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USD	GBP	INR	PKR	EUR	IRR	AED
01	01	1000	1000	01	1000	01
AFN 78.50	AFN 110.04	AFN 1067	AFN 500	AFN 95.82	AFN 0.37	AFN 21.22

Iran's Khamenei says Tehran wants action, not promises, for revival of nuclear deal

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday that Tehran wanted action and not promises from six world powers for the revival of their 2015 nuclear deal.

"I have told our negotiators that actions, not promises (by the six powers), are needed for the restoration of the nuclear deal," Khamenei said in a televised speech.

Tehran and global powers have been in talks since early April aimed at bringing back Washington and Tehran into full compliance with the deal that former US President Donald Trump exited in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Tehran.

In reaction to the sanctions, Tehran has been rebuilding stockpiles of enriched uranium, enriching it to higher levels of fissile purity and installing advanced centrifuges to speed up production.

While the European Union envoy coordinating the talks on said on Wednesday he believed a deal would be struck at the next round starting next week, other senior diplomats have said the most difficult decisions lie ahead.

ADF rebels killed 57 civilians in DR Congo's Ituri region: UN

Fighters from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) group killed 57 civilians in displacement camps in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on May 31, the United Nations said on Friday, voicing outrage at the gun and machete assaults.

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, said the deadly attacks by the ADF, which was driven out of neighbouring Uganda in the late 1990s, had forced some 5,800 people to flee multiple displacement sites in the eastern Ituri province.

"On May 31, ADF simultaneously attacked displacement sites and villages near the towns of Boga and Tchabi, killing 57 civilians – including seven children – who were shot and attacked with machetes," UNHCR spokesman Babar Baloch told reporters in Geneva.

"Several others were left wounded and 25 people were abducted, while over 70 shelters and stores were set on fire.

"In Boga town alone, 31 women, children and men were killed. Bereaved family members told UNHCR partners that many of their relatives were burnt alive in their houses," Baloch said.

"UNHCR is outraged by this latest in a series of atrocities committed by armed groups in eastern DRC," he added.

The agency called for security in the region to be scaled up urgently to protect civilians, many of whom have been attacked and forced to flee multiple times.

The ADF is the deadliest of scores of armed groups that roam the mineral-rich eastern DRC.

It is historically a Ugandan armed group that has holed up in eastern DRC since 1995. In March, the United States said the ADF was linked to ISIL (ISIS).

Baloch said that thousands had fled Boga to various nearby locations "with virtually nothing but the clothes they were wearing".

He said that while most had been welcomed in by impoverished host families, some were sleeping out in the open, while others have sought refuge in already overcrowded churches.

Baloch added that one of UNHCR's humanitarian partner organisations had its offices looted, leaving thousands short of aid.

The UNHCR said more than five million people had been uprooted by insecurity and violence in the DRC, with 1.7 million displaced in Ituri alone.

The agency said its financial appeal of $204.8m for DRC in 2021 was only 18 percent funded.

DR Congo on Thursday announced it will extend martial law in the restive region for 15 days, a month after civilian authorities were replaced with military administrations in North Kivu and Ituri provinces in the wake of rising rebel attacks.

On May 6, the government imposed a state of siege to try to end the bloodshed.

'No difference': Palestinians react to Israeli coalition deal

Many Palestinians are sceptical that a change in the Israeli government due to replace PM Benjamin Netanyahu will improve their lives.

Many Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza have dismissed a change in the Israeli government, saying the nationalist leader due to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would likely pursue the same right-wing agenda.

Naftali Bennett, the 49-year-old former head of Israel's main West Bank settler organisation and ex-Netanyahu ally, would be the country's new leader under a patchwork coalition.

Opposition and centrist leader Yair Lapid of Yesh Atid and Bennett declared on Wednesday night they had reached a deal to form a new government to unseat the incumbent Netanyahu after a 12-year run as prime minister.

Bassem al-Salhi, a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), said the prime minister-designate was no less extreme than Netanyahu.

"He will make sure to express how extreme he is in the government," he said.

Bennett has been a strong advocate of annexing parts of the West Bank that Israel captured and occupied in a 1967 war.

However, in recent days Bennett appeared to propose a continuation of the status quo, with some easing of conditions for Palestinians.

"My thinking in this context is to shrink the conflict. We will not resolve it. But wherever we can [improve conditions] – more crossing points, more quality of life, more business, more industry – we will do so."

Hamas, the group which rules the besieged Gaza Strip, said it made no difference who governs Israel.

"Palestinians have seen dozens of Israeli governments throughout history, right, left, centre, as they call it. But all of them have been hostile when it comes to the rights of our Palestinian people and they all had hostile policies of expansionism," spokesman Hazem Qassem said.

Sami Abou Shehadeh, leader of the Palestinian nationalist Balad Party, told Al Jazeera from occupied East Jerusalem the issue was not the "personality" of Netanyahu but the policies Israel pursues.

"What we need is a serious change in Israeli policies, not in the personalities. The situation was very bad before Netanyahu, and as long as Israel insists on its own policies, it will continue to being bad after Netanyahu. This is why we oppose this government [new coalition]."

Former member of the executive committee of the PLO Hanan Ashrawi said the Netanyahu years still had "built-in systems of racism, extremism, violence and lawlessness".

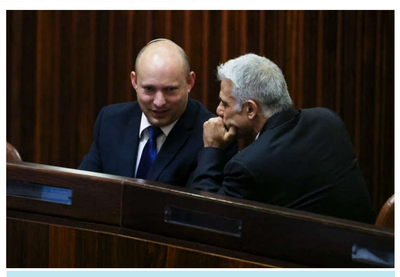
"His former cohorts will maintain his legacy," she tweeted.

Similar sentiments were voiced elsewhere.

"There is no difference between one Israeli leader and another," Ahmed Rezik, 29, a government worker in Gaza, told Reuters news agency.

"They are good or bad for their nation. And when it comes to us, they are all bad, and they all refuse to give the Palestinians their rights and their land."

The coalition agreement capped a March 23 election in which neither Netanyahu's Likud party and its allies nor their opponents won a majority in the legislature. It was Israel's fourth national ballot in two years.



Belarus to cut US diplomatic staff, tighten visa procedures over sanctions

The Belarusian foreign ministry has announced plans for the reduction of US diplomatic staff in the country and tightening visa procedures for the Americans after Washington imposed sanctions against a number of companies in Belarus.

Anatoly Glaz, the ministry spokesman, announced the retaliatory move in a statement on Thursday, saying the United States would have to cut its diplomatic and administrative staff in Belarus.

Glaz also said the Belarusian foreign ministry has revoked the permission of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) — a US agency purportedly responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance — to work in the country.

The US administration said in April that it would impose sanctions on nine state-owned companies in Belarus over Minsk's alleged human rights violations and abuses.

Glaz censured the US sanctions against his country, saying, "These actions are illegal, contradict international law and are aimed at putting pressure on a sovereign state."

Washington has also threatened Belarus with more sanctions after Minsk forced a Lithuania-bound airliner to land and arrested a dissident journalist onboard.

The European Union banned Belarusian airlines last week from using the airspace of the 27-nation bloc and called on air carriers based in the EU to avoid flying over the country after Belarusian law enforcement forces detained dissident figure Roman Protasevich, who was among the passengers of a plane that had earlier been diverted to the Minsk airport.

On May 23, a Ryanair passenger plane heading from Greece to Lithuania was forced to make an emergency landing at Minsk International Airport, following a reported bomb scare that proved to be a false threat later.

Belarusian law enforcement forces detained Protasevich, the co-founder of a Telegram channel that is viewed as extremist by the Belarus government, as well as a female companion identified as Sofia Sapega.

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UAE announces 2,062 new COVID-19 cases, two deaths in 24 hours

The United Arab Emirates recorded 2,062 new COVID-19 infections, 2,035 recoveries and two deaths in 24 hours, the country's National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA) reported on Friday.

The country's health authorities determined Friday's numbers after carrying out 233,038 coronavirus tests.

The total diagnosed cases since the beginning of the pandemic have now increased to 579,009. Total recoveries rose to 558,584 and the death toll now sits at 1,691.

The UAE's immunization drive, which has been deemed the world's most efficient one yet, has been gaining speed.

NCEMA on Tuesday reported that more than 81 percent of the UAE's eligible population over 16 and just over 92 percent of its elderly population (over 60) have been inoculated against the virus. With Dubai's recent approval of the Pfizer-BioNTech jab for 12–15-year-olds, the number of vaccinated individuals is expected to rise soon.

It was announced this week that the UAE and Bahrain have made the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine available as a booster shot to those initially immunized with a vaccine developed by the China National Pharmaceutical Group (Sinopharm).

The Gulf states, which have vaccinated large portions of their populations, initially started inoculating residents and citizens with the Sinopharm COVID-19 shot before later introducing other vaccines.

Six teenage girls killed in fire at Egypt detention center

Six teenage girls were killed and 19 others injured in a fire at a juvenile detention center in the Egyptian capital, officials said Friday.

The blaze broke out late Thursday at the building in Al-Marg district on Cairo's northeastern outskirts, a security official told AFP.

The head of the facility, which houses around 200 girls aged between 14 and 17, was immediately detained, the official said, without elaborating.

The fire, reportedly confined to one wing of the detention facility, was brought under control by civil defense workers.

Prosecutors opened an investigation into the cause of the fire by questioning survivors, a judicial source said.

The remains of those who died were handed over to their families.

Deadly fires are a common hasard in Egypt, where many buildings are dilapidated and poorly maintained.

In March, at least 20 people died in a fire at a textile factory east of Cairo.

Seven patients were killed in a December 2020 blaze at a hospital north of the capital.

Australia detects 'highly transmissible' COVID variant in Melbourne

Australian authorities in the southeastern state of Victoria have detected a "highly transmissible" variant of the deadly coronavirus, stoking concerns of a major spike in cases.

Authorities in Victoria said on Friday that the Delta COVID-19 virus variant has for the first time been detected through genomic sequencing among infections in the latest outbreak in Melbourne, the state capital and Australia's second-biggest city.

"That variant is the Delta variant, it is now infamous in India and increasingly found in the United Kingdom. It is a variant of significant concern," Victoria state Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton told reporters in Melbourne.

Sutton stressed that the highly infectious variant was not linked to any sequenced COVID-19 cases in other parts of Australia and is thought to be behind the recent devastating wave of the deadly pathogen in India.

"It is a concern that it is not linked to other cases but we are chasing down all those primary-case contacts ... and looking into where it might have been acquired," the Australian official said.

The Delta variant has been classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as among the four COVID-19 variants of concern due to evidence that they spread more easily.

The highly infectious variant was said to have been detected in two members in a family who travelled from Melbourne to neighboring New South Wales (NSW) in late-May and visited several popular tourist locations in the state's south.

Sutton said it was "within the bounds of possibility" that the cases could have contracted the Delta variant in NSW but that more tests would be needed as NSW, Australia's most populous state, has not reported any locally acquired cases in a month.

Victoria, Australia's second-most populous state, is battling to contain its latest outbreak – 65 cases since May 24 – after more than three months of no cases, placing tough restrictions on the movement of people and shutting down large parts of its economy.

A range of measures, including snap lockdowns, regional border restrictions and strict social distancing rules, have been taken to rein in potential outbreaks in Australia and keep its COVID-19 numbers relatively low at just over 30,100 cases and 910 deaths.