

[Egypt to receive 6.8m doses of AstraZeneca vaccine](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-02-22 20:15

CAIRO: Egypt will receive 6.8 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, said Health and Population Minister Hala Zayed.

Online registration for vaccination will begin next week, with priority for the elderly and those with chronic diseases, she added.

Egypt has contracted for 100 million doses of COVID-19 jabs, 40 million of which are from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, Zayed said.

"We know that there is a global shortage, but we were the first African country to receive vaccines and start a vaccination campaign," she added.

Hossam Hosni, head of the scientific committee to combat coronavirus in Egypt, said vaccinating doctors will be done within weeks, followed by citizens.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Coornavirus vaccine](#)

[Egypt](#)

[AstraZeneca](#)

Egypt and Israel discuss future of Leviathan natural gas field
Egypt denies resumption of Russian chartered air traffic

Rockets target US embassy in Iraqi capital Baghdad

Mon, 2021-02-22 19:43

BAGHDAD: At least two rockets struck Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone on Monday without causing any casualties, Iraq's army said in a statement. Security officials said the US Embassy was the target.

Two Iraqi security officials said three rockets struck the Green Zone, one falling within the perimeters of the vast US Embassy complex. They spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

A statement from the military said there were no casualties and that an investigation was ongoing. There was minor property damage, including a damaged vehicle. The Green Zone houses foreign embassies and is the seat of Iraq's government.

It was the third attack to target the American presence in Iraq in a week. A US-led coalition contractor was killed and other civilians were wounded in a rocket attack outside Irbil international airport last Tuesday. On Saturday, rockets wounded personnel working for a US defense company at Balad airbase in Salahaddin province.

The US Embassy was a frequent target of rocket attacks during the Trump administration. The pace of attacks abated in the weeks before Biden took office and recently resumed.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Iraq](#)

[Baghdad](#)

[US](#)

[us embassy Baghdad](#)

[US embassy in Iraq](#)

US blasts Iran-backed militias over Iraq rocketsFive rockets fired at US air base in Afghanistan

[US seeks to extend, strengthen Iran nuclear pact despite Khamenei defiance](#)

Mon, 2021-02-22 19:23

LONDON: The United States will seek to strengthen and extend the agreement between world powers and Iran aimed at curbing its nuclear program, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday.

It's a new sign of Washington's ambition to revive the 2015 nuclear deal rejected by former President Donald Trump even as Tehran appears to be backing further away from it.

The UN nuclear watchdog said on Sunday it had struck a deal with Iran to cushion the blow of steps Tehran plans to take this week that include ending snap inspections, with both sides agreeing to keep "necessary" monitoring for up to three months.

The announcement by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi, made at Vienna airport after a weekend trip to Iran, confirmed that Tehran would go ahead with its plan to slash cooperation with the agency on Tuesday.

Blinken, addressing the UN-sponsored Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, said in a pre-recorded speech: "The United States remains committed to ensuring that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. Diplomacy is the best path to achieve that goal."

US President Joe Biden has said that if Iran comes back into "strict compliance" with the 2015 pact, his administration will do the same, Blinken said.

"Working with allies and partners, we will also seek to lengthen and strengthen the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) and address other areas of concern, including Iran's destabilizing regional behavior and ballistic missile development and proliferation," Blinken said.

"Iran must comply with its safeguards agreements with the IAEA and its international obligations," he added.

White House press secretary Jenn Psaki said US allies in Europe are still

waiting a response from Iran on the European Union's offer to host an informal meeting between current members of the nuclear deal and the US. Iran has slowly walked away from all the nuclear deal's limitations on its stockpile of uranium and has begun enriching up 20%, a technical step away from weapons-grade levels.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Monday Iran might enrich uranium up to 60% purity if the country needed it and would never yield to US pressure over its nuclear activity, state television reported.

Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with six powers caps the fissile purity to which Tehran can refine uranium at 3.67%, well under the 20% achieved before the agreement and far below the 90% suitable for a nuclear weapon.

"Iran's uranium enrichment level will not be limited to 20%. We will increase it to whatever level the country needs...We may increase it to 60%," the TV quoted Khamenei as saying.

Khamenei also repeated a denial of any Iranian intent to weaponize uranium enrichment.

"Our respected government did not abandon its commitments and gradually reduced some of them, which are still reversible in the case that they return to their responsibilities," he said.

Moreover, Iran said on Monday it will end at 2030 GMT the implementation of the Additional Protocol that allows the UN nuclear watchdog to carry out snap-inspections at sites not declared to the agency, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported.

"As of midnight tonight (2030 GMT), we will not have... commitments beyond safeguards. Necessary orders have been issued to the nuclear facilities," Tasnim quoted Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's envoy at the IAEA as saying.

US State Department spokesman Ned Price said Khamenei's comment about uranium enrichment "sounds like a threat" and declined to respond to what he described as "hypotheticals" and "posturing."

Price also reiterated US willingness to engage in talks with Iran.

French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told his EU colleagues during a meeting in Brussels that the situation regarding Iran's nuclear program is "worrying," his ministry said on Monday.

(With AP, AFP and Reuters)



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Anthony Blinken](#)

[Iran](#)

[United States](#)

[Iran nuclear deal](#)

[Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#)

US top general urges Iran restraint amid efforts to restart talksIran says outcome of IAEA chief visit 'significant achievement'

[UK must stand up to Iran: MPs](#)

Mon, 2021-02-22 19:02

LONDON: A cross-party group of British MPs has written to the government urging it to have the “courage” to downgrade diplomatic relations with Tehran in response to the threat posed by Iran’s state terrorism.

The letter, issued by the British Committee for Iran Freedom (BCFIF), said the case of Assadollah Assadi – an Iranian diplomat convicted of terrorism for trying to bomb an opposition rally in Paris in 2018 – is evidence that

Tehran uses its diplomatic missions abroad as a cover for terrorism.

"Iran's decision to act as a pariah state and to use its diplomats to threaten the security of Europe and the life of its citizens must be met with maximum pressure and not maximum diplomacy by the EU and UK," the MPs and Lord Alton of Liverpool said in the letter.

In a separate statement, Lord Alton said the Assadi ruling and investigation "show beyond any doubt that this was an act of state terrorism by the regime in Iran against the country's organised pro-democracy opposition, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), by targeting their conference, leader and supporters on European soil."

Lord Alton denounced the invitation extended to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to speak at the virtual Europe-Iran Business Forum in March, and urged the UK to downgrade relations with Tehran and investigate its diplomatic mission in London for evidence of terrorist activity.

"A Global Britain must have the courage to take the lead in Europe to address the serious threats of Iran's state terrorism," the BCFIF said.

It added that until the UK has confronted the Iranian threat within the country, it should proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization and sanction senior Iranian leaders such as Zarif and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Ali Safavi, an official with the NCRI's Foreign Affairs Committee, told Arab News that "the concern over the Iranian regime's illicit and dangerous nuclear weapons program shouldn't dwarf other aspects of its malign and sinister behavior," including "its renewed intelligence gathering and terrorist schemes on European soil."

He said Tehran's terrorism in Europe, its pursuit of nuclear weapons, its human rights abuses at home and its expansionism across the Middle East "are part and parcel of the same policy and, as such, must be dealt with in their entirety. A piecemeal approach to all these nefarious actions will be to no avail."

He added: "It's time for the EU to revise its policy vis-a-vis the ruling theocracy, and stand with the Iranian people and not with their oppressors."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Britain](#)

[Iran](#)

[Assadollah Assadi](#)

[National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\)](#)

Iranian envoy charged over Paris rally bomb plotIran protests to Belgium over Iranian envoy's bomb plot case

[Kuwait closes land and sea border crossings – cabinet](#)

Mon, 2021-02-22 19:17

LONDON: Kuwait will close its land and sea border crossings, with the exception of shipping operations and workers in the neutral zone, from Wednesday until March 20, the cabinet said on Monday via Twitter. Citizens, and domestic workers accompanying them, are allowed to return through land and sea ports, as are citizens' first-degree relatives, the cabinet added.

The Council of Ministers said that citizens arriving into the country will be

subjected to mandatory quarantine, and they must spend a week at a hotel and another week at home.

During their weekly meeting, the cabinet also said it would form a joint committee, headed by the Ministry of Interior and including the health ministry the civil aviation authority, tasked with overseeing that quarantine measures are enforced upon arrival.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](#) عن تأكيد إصابة 899 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 955 حالة شفاء، و 5 حالات وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](#) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 184,989 حالة pic.twitter.com/0UG3hBHFYn

February 22, 2021 (@KUWAIT_MOH) وزارة الصحة - الكويت -

It also said that as of Wednesday, restaurants and cafes, including those in shopping malls, would only operate for delivery and take away services until further notice.

Kuwait on Monday reported 899 new confirmed cases in the previous 24 hours, and five deaths related to the virus, bringing the totals to 184,989 and 1,049, respectively. Health authorities also said 955 patients recovered from the virus, raising the total to 173,182.

On Saturday, Kuwait announced it was extending an entry ban for non-Kuwaiti citizens until further notice as part of coronavirus restriction measures.
(With Reuters)



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Kuwait](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Kuwait bans entry for non-Kuwaiti citizens until further notice
Travelers arriving in Kuwait from COVID-19 hotspots must isolate in local hotels