

## world

## Turkey ready for US sanctions over missile deal: minister

Ankara, Turkey

Turkey insisted it would go ahead with its controversial decision to buy the S-400 missile defence system from Russia, saying it was preparing for any possible sanctions from the US.

Turkey's push to buy the S-400 system has strained relations with the United States, a NATO ally, which worries about integrating Russian technology with Turkey's Western equipment.

Defence Minister Hulusi Akar told reporters late Tuesday that Ankara was "preparing" for US penalties under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), which prohibits business with Russia's state and private defence and intelligence sectors.

He added that Turkey was "fed up" with being just being a buyer of military equipment, and wanted to be involved in joint production and technology transfers.

"The idea that we always buy, you always produce, is finished," he told reporters in Ankara.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday said Turkey and Russia would jointly produce S-500 defence systems after the purchase of the S-400



Defence Minister Hulusi Akar

system.

Turkey has already sent personnel to Russia for training, Akar said, and the system could be delivered as early as June or July.

Last month, he said the S-400 would likely be used to protect the capital Ankara and Istanbul.

In a bid to force Turkey to cancel its S-400 deal, the US offered a renewed proposal in March for Patriots, its own anti-missile and anti-aircraft weapon system.

The US has said buying the S-400 could jeopardise the Turkey's involvement in the F-35 fighter jet programme, for which it provides some parts.

Akar said Turkey was still considering the offer but that there had been "general easing" in negotiations with the US on the F-35s and Patriots.



## Trump names woman as head of US Air Force

Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump announced Tuesday he had nominated a former ambassador and Arizona businesswoman to lead the Air Force.

Barbara Barrett, 68, served as the US ambassador to Finland from 2008 to 2009 under the George W. Bush administration. She also chaired an aeronautics research and development center, The Aerospace Corporation, until 2017.

"She will be an outstanding Secretary!" Trump tweeted.

A former lawyer and test pilot, Barrett is also a board member at the Rand Corporation, a think tank that provides research and analysis to the US armed forces.

She and her husband Craig, the former CEO of American technology giant Intel, are major Republican donors. Barrett ran for governor of Arizona on the GOP ticket in 1994, the first woman to do so, but she failed to secure her party's nomination.

If she is confirmed, Barrett will succeed another woman,



Barbara Barrett

Heather Wilson, in the position of secretary of the air force.

Wilson's name had come up as a potential replacement for Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who resigned in December because of differences over Trump's policies on Syria and other issues.

Wilson stepped down in March, the highest level Pentagon departure since that of Mattis, once it became apparent that interim Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan would stay in that post.

# Omanis praise compatriot for 'historic' Man Booker

AFP | Muscat, Oman

Omanis yesterday hailed writer Jokha Alharthi's "historical achievement" and praised her for bringing "honour" to their Gulf nation after she became the first Arab author to win the Man Booker International prize.

"It is a huge historic achievement for the author, for Oman and for Arabic culture in general," said Saif al-Rahbi, an Omani poet, essayist and writer.

"It shows that Omani literature is moving along," he said.

Alharthi, 40, received the prestigious prize during a ceremony Tuesday in London for her novel "Celestial Bodies" which depicts life in her Gulf nation.

The 50,000-pound (57,000 euro, \$64,000) Man Booker International prize celebrates translated fiction from around the world and is divided equally between the author and the translator.

The judges said Celestial Bodies was "a richly imagined, engaging and poetic insight into a society in transition and into lives previously obscured".

It tells the story of three sisters who witness the slow pace of development in Omani society during the 20th century.

"I am thrilled that a window has been opened to the rich Arabic culture," Alharthi said after the ceremony at the Roundhouse in London.

"Oman inspired me but I think international readers can relate to the human values in the book -- freedom and love," she said.

The jury praised an "elegantly structured and taut" novel which "tells of Oman's coming-of-age through the prism of one family's losses and loves".

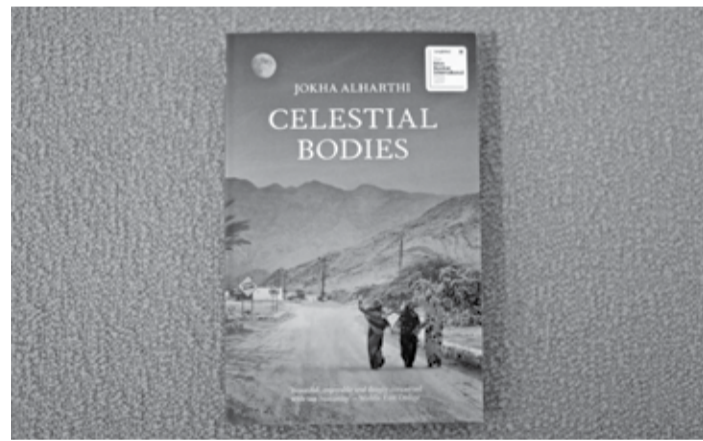
The director general of Oman's culture ministry, Said bin Sultan al-Bussaidi, agreed.

The novel, he said, shows that Alharthi's work "reflects maturity and has reached an international level".

"It is an honour for each and every Omani man and woman... (and the prize) will help spread Omani literature across



Omani author Jokha Alharthi (L) and translator Marilyn Booth pose after winning the Man Booker International Prize for the book 'Celestial Bodies' in London



A copy of 'Celestial Bodies' by Omani author Jokha Alharthi, translated by Marilyn Booth, which has won the Booker International Prize in London

the world," he added. Alharthi is the author of two previous collections of short fiction, a children's book and three novels in

Arabic. She studied classical Arabic poetry at Edinburgh University and teaches at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat.

In an interview with the BBC at the weekend, Alharthi said she had wanted for a "very long time to write a book about life in Oman (but) couldn't when she was actually in Oman".

"But when I went to Edinburgh, the first year was difficult for me, homesickness, cold, so I felt that I need to go back to warmth and feel something from home," she said.

"Actually writing saved me."

### 'Surge in translation'

Her prize-winning novel -- which the Guardian newspaper said offers "glimpses into a culture relatively little known in the west" -- came out in 2010.

Alharthi said on Tuesday that the novel touches on the history of the slave trade in Oman, an absolute monarchy where Sultan Qaboos, who has ruled since 1970, has been pushing for reform.

For one expert of Arabic and Middle Eastern literature, it could be a game changer for novels emerging from the region.

"It has the potential to orient publishing away from the Arabic novel as answering the question 'what can we learn about them?' and towards the Arabic novel as a work of art," said Marcia Lynx Qualey, editor of ArabLit Quarterly.

"The surge in translation of Arabic-language novels is already in progress, but I think this re-orient publishers somewhat," she said.

Qualey said there "is definitely a growing interest in works by Gulf authors".

"In Kuwait, Oman, Saudi, and elsewhere there are authors writing on issues of class, domestic violence, slavery, racism, patriarchy, power, and other issues that are of global interest," she added.

Celestial Bodies was translated by US academic Marilyn Booth, who teaches Arabic literature at Oxford University.

Jury chair Bettany Hughes said the novel showed "delicate artistry and disturbing aspects of our shared history".

## Dutch bust major cryptocurrency launderer

The Hague, Netherlands

Dutch investigators said yesterday they have busted one of the biggest online money laundering services for cryptocurrencies worth hundreds of millions of euros a year.

Tax and federal prosecution officers have confiscated six servers in the Netherlands and Luxembourg, taking the Bestmixer.io virtual currency mixing service offline, the Dutch tax office's criminal branch (FIOD) said.

Bestmixer.io is one of the

three largest online mixing services dealing in bitcoins, bitcoin cash and Litecoins, the FIOD said. It was started a year ago and has so far generated sales of at least 200 million dollars (25,000 Bitcoin).

So-called "crypto-mixing services" are used by criminals on the Darknet to mask the origin of virtual currency," the FIOD said in a statement.

Services like Bestmixer.io are paid to "launder" online currency such as Bitcoins for a commission, erasing traces of the money's origin, it said.

**Tax and federal prosecution officers have confiscated six servers in the Netherlands and Luxembourg, taking the Bestmixer.io virtual currency mixing service offline**

"People use the mixing service apparently to increase their anonymity. Our investigations show that much of the currency has a criminal origin or destination," said FIOD.

"This mixer is suspected of being used in these cases to mask criminal money streams and to launder money," it added.

In total, Darknet markets generate some 800 million dollars yearly.

Bestmixer.io's clients are from all the world "with the emphasis on the United States, Germany and the Netherlands," said FIOD.

The probe was launched following a report by the US-based cyber security firm McAfee.

So far, no arrests have been made, FIOD spokesman Adriaan Ros said.