

Rafah border crossing with Egypt reopens for limited traffic

CAIRO, Feb 2 (AP)

GAZA'S Rafah border crossing with Egypt reopened on Monday for limited traffic, a key step as the Israeli-Hamas ceasefire moves ahead, according to Egyptian and Israeli security officials. An Egyptian official said 50 Palestinians would cross in each direction on the first day of the crossing's operation. The official, involved in talks related to the implementation of the ceasefire deal, spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the issue.

State-run Egyptian media and an Israeli security official also confirmed the reopening which, for now at least, is largely symbolic. Few people will be allowed to travel in either direction, and no goods will be allowed to enter.

About 20,000 Palestinian children and adults needing medical care hope to leave devastat-



ed Gaza via the crossing, according to Gaza health officials. Thousands of other Palestinians outside the territory hope to enter and return home.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also said that Israel will allow 50 patients a day to leave. An official involved in the discussions, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the diplo-

matic talks, said each patient would be allowed to travel with two relatives, while some 50 people who left Gaza during the war would be allowed to return each day.

The Egyptian health ministry said in a statement on Monday that 150 hospitals across the country have been prepared to receive Palestinian patients and wounded who will be evacuat-

ed from Gaza through the Rafah crossing. Israel has said it, and Egypt will vet people for exit and entry through the crossing, which will be supervised by European Union border patrol agents with a small Palestinian presence. The number of travellers is expected to increase over time if the system is successful.

Israeli troops seized the Rafah crossing in May 2024, calling it part of efforts to combat arms smuggling for the militant Hamas group. The crossing was briefly opened for the evacuation of medical patients during a ceasefire in early 2025. Israel had resisted reopening the Rafah crossing, but the recovery of the remains of the last hostage in Gaza last week cleared the way to move forward.

The reopening is a key step as last year's US-brokered ceasefire agreement that took effect on Oct. 10 moves into its second

phase.

Before the war, Rafah was the main crossing for people moving in and out of Gaza. The territory's handful of other crossings are all shared with Israel. Under the ceasefire terms, Israel's military controls the area between the Rafah crossing and the zone where most Palestinians live. Fearing that Israel could use the crossing to push Palestinians out of the enclave, Egypt has repeatedly said it must be open for them to enter and exit Gaza. Historically, Israel and Egypt have vetted Palestinians applying to cross. The current ceasefire halted more than two years of war between Israel and Hamas that began with the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. The truce's first phase called for the exchange of all hostages, an increase in badly needed humanitarian aid and a partial pullback of Israeli troops.

Iran summons all EU ambassadors

Protest listing of Revolutionary Guard as terror group

■ By Jon Gambrell

DUBAI, Feb 2 (AP)

IRAN said on Monday that it had summoned all of the European Union ambassadors in the Islamic Republic to protest the bloc's listing of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard as a terror group.

The move comes as Iran faces the threat of US military action in response to the killing of peaceful demonstrators and over possible mass executions. The American military has moved the USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided-missile destroyers into the Mideast. It remains unclear whether President Donald Trump will decide to use force, though regional countries have engaged in diplomacy in an effort to halt a new Mideast war from breaking out.

"Trump is trying to calibrate a response to Iran's mass killing of protesters that punishes Iranian leaders without also embroiling the United States in a new, open-ended conflict in the region," the New York-based Soufan Centre think tank said on Monday.

"Some Trump aides seek to exploit Tehran's weakness to secure major concessions from the regime, but Trump has set conditions for a diplomatic resolution that Tehran cannot accept."

The EU agreed to list the Guard as a terror group last week over its part in the bloody crackdown on nationwide protests in January that killed thousands and saw tens of thousands detained.

Other countries, including the US and Canada, have previously designated the Guard as a terrorist organisation. While the

move is largely symbolic, it does add to the economic pressure squeezing Iran, particularly as the Guard has a major influence on the country's economy.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told journalists that the ambassadors had begun to be summoned on Sunday and that the process went into Monday as well.

"A series of actions were reviewed, various options are being prepared and were sent to

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the related decision-making bodies," Baghaei said. "We think that in the coming days, a decision will be made about a reciprocal action by the Islamic Republic of Iran toward the illegal, unreasonable and very wrong move by the EU."

Also, on Sunday, Iran's Parliament Speaker said that the Islamic Republic now considers all European Union militaries to be terrorist groups, citing a 2019 law.

The Guard emerged from Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution as a force meant to protect the Shiite cleric-overseen Government and was later enshrined in its constitution. Operating in parallel with the country's regular Armed Forces, it grew in prominence and power during a long and ruinous war with Iraq in the 1980s. Though it faced possible disbandment after the war, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei granted it powers to expand into private enterprise, allowing it to thrive.

CDS on Armenia visit to deepen defence ties

YEREVAN, Feb 2 (IANS)

A HIGH-LEVEL Indian defence delegation led by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan has arrived in Armenia for a four-day official visit aimed at strengthening defence and security cooperation between the two countries.

The Indian delegation reached Yerevan on Sunday local time, according to a statement issued by the Integrated Defence Staff Headquarters.

The visit is being viewed as a significant step in advancing bilateral military engagement and reinforcing strategic ties.

“The visit marks an important step in taking forward shared strategic interests and enhancing long-term defence and security collaboration between the two Nations,” the Integrated Defence Staff Headquarters said.

Upon arrival in the Armenian capital, the delegation was received by India’s Ambassador to Armenia, Nilakshi Saha Sinha, along with Deputy Chief of the Armenian Armed Forces, Major General Temur Shahnazaryan.

The warm reception under-



An Indian defence delegation led by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan reached the Republic of Armenia. (PTI)

scored the growing closeness between New Delhi and Yerevan in the defence domain.

The visit comes close on the heels of a major milestone in India-Armenia defence cooperation. Just two weeks ago, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh flagged off the first tranche of guided Pinaka rockets destined for Armenia. The systems were manufactured by Nagpur-based Solar Defence and Aerospace Limited (SDAL). Armenia had signed a contract worth around Rs 2,000 crore in September 2022 for the acquisition of four Pinaka rocket system batteries.

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India, US agree to trade deal: Trump

NEW DELHI, Feb 2 (PTI)

INDIA and the US agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from current 25 per cent, US President Donald Trump said on Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Prime Minister said he was delighted that "made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent".

Trump claimed India will move forward to reduce its "tariffs and non tariff barriers" against the US to zero.

"Out of friendship and respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a trade deal

between the United States and India, whereby the United States will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent," the US President said on social media.

India will "likewise move forward to reduce their tariffs and non tariff barriers against the United States, to zero".

Trump said Modi also committed to "buy American" at a much higher level, in addition to over USD 500 billion dollars of US energy, technology, agricultural, coal, and many other products.

"Our amazing relationship with India will be even stronger going forward. Prime Minister Modi and I are two people that get things done something that

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'US will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18% from current 25%'



Big thanks to Trump on behalf of 1.4 bn Indians: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Feb 2 (IANS)

IN A significant development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said that 'Made in India' products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent, as US President Donald Trump said, India and the United States had reached a trade deal.

PM Modi posted on X that it was "wonderful to speak with my dear friend President Trump today".

"Delighted that 'Made in India' products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent. Big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement," Prime Minister posted on X.

"When two large economies and the world's largest democracies work together, it benefits our people and unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation. President Trump's leadership is vital for global peace, stability, and prosperity. India fully supports his efforts for peace," PM Modi further stated.