

US-Russia cooperation ensured Syria border crossing kept open: Official

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Sat, 2021-07-10 20:09

ATLANTA: A vital border crossing between Syria and Turkey has been kept open thanks to Washington and Moscow forging an agreement to pass a resolution at the UN Security Council (UNSC), the deputy to the US ambassador to the UN told a press briefing attended by Arab News on Saturday.

Jeffrey Prescott said keeping the border crossing open will “save lives” and deliver critical food and medicine, especially vaccines, to internally displaced Syrians. The US had initially expected Russia to veto the resolution, he added.

Prescott described the passing of the resolution as a “critical starting point” that the US and others will have to build on in the months ahead in order to expand humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people.

The UNSC voted unanimously on Friday to extend its authorization to keep the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing open for humanitarian aid to the Syrian people for another year in two six-month intervals.

The UN said the resolution applies “only to Bab Al-Hawa, not to several other crossing points whose use was previously curtailed by the council.”

It added: “The second six-month extension remains pending, subject to the issuance of a substantive report by the secretary-general on transparency in aid delivery operations and progress on cross-line access.”

Vassily A. Nebenzia, Russia’s ambassador to the UN, attributed the passing of the resolution to the “spirit of commitment” that was achieved during the recent summit between presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin. “We are grateful for this,” Nebenzia added.



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Biden hails diplomatic victory after UN votes to extend cross-border aid to Syria
Russia allows UN Syria aid access from Turkey for 12 months

[Algerian prime minister is infected with COVID-19](#)

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2021-07-10 16:16

CAIRO: Newly appointed Algerian Prime Minister Ayman Benabderrahmane is infected with COVID-19, Algerian state TV said on Saturday.

The prime minister, who had just formed his new government on Wednesday, will quarantine for seven days, but will continue performing his duties virtually, state TV said.

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune ordered his government to reimpose physical distancing and mask-wearing measures across the country on Saturday, as well as to speed up a vaccination drive to cope with a surge in infection cases, it said.

The North African country has so far reported 145,296 confirmed cases of coronavirus including 3,824 deaths.



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Algeria forms new government with energy and finance ministers unchanged
At least 27 killed in two road accidents in Algeria

[Lebanon power station to restart after](#)

fuel delivery

Author:

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Sat, 2021-07-10 14:43

BEIRUT: A major power station in Lebanon is to resume operations on Sunday, two days after it ground to a halt due to a lack of fuel at a time of constant power cuts and economic collapse.

Zahrani in south Lebanon – one of the country's four main power plants – went offline on Friday because the state electricity company was unable to access fuel shipments stuck offshore due to pending payments.

Electricity of Lebanon (EDL) said Saturday that foreign correspondent banks had completed payment procedures and preparations were underway to unload the cargo the same day.

"Zahrani power plant will be back in service starting tomorrow morning after the entire cargo aboard the tanker is unloaded into its tanks," EDL said in a statement.

The state electricity company did not refer to Deir Ammar power station which also went offline on Friday because it ran out of fuel.

Together, Deir Ammar and Zahrani provide about 40 percent of the country's electricity.

Lebanon is mired in what the World Bank has called one of the worst economic crises since the 1850s, and the cash-strapped state is struggling to buy enough fuel to keep the lights on.

Power cuts in recent months have lasted up to 22 hours a day in some areas, while even private generator owners have been forced to ration output as fuel prices rise, resulting in periods of complete blackout.

This has disrupted work at businesses, government offices and hospitals.

The government's Covid-19 vaccine committee on Friday said it canceled a mass vaccination drive planned for the weekend because of power outages in most centers.

The international community has long demanded a complete overhaul of the electricity sector, which has cost the government more than \$40 billion since the end of Lebanon's 1975-90 civil war.

Lebanon has been without a fully functioning government since the last once resigned in the wake of a devastating explosion at Beirut port last year that killed more than 200 people.

The economic crisis has seen the Lebanese pound lose more than 90 percent of its value against the dollar on the black market, and left over half the population living below the poverty line.



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Pharmacies in crisis-hit Lebanon strike over shortages

[Hackers breach Iran rail network, disrupt service](#)

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Reuters

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Fri, 2021-07-09 16:25

DUBAI: Train services in Iran were delayed by apparent cyberattacks on Friday, with hackers posting the phone number of the country's supreme leader as the number to call for information, state-affiliated news outlets reported.

Trains were delayed or canceled as ticket offices, the national railway's website and cargo services were disrupted, with "unprecedented chaos at railway stations across the country," the state broadcaster IRIB reported. A notice on electronic boards at stations asked travelers to call a number which in fact belonged to the office of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, IRIB and the semi-official news agency Fars said.

"Long delays due to cyberattacks," said another notice on station boards, Fars added.

IRIB later quoted a state railway company spokesman as saying technicians were checking the disruptions and denying that there were major delays.



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[Lebanon MPs stall lifting immunity in](#)

port blast probe

Author:

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Fri, 2021-07-09 19:21

BEIRUT: Lebanese parliamentarians failed to make progress in the Beirut port blast investigation Friday weeks before its first anniversary, demanding more proof before they lift immunity for ex-ministers wanted for questioning. Hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer exploded on the dockside at Beirut port last August 4, killing more than 200 people, injuring thousands and ravaging swathes of the capital.

Afterwards, it emerged that officials had known about the explosive substance being stored unsafely at the port for years.

Earlier this month, the leading judge in the case, Tareq Bitar, said he had demanded that parliament lift the immunity of ex-finance minister Ali Hasan Khalil, former public works minister Ghazi Zaiter and ex-interior minister Nohad Machnouk.

He said he was also taking steps toward charging former public works minister Yusef Fenianos, as he looked at possible charges of "probable intent to murder" and "negligence."

Deputy speaker Elie Ferzli said parliament's administration and justice committee met on Friday and decided to "request all evidence available in the investigation, as well as all documents that prove suspicions."

He said they would reconvene once they had received a reply, to decide whether or not to waive immunity.

Lawyer and activist Nizar Saghieh said the committee's request went against the separation of powers between the judiciary and the legislature, and "violated the confidentiality of the investigation."

The hashtag #lift_immunity_now began trending in Lebanon as protesters gathered outside the residence of the parliament speaker where the meeting took place.

"Immunity has to be lifted immediately," said Ibrahim Hoteit, a representative of families of those killed in the devastating explosion. The activist, who lost his brother in the disaster, said stalling the decision was "shameful, in view of the size of the crime."



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Lebanese judge takes aim at top politicians, officials over Beirut port blast
Lebanese minister denies request to quiz security chief over Beirut blast