

Houthis 'provisionally' accept Saudi peace plan

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Sat, 2021-03-27 19:35

AL-MUKALLA: Iran-backed Houthis have "provisionally" accepted a Saudi initiative to end the war in Yemen, but are demanding unchecked flights from Sanaa airport to unlimited destinations before giving the peace plan their final approval, a Yemeni news agency reported.

Yemen Press Network (Yazaan) said on Friday that Houthi spokesmen had told Omani mediators they had reservations about the initiative regarding the inspection of flights from Sanaa and their destinations.

The Saudi initiative, announced by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan last week, proposed a nationwide truce, easing restrictions on shipping entering Houthi-controlled seaports, and reopening Sanaa airport to a limited number of regional and international destinations.

The Houthis sought to arrange unchecked flights to all destinations, including Iran.

The internationally recognized government has always demanded flights at Sanaa airport be inspected to prevent the rebels from smuggling in weapons and fighters.

UN Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths said on Saturday that he had a "constructive discussions" on ending the war with Omani Foreign Minister Badr Al-Busaidi in Muscat.

"The special envoy thanked him for the critical support of the Sultanate to the UN efforts aiming to bring sustainable peace to Yemen through an inclusive political process," the UN office's said in a statement.

Oman's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the meeting discussed developments in Yemen, as well as efforts to stop the war and revive negotiations between all parties to achieve security and stability in the region.

On Friday, the UN envoy held talks with Houthi negotiator Mohammed Abdul Sallam on the establishment of a nationwide truce and the other points of the Saudi initiative along with the UN's peace proposal known as the Joint Declaration.

Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi on Saturday mourned the death of Brig. Gen. Amen Al-Waili, commander of 6th Military Region, who was killed in fighting with the Houthis on Friday.

Hadi described Gen. Al-Waili as a loyal and dedicated military leader who had confronted the militia on major battlefields across the country.

Vice President Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmer, Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik and other senior government officials also mourned the death of the commander and sent condolence letters to his family.

Al-Waili is the most senior army commander to be killed during the militia offensive in the central province of Marib.

Hundreds of Houthis, including dozens of military leaders, have been killed since early last month when the militia launched an offensive to recapture the oil-rich city of Marib, the Yemen government's last bastion in the northern part of the country.

Yemen's Defense Ministry and local media said that Arab coalition warplanes carried out dozens of raids on Friday and Saturday, targeting Houthi military vehicles and formations in the Helan and Al-Kasara areas, west of Marib. Coalition's airstrikes have helped blunt militia advances in Marib and paved the way for government troops to seize new areas.

In the southern province of Taiz, Yemen's army claimed limited territorial gains and killed at least 12 Houthis in Maqbanah, west of Taiz city.



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Arab world countries condemn latest Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia
Blinken and Yemen PM discuss cease-fire after Saudi peace initiative

Loud bang heard in Damascus amid operation to clear explosives

Sat, 2021-03-27 18:33

DAMASCUS: A loud blast heard in the Syrian capital was the result of an operation to clear stray explosives in an area of the Damascus countryside, state news agency SANA said on Saturday.

The agency made the statement after a loud bang was heard in Damascus.



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Tripartite summit between Egypt, Iraq and Jordan postponed due to train accident

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Sat, 2021-03-27 17:06

CAIRO: Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi has announced the postponement of the tripartite summit between Iraq, Egypt and Jordan due to the Sohag train accident.

The prime minister expressed, through his official Twitter account, his country's solidarity with Egypt and the families of the victims of Friday's train collision in Sohag Governorate in Upper Egypt. The accident resulted in the death of 32 people and the injury of others.

"Our thoughts are with the families of the victims and we wish the injured a speedy recovery. In solidarity, we will postpone the trilateral summit to the near future," he said.

The Jordanian-Egyptian-Iraqi summit was due to be held in Baghdad at the end of this month, in the presence of Jordan's King Abdullah and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry revealed that consultations between the foreign ministers of the three countries have begun to set a new date for holding joint meetings – on the sidelines of the tripartite summit – soon.

"As we renew our condolences to the government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for this painful tragedy, we note that a tripartite meeting was proposed to take place between the foreign ministers of these countries," the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, in tweets on its official Twitter account.

A meeting was scheduled to take place between the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Fuad Hussein, and his Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts, Sameh Shoukry, and Ayman Safadi.



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[US goes ahead with \\$1.15bn for Sudan reforms](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-03-26 23:57

WASHINGTON: The US has confirmed it had assisted Sudan with more than \$1 billion to help clear arrears at the World Bank as it hailed reforms by the civilian-backed government.

President Joe Biden's administration said it carried out a financing deal signed in January by the previous treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, on a trip to Sudan, which has faced unrest over the past several years due to the dire economic situation.

The Treasury Department on Thursday provided Sudan with \$1.15 billion in bridge financing, typically loans that cover short-term needs. No US taxpayer

money was involved.

"Sudan's civilian-led transitional government deserves credit for making challenging but necessary reforms to restore its social contract with the Sudanese people," said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, Mnuchin's successor. The financing "will move Sudan one step closer to securing much needed-debt relief and help the nation reintegrate into the international financial community," she said in a statement.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, a British-educated economist, has been seeking ways to end conflicts and rebuild economic opportunities as Sudan turns the page on decades of pariah status under strongman Omar Al-Bashir, who was toppled in April 2019.

In the final months of Donald Trump's administration, the US removed Sudan from a list of state sponsors of terrorism, a long-sought goal of Khartoum as the designation severely impeded investment.

Sudan's civilian-led transitional government deserves credit for making challenging but necessary reforms to restore its social contract with the Sudanese people.

Janet Yellen, US Treasury secretary

Trump agreed to the move after pushing Sudan to agree to normalize ties with US ally Israel, a decision that has triggered protests in Khartoum.

Sudan fulfilled one of the main conditions demanded by international donors in February, when it took steps to unify its official and black-market exchange rates.

"They have undertaken an enormous level of reform in a very short period of time," said a source.

"We hope that they're able to continue that progress in the coming weeks and months."

Helping Sudan settle its arrears with the World Bank would help show the Sudanese people that painful reforms such as ending fuel subsidies were paying off, the source added



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'We don't want war' with Sudan: Ethiopian PM Abiy
Sudan's cabinet backs UAE mediation in border, dam disputes with Ethiopia

[Morocco expects 4.2 million COVID-19 vaccine doses soon, officials say](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-03-26 23:51

RABAT: Morocco expects new batches of coronavirus vaccine to arrive soon from Russia, South Korea and China, allowing it to continue its rapid immunization rollout despite a pause in exports from India, Health Ministry sources said. Morocco has already received 8.5 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine, made in India, and Sinopharm vaccine, made in China, allowing it to administer more jabs than any other African country.

It expects 4.2 million more doses soon, said Health Ministry scientific committee member Said Afif, keeping it on track to reach its target of herd immunity before the summer.

These include 2 million more Sinopharm doses, 1 million of Russia's Sputnik V shot and another 1.2 million AstraZeneca doses made in South Korea and bought

through the Covax vaccine-sharing scheme, Afif said.

The Health Ministry has approved use of the Sputnik and South Korean-made AstraZeneca vaccines.

“Morocco is adopting a strategy of anticipation to ensure the vaccination campaign continues steadily regardless of the delays announced by AstraZeneca manufacturer in India,” Afif said.

India has put a temporary hold on all major exports of the AstraZeneca coronavirus shot made by the Serum Institute of India (SII), the world’s biggest vaccine-maker, to meet domestic demand as infections rise, Reuters reported on Wednesday.

A source from Morocco’s Health Ministry said the new vaccine shipments are expected in the coming days without offering further details.

By Friday, 4.29 million people had received a first jab in Morocco and 3 million the second dose.

France has accused Russia of using its Sputnik V vaccine as a tool to spread Moscow’s influence and message rather than as way to fight the global health crisis.

“In terms of how it is managed, it (the Sputnik V vaccine) is more a means of propaganda and aggressive diplomacy than a means of solidarity and health aid,” Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told France Info radio.

Morocco is adopting a strategy of anticipation to ensure the vaccination campaign continues steadily regardless of the delays announced by AstraZeneca manufacturer in India.

Said Afif, Health Ministry scientific committee member

The Russian vaccine has come under much criticism in Western countries, while President Vladimir Putin – who got a Sputnik jab himself on Tuesday – has dismissed the skepticism as “strange.”

Le Drian said both Russia and China were using their vaccines to gain influence abroad “even before vaccinating their own populations.”

The minister said Russia had announced “with a lot of media attention” that it would deliver 30,000 vaccine doses to Tunisia.

But the UN-backed Covax initiative had already delivered 100,000 doses to the north African country, with 400,000 more to come by May, he said.

“That is what real solidarity work looks like, that is true health cooperation,” Le Drian said.



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