

Macron views EU joint defence clause as 'stronger' than Nato

AFP, ATHENS
French President Emmanuel Macron said Saturday he considered the EU's common defence clause "stronger" than the one binding Nato together. The declaration, made during a visit to Greece, comes as US President

Donald Trump is questioning the North Atlantic military alliance, repeatedly calling it a "paper tiger" for not helping out in his war against Iran. The mutual defence clause enshrined in Article 42.7 of the Treaty of the European Union, which

requires other EU countries to come to the defence of any member under attack, is "steadfast", Macron said. It is unambiguous and, "in substance, stronger than Article 5" in NATO's founding treaty, he said in a news conference alongside Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Bangladesh to overtake India

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The IMF expects India to regain the lead in 2027 and to remain ahead at least until 2031.

To understand why this measure is so volatile, consider the arithmetic. GDP per capita in current dollars is calculated by converting each country's output into US dollars at the prevailing exchange rate.

When a currency depreciates – as both the

taka and the rupee have done in recent years, though at different speeds – it compresses the dollar value of output regardless of how productive the underlying economy has become.

The crossing of the two lines in 2026, seen on any given screen, tells us something real: that exchange-rate dynamics now place the two economies' dollar incomes within touching distance

of each other. It does not, on its own, tell us which population is better off.

The second measure complicates the picture considerably. The IMF also publishes GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP), which strips out exchange-rate movements and instead converts output into a common "international dollar" based on what each currency can actually buy

domestically.

On this basis, India leads Bangladesh by a wide margin, and always has in the modern era.

In 2025, India's PPP-adjusted GDP per capita stands at \$11,789, some 15 percent above Bangladesh's \$10,271.

By 2031, the IMF projects the gap will widen to nearly 24 percent, with India reaching \$18,485 against Bangladesh's \$14,857.

Trump calls off US envoys' trip to Pakistan

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The prospect of new talks had been uncertain, with Iranian state television saying Araghchi had no plans to meet with the Americans, and that Islamabad would serve as a bridge to "convey" Iranian proposals.

The urgency of striking a deal to permanently end the war has mounted as the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for the world's oil and gas supplies, has remained closed.

But Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards yesterday said that they had no intention of ending their effective blockade of the waterway, which has thrown energy markets into turmoil.

"Controlling the Strait of Hormuz and maintaining the shadow of its deterrent effects over America and the White House's supporters in the region is the definitive strategy of Islamic Iran," the Guards

said on their official Telegram channel.

Meanwhile, Iran's defence ministry yesterday said the US was seeking a "face-saving" way to exit the war.

"Our military power today is a dominant force, and the enemy is looking for a face-saving way to escape the war quagmire it has become trapped in," media outlet ISNA quoted a ministry spokesperson as saying.

The US has imposed a blockade of its own on Iranian ports in retaliation.

In a defiant statement carried by state media, the Iranian military's central command said that if "the invading US military continues blockading, banditry, and piracy in the region, they should be certain that they will face a response."

Since the first and only round of US-Iran talks, also hosted by Pakistan, efforts to bring the two sides back

to the table have hit an impasse, with Iran refusing to participate as long as the US naval blockade remains in place.

Iran, meanwhile, has allowed only a trickle of ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

European Council President Antonio Costa said the waterway "must immediately reopen without restrictions and without tolling".

"This is vital for the entire world," Costa said.

On the war's Lebanese front, Trump announced a three-week ceasefire extension on Thursday and spoke in glowing terms of peace prospects after meeting with Israeli and Lebanese envoys.

But Mohammed Raad, the head of the parliamentary bloc for Hezbollah, urged the Lebanese government to withdraw from direct talks with Israel and warned that a lasting peace deal of the

kind sought by Trump "will in no way enjoy Lebanese national consensus".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to destroy the Iran-backed armed group, said "it's clear to us that Hezbollah is trying to sabotage" the peace process.

Despite the ceasefire, Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes yesterday in the Nabatieh and Bint Jbeil districts in the south of the country had killed six people.

In the coastal city of Sidon, Ahmad Shumar and his family were preparing to head back to their hometown in the south this week, after giving up on a previous attempt due to fears of Israeli attacks.

"We are going home now, not knowing whether there will be war or peace – we will see," the 74-year-old said, surrounded by bags and mattresses.

6 killed as Russia strikes Ukraine

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and 27 wounded in one overnight strike on an apartment block in Dnipro, Oleksandr Ganzha, head of Drinpropeetrovsk's regional military administration said on Telegram.

A later strike on another apartment building in the city, killed one person and wounded seven, he said.

"The Russians hit the same residential neighbourhood as the one targeted overnight," Ganzha said.

Dnipro's deputy mayor was "nearly killed" in one of the strikes, said the mayor, Borys Filatov.

In the southern region of Zaporizhzhia, one person was killed and four wounded by a Russian drone strike on a civilian minibus, the head of the region's administration, Ivan Fedorov, said on Telegram.

The Russian defence ministry said it had

"launched a massive strike" on Ukrainian military targets over the past 24 hours. Moscow denies targeting civilians throughout the four-year war.

Following the barrage, a drone crashed in Romania, a Nato and EU country that borders Ukraine, local authorities said, adding that they had to evacuate over 200 people.

Zelensky said the incessant Russian strikes on civilian targets required a strong response from Ukraine's allies, especially in Europe.

"Every such strike should serve as a reminder to our partners that the situation requires immediate and firm action, and the rapid strengthening of our air defence," he said.

He urged the European Union to impose even more sanctions on Russia.

The plea came two days after EU leaders approved a long-stalled 20th sanctions

round against Russia that target the banking sector and add new restrictions on exports of Russian oil.

That package had been blocked for months by Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, who was voted from power two weeks ago. The EU also approved a 90-billion-euro (\$105 billion) loan to Ukraine intended to strengthen its defences and cover state expenditures for the 2026-2027 period.

In recent months, Kyiv has stepped up its own retaliatory attacks on Russia, hitting civilians and energy infrastructure among other targets.

Ukrainian drone attacks over the past 24 hours injured one person in Russia's Kursk region, which borders Ukraine, governor Alexander Khinshtein announced Saturday on Russia's state-sponsored messenger app Max.

The governor for Russia's neighbouring Belgorod region, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said a woman was killed and a man seriously wounded in a drone attack on a car, and a man driving a tractor was wounded in another strike.

A rare Ukrainian drone strike hit an apartment high rise in Yekaterinburg, a large industrial city in Russia's heartland more than a thousand miles away from Ukraine, said local governor Denis Pasler. No one was seriously injured in the attack, he added.

On the front line in Ukraine, the Russian army claimed to capture the village of Bochkove in the Kharkiv region.

Diplomatic efforts to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II are at a standstill with US mediation efforts diverted by the outbreak of the Middle East war in February.

Be 'servants and friends of the people'

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Focusing on economic resources, he said, while emphasising the importance of training.

"Modern administrative competence is not just about knowing rules – it also requires the use of technology, data analysis, quick decision-making and a creative approach to public service."

Highlighting the need to modernise governance, he said the world has already entered the era of artificial intelligence and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, making it essential for public administration officials to keep pace with technological changes.

"The use of AI, automation and digital technologies can make our administration more efficient, transparent and accountable," Tarique said, adding that the government aims to deliver public services at citizens' doorsteps through information technology.

He also assured continued support to strengthen the BIAM Foundation to build a skilled and future-ready civil service.

Focusing on economic competitiveness, Tarique emphasised the importance of simplifying business processes through initiatives such as single-window clearance, one-stop services and fully digital workflows.

"Our development vision must be inclusive, sustainable and humane. We want to build a Bangladesh where the benefits of development gradually reach every level of society, inequality declines and eventually disappears."

Tarique underscored the role of women and youth as key drivers of growth and said environmental protection and climate resilience must be integral to all policies.

Referring to the government's electoral pledges, he said those commitments are not merely political promises but a contract with the people.

"The government is determined to implement every commitment of its manifesto and the July Charter in letter and spirit," he said, urging officials to contribute with their merit and professionalism.

The current government reflects the aspirations of ordinary people

who have long yearned for an accountable, just and welfare-oriented system of governance.

The July uprising once again made it clear that the people are the true owners of this state, Tarique said.

"So, as public servants, your foremost responsibility is to protect the interests and ensure the welfare of people, who are the rightful owners of the state. Your decisions can affect a family, a region or even the entire nation. That is why your responsibilities are not only administrative but also deeply moral and constitutional."

The government has already taken steps to fill vacant posts swiftly, strengthen the Public Service Commission and implement key administrative reforms.

Tarique expressed hope that BIAM's curriculum and training environment would further enhance officials' professional skills, problem-solving abilities and innovative thinking.

Founded on December 29, 1991, BIAM was later transformed into the BIAM Foundation in November 2002.

Dreams of PhDs end in Florida

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to locate her body.

Both were last seen on April 16 near the USF campus in Tampa. A family friend reported them missing the following day, triggering a search that expanded into a criminal probe involving multiple agencies.

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Marine and Dive teams were seen searching the water near the Howard Frankland Bridge for Bristy on Friday.

A medical examiner is still determining Limon's cause of death and may share autopsy results soon, Chief Deputy Joseph Maurer with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office said.

"This is a deeply disturbing case that has shaken our community and impacted many who were hoping for a safe resolution," Sheriff Chad Chronister said in a statement on Friday.

Abugarbich was arrested Friday morning after law enforcement was called to his home for a reported domestic violence incident, according to Maurer.

In addition to the murder charges, Abugarbich is facing charges of unlawfully moving a dead body, failure to report a death with intent to conceal, tampering with physical evidence, false imprisonment, and battery, the sheriff's office had said.

'NO LONGER WITH US'

For their families back home, the unfolding details have been devastating.

Although police have yet to recover Bristy's body, authorities informed her family she is believed dead.

Her brother Jahid Hassan Pranto told The Daily Star that police contacted him early Friday, saying forensic evidence indicated two victims.

"Police informed us that the amount of blood they found at the suspect's apartment was from two bodies," he said.

Pranto added that authorities have not yet issued an official confirmation of her death but told family members they are awaiting forensic reports and may make an announcement soon.

In a Facebook post, Pranto yesterday wrote, "My sister is no longer with us. Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajium."

'PANTA-ILISH'

Limon's mother, Lutfun Haque, recalled her son's last call on Pabela Baishakh, April 14, when he simply asked whether she had eaten panta-ilish.

"My last conversation with my son was on Pabela Baishakh. He was always under pressure from his studies, so we did not talk much. That day he called and just asked whether I had eaten panta-ilish. I have no strength left to say anything more," she said through tears.

She added that the shock of his death has left her physically unwell. The family requested their location not be disclosed for security reasons. Limon's father, Zahurul Haque, is also seriously ill.

Limon grew up in Mawa, Dhaka, with his ancestral home in Madarganj, Jamalpur. His friend Jasim Uddin remembered him as bright and soft-spoken.

His sudden death has cast a pall of grief over the family and relatives.

'TALK OF MARRIAGE'

Limon had spoken highly of Bristy to his family in Bangladesh, telling them the pair had discussed the possibility of marriage, his brother Zubaer Ahmed told CNN.

"He shared that she is a good girl, and she has a lot of talent, like she can sing and cook well," Ahmed, the brother, said.

Limon had been hard at work on his thesis for the past two years, studying how to use generative AI to monitor shrinking wetland in South Florida, his brother said.

"My brother is very decent and a very simple person," Ahmed said. "He always put a smile on his face."

After completing his PhD, Limon wanted to return to Bangladesh and get a job as a university professor, Ahmed said.

THE SUSPECT

Hisham Abugarbich has emerged as the central

figure in the investigation.

Investigators brought the suspect under early scrutiny due to his proximity to the case and inconsistencies during questioning. While initially cooperative during two interviews, Abugarbich stopped engaging with law enforcement on Thursday.

By Friday, authorities said they were able to "link the suspect to this case and to (Limon's) body," reports CNN.

University officials told Newsweek that Abugarbich, who pursued a management degree between the spring 2021 and spring 2023 semesters, was not enrolled at the time of his arrest.

Hillsborough County court records show his criminal history includes several 2023 battery charges and a burglary case. Court documents further reveal a pattern of domestic unrest. In filings, his brother alleged Abugarbich attacked both him and their mother during an argument. A judge previously granted a domestic violence injunction against him, though it later expired.

The arrest took place at the family home following a domestic violence call. After barricading himself inside, the suspect surrendered peacefully to a SWAT team and crisis negotiators, authorities said.

BNP 'deceiving the nation'

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He termed it "shameful" to reject the referendum verdict in which 70 percent voters supported reforms. "The day this verdict is implemented, fascism will truly end in this country."

Addressing the BNP, he added, "Without the sacrifices of mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters in the July uprising, you would not be enjoying power today."

"We all took part in the movement, but we could not reach the shore. The heroes of July brought the boat ashore and showed the nation the path to liberation. Learn to respect them; do not belittle them."

Referring to recent incidents, the Jamaat chief condemned attacks on Ducsu members inside a police station and on Jamaat MP Masum Mostafa in Netrokona. "What kind of Bangladesh is this?" he asked.

He also warned against violence at educational institutions. "We want to see notebooks and pens, not machetes or axes. The culture of domination must stop. If not, remember that July is not confined to 2024; it will return."

At the event, Rokeya Begum, mother of martyr Jabir Ibrahim and Jamaat candidate for a parliamentary seat

reserved for women, spoke on behalf of the families.

Injured July activist Atikul Islam demanded the immediate implementation of the "70 percent people's verdict", warning that attempts to suppress it would force those in power to step down.

Tasmiya Pradhan, chairperson of Jagpa and another I-Party Alliance candidate for the reserved seats, alleged that the government is "insulting July martyrs in parliament" by not implementing the July charter.

Nahid Islam, opposition chief whip and NCP convener, said ministers are claiming in parliament

that there is no fuel crisis. They are "denying real problems, the economic crisis, and the gradual deterioration of law and order in the country."

"We are fully prepared to cooperate with this government in the interest of the country and its people. But the government is closing all doors to such cooperation."

LDP Chairman Col (retired) Oli Ahmad, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar, Senior Naye-e-Ameer ATM Azharul Islam, assistant secretaries general Rafiqul Islam Khan and Hamidur Rahman Azad, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Beware of political traps, provocations

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A leader present at the meeting said Tarique expressed dissatisfaction with some recent JCD activities and asked the organisation to focus more on student-oriented politics.

"He made it clear that Chhatra Dal must not do anything that could malign the organisation, the BNP or the government," the leader said, requesting anonymity.

Tarique also asked JCD President Rakibul Islam Rakib and General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir about recent developments on campuses and the organisation's response to

opposition activities.

According to meeting sources, he advised JCD to avoid shows of strength and instead prioritise student issues – academic environment, housing, safety, transport, classroom facilities and democratic space.

He also instructed the central leadership to engage directly with students on campuses and ensure activists follow party directives.

Several leaders said the party leadership believes opposition student organisations may try to provoke Chhatra Dal into clashes to create controversy

and put pressure on the government.

They said Tarique warned JCD not to fall into such traps.

A senior BNP leader summed up the directive: "Chhatra Dal should remain active, but not aggressive. Campus politics must continue, but it has to be peaceful and student-oriented."

The meeting also discussed what leaders described as false and misleading social media campaigns against the BNP, Chhatra Dal and senior figures.

Tarique instructed JCD not to respond emotionally but to counter

misinformation with facts, discipline and constructive campus work.

He further called for strengthening organisational activities nationwide and better coordination between the central committee and university units.

Warning that the public closely watches student politics, he said all activities must remain within the law and advised legal action against violators.

BNP leaders said the party would closely monitor campus developments and take organisational action against any unit that breaches the instructions.

Palestinians

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according to the territory's health ministry, whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

Public infrastructure, sanitation services and the health sector are all struggling to function.

Gaza, under Hamas control since 2007, is seeing its first vote since legislative elections in 2006 that the Islamist movement won.

The voting came after Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes across the Palestinian territory on Friday killed at least 13 people, including five in an attack that targeted a police vehicle.

Despite an October ceasefire, violence has persisted, with at least 792 Palestinians killed since the truce began, according to Gaza's health ministry.

No need to panic

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The alert warned that the group could target "important state installations", including the Sangsad Bhaban, Shahbagh intersection, places of worship, and even police and army establishments.

Although the PHQ message did not name any specific organisation,

it referred the potential attack being linked to the recent arrest of a suspected extremist, Istiak Ahmed Sami alias Abu Bakkar alias Abu Mohammad.

The directive said intelligence reports showed that the arrestee was in regular contact with two dismissed army personnel to plan attacks.

Iran president calls on people to save energy

AFP, Tehran

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian called on his people to conserve electricity, warning that while there were no shortages at present, the US and Israel aimed to sow "dissatisfaction" among the Iranian people.

"We have asked our dear people, who are now ready

and present on the ground, a simple request. And that is to reduce their own electricity and energy consumption," the president said on state TV.

"We do not need people to sacrifice for the time being, but we do need to control consumption. Instead of 10 lights, two lights should be turned on in the house – what is wrong with that?" he added.

Manipur ethnic violence

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community who claim descent from one of the "lost tribes" of Israel – arrived in Tel Aviv.

They were the first group to arrive since the Israeli government decided in November to fund the immigration of around 6,000 members of the community.

Their oral history tells of a centuries-long exodus through Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet and China, all the while adhering to certain Jewish religious practices, such as circumcision.

In India, they were converted to Christianity by 19th-century missionaries.