

WORLD  
world

# Japan PM on Tehran mission

● **Abe is the first Japanese prime minister to visit Iran in 41 years**

Tehran

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived in Tehran yesterday for a rare diplomatic mission, hoping to defuse tensions between the Islamic republic and Tokyo's ally Washington.

State television broadcast footage of Abe being greeted at Tehran's Mehrabad airport by Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

The first Japanese prime minister to visit Iran in 41 years, Abe was expected to go straight into talks with President Hassan Rouhani and to meet Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei on Thursday morning.

His arrival was preceded by that of Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono, who held closed-door talks with Zarif.

"Amid concerns over growing tension in the Middle East and with the attention of the international community on the issue, Japan wishes to do its best towards peace and stability in the region," Abe told reporters before leaving for Tehran.

"Based on traditional friendly ties between Japan and Iran, I would like to have candid exchanges of opinions with President Rouhani and supreme leader Khamenei towards easing tensions," he said.



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hopes to use Tokyo's longstanding trade ties with Tehran and strategic alliance with Washington to persuade Iranian leaders to calm soaring tensions in the Gulf



Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe won Donald Trump's blessing for his mission to Tehran during a visit to Tokyo by the US president late last month



Washington's deployment to the Gulf of an aircraft carrier task force as well as B-52 bombers, an amphibious assault ship and a missile defence battery has sent tensions soaring in the region

“**Abe might touch upon the subject (of mediation) but that does not necessarily mean he is delivering a message from Washington**”

JAPANESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

## Lower the temperature

Japanese government officials said Abe would not present Tehran with a list of demands, or deliver a message from Washington, but instead wanted to play the role of neutral intermediary. Abe discussed “the situation

in Iran” in a telephone call with Trump on Tuesday, a Japanese government spokesman said.

A government official said Abe will not be in Tehran to “mediate between Iran and the US” and that “easing tensions” was the prime purpose.

“He might touch upon the subject (of mediation) but that does not necessarily mean he is delivering a message” from Washington, he added.

Japan is hoping to lower the temperature, officials say.

Abe won Trump's blessing for the mediation mission when the US president visited Tokyo last month.

“We believe it is extremely important that, at the leadership level, we call on Iran to ease tension, to adhere to the nuclear agreement and to play a constructive role for the region's stability,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said.

Iranian newspapers were divided along conservative-reformist lines in their assessment of Abe's visit.

The reformist *Sazandegi daily* ran a front-page cartoon of Abe in full samurai armour, a rolled piece of paper in one hand and

a shield on the other.

In an accompanying article headlined “A samurai in Tehran,” the paper said everyone was waiting to see “Tehran's reaction to Japan's initiative to raise its international standing by mediating as both Washington's ally and Iran's friend.”

## Philippines blasts ‘cowardly Chinese boat’ over sinking

Manila

The Philippines yesterday condemned the “cowardly action” of a suspected Chinese fishing vessel accused of abandoning a Filipino fishing crew after a collision in the disputed South China Sea.

The boat on Sunday hit a Filipino craft anchored near Reed Bank -- claimed by both Manila and Beijing -- causing it to sink and leaving 22 crewmen “to the mercy of the elements”, said defence secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

“We condemn in the strongest terms the cowardly action of the suspected Chinese fishing vessel and its crew for abandoning the Filipino crew,” Lorenzana said in a statement. “This is not the expected action from a responsible and friendly people.”

Lorenzana called for an investigation into the collision, and for “diplomatic steps” to prevent a repeat of the incident.

However, Philippine defence department spokesman Arsenio Endolongo said the agency had yet to confirm whether the vessel was Chi-



Philippines defence secretary Delfin Lorenzana

nese-registered, adding it was the Filipino fishermen who identified it as such.

The defence chief also thanked the crew of a Vietnamese fishing vessel in the vicinity which he said brought the Filipinos to safety.

**Like the Philippines, Vietnam has partial claims over the South China Sea, where Beijing has staked “indisputable sovereignty” and built artificial islands with military facilities and airstrips. Taiwan, Brunei and Malaysia also have claims in the area.**

## Fish turns gloomy when separated: study

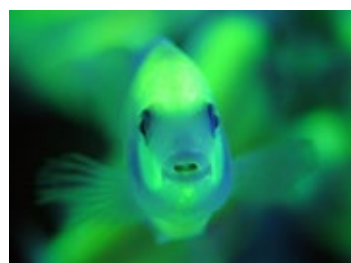
● **Tropical fish suffers from heartache when separated from its lover**

Paris

The tiny Central American convict cichlid may only be a few centimetres long but it's a fish with a big heart.

Researchers in France found that the tropical fish -- known to be a loyal and monogamous partner -- suffers from heartache when separated from its lover.

Even more heart-rending perhaps is that female cichlids, when paired with a male who is not their preferred partner, were shown in experiments to



The convict cichlid is known as a loyal lover



To effectively measure each fish's mental response to separation, researchers from the University of Burgundy in Dijon trained females to use their mouths to open two small boxes, placed either side of their tanks

exhibit “pessimistic” behaviour. Scientists believe that over the course of evolution fish species such as the convict cichlid

have developed loyal partnerships as a way to better protect their young, which are extremely vulnerable to predators.

To effectively measure each fish's mental response to separation, researchers from the University of Burgundy in Dijon trained females to use their mouths to open two small boxes, placed either side of their tanks.

The “positive” box contained fish food, and the “negative” box was empty. The boxes had either black or white lids to help the fish distinguish between them.

The team then placed a grey “ambiguous” box in the centre of the tank to see how the females would react.

They reasoned that a fish with an optimistic outlook would flip open the grey lid in the hope of snaffling a treat, whereas a pessimistic one might hesitate or leave the box alone altogether.

Their study, published in the journal *Proceedings of Royal Society B*, showed that female fish spend much more time trying to lift off the grey lids when their favoured males were in the tanks with them.

While the tale of the cichlid's love-travails may warm the heart, the fish are anything but lovely: they have sharp teeth and have been shown to be extremely territorial.