



## ROCKET FIRING CONTINUES



**Ukraine**  
A Russian TOS-1A multiple rocket launcher fires toward Ukrainian positions from an undisclosed location in Ukraine. The TOS-1A, a heavy flamethrower system mounted on a tracked chassis, launches thermobaric rockets as fighting continues amid the ongoing conflict.

PTI

## Prez Trump looks to rebuild critical mineral supply chains

They are needed for everything from jet engines to smartphones

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump's administration is expected to unveil its grandest plan yet to rebuild supply chains of critical minerals needed for everything from jet engines to smartphones, likely through purchase agreements with partners on top of creating a USD 12 billion US strategic reserve to help counter China's dominance.

Vice President JD Vance is set to deliver a keynote address Wednesday at a meeting that Secretary of State Marco Rubio is hosting with officials from several dozen European, Asian and African na-



tions.

The US is expected to sign deals on supply chain logistics, though details have not been revealed. Rubio met Tuesday with foreign ministers from South Korea and India to discuss critical minerals mining and processing.

The meeting and expected agreements will come just two days after Trump announced Project Vault, or a stockpile of critical minerals to be funded with a USD 10 billion loan from the US Export-Import Bank and nearly USD 1.67 billion in private capital.

## Countering dominance on critical minerals

Other countries might join with the Trump administration in buying up critical minerals and taking other steps to spur industry development because the trade war revealed how vulnerable Western countries are to China, said Pini Althaus, who founded Oklahoma rare earth miner USA Rare Earth in 1999.

"They're looking at setting up sort of a buyers' club, if you will," said Althaus, who now is working to develop new mines in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as CEO of Cove Capital.

## The stockpile strategy

Meanwhile, the US Export-Import Bank's board this week approved the USD 10 billion loan - the largest in its history - to help finance the setup of the US Strategic Critical Minerals Reserve.

It is tasked with ensuring access to critical minerals and related products for manufacturers, including battery maker Clarios, energy equipment manufacturer GE Vernova, digital storage company Western Digital and aerospace giant Boeing, according to the policy bank.

## Nepal deploys army to bolster security

Nepal on Wednesday started deploying thousands of army troops across the country to bolster security for the next month's general elections - the first since last year's deadly Gen-Z protests that toppled the KP Sharma Oli-led coalition government. The troops have been mobilised with a view to conducting the elections in a free, fair and fearless environment.

87

killed in unexploded ordnance incidents in Afghanistan over past year

87 people were killed in 193 incidents involving unexploded ordnance in Afghanistan over the past year, the ANDMA said the local media reported.

ANDMA Information Department Head Hafiz Mohammad Yousof Hamad said that the Mine Clearance Coordination Department and demining organisations cleared 58 kilometres of land of unexploded ordnance in 2025 and found and neutralised 24,720 mines, Pajhwok Afghan News reported.



## AROUND THE WORLD

## NEW YORK

## Indian national convicted for sexual assault in flight

An Indian national has been convicted on charges of abusive sexual contact and assault onboard a flight. Varun Arora, 38 is present in the United States without lawful status. He faces up to two years in prison when sentenced in May. According to court records and evidence presented at trial, in August 2024, during final

approach on a flight from Rhode Island international airport to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, a passenger awoke to find Arora sexually groping her. Arora, who was wearing a sleep mask, pretended to be asleep as he continued to place his hand on the victim despite her repeatedly removing his hand. PTI

## SINGAPORE

## Indian national charged for falsifying invoices

An Indian national in Singapore on Wednesday was charged for multiple offences, including allegedly asking his staff to falsify company invoices claiming they had offered services worth millions of dollars to the health ministry, according to a media report. Rajput Kuldeep Singh Vithal Singh, the former chief executive of healthcare start-up Biofournis Holdings, was handed seven charges in a district court. The charges include three counts of abetting the falsification of accounts, three charges of fraud by false representation or abetment of the offence, and one count of forgery for cheating, The Straits Times reported. Singh, 34, was also the former director of the company, it said. PTI

## PAKISTAN

## Pakistan, Kazakhstan aim to increase bilateral trade

Pakistan and Kazakhstan on Wednesday signed 37 MoUs and agreements across various sectors as they aim to increase bilateral trade to USD 1 billion over the next year during Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's two-day visit to the country. The two sides also signed a joint declaration for the establishment of a strategic partnership between the two countries. The developments came during the meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Kazakhstan President Tokayev. The memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agreements are related to petroleum, mining and geo-sciences. PTI

## Direct bus launched between Nepal &amp; India

## KATHMANDU

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Beni is the gateway of Muktinath, an ancient Vishnu temple located in the Mustang district of Gandaki province. The temple of Muktinath, known as 'the lord of liberation', is sacred to both Hindus and Bud-

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