



Philippines' police 'murdered' mayor

## FEARS OF LOSING HOME, LAND PLAGUE ONE IN FOUR INDIANS

# SANCTIONS RENEWAL SHOWS US STILL 'ENEMY': IRAN

**TEHRAN:** Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday that Congress's decision to renew US sanctions for 10 years would elicit a "harsh reaction" and proved the United States was still an enemy. "America... is our enemy, we have no doubt about this. The Americans want to put as much pressure on us as they can," Rouhani said in a speech to students at Tehran University. The Iran Sanctions Act passed the US Senate 99-0 last week, after easily clearing the House of Representatives in November.

President Barack Obama is expected to sign the measure into a law, a White House official said, adding that the administration does not believe the extension violates last year's nuclear deal between major powers and Iran. Obama has suspended sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program since the agreement went into effect at the start of the year.

But Iran says that even if the nuclear sanctions remain suspended, just keeping them on the books amounts to a breach of the agreement. "If this is implemented... it would be a blatant and clear breach of the JCPOA (nuclear agreement) and would face a very harsh reaction from us," Rouhani said. The actual language in the agreement could be interpreted in different ways. It calls on the US to "cease the application of... all nuclear-related sanctions". It does not specify whether Washington can keep them in reserve for possible use in the future.

At a press conference yesterday, conservative parliament speaker Ali Larijani said parts of the deal were "rushed". "Some of the sections of the JCPOA should have been written with more precision to stop differing interpretations," Larijani said. "I believe Iran should file a complaint in regard of the Americans' breach of the JCPOA," he added. Rouhani and other top officials are due to meet on Wednesday to discuss the issue. Rouhani, who is expected to run for a second term in May, has faced a barrage of criticism from conservatives who say his team made too many concessions in the nuclear deal for minimal economic gain.

In yesterday's speech, he emphasized that his team had not acted alone and that supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was closely involved at every stage of the negotiations. "We took no step on the JCPOA issue without consulting the honourable leader," Rouhani said.

Although Iran has managed to significantly ramp up its oil exports since the deal, it has struggled to rejoin the international financial system because major Western banks remain reluctant to do business for fear of remaining non-nuclear US sanctions. The result has been that Iran has been unable to attract the huge foreign investment which Rouhani has said is necessary to rekindle the country's battered economy. — AFP



## LA METRO ON ALERT AFTER BOMB THREAT

**LOS ANGELES:** Authorities ratcheted up security on the Los Angeles metro following a tip from overseas about an impending bomb attack yesterday against a station in the sprawling rail network. The threat was relayed by an anonymous man who called a public safety line run by an unidentified foreign government, which then passed on the information to a Federal Bureau of Investigation terrorism task force, said Deirdre Fike, assistant director in charge of the FBI's office in Los Angeles.

The target of the threatened attack was metro's Universal City station-located near the Universal Studios theme park-where the caller who spoke English said an explosive device would go off yesterday, Fike told reporters at a hastily organized press conference with local authorities. Officials said they were working to determine the credibility of the threat described as "very specific." "The threat is imminent and it's related to tomorrow" and concerned an off-ramp at the station, Los Angeles police chief Charlie Beck said. He added that authorities had little time to assess the seriousness of the threat and because of its imminent nature had decided to move quickly and alert the public.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell said the call could be real or a hoax and urged commuters to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity. He said undercover deputies had been deployed throughout the network, along with uniformed officers, members of the bomb squad and K9 explosive detection

units. Metro officials meanwhile tweeted a simple and succinct reminder to passengers, warning them to remain alert yesterday. "If you see something, say something," read the Twitter message sent from the rail-way network's @metrolosangeles handle.

Mayor Eric Garcetti said commuters should expect to be searched, but should go about their lives as normal. He said he planned to ride the metro yesterday from Universal City to reassure commuters. "My advice is right now, everybody should go about their normal day tomorrow," Garcetti said. He added that commuters should not be frightened by the heightened security. "Those are there for your protection, and we meet threats with every possible precaution that we can," he said. Authorities said there was added vigilance as the threat came about during the busy holiday season when many people were out shopping or would be visiting theme parks and attractions in and around Los Angeles, including Universal Studios and Disneyland. The Los Angeles metro system consists of six lines, including two rapid transit subway lines and four light rail lines that serve 93 stations.

The Universal City station on the metro system's Red Line has been listed as among the busiest in the network. Some 145,000 people use that line daily, Garcetti said. The Red Line connects North Hollywood with the central and downtown Los Angeles. Last year, an emailed threat forced the closure of Los Angeles schools for a day before it was determined to be a hoax. — AFP

## ITALY'S YOUNGEST EVER PREMIER FELLED BY DISCONTENTED YOUTH

**ROME:** Twenty-year-old Francesco Incorvaia, a sociology student from Rome, was just the kind of voter Matteo Renzi had spent years trying to win over. Italy's youngest ever prime minister had changed labor laws in a bid to reduce one of Europe's highest youth unemployment rates, handed cash to low earners and proposed constitutional amendments to streamline lawmaking and boost an ailing economy. But Incorvaia and millions of other young Italians walked into voting booths at a referendum on Sunday and effectively threw him out of office, handing him a stinging defeat that left him no choice but to resign.

"At least this way there is an idea that the people can still have some say, without leaving too much power in the hands of people who don't care about us," Incorvaia said, standing outside his university department in Rome. According to a survey by research firm Quorum for SKYTG24, about 80 percent of voters aged between 18 and 34 opposed Renzi's proposal to shrink the upper house Senate and claw back power from regional administrations—a tsunami of opposition from a generation that is rewriting the political map in Italy.

Despite his youthful vim, Renzi, who was 39 when he took the premiership almost three years ago, came to be seen as part of the creaking old establishment he pledged to revamp. With Renzi pledging to step down, the younger generation's pre-

ferred anti-establishment 5-Star Movement has called for early elections and said it is ready to govern. M5S campaigned hard against Renzi's constitutional reform proposal, on the grounds it would remove democratic checks and balances, and it was clear many young people were also expressing their support for 5-Star in voting it down.

"Lots of people in the 5-Star Movement are young, so they seem like a new start compared to the 80-year-olds in the other parties," said Veronica Bagagli, 20, a student from near Rome. Rising support for 5-Star has sent shivers through financial markets because the movement has promised to call a referendum on Italy's membership of the euro. It rivals Renzi's Democratic Party as the most popular party in opinion polls and would be favorite to win elections under the current system, which may be changed as mainstream parties seek to keep them out of power.

Young voters helped propel 5-Star into power in the municipalities of Rome and Turin this year. Overall, voters under 35 years of age represent about a fifth of the electorate. "For me the victory of the 'No' vote is above all an important signal, it signals that the people are tired of enduring the policies of austerity (and) neoliberal politics of Renzi's government and the previous governments," said "Students for No" campaign representative Federica Ciarlariello. — Reuters

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