

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) -- Iran has offered Pakistan and China participation in the Chabahar project which is being built by India, Pakistan's Dawn newspaper reported Tuesday. Foreign Minister Javad Zarif invited Pakistan to participate in Chabahar seaport project and in the development of its link with the Gwadar Port "as he sought to allay concerns here (in Pakistan) over Indian involvement in the Iranian port". "We offered to participate in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). We have also offered Pakistan and China to participate in Chabahar," Zarif said while in Islamabad on a three-day visit.

Kayhan International



WASHINGTON: A top U.S. general on Tuesday signaled support for the Iran nuclear deal, saying it played an important role in addressing Iran's nuclear program. "The JCPOA addresses one of the principle threats that we deal with from Iran, so if the JCPOA goes away then we will have to have another way to deal with their nuclear weapons program," said U.S. Army General Joseph Votel, head of the U.S. military's Central Command. He was using an acronym for Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the formal name of the accord with Iran agreed in July 2015 in Vienna.


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Viewpoint
By Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer
Bahraini Regime Trying to Punch Above Its Size

'Pet Man' to Vie at Two Int'l Film Festivals



Federer Cruises Past Krajinovic at Indian Wells



UN Chief Deplores Failure to Implement UN Resolution on Syria



Two Ministers Survive Impeachment by Majlis

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran's labor and transportation ministers narrowly managed to keep their job after a vote in parliament on Tuesday following a motion to fire them over allegations of mismanagement.

Out of 253 lawmakers present at the session, 124 voted to keep Ali Rabiei while 126 voted to fire him and two abstained. One vote was made void because it was late. The chamber has 290 seats.

Under procedural regulations, abstentions in parliament are counted as an in-favor vote, hence Rabiei kept his post.

Rabiei's opponents said his management caused many people to lose their jobs, saying he was responsible for unemployment rising to about 12%.

Lawmakers also criticized Rabiei for the collision of a tanker that burned and sank off the coast of China, killing 30 sailors in January. The Labor Ministry manages some 60% of the tanker company.

His defenders, however, said not all the accusations were directly related to his ministry.

In the afternoon session, lawmakers heard about Transportation Minister Abbas Akhundi and his allegedly poor management,

as well as high death rates in traffic accidents in Iran.

He attended an open session of the parliament for his third impeachment since he took the helm in August 2013.

Out of a total 246 lawmakers present at the session, 92 MPs voted to oust him against 152 parliament members who opted to keep him in the portfolio, with two others abstaining.

Several cabinet members, including First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, Culture Minister Abbas Salehi and head of the Department of Environment Isa Kalantari accompanied Akhundi at the hearing.

The embattled minister was grilled over a number of issues including a passenger plane crash that killed all 66 people on board in the southwestern city of Yasuj on February 18, 2018.

The lawmakers are also expected to impeach Minister of Agriculture Mahmoud Hojjati on Wednesday.

He is to be questioned regarding his performance in regulating the market for agricultural produce, addressing the problems facing the factories processing sugar cane, and his alleged recruitment of retired managers.

Waterboarder to Head CIA: Trump Replaces Tillerson With Hotheaded Loyalist

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- U.S. President Donald Trump fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson Tuesday after a series of public rifts over issues including North Korea and Russia, replacing his chief diplomat with loyalist CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

The biggest shakeup of Trump's Cabinet since he took office more than a year ago, which the president announced on Twitter, comes as the administration prepares for an unprecedented meeting with the leader of North Korea.

Trump tapped the CIA's deputy director, Gina Haspel, to replace Pompeo at the intelligence agency.

Tillerson's departure caps months of tensions between the Republican president and the 65-year-old former Exxon Mobil chief executive.

On Monday Tillerson blamed Russia for the poisonings in England of a former Russian double agent and his daughter. Earlier, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders refrained from saying Moscow was responsible.

Tillerson was reported to have privately called Trump a "moron" in July after the president suggested a 10-fold increase in

the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Tillerson declined to directly address whether he had made the comment, although a State Department spokeswoman later issued a denial.

A senior White House official said Trump asked Tillerson to step down on Friday but did not want to make it public while he was on a trip to Africa. Trump's announcement came only a few hours after Tillerson landed in Washington after a trip that had been cut short.

The official said Trump works well with Pompeo, a former Republican congressman from Kansas, and wanted him in place before the U.S. president's planned talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and trade negotiations.

Tillerson had no diplomatic or political experience before becoming secretary of state. He appeared out of the loop last week when Trump announced he would meet with North Korea's Kim.

U.S. stock index futures pared their gains and the dollar also trimmed gains versus the yen while extending losses versus the euro amid the news.

(Continued on Page 7)

Terrorists Plan Chemical Attack to Blame Syrian Gov't: Russia to Respond If U.S. Strikes Damascus



Syria's President Bashar al-Assad (2nd L), Russia's President Vladimir Putin (C back), Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu (C front), and his first deputy, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Valery Gerasimov (R) are pictured during a meeting at Bocharov Ruchei state residence in Sochi, Russia.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Russia said on Tuesday it had information that the United States planned to bomb the government quarter in Damascus on an invented pretext, and said it would respond militarily if it felt Russian lives were threatened by such an attack.

Valery Gerasimov, head of Russia's General Staff, said Moscow had information that terrorists in the enclave of eastern Ghouta were planning to fake a chemical weapons attack

against civilians and blame it on the Syrian army.

He said the United States intended to use the fake attack as a pretext to bomb the government quarter in nearby Damascus where he said Russian military advisers, Russian military police and Russian ceasefire monitors were based.

"In the event of a threat to the lives of our servicemen, Russia's armed forces will take retaliatory measures against the missiles and launchers used,"

Gerasimov said in a statement.

Russia has previously accused terrorists in Syria of preparing to use toxic agents in eastern Ghouta so they could later accuse Damascus of employing chemical weapons.

Damascus denies Western allegations that government forces have used chemical weapons.

Russia's warning came a day after U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley warned that Washington "remains prepared to act if

we must," if the UN Security Council failed to act on Syria, as the Syrian army's onslaught in eastern Ghouta against terrorists continued unabated.

According to Gerasimov, militants have brought a crowd of civilians, including women and children, into eastern Ghouta from other regions to represent them as victims of the planned chemical attack, while film and satellite video transmitters are already in place.

"This has been confirmed by the discovery of a laboratory for the production of chemical weapons in the village of Afris, which was liberated from terrorists," he said.

The general added, however that "despite constant attempts by militants to disrupt peace initiatives in eastern Ghouta, the situation in the suburb of Damascus shows a trend toward stabilization."

On Monday, Syria's envoy to the UN Bashar al-Ja'afari slammed new U.S. military threats, saying Haley's comments were aimed at provoking a chemical attack by terrorists and fabricating evidence against Damascus.

For the past several years, the flashpoint enclave has been under the control of multiple

(Continued on Page 7)

UN Human Rights Experts: Facebook Plays a Role in Myanmar 'Genocide' of Rohingya

GENEVA (Dispatches) - UN human rights experts investigating a possible genocide in Myanmar said that Facebook had played a role in spreading hate speech there.

More than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar's Rakhine state into Bangladesh since the regime launched a brutal security crackdown last August. Many have provided harrowing testimonies of executions and rapes by Myanmar security forces.

The UN human rights chief said last week he strongly suspected acts of genocide had taken place.

Marzuki Darusman, chairman of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, told reporters that

social media had played a "determining role" in Myanmar.

"It has ... substantively contributed to the level of acrimony and dissension and conflict, if you will, within the public. Hate speech is certainly of course a part of that. As far as the Myanmar situation is concerned, social media is Facebook, and Facebook is social media," he said.

UN Myanmar investigator Yanghee Lee said Facebook was a huge part of public, civil and private life, and the government used it to disseminate information to the public.

"Everything is done through Facebook in Myanmar," she told reporters, adding that Facebook had helped the impoverished country but had also been

used to spread hate speech.

"It was used to convey public messages but we know that the ultra-nationalist Buddhists have their own Facebooks and are really inciting a lot of violence and a lot of hatred against the Rohingya or other ethnic minorities," she said.

"I'm afraid that Facebook has now turned into a beast, and not what it originally intended."

The most prominent of Myanmar's hardline nationalist monks, Wirathu, emerged from a one-year preaching ban on Saturday and said his anti-Muslim rhetoric had nothing to do with violence in Rakhine state.

Lee said the crackdown on Rohingya minority bears "the hallmarks of genocide" and insisted the government should be

held accountable.

"I am becoming more convinced that crimes committed... bear the hallmarks of genocide, and call in the strongest terms for accountability," she told the UN Human Rights Council.

The South Korean academic, who has been barred from visiting Myanmar, voiced alarm at "credible reports" of widespread indiscriminate killings, including by burning people alive.

She pointed to "conservative estimates" that at least 6,700 Rohingya, including at least 730 children under the age of five, were killed in the first month of violence alone. Lee echoed a call from UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

(Continued on Page 7)