with Turkey reiterating its readiness to support peace efforts.

"After this meeting with Putin, we hope to have the opportunity to discuss the peace plan with US President Trump as well. Peace is not far away; we see that," Erdogan told reporters on his return flight from Turkmenistan.

Erdogan had told Putin on Friday that a limited ceasefire in the war, focused on energy facilities and ports in particular, could be beneficial.

"The Black Sea should not be seen as a battleground. Such a situation would only harm Russia and Ukraine," Erdogan said in comments released by his office on Saturday.

"Everyone needs safe navigation in the Black Sea. This must be ensured."

Meanwhile, Trump's special envoy will meet with Volodymyr Zelensky and other European leaders in Berlin this weekend, the White House said, as Washington presses for a plan to end Russia's war with Ukraine.

Ahead of the meetings, Zelensky yesterday warned that Russia "still

aims to destroy" Ukraine, as Kyiv said "massive" Russian strikes on energy facilities overnight had left thousands without power across the country.

Russia said it had hit Ukrainian facilities with hypersonic ballistic missiles, in what it called retaliation for Ukrainian attacks.

An 80-year-old woman was killed when a Russian shell hit a

residential building in Ukraine's northeastern Somy region, said the regional governor.

Trump has been stepping up pressure on Kyiv to reach an agreement since revealing a plan to end the war last month that was criticised as echoing Moscow's demands, including Ukraine ceding crucial territory.

The 28-point proposal has triggered a flurry of diplomacy

between the United States and Ukraine's European allies, with Kyiv officials recently saying they had sent Washington a revised version.

Full details on the updated plan have not been released.

A White House official confirmed to AFP on Friday that Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff will meet with Zelensky and European leaders over the weekend to discuss



the status of peace negotiations.

The idea of a speedy accession by Ukraine into the European Union -- a move opposed by Moscow -- is included in the latest version of the US-led plan.

Europeans and Ukrainians are also asking the United States to provide them with "security guarantees" before Ukraine negotiates any territorial concessions, France said Friday.

## Ousted party holds mega rally in Nepal

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Tens of thousands rallied for the party of Nepal's ousted prime minister, KP Sharma Oli, yesterday, in the largest gathering in the Himalayan country since youth-led anti-graft protests forced him out three months ago.

Police estimated 70,000 attended the rally in Bhaktapur near the capital Kathmandu to launch a three-day convention of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

The "Gen Z" protests and subsequent unrest killed 77 people and injured more than 2,000 in September. Oli and some other politicians had to be rescued and kept safe by the army for several days as the Prime Minister's Office, the Supreme Court and parliament were set on fire.

The interim government headed by former Chief Justice Sushila Karki dissolved parliament.

## Trump features in newly released Epstein photos

REUTERS, Washington

Congressional Democrats released 19 new images from the estate of the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein on Friday, including photos of now-President Donald Trump, as a deadline for an extensive release of documents related to the disgraced financier nears.

Trump is featured in three of the photos shared by House Oversight Committee Democrats, who said they are reviewing more than 95,000 images produced by the estate.

In one black-and-white photo, Trump is seen smiling with several women -- whose faces are redacted -- on each side of him. A second image shows Trump standing beside Epstein, and a third, less-clear image shows him seated alongside another woman, whose face is also redacted, with his red tie loosened. It was not clear when or where the photos were taken.

"Everybody knew this man," Trump told reporters at the White House on Friday. "He was all over Palm Beach. He has photos with everybody. I mean, almost -- there are hundreds and hundreds of people that have photos with him. So that's no big deal."

The Epstein scandal has been a political headache for Trump for months, partly because he amplified conspiracy theories about Epstein to his own supporters. A Reuters/Ipsos poll this week found that just half of Republicans approve of Trump's handling of the Epstein case, well below his overall 85% approval rating in his own party.

## WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS UN slams 'relentless' Israeli expansion

AFP, United Nations

The expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank is at its highest level since at least 2017, when the United Nations began tracking such data, according to a report by the UN chief seen by AFP on Friday.

In 2025, "plans for nearly 47,390 housing units were advanced, approved, or tendered, compared with some 26,170 in 2024," the report said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the "relentless" expansion, saying it "continues to fuel tensions, impede access by Palestinians to their land and threaten the viability of a fully independent, democratic, contiguous and sovereign Palestinian State."

"These figures represent a sharp increase compared to previous years," he added, noting an average of 12,815 housing units were added annually between 2017 and 2022.

Excluding east Jerusalem, which was occupied and annexed by Israel in 1967, some 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank, along with about three million Palestinian residents.

Violence in the West Bank has soared since Israel's war on Gaza. Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 1,022 Palestinians in the West Bank since the start of the conflict, according to AFP.



This handout photo, taken and released by Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP) yesterday, shows a damaged bridge after Thai military strikes in Cambodia's Pursat province. Inset, a relative of a Thai soldier reacts during a royal cremation at a temple in Si Sa Ket province, Thailand. Violence between the Southeast Asian neighbours, which stems from a long-running dispute over the colonial-era demarcation of their 800-kilometre border, has displaced around half a million people on both sides. PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

### Promoting Diaspora Investment and Optimal Usage of Remittance Project

**প্রকল্পের উদ্দেশ্য**

- ▶ অনিবাসী/অভিবাসী বাংলাদেশি কর্মীদের প্রেরিত রেমিট্যান্স যাতে তাদের পরিবার উৎপাদনশীল খাতে ব্যবহার করতে পারে, সে বিষয়ে মার্চ পর্যায়ে অনিবাসী/অভিবাসী কর্মীর পরিবারের সদস্যদেরকে রেমিট্যান্সের সঞ্চয়বাহার ও দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন;
- ▶ বিদেশে স্বচ্ছল বাংলাদেশি ডায়াসপোরার কর্মিউনিটিকে বাংলাদেশে তাদের গ্রামীণ জনপদে বিনিয়োগে আকৃষ্ট করা;
- ▶ অভিবাসী কর্মীর পরিবারের রেমিট্যান্স নির্ভরশীলতা কমানো;
- ▶ অভিবাসী কর্মীর পরিবারের সদস্যদের মাঝারি ও ক্ষুদ্র উদ্যোক্তা হিসেবে তৈরী করার মাধ্যমে কর্মসংস্থানের ব্যবস্থা এবং আয়ের সুযোগ সৃষ্টি;
- ▶ বাংলাদেশের জন্য রেমিট্যান্স বৃদ্ধির ক্ষেত্রে সম্প্রসারণ কৌশল প্রণয়ন করা; এবং
- ▶ রেমিট্যান্সের সর্বোত্তম ব্যবহার সংক্রান্ত পন্থা উদ্ভাবন করা।

**প্রকল্পের প্রধান কার্যক্রম**

- ▶ বাংলাদেশের জন্য রেমিট্যান্স বৃদ্ধির ক্ষেত্রে সম্প্রসারণের উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করা;
- ▶ বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশে বসবাসরত বাংলাদেশি ডায়াসপোরাকে বাংলাদেশে তাদের জন্মস্থানে বসবাসকারী আত্মীয়স্বজনদের কল্যাণে অবদান রাখতে উদ্বুদ্ধ করা এবং ক্ষুদ্র বিনিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে একটি প্র্যাটফর্ম তৈরী করা;
- ▶ অভিবাসী পরিবারের ৪,৫০০ সদস্যদেরকে রেমিট্যান্সের সঞ্চয়বাহার (ফাইন্যান্সিয়াল লিটারেসি) সংক্রান্ত সক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধির প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদান, তন্মধ্যে নির্বাচিত ৩০০ জন সদস্যকে 'ক্ষুদ্র ব্যবসা উদ্যোগ' গ্রহণের জন্য এককালীন আর্থিক প্রণোদনা প্রদান।

**নবসিদ্ধি: নবসিদ্ধি সদর, শিবপুর, রায়পুর**

**প্রকল্প এলাকা**

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**গাজীপুর: গাজীপুর সদর, কাপাসিয়া, কালাীগঞ্জ**

**রমনসিংহ: ভালুকা, ফুলবাড়ীয়া, গাংরাগাঁও**

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