

Iran to bypass uranium enrichment maximum despite calls for rethink

TEHRAN: Iran ignored US and EU warnings yesterday and vowed to exceed within days the maximum uranium enrichment level it agreed to in the landmark 2015 nuclear accord. Iran is acting on its May 8 threat to suspend parts of the agreement in response to US President Donald Trump's reimposition of crippling sanctions after withdrawing from it in May last year. President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday's decision was in response to failure by other parties to the deal to keep up their promises and provide Iran relief from the US sanctions.

"On July 7, our enrichment level will no longer be 3.67 percent. We will put aside this commitment. We will increase (the enrichment level) beyond 3.67 percent to as much as we want, as much as is necessary, as much as we need," Rouhani told a cabinet meeting. The enrichment maximum set in the agreement is sufficient for power generation but far below the more than 90 percent level required for a nuclear warhead.

France reacted quickly by warning Iran that it would "gain nothing" by leaving the deal and said "challenging the agreement would only increase tensions already high" in the Middle East. Iran insists that it is not violating the deal, citing terms of the agreement allowing one side to temporarily abandon some of commitments if it deems the other side is not respecting its part of the accord.

Rouhani stressed that Iran's action would be reversed if the other parties to the nuclear deal made good on their side of the bargain - relief from sanctions. "We will remain committed to the (nuclear deal) as long as the other parties are committed," he said. "We will act on the JCPOA 100 percent the day that the other party acts 100 percent (too)," he added using the deal's acronym. Iran has sought to pressure the other parties - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - to save the deal.

On May 8, Iran announced it would no longer respect the limits set on the size of its stockpiles of



TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani chairs a cabinet meeting yesterday. — AFP

enriched uranium and heavy water, and threatened to abandon further nuclear commitments, including exceeding the agreed uranium enrichment maximum from July 7. Rouhani said Iran will also deliver on its threat to resume construction of a heavy water reactor after July 7 and will bring it to the condition that "according to you, is dangerous and can produce plutonium". But all these measures can be reversed in "hours" if the other parties "live up to their commitments", he said.

US President Donald Trump warned Monday that Iran is "playing with fire" after Tehran said it had exceeded the limit set on its enriched uranium stockpile. Rouhani said it was the US that started the fire and Washington has to "put it out" by returning to the nuclear deal. His adviser, Hesamodin Ashena, warned Trump against listening to hawks in his administration, hinting aggression against Iran could make him a "one-term president". "We have unseated an American president in the past, we can do it again," he tweeted, referring to Jimmy Carter whose bid for a second term was marred by the Iran hostage crisis in 1980. —AFP

Dozens killed in strike on Libya...

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He urged the international community to punish those who ordered, carried out and provided arms for the strike - the second time the facility has been attacked. "The absurdity of this ongoing war today has led this odious bloody carnage to its most hideous and most tragic consequences," Salame said. Around 600 migrants and refugees were held in the Tajoura detention center, the head of the compound Nouredine Al-Grifi said, adding that other people were wounded in another hangar.

In a statement, the Tripoli-based internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) denounced the attack as a "heinous crime" and blamed it on the "war criminal Khalifa Haftar". Turkey, which backs the GNA, called for an international probe into what it called a "crime against humanity". Qatar's foreign ministry said the attack was a "flagrant violation of international laws that protect human rights, and may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity". Haftar, who controls much of eastern and southern Libya, launched an offensive to take the capital in April. But yesterday evening a spokesman for the strongman said "the (pro-Haftar) forces deny their responsibility in the attack on the migrant center of Tajoura". Ahmad Al-Mesmari blamed the attack on the GNA.

MPs pass budget with deficit...

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it will not be able to bridge the budget shortfall. The persistent budget deficit comes after 16 years of surpluses during which Kuwait built assets worth over \$600 billion managed by Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), mostly outside the country (the returns of which are not included in the budget).

Also, according to Kuwaiti law, 10 percent is deducted from revenues every year regardless of whether there is surplus or deficit in favor of the Kuwait Fund for Future Generations. This year's contribution is KD 1.58 billion. The budget was passed by 36 votes in favor with 20 against. During the debate on the budget, MPs called on the government to stop squandering public funds and to employ more Kuwaitis.

Following the renewal of confidence in the finance minister, Hajraf thanked the Assembly and said he will continue to serve the country and the people. But he warned against what he called a "deviation" in the debate of grillings, which could undermine democracy. Before the voting, two lawmakers spoke in favor of the motion and two others defended the minister. MP Nayef Al-Merdas said he did not hear the minister promise to scrap interest on loans taken by pensioners. The minister was grilled twice last month over alleged violations and squandering public funds.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable to Hajraf, congratulating him on the renewed confidence. He commended the minister's efficient performance while replying to parliament queries, along with the elevated democratic practice which reflected the civilized image of the dear homeland. HH the Amir wished everybody success in serving the dear nation. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a similar cable to Hajraf, and wished everyone success in serving the dear nation under the leadership of HH the Amir.

The Assembly also unanimously voted to refer the outcome of four investigations to the public prosecutor for legal action. These include probes on alleged viola-

The UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are seen as Haftar's key supporters while he accuses Turkey and Qatar of supplying weapons to his rivals. The GNA accused pro-Haftar forces of having carried out a "premeditated" and "precise" attack on the migrant center. No-one has so far claimed responsibility, but pro-Haftar media reported Tuesday night a "series of air raids" in Tripoli and Tajoura. The suburb of Tajoura, which has several military sites belonging to pro-GNA armed groups, is regularly targeted in air raids by Haftar's forces.

"Migrants and refugees must NOT be detained; civilians must NOT be a target; Libya is NOT a safe place of return" for migrants and refugees, the head of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi tweeted. The European Union had also called on the UN to launch an investigation. "Those responsible should be held to account", EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini, enlargement commissioner Johannes Hahn and migration commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said in a statement.

UNHCR spokesperson Charlie Xaxley told AFP in Geneva that the agency had asked to have the centre evacuated a few weeks ago after "a near miss from a similar air strike". The center was thought to have been used to store weapons, he added, reiterating "that using civilian infrastructure like that constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law". The UN's mission in Libya has said around 3,500 migrants and refugees held in detention centers near the combat zone are at risk.

Wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising against dictator Muammar Gaddafi, Libya has become a major conduit for migrants seeking to reach Europe. —AFP

tions at Al-Zour refinery, violations at the health ministry, illegal distribution of state-owned agricultural land and severe damage by heavy rains last year.

Moreover, the financial status of the country was discussed in a closed session as demanded by the government to provide MPs with information about the performance of Kuwaiti assets abroad. At the end of the debate, speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said it was decided to refer the issue to the Audit Bureau. At the end of the session, Ghanem closed the current term of the Assembly until the end of October. Questioned about whether Putin's Russia calls the shots now, he replied: "I don't think so. I think Russia is very respectful of the nature of its role, Russia is certainly very respectful of Saudi Arabia, and they have compromised on certain positions." Falih added that Riyadh wanted to achieve a market balance for supply and demand - but that it needed non-OPEC players to step in. "OPEC was trying to do it for a while, but let's face it: we are less than 30 percent of global supply, so bringing more non-OPEC together with us has given a big boost."

Vienna-based OPEC, which pumps a third of global crude, decided three years ago to hook up with non-cartel members to form OPEC+ to combat slumping prices. In recent years, the cartel has lost valuable market share to the United States - whose booming shale output has transformed it into the world's biggest oil producer and a net exporter. The expanded group - comprising 24 crude producers including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman and Russia - accounts for almost half of world oil supplies.

SEB analyst Bjarne Schieldrop noted that Moscow and Riyadh needed other cartel members on board. "If there is disagreement within OPEC, then Russia-Saudi cannot push or force through a decision," he told AFP. "On the other hand given the size of Russia and Saudi Arabia there won't be a deal unless those two are in on it." Saudi Arabia and Russia could of course go it alone and flex their production together and skip the rest of OPEC. Saudi do not want to do that," Schieldrop said. "They know that size matters in the global oil market. OPEC has become too small. OPEC+ on the other hand is big enough to matter and impact the global oil market."

US auto industry legend Iacocca dies aged 94

WASHINGTON: Automobile industry legend Lee Iacocca, who is credited with creating the iconic Ford Mustang and saving Chrysler from bankruptcy, died Tuesday at the age of 94, US media reported. Iacocca died at his home in Bel-Air, a neighborhood of Los Angeles, from complications of Parkinson's disease, his family told local media. Chrysler said in a statement that the company "is saddened" by news of Iacocca's death. "He played a historic role in steering Chrysler through crisis and making it a competitive force," the statement read. "Lee gave us a mindset that still drives us today - one that is characterized by hard work, dedication and grit. His legacy is the resilience and unshakable faith in the future that live on" in the company's employees.

Iacocca began his career in 1946 at the Ford Motor Company, first as an engineer and then in sales. It was his talent in marketing that helped realize his full potential. Iacocca's first sales campaign in the mid-1950s was so successful that it attracted the attention of company executives and brought him to the Ford headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan. Iacocca had reaped in massive sales over his career, particularly with the Ford Mustang that he designed in 1957. However he was accused of plotting against Chairman Henry Ford II in a quest to reach the top company position. In a 1992 interview, when Iacocca was asked about the seemingly Machiavellian scheme, he snapped back with characteristic sharpness: "Machiavelli my



Lee Iacocca

**!" Ford fired him in 1978 - so Iacocca moved to the floundering Chrysler Corporation.

In 1979, the US government bailed Chrysler out of a potential bankruptcy with \$1.5 billion in secured loans. Iacocca took the reins once more and implemented a painful restructuring process. He had twisted Congress's arm for the loan, and he successfully brought Chrysler back from the brink - then paid off the loan ahead of schedule. Under his leadership, Chrysler invented the minivan and later the suburban utility vehicle (SUV). His famous line in Chrysler ads - "If you find a better car, buy it!" he would say, pointing at the viewer - turned him into a legend.

Iacocca's fierce anti-Japanese views - he viewed their commercial practices as detrimental to US - at the time earned him support from Democrats and labor unions. But by the late 1980s Chrysler took a downturn, and thousands of employees were laid off in order to save the company. He left Chrysler at the start of the 1990s, and later launched an ultimately unsuccessful hostile takeover bid of the company with billionaire Kirk Kerkorian. —AFP

Spectacular fall of India's 'dosa...

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"If a lower middle class family wanted an outing, a good treat, a place to celebrate something, Saravana Bhavan was the choice," G C Shekhar, a journalist in Chennai, told AFP. "This man sort of democratized restaurants." The concept spread beyond India, with around 80 outlets abroad today catering mostly to the homesick Indian diaspora in the United States, the Gulf, Europe and Australia. He also treats his staff generously, giving even the lowest-ranking employees benefits like health insurance. In return, they adoringly call him "annachi" ("elder brother").

Alongside Hindu gods, the restaurants invariably have two pictures of him on the wall: One with his sons, who now run the business - and one with his trusted spiritual guru. But his beliefs, by no means unusual in

Unhappy birthday: Hundreds...

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"I wasn't that hungry so I only ate the egg and a little steamed rice. I vomited and an ambulance took me to the Rizal Medical Centre where I was given an IV drip," the woman told AFP. "I blame the cook. Everyone knows Madam (Imelda) is blameless since she was not the one who cooked it," she added.

The party featured singing and speeches, as well as water bottles adorned with Imelda's name and meals in plastic boxes. There were no immediate reports that the guest of honor was taken ill. The family later issued an apology while pledging to help those who were sick and cooperate with an official investigation. "I offer my apologies ask for your understanding. Rest assured

Gandhi calls for change as he...

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The BJP's huge victory stunned the opposition and political pundits who had predicted a reduced majority for Modi's party. While saying he could not avoid his share of the blame, Gandhi launched a virulent attack on the BJP's tactics, hinting that the vote had not been free and fair and saying that the Indian press, judiciary and election commission had all been turned against the opposition.

"We didn't fight a political party in the 2019 election. Rather, we fought the entire machinery of the Indian state," he said. Gandhi also accused the BJP of seeking to "destroy the fabric of our nation" and vowed to protect the country until his "last breath". "I have no hatred or anger towards the BJP but every living cell in my body instinctively resists their idea of India," he said. Critics accuse the BJP of stoking religious tensions and trying to undermine the country's secular credentials. The BJP denies the accusations, insisting it believes in equality for all. Around 80 percent of India's 1.3 billion population is Hindu, but it is also home to large numbers of Muslims, Christians and Buddhists.

The great-grandson, grandson and son of three past premiers of the world's biggest democracy, Gandhi had set out to rejuvenate the party after it lost to BJP in the 2014 election. But he struggled to shed his image as a

India, proved to be his undoing. In the early 2000s, Rajagopal reportedly took an astrologer's advice to make a fateful decision - to take as his third wife the daughter of an employee he had his eye on. "He was obsessed with her," D Suresh Kumar, another local journalist, told AFP.

The young woman in question was already married and rejected his advances, but Rajagopal is not a man used to taking no for an answer. Threats, beatings and exorcisms directed at the woman, her husband and her family over months all failed, and in 2001 - after one failed attempt - the husband was murdered on Rajagopal's orders. In 2004, he was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years. On appeal, he was convicted of murder and the sentence increased to life, a decision then upheld by the Supreme Court in March.

He is meant to surrender by July 7 and spend the rest of his life behind bars. "Rajagopal is an example of how you can really come up in the society through hard work and thinking out of the box," said Shekhar. "What led to his downfall was his weakness for women and his belief that he was so powerful that he could get somebody murdered and get away with it." —AFP

that we will continue to help until everyone is fully healed," her son Ferdinand Junior said in a statement.

Family matriarch Imelda was convicted in November in a corruption case stemming from the time of her husband's brutal dictatorship. Although currently free on bail pending an appeal, she faces decades behind bars after being found guilty of funneling around \$200 million through Swiss foundations decades ago. Ferdinand Marcos, who along with his cronies was accused of pilfering \$10 billion from the Philippines, fled with his family to the US after his dictatorship fell in 1986. He died in exile three years later, but his heirs later returned to Manila and the political scene.

Imelda Marcos just finished a term as a congresswoman, her son Ferdinand Junior has also served as a senator while eldest daughter Imee won a Senate seat in May's elections. The family has a powerful ally in President Rodrigo Duterte, who ordered the late dictator's remains interred at Manila's Heroes' Cemetery despite public protests. —AFP

privileged, dynastic scion. He even lost his constituency in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, that had been a family bastion for decades. He was allowed to contest a second seat, however, and won in southern India.

Gandhi's efforts at rebuilding the so-called Grand Old Party also seemed to flounder with the senior members refusing to yield space to the younger generation. Media reports said party baron, 90-year-old Motilal Vora, would become interim chief. "Rebuilding the party requires hard decisions and numerous people will have to be made accountable for the failure of 2019," Gandhi said. "It would be unjust to hold others accountable but ignore my own responsibility," he added. Analysts said Gandhi's resignation was likely to throw the party into fresh turmoil. "Rahul Gandhi's resignation is an important point, but the bigger thing is what comes after this," Manisha Priyam, an independent political analyst, told AFP. "Is it going to be a substitute who is going to be placed as the president?" she said indicating that making a Gandhi family pawn as new leader would not end its troubles. Rahul Gandhi's mother, Italian-born Sonia, remains party chairperson. His sister Priyanka also took an increased role in this year's election.

Many Congress officials have not yet given up hope that Rahul Gandhi will reconsider his resignation. "We request Rahul Gandhi to lead from the front to take on the upcoming political challenges," Sachin Pilot, Congress leader from western Rajasthan state, told reporters. "Not just Rajasthan, but the people of India, have asked him to change his mind, take back his resignation and work as president again," he added. —Agencies