

Not looking for war with Iran: Trump

Tehran warns conflict in the Gulf could spread uncontrollably and threaten the lives of U.S. troops

REUTERS
DUBAI/WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday he was not seeking war with Tehran after a senior Iranian military commander warned any conflict in the Gulf region could spread uncontrollably and threaten the lives of U.S. troops.

Tensions remain high between longtime foes Iran and the United States after Mr. Trump said on Friday that he called off a military strike to retaliate for Iran's downing of an unmanned U.S. drone out of concern it would have been a disproportionate response.

"I'm not looking for war," Mr. Trump said on NBC's Meet the Press programme.

'Ready for deal'

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo repeated to reporters on Sunday that Washington was prepared to negotiate with Tehran with no preconditions.

"They know precisely where to find us," said Mr. Pompeo, who is traveling to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to "ensure



Up in arms: Activists protesting against the Iranian regime outside the White House in Washington. ■ AP

we're strategically aligned" with those countries, which are regional rivals of Iran.

Mr. Trump has said he will impose further sanctions on Iran beginning on Monday, but has also indicated that he would be prepared to seek a deal to bolster its flagging economy, an apparent move to defuse tensions. "I think they want to negotiate. And I think they want to make a deal. And my deal is nuclear. Look, they're not going to have a nuclear weapon," he added.

Iran played down the im-

pact of any new U.S. sanctions. They were "just propaganda, as all sanctions... have been imposed and there are no more sanctions left," state-run news agency IRIB quoted Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying.

Last year Mr. Trump withdrew the United States from a 2015 accord between Iran and world powers that curbed Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for easing sanctions. Relations in the region have worsened significantly since then.

Diplomatic efforts are under way to ease tensions between the two nations. Andrew Murrison, Britain's Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, said on Sunday that he had "open, frank and constructive" talks with Iranian government representatives in Tehran.

"I reiterated the U.K.'s assessment that Iran almost certainly bears responsibility for recent attacks on tankers in the Gulf of Oman," and called for such activity to stop, Mr. Murrison said.

60-day deadline

A senior advisor to Iran's top authority Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Tehran may scale back compliance with its nuclear deal soon unless European countries shield it from U.S. sanctions through a trade mechanism.

"If Europeans don't take measures within the 60-day deadline, we will take new steps," the semi-official ISNA news agency quoted the official, Kamal Kharazi, as saying. Tehran announced a deadline of 60 days in May.

Iran has said it would respond firmly to any threat

and warned on Sunday of the risks of a military confrontation. "If a conflict breaks out in the region, no country would be able to manage its scope and timing," Major General Gholamali Rashid said, according to the semi-official Fars news agency. "The American government must act responsibly to protect the lives of American troops by avoiding misconduct in the region."

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani accused the Americans of stoking tensions in the Gulf through what Iran has called the violation of its airspace by the U.S. military drone, Fars reported.

Washington said the aircraft was targeted in international air space in "an unprovoked attack".

A hawk in Trump's administration, national security adviser John Bolton, sought to maintain military pressure on Iran. "Neither Iran nor any other hostile actor should mistake U.S. prudence and discretion for weakness. No one has granted them a hunting license in the Middle East," Mr. Bolton said during a visit to Israel.

Sirisena calls for repealing law clipping presidential powers

'Political uncertainty in Sri Lanka due to the 19th Amendment'

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, who will complete his term by end of this year, has called for repealing a law that clips presidential powers, citing it as reason for "political uncertainty" in the country.

The 19th Amendment, which was passed in April 2015, is widely-considered a historic legislation, shifting power from the executive to the legislature, and strengthening the independence of oversight bodies.

Election pledge

Mr. Sirisena - backed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and political parties representing Tamil and Muslim minorities - rose to presidency in January 2015, promising good governance and the abolition of executive presidency.

Speaking at an event on Sunday, he observed that while the "monarchical and dictatorial nature" of the 18th Amendment to the Sri Lan-



Maithripala Sirisena

before four-and-a-half years of its term.

When President Sirisena prematurely sacked Parliament late last year, sparking an unprecedented political crisis that spanned seven weeks, the Supreme Court ruled that his dissolution was illegal.

"People accuse us of running an unstable government. They say that me and the Prime Minister are pulling in different directions... the reason is the 19A," President Sirisena said in his speech on Sunday.

The fissures within the government came to light in the wake of the deadly Easter terror attacks too, when both leaders said that while prior intelligence had been available with security officials, they were not aware of the warning.

With presidential polls due by end of the year, it remains unclear if President Sirisena will run for office again. No other party has finalised its candidate for the race.

kan Constitution was the reason for the 19th Amendment, the 19 A had made it "impossible" for the country to move forward under a single political leadership.

The 18th Amendment, passed during former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's time in office, lifted the two-term limit on presidency, and removed important checks on the exercise of executive power.

Two term cap

The 19th Amendment caps presidency at two terms, and disallows dissolution of Parliament by the President

Erdogan's party loses Istanbul re-poll

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
ISTANBUL

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan suffered a major blow on Sunday as the Opposition candidate in Istanbul's controversial mayoral election re-run romped to victory.

Ekkrem Imamoglu won the first vote in March by a tiny margin of just 13,000 votes in the city of 15 million.

That win was however annulled by election authorities after Mr. Erdogan's AKP party claimed that there was corruption in the counting.

But after being stripped of



Supporters of Ekkrem Imamoglu celebrating on Sunday. ■ AP

that victory, Mr. Imamoglu vowed a "battle for democracy" that turned him into a household name.

With more than 99% of ballots counted on Sunday night, Mr. Imamoglu was winning by more than 7,75,000 votes - and had 54% overall.

'A win for all'

"It was not a single group or party, but the whole of Istanbul and Turkey that won this election," Mr. Imamoglu said in his victory speech.

"Mr. President, I am ready to work in harmony with you. I convey from here my request to meet with you in the shortest time possible," he added.

Ethiopia Army chief killed in failed regional coup

Situation is currently under full control by the Federal Government, says PM

REUTERS
ADDIS ABABA

Ethiopia's Army Chief of Staff and the head of the northern State of Amhara were killed in two separate but related attacks when a General tried to seize control of Amhara in an attempted coup, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's office said in a statement on Sunday.

Amhara State President Ambachew Mekonnen and his adviser were shot dead

and the State's Attorney General was wounded in the regional capital of Bahir Dar on Saturday evening.

In another attack, Ethiopia's Army Chief of Staff Seare Mekonnen and a retired General were shot dead in Seare's home in Addis Ababa by his bodyguard.

Mr. Abiy's office named Amhara State Security head General Asamnew Tsige as responsible for the foiled coup, without giving details



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. ■ AFP

of his whereabouts. General Asamnew was released from prison last year after receiving an amnesty for a similar coup attempt, according to media reports.

Mr. Abiy took office just over a year ago and em-

barked on unprecedented reforms in Ethiopia, Africa's second-most populous country and one of its fastest-growing economies.

But the premier's shake-up of the military and intelligence services has earned him powerful enemies, while his government is struggling to rein in powerful figures in Ethiopia's myriad ethnic groups fighting the federal government and each other for greater influence and resources.

The shooting in Bahir Dar occurred when the State President - an ally of Mr. Abiy -

was holding a meeting to decide on how to put a stop to the open recruitment of ethnic Amhara militias by General Asamnew.

"The situation in the Amhara region is under full control by the Federal Government in collaboration with the regional government," Mr. Abiy said in a statement.

Brigadier General Tefera Mamo, head of special forces in Amhara, told state television that "most of the people who attempted the coup have been arrested, although there are a few still at large."

IN BRIEF



Kim receives 'excellent letter' from Trump

SEOUL North Korean leader Kim Jong-un received a letter of "excellent content" from U.S. President Donald Trump, the state media said on Sunday. "Appreciating the political judging faculty and extraordinary courage of President Trump, Kim Jong-un said that he would seriously contemplate the interesting content," it said.

Cambodia building collapse toll rises to 18

PHNOM PENH The death toll in the under-construction building collapse in Cambodia on Saturday rose to 18 on Sunday. Twenty four people have been injured in the incident. REUTERS

Trump says re-election will be easier if he is impeached

'FBI probe into 2016 campaign was illegal'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said in an interview broadcast on Sunday that his chances of retaining the White House in 2020 would be strengthened if Democratic lawmakers start impeachment proceedings against him.

Asked on NBC's 'Meet the Press' whether he thought impeachment was good politics for him, Mr. Trump replied, "I think I win the election easier."

The President repeated his long-standing allegation that the FBI's counterintelligence investigation into his 2016 campaign was illegal. "I



Donald Trump

was spied on. What they did to me was illegal. It was illegal on the other side. I did nothing wrong," he said.

"So impeachment's a very unfair thing because nothing that I did was wrong. And if you look at the Mueller report, there was no collusion. This was all about collusion."

The Democrats are split over whether Mr. Trump should be impeached after

the Mueller Report into Russian interference in the 2016 election outlined numerous contacts between his campaign and Russians, as well as evidence that the President tried on several occasions to stymie the investigation.

While many of the candidates for the Democratic nomination are pro-impeachment, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has argued that it would be a risky move without an "ironclad" case and bipartisan support.

Mr. Trump said Ms. Pelosi was staving off the growing impeachment calls because she agreed with his assessment that it would harm their prospects in 2020. "I think she feels that I will win much easier," Mr. Trump said. "I mean, I've been told that by many people."

Saudi launches residency scheme to boost revenue

Aimed at luring wealthy expatriates

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
RIYADH

Saudi Arabia on Sunday launched a new special residency scheme aimed at luring wealthy expats as the petro-state seeks to boost non-oil revenue.

The scheme offers a permanent residency for 800,000 riyals (\$213,000) and a one-year renewable residency costing 100,000 riyals (\$27,000), according to the online portal for registrations.

The scheme will allow expats to do business without a Saudi sponsor, buy property and sponsor visas for relatives, the website said.

Analysts say the programme will largely benefit wealthy Arabs who have lived in Saudi Arabia for years without permanent residency or MNCs seeking



Permanent and renewable residency schemes being offered.

to do long-term business.

The move appears to be aimed at boosting non-oil revenue as the kingdom seeks to diversify its economy.

Though it was approved by the Saudi Cabinet last month, the portal began accepting applications on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia is currently home to some 10 million overseas workers.

Economic plan for West Asia peace snubbed

Won't be tempted by money: Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS
JERUSALEM

The economic component of the Trump administration's long-awaited West Asia peace plan drew chilly responses from regional allies on Sunday, two days before it was to be discussed at a conference in the Gulf.

An Israeli Minister called a major piece of the White House's "peace to prosperity" plan "irrelevant," while Jordan and Egypt restated their support for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, pouring cold water on Washington's focus on economic issues.

The \$50 billion economic plan, published on Saturday, calls for massive infrastructure projects and job creation for Palestinians. It makes no mention of Palestinian political aspirations in

the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, lands Israel captured in 1967.

Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said on Sunday that the country will not be "tempted" by money into what he said amounts to giving up Palestinian rights.

Mr. Berri said in a statement that although Lebanon is currently dealing with an economic crisis, it would be a mistake to think that billions of dollars could convince the government to abandon Palestinians' rights as refugees.

Sufian Qudah, a spokesman for Jordan's Foreign Ministry, said that "no economic proposal can replace a political settlement to the conflict which must be resolved as per the two-state solution."

THE HINDU GROUP

Good English is now just a call away

Sign up for

STEP COACH

and get Expert English guidance on call.

STEP Coach has something special for English learners from all walks of life.

<div style="background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">PROFESSIONAL</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Craft better e-mails Strike good conversations Make impressive presentations 	<div style="background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">JOB SEEKER</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ace interviews Express views clearly Improve articulation
<div style="background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">TEST PREP</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand questions well Answer with clarity 	<div style="background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">GENERAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve all round understanding Unlock new opportunities

Visit BIT.LY/STEPC

Standardised Test of English Proficiency
from THE HINDU GROUP