

At least 6 dead, more missing in Oman rockslides

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Sun, 2022-03-27 09:12

MUSCAT: At least six workers were killed and others missing after rockslides engulfed a quarry in northern Oman on Sunday, emergency authorities said. Further slides in the wake of the deadly collapse were hampering rescue efforts at the quarry in Ibri, Al-Dhahirah governorate, the Gulf state's Civil Defense and Ambulance Authority said.

Footage posted by the CDAA showed a towering cliff face crumbling onto the quarry below, creating a huge cloud of dust as workers shouted below.

"The rockslides are still going on and hampering the search for missing people," it tweeted.

"So far, six dead people have been recovered and four others have been treated in moderate to critical condition," it said, without giving the victims' nationalities.

Ibri, in the Hajjar mountain chain about 200 kilometers (125 miles) from the capital Muscat, is a center for quarries, mainly marble, which often employ immigrants from South Asia.



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Saudi Dar Alrkan, Oman's Omran partner in \$1.6bn deal to bolster tourism

[US envoy not confident Iran nuclear deal is imminent](#)

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1648363923011896500

Sun, 2022-03-27 06:42

DOHA: US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley said on Sunday he was not confident that a nuclear deal between world powers and Iran was imminent, dampening expectations after 11 months of talks in Vienna that have stalled.

The failure of efforts to restore the pact, which would curb Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for lifting tough sanctions, could carry the risk of a regional war, or lead to more harsh Western sanctions and further rises in world oil prices, analysts say.

"I can't be confident it is imminent.. a few months ago we thought we were pretty close as well," Malley said at the Doha Forum international conference.

"In any negotiations, when there's issues that remain open for so long, it tells you something about how hard it is to bridge the gap."

His assessment of the negotiations in Vienna to revive a 2015 nuclear accord came after Kamal Kharrazi, a senior adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said a deal could come soon.

"Yes, it's imminent. It depends on the political will of the United States," Kharrazi told the conference.

Then-US President Donald Trump abandoned the nuclear pact in 2018, prompting Tehran to start violating nuclear limits set under the deal about a year later, and months of on-and-off talks to revive it paused earlier this month after Russia presented a new obstacle.

Russia later said it had received written guarantees that it would be able to carry out its work as a party to the deal, suggesting Moscow could allow it to be resuscitated.

Kharrazi said in order for the deal to be revived it was vital for Washington to remove the foreign terrorist organization (FTO) designation against Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), an elite unit which reports to Khamenei.

The IRGC, created by the Islamic Republic's late founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini during the 1979 revolution, is more than just a military force.

It is also an industrial empire with enormous political clout. It was listed by Washington as a specially designated global terrorist (SDGT) and sanctioned under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in 2017.

The IRGC's foreign operations arm, the Quds Force, was labelled an SDGT in 2007. The Trump administration put the IRGC organization on the FTO list in April of 2019.

The Quds Force helps Iran spread its influence in the Middle East through proxies.

"IRGC is a national army and a national army being listed as a terrorist group certainly is not acceptable," said Kharrazi.

Asked about any potential redesignation, Malley said: "Regardless of what happens to the IRGC issue that you raise, our view of the IRGC is many other

sanctions on the IRGC will remain. This is not a deal that intends to resolve that issue.”

Tehran has also been pushing for guarantees that any future US president would not withdraw from the deal, which would curb Tehran’s nuclear program in exchange for lifting tough sanctions which have hammered Iran’s economy.

The extent to which sanctions would be rolled back is another sensitive subject.

The United States’ allies in the Gulf and Israel view the nuclear talks with misgivings and see Tehran as a security threat.

Israel and the United States will cooperate in preventing a nuclear-armed Iran despite differences over any nuclear deal, Israel’s foreign minister said on Sunday.

“We have disagreements about a nuclear agreement and its consequences, but open and honest dialogue is part of the strength of our friendship,” Yair Lapid said in Jerusalem during a joint press conference with visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.





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EU's Borrell says nuclear agreement with Iran very close
Ukraine, Iran deal, post-pandemic woes focus of Middle East summits

[Yemen calls on international community to stop Houthis from threatening shipping](#)

Sat, 2022-03-26 20:58

LONDON: Yemeni Information Minister Moammar Al-Eryani said on Saturday recent repeated attempts by the Houthi militia to target oil tankers and threaten the security and safety of international shipping lines in the Red Sea and Bab Al-Mandeb was a serious escalation.

He added that it falls in line with the Iran-backed group's efforts to damage oil infrastructure and global energy supplies at Tehran's behest, arming and planning.

The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen said on Wednesday that it had thwarted an attempt by the Houthi militia to carry out an attack in the southern Red Sea and Bab Al-Mandeb on giant oil tankers and destroyed two explosive-laden Houthi boats.

"Houthi militia threaten international navigation, taking advantage of the Stockholm Agreement and control over Hodeidah, under the eyes of the UN Mission to Support Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), which made no progress and has become a cover for the militia to violate the agreement and commit terrorist activities," Al-Eryani said in a series of tweets.

He also said that the coalition was making "exceptional efforts on behalf of the world in securing oil tankers and shipping lanes," including neutralizing six remotely controlled booby-trapped boats and a number of drones that were being prepared in Hodeidah and Saleef ports in the past 72 hours.

He called on the international community, including the UN and US envoys, to stop Houthi activities that threaten energy sources and supplies and the security and safety of international shipping lanes, work to include them on international terrorism lists, and prosecute their leaders as war criminals and hold them accountable.



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World condemns Houthis as US says Iran 'clearly enabled' Jeddah oil attack
Coalition launches air-strikes, destroys explosive-laden boats in Yemen's Hodeidah, Saleef

Lebanese PM expects progress in talks with IMF over meltdown

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Sat, 2022-03-26 20:11

BEIRUT: Talks between the Lebanese government and the International Monetary Fund over an economic recovery plan should make progress in the next two weeks, Prime Minister Najib Mikati said Saturday.

Speaking to reporters in Qatar, where he is attending the Doha Forum, Mikati said an IMF delegation will resume talks with the government in Beirut on Tuesday over the country's economic meltdown that began more than two years ago.

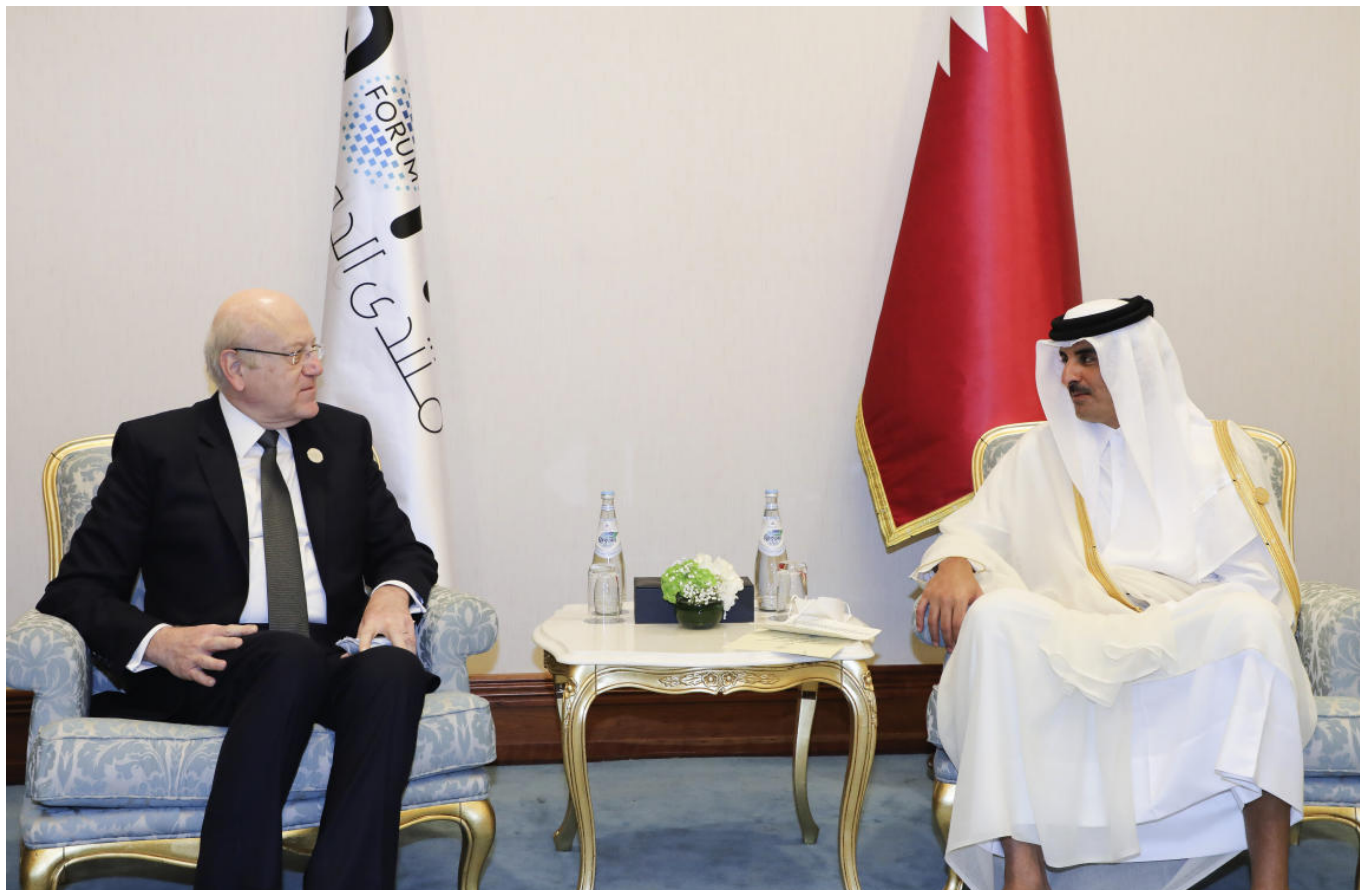
Talks between Lebanon and the IMF began in May 2020, and then stopped for months amid a political deadlock in the small country. They resumed after Mikati took office in September but no breakthrough has been made since. A main sticking point in the talks has been estimating the amount of financial losses. But late last year, Deputy Prime Minister Saadeh Shami, who is heading the talks with the IMF, put the losses of the financial sector at \$69 billion.

"Hopefully it's going to take, I guess, two weeks and by the end of the two weeks we can see the light differently," Mikati said in English about the next round of talks. He added that Lebanon has no other option but to reach an agreement with the IMF.

Mikati said Lebanon's economic meltdown, described by the World Bank as one of the worst the world has witnessed since the 1850s, has been made worse by the war in Ukraine.

Mikati refused to answer a question about corruption charges filed by a judge against the country's central bank Gov. Riad Salameh, saying it was "not the right place to talk about what's going on domestically." But he said Salameh's case will be solved "the right legal way." He did not elaborate. Mikati said the war between Russia and Ukraine has become "a new source of pressure" on small countries. He said Lebanon imports all its wheat from Russia and Ukraine. He said the government is trying to guarantee food security for people in Lebanon in the coming year.

Lebanon's economic crisis that began in October 2019 is rooted in decades of corruption and mismanagement. It has left three-quarters of the population of 6 million people, including 1 million Syrian refugees, in poverty. The Lebanese pound has lost more than 90 percent of its value.



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Lebanon PM Mikati says he will not run in May parliamentary election
Lebanon optimistic about resumption of relations with Gulf states

[Egypt launches yacht race to boost tourism](#)

Author:

Sat, 2022-03-26 19:07

CAIRO: Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has launched the first edition of a yacht race in the Red Sea governorate.

Amr El-Qadi, CEO of the Egyptian General Authority for Tourism Activation, said holding the two-day race comes within the framework of the ministry's efforts to promote yacht tourism, which attracts high spenders. The authority

is planning to sponsor a series of yacht races, he added.

Khaled Sherif, assistant minister of tourism and antiquities for digital transformation, said 13 yachts are participating in the race, each led by a crew of no fewer than five sailors. He added that the race covers 10-12 nautical miles.



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Emaar Misr launches yacht marina in Egypt