

Fighting 'Islamist terror' top priority



French President Emmanuel Macron addresses French ambassadors during the annual gathering of French diplomatic corps at the Elysee Palace in Paris

Paris
Fighting "Islamist terrorism" is France's top foreign policy priority, President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday, vowing to make his country a leading power in an unstable, increasingly polarised world. "Providing security for our citizens means that the fight against Islamist terrorism is our first priority," Macron told some 200 French diplomats gathered in Paris. "There's no place for naivete, nor for fear of Islam that confuses Islamism and Islamic," he said, adding that assuring the security of the French was the "raison d'etre" of the country's diplomacy.

Since early 2015, France has suffered a series of terror attacks that have claimed more than 230 lives, making it the country worst affected in western Europe. Macron, who took power in May on a promise to boost France's international standing, said he would work with the various powerbrokers in the Middle East -- including arch-rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia -- to try eradicate the jihadist threat. "Some have chosen (their camp). It's a mistake. The strength of our diplomacy is to speak to all sides," he said. France will host a conference on cutting off sources of funding for terror

groups like Islamic State in early 2018, he added. **'No alternative'** The 39-year-old leader also insisted there was no alternative to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which has been fiercely opposed by US President Donald Trump. "There is no alternative to the non-proliferation agenda. It enables a constructive and demanding relationship with Iran," he said. Faced with dismal approval ratings less than four months into his term, Macron was looking to burnish his foreign policy credentials with the speech, which is a fixture on France's political calendar. (AFP)

NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston closed amid flood

Los Angeles
The U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)'s Johnson Space Center (JSC) in Houston remained closed on Monday to all but mission-critical staff, due to heavy rainfall caused by Hurricane Harvey, according to the space agency. But the Mission Control continued operations, the agency added. "While the vast majority of our workforce is safe, many have experienced severe flood damage, are without power and may need other assistance," JSC Director Ellen Ochoa, a former astronaut, said in a post on Monday. The JSC in Houston has been closed to all non-critical staff from Sunday and will



Flight Control Room 1 at Johnson Space Center (file image) remain closed on Tuesday. The JSC Emergency Management said: "Center Closure Includes all Sites." However, the Mission Control Center is "operational and fully capable of supporting the International Space Station (ISS) from Houston," according to NASA. "Oh boy - looks like a ton of rain is about to unload. Here's a prayer for family, friends & everyone in #HurricaneHarvey's path--stay safe," astronaut Jack Fischer, who is currently in the ISS, posted photos of the storm when he orbited over hurricane Harvey. (Xinhua)

#PollToday



Do you think Bangladesh should open its borders to the Rohingya Muslims who are seeking refuge?

Yes No Cant Say



"A dictatorship (Maduro's government in Venezuela) is trying to survive at an unprecedented humanitarian cost, even though the resources of the country remain significant,"

Emmanuel Macron, French President

Rest in sight

Russia says Zapad-2017 drills 'purely defensive'



Russia dismissed Western concerns over its military exercises with Belarus next month, calling them "purely defensive".

Third Indian train derailed in 10 days

An express train derailed in India yesterday, the third accident to hit the country's ageing railways in 10 days.

Danish sub scanned for clues to journalist's death

Copenhagen police were scanning an inventor's homemade submarine for possible hidden rooms as they investigate the death of a Swedish journalist.

Dortmund bus bomber could face 28 counts of attempted murder

German prosecutors revealed they are seeking 28 counts of attempted murder against Sergej W., who is accused of the April 11 bomb attack on the Borussia Dortmund team bus.

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Marcos kin offer gold, assets to Philippines: Duterte

Manila
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said yesterday the heirs of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos had offered to return to the government some of the family's disputed wealth, including "a few gold bars".

Marcos and his wife Imelda were accused of plundering about \$10 billion from state coffers in 20 years in power. A bloodless "People Power" uprising in 1986 chased the

family into US exile. The government announced last month that Duterte, a Marcos ally, may abolish a government agency that has recovered some 170 billion pesos (\$3.4 billion) from Marcos and his family. But Duterte said in a speech to government officials: "They (the Marcos family) told me they'll open everything, and probably return what is uncovered."

Heavy rain, flooding paralyse India's financial hub



Indians wade through a flooded street during heavy rain showers in Mumbai

Mumbai
Hheavy rain brought India's financial capital Mumbai to a virtual standstill yesterday, flooding streets, causing transport chaos and prompting warnings to stay indoors.

Dozens of flights and local train services were cancelled as rains lashed the coastal city of nearly 20 million people.

Floods have killed more than 1,000 people in India, Nepal and Bangladesh in recent weeks and forced millions from their homes in

the region's worst monsoon disaster in recent years. As the meteorological department warned that the Mumbai rains would continue for the next 24 hours many offices sent staff home early, fearing a repeat of 2005 floods that killed more than 1,000 people. "I haven't been able to travel and had to cancel all my plans," said researcher Rajesh Prabhakar, who was stranded on the outskirts of the city after flooding forced the cancellation of rail services.

Suicide bomber kills five in Kabul bank blast

Kabul
Asuicide bomber blew himself up outside a bank in the Afghan capital Kabul yesterday, days ahead of the Eid holiday, killing five people and injuring several others in an attack claimed by the Taliban.

It was the latest in a series of deadly attacks to hit the city and comes three months after a massive truck bomb ripped through the same area, killing about 150 people.

The bomb went off outside the Kabul Bank, which usually pays the salaries of

security forces personnel and government employees. "The latest report shows five, including a guard, were killed and eight civilians were wounded in today's terrorist attack," said interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish. The Taliban later claimed responsibility on social media for the bombing. The blast happened Tuesday morning at a time when many officials were expected to be collecting their salaries ahead of this week's Eid al-Adha holiday.