

Macron warns of renewed rift with US

Urges EU to use 'Greenland moment' to push reforms

REUTERS, Paris

Europe should brace for more moments of US hostility, French President Emmanuel Macron has warned, and should treat what he called the "Greenland moment" as a wake up call to push through long delayed reforms to strengthen the bloc's global power.

In an interview with several European newspapers, the French leader said the European Union should not mistake a lull in tensions with Washington for a lasting shift despite a pause in US threats over Greenland, trade and technology.

Macron urged EU leaders to use a summit in a Belgian castle this week to inject fresh energy into economic reforms to bolster the bloc's competitiveness and strengthen its ability to stand up to China and the United States on the world



Mourners react during the funeral of Palestinians killed in an Israeli strike, at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City yesterday. Inset, friends and relatives carry the body of one of the victims.

PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

Nuke talks gauged 'seriousness' of US

Says Iran, warns of 'destructive' influence on diplomacy ahead of Netanyahu's Washington trip

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Nuclear talks with the United States allowed Tehran to gauge Washington's seriousness and showed enough consensus to continue on the diplomatic track, Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson said yesterday.

US and Iranian diplomats held talks through Omani mediators in Oman last week in an effort to revive diplomacy, after US President Donald Trump positioned a naval flotilla in the region, raising fears of new military action.

"The Muscat meeting was not a long meeting. In our view, it was to gauge the seriousness of the other side and how to continue this path," Esmail Baghaei said.

"After the talks, we felt there was understanding and consensus to continue the diplomatic process."

The spokesperson said that a trip to Oman yesterday by Ali Larjani, an advisor to Iran's Supreme Leader, was pre-planned to follow up on regional consultations, and

Iran security chief meets Oman ruler after US talks

Uranium dilution hinges on sanctions relief: Tehran

Iran steps up its crackdown after recent protests

that Larjani would next travel to Qatar, reports Reuters.

Larjani and Sultan Haitham bin Tariq "discussed the latest developments in the Iranian-American negotiations", the official Oman News Agency said.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran's Secretary of National Security Council, Ali Larjani, meets with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi in Muscat yesterday.

Regarding the Israeli Prime Minister's expected trip to Washington today, Baghaei said the US "must act independently of foreign pressures, especially Israeli pressures that ignore the interests of the region and even the US."

"The Zionist regime has repeatedly, as a saboteur, shown that it opposes any diplomatic process in our region that leads to peace."

Iranian Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will meet President

Donald Trump in Washington today, seeking to press him to adopt a tougher line on Iran's ballistic missile programme in the next round of talks.

Iran could agree to dilute its most highly enriched uranium in

exchange for all financial sanctions being lifted, its atomic chief said on Monday, one of the most direct indications so far of its position at talks with Washington.

Meanwhile, India's Adani Enterprises said yesterday it was cooperating with a US probe into potential sanctions violations, after a media report alleged that the company had imported Iranian oil products.

Iran stepped up its crackdown on Monday after recent protests, making more arrests, reports AFP.

Israeli strikes in Lebanon kill 4

REUTERS, Beirut

Israeli forces killed four people, including a child, in southern Lebanon on Monday evening, Lebanon's National News Agency reported, citing the health ministry, in two separate strikes that targeted members of the Shia Muslim armed group Hezbollah.

In a third incident, Israeli forces seized an official from Jama'a Islamiya, a Lebanese Sunni Islamist group, during a raid, according to the group and Hezbollah. The Israeli military described him as a "senior terrorist" and said he was transferred to Israel for questioning.

Israel has carried out regular strikes in Lebanon since its 2024 war with Hezbollah, killing around 400 people since a ceasefire, according to a toll from Lebanese security sources.

Three of the fatalities, including a three-year-old child were killed in an Israeli airstrike in the village of Yanouh, NNA reported, citing the health ministry.

The Israeli military said it had killed a Hezbollah member in a strike in the area of Yanouh, identifying him as the head of Hezbollah's artillery in the area, and saying he carried out numerous attacks on Israel during the war.

TI sees 'worrying decline' in democracies

Says US slid to lowest-ever score on its 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index

AFP, Berlin

Anti-graft watchdog Transparency International (TI) yesterday warned of worsening corruption in democracies worldwide and said the United States had slid to the lowest-ever score on its 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Berlin-based TI also said the average global score had hit its worst level in more than a decade.

US President Donald Trump, since returning to the White House early last year, has upended domestic and foreign politics while ramping up pressure on institutions ranging from universities to the Federal Reserve.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell is currently under investigation by Trump's Department of Justice after resisting pressure from the president to reduce interest rates.

TI raised concerns over "actions targeting independent voices and undermining judicial independence" in the US.

"The temporary freeze and weakening of enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act signal tolerance for corrupt business practices," the watchdog said. The Trump administration's gutting of overseas aid has also "weakened global anti-corruption efforts", it said.

Trump opposes Israeli plan to annex West Bank

AGENCIES

A White House official on Monday reiterated US President Donald Trump's opposition toward Israel annexing the West Bank.

"A stable West Bank keeps Israel secure and is in line with this administration's goal to achieve peace in the region," the official said.

International outrage grew yesterday at Israeli plans to tighten the country's grip over the occupied West Bank, with the United Nations chief saying he was "gravely concerned".

Earlier, Saudi Arabia and seven other Muslim-majority countries condemned the new Israeli measures, which pave the way for more settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Announced on Sunday by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Defence Minister Israel Katz after being approved by the security cabinet, they include allowing Jewish Israelis to buy West Bank land directly, and extending greater Israeli control over areas where the Palestinian Authority exercises power.

It was unclear when the new rules would take effect but they do not require further approval, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, Israeli attacks in central Gaza killed three Palestinians yesterday. A source at Al-Qsa Hospital has told Al Jazeera that two people have been killed by Israeli bombing on Salah ud-Din Street in central Gaza.

A Palestinian woman has been killed by Israeli forces in al-Masdar village in central Gaza. The sixth batch of returnees, comprising 40 people, arrived in the Gaza Strip via Rafah crossing.

CONGRESSIONAL HEARING Epstein accomplice seeks clemency from Trump

AFP, Washington

Convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell refused Monday to answer questions from US lawmakers but her attorney said she was prepared to speak if granted clemency by US President Donald Trump.

Maxwell, 64, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence for sex trafficking, was subpoenaed by the House Oversight Committee to discuss her relations with Epstein.

Rather than answer the committee's questions, however, the former British socialite invoked her Fifth Amendment right to not incriminate herself.

A recording of the deposition released by the committee showed Maxwell speaking via video link, her eyes cast down at the table she was seated at in a Texas prison.

She was asked about her and Epstein's co-conspirators, whether they surrounded themselves with the rich and famous in order to "curry favor" and avoid scrutiny, and whether Trump ever engaged "in sexual activity with an individual introduced to him by you or Jeffrey Epstein."

Wearing a drab, beige uniform, Maxwell repeated the phrase "I invoke my Fifth Amendment right to silence" until the committee gave up and called off their questioning early.

Maxwell's attorney, David Markus, said she would be prepared to speak publicly if granted clemency by Trump.

"If this Committee and the American public truly want to hear the unfiltered truth about what happened, there is a straightforward path," Markus said in a statement.



A Ukrainian service member from the 48th Separate Artillery Brigade fires a 2S22 Bohdana self-propelled howitzer toward Russian positions near the front line in Ukraine's Kharkiv region on Monday. A Russian airstrike killed an 11-year-old girl and her mother and wounded 14 other people in the Ukrainian-controlled part of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Japan's PM Takaichi must show 'actions' for dialogue

Says China

AFP, Beijing

China insisted yesterday that Tokyo must first show "concrete actions" after Japan's newly elected Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said she was "open to various dialogues" with Beijing, effectively rejecting her overtures.

Those actions included a retraction of Takaichi's November comments that Tokyo could intervene militarily in any Chinese attack on self-ruled island Taiwan, which have fuelled a months-long diplomatic stand-off with Beijing.

A day after winning a landslide election, Takaichi told reporters Japan was "open to various dialogues with China".

Asked about her comments yesterday, China's foreign ministry said "genuine dialogue should be built on respect for one another".