Iran says damage at nuclear site 'significant'

n accident at a nuclear complex in Iran caused significant damage and could slow the production of centrifuges used to enrich uranium, the country's atomic energy spokesman said.

The incident happened on Thursday at a warehouse under construction at the Natanz complex in central Iran, but caused no casualties or radioactive pollution, according to the Islamic republic's nuclear body.

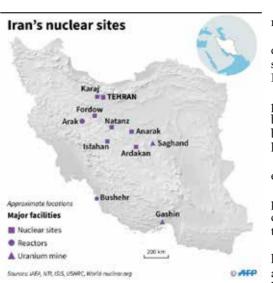
Security officials called it an accident and said they had determined the cause, without providing any further explanation.

"There were no victims... but the damage is significant on a financial level," Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said in an interview published Sunday by A photo released by the nuclear organisation showed a state news agency IRNA.

"In the medium term, this accident could slow down the development and production" of ad-



building with a damaged roof, walls apparently blackened by fire and doors hanging off their hinges



vanced centrifuges, he said. Natanz is one of Iran's military dimension.

main uranium enrichment plants.

"God willing, and with constant effort... we will compensate for this slowdown so that the rebuilt site will have even more capacity than before," Kamalvandi added.

The organisation had earlier released a photo purportedly from the site, showing a one-storey building with a damaged roof, walls apparently blackened by fire and doors hanging off their hinges as if blown out from the inside.

State TV later showed the building from a different angle with minor damage to its walls.

Tehran announced in May last year it would progressively suspend certain commitments under a 2015 nuclear deal with major powers, which the United States unilaterally abandoned in 2018.

Iran restarted enriching uranium at Natanz last September, despite having agreed under the accord to put such activities there on hold. Tehran has always denied its nuclear programme has any

Egypt approves law for military to run in polls



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (C), a former army chief, surrounded by top generals, could potentially stay in power until 2030 under amendments passed by parliament

Sisi won his first term as president in 2014

He was re-elected in March 2018

The amended law prohibits officers from divulging information or joining political parties without premission

AFP | Cairo

gypt's parliament yesterday approved ■ amendments allowing active or former military per-

overwhelmingly voted in favour of constitutional amendments that potentially allow a former army chief, to stay on until 2030.

republic, all but two of Egypt's al. presidents have hailed from a military background.

The army is highly visible in Egypt's public life, with former other former soldier in Detop brass currently serving as cember 2017 for six years for ministers and heading governorates as well.

boasts a sizeable business he posted on YouTube.

portfolio ranging from massive construction projects to most recently producing protective

Sisi, the former general-turned-president, led the army's overthrow of elected president Mohamed Morsi in 2013 following mass protests against the Islamist leader's

He won his first term as president in 2014 and was re-elected in March 2018 with more than 97 per cent of the vote, after standing virtually unopposed.

The amended law also prohibits officers from divulging information during their service publicly or joining political parties without the Supreme Council of Armed Forces' permission.

SCAF is a military counsonnel to run for the presiden- cil comprised of the councy and parliament pending the try's most senior generals. It ruled Egypt following the The legislative changes toppling of long-time aucome a year after Egyptians tocrat Hosni Mubarak in

A former chief of staff of the armed forces, Sami Anan, was President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, jailed in January 2018 after contesting the presidential elections against Sisi without Since it became a modern the military's explicit approv-

He was released nearly two

A military court jailed anannouncing his decision to enter the presidential race as The nationalist institution a potential candidate in a video

Saudi opens Hajj registration for foreign residents

Foreign residents are allowed to register on https:// localhaj.haj.gov.sa.

Riyadh

🖰 audi Arabia yesterday opened Hajj registration for foreign residents in the kingdom, saying they will make up 70 per cent of the pilgrims after it scaled-back the annual ritual due to coronavirus.

Saudi Arabia has said it will allow only around 1,000 pilgrims already present in the Hajj ministry said. kingdom to participate in this end of July, a far cry from the 2.5 day pilgrimage last year.

as diabetes and heart condi- ministry said. tions, are allowed to register on https://localhaj.haj.gov.sa., the through the database of those nounced it would hold a "very



worshippers praying at the Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca

year's Hajj, scheduled for the be open until Friday, it added.

Saudi citizens will make up million who attended the five- the remaining 30 pc of the pil-Foreign residents, aged be- to medical professionals and

"They will be selected

who have recovered from the The registration process will virus," the ministry said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The pilgrims will be tested for grims, with the ritual restricted coronavirus before arriving in the holy city of Mecca and are tween 20 and 65 who have no security personnel who have required to quarantine at home previous health ailments such recovered from the virus, the after the ritual, according to health officials.

Last month, Saudi Arabia an-

limited" Hajj, a decision fraught with political and economic peril as it battles a coronavirus

The decision to exclude pilgrims arriving from outside Saudi Arabia is a first in the kingdom's modern history and has sparked disappointment among Muslims worldwide, although many accepted it was necessary due to the health risks involved.



Saudi Arabia has so far reported more than 213,000 coronavirus infections -- the highest in the Gulf -- and nearly **2.000** deaths.

Myanmar army sacks officers over landslide tragedy

Yangon

Two high-ranking officers were fired for having "failed their responsibilities" after a landslide in Myanmar killed at least 174 jade miners, the country's military said on Monday in a rare public sanctioning.

Heavy monsoon rains on Thursday sent mud cascading down a hillside over workers scouring the land for the green gemstone in Hpakant in northern Kachin state.

The victims were largely poor migrants who had travelled across the country to prospect in the treacherous open-cast mines, hoping to find valuable stones left behind by the big companies.

living memory to hit the shad- their posts. owy, multi-billion dollar industhe military.

the military announced Kachin told AFP. Security and Border Affairs Minister Colonel Nay Lin Tun bilities.'



The landslide victims were largely poor migrants who had travelled across the country to prospect in dangerous open-cast mines

and another unnamed com-

"They were responsible for would be taken, he added. try dominated by firms linked to reporting any trespassing in A Facebook post Monday by Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun

"They failed their responsi-

The military would hold an It was the worst tragedy in mander had been removed from investigation and appropriate action against the two men

> Unidentified miners have this restricted area," spokesman been buried in mass graves, while many more remain miss-

They join scores of informal prospectors killed each year in Hpakant as they search for the stone so highly prized over the border in China.

The industry is mired in secrecy. Environmental watchdog Global Witness alleges operators are linked to the military elite and its cronies.

The group estimated the industry was worth some \$31 billion in 2014, although very little

reaches state coffers. Environment Minister Ohn Win told local media Sunday that "greedy" miners were to blame while civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi has not released a formal statement.

went heavy monsoon rain sent mud cascading down a hillside over workers