

Don't fall for COVID-19 vaccine conspiracies, warns Muslim scholar

Wed, 2021-01-20 00:37

LONDON: A leading Muslim scholar in Canada has warned people not to be taken in by conspiracy theories about the coronavirus vaccine.

Sheikh Mohammed Tahir Al-Qadri said that such views, which are being spread by some on social media in an attempt to discourage people from being vaccinated, go against the tenets of Islam.

"Saving lives is an act of worship," he said during an interview with Sky News. "At the start of the pandemic, Muslims around the world were among those in the forefront. They put their maximum efforts into saving lives, providing people with food and every kind of necessary support. In the same way, they should come forward now."

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Al-Qadri, who is originally from Pakistan, sought to reassure his followers and encourage them not to believe false claims about the vaccines.

"Some people are saying that there is alcohol in it, or pork or other things forbidden (in Islam)," he said. "Some say these vaccines may affect certain parts of the brain. What can I say? These are totally baseless claims."

"This is a matter of medicinal development, of life, and it is just the same as when we take paracetamol, antibiotics or aspirins despite their side effects."

"Believing in the medical process is one of the basic teachings of Islam. Islam and the teachings of the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is focused on reason, intelligence, scientific research and intellectual development."



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Serious questions over coronavirus origin fuel conspiracy theoriesIran leader refuses US help, citing virus conspiracy theory

[Trump grants Bahrain's King Hamad top honor on last day in office](#)

Tue, 2021-01-19 22:36

LONDON: Bahrain's King Hamad was awarded a rare medal by US President Donald Trump in recognition of his "remarkable efforts" to consolidate relations and the close partnership between the two countries, Bahrain News Agency (BNA) reported on Tuesday.

Trump decorated the monarch with the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, "a rarely-awarded, prestigious decoration that can only be bestowed by the president, typically to chiefs of state or heads of government of other countries," the White House said.

The king was also recognized for his "prominent role in pushing bilateral cooperation to broader and more comprehensive horizons, which promoted the common interests of the two countries and its peoples," BNA said.

The outgoing American leader said that he was "pleased to present this medal to the king, who over decades contributed to establishing Bahrain's position as a steadfast strategic ally and partner working alongside the United States."

Trump added that Manama's support for the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, which is stationed in Bahrain, had a supportive role in enabling it to perform its multiple tasks and he praised the king's courage and wise leadership vision for his support for peace and his decision to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.

He described this decision as the start of a new era of economic and security cooperation among the most important US partners in the Middle East and made peace in the region a possible process that would reshape the region's landscape in a positive way for future generations.

The American president said that the partnership between the two countries would become deeper in the Middle East.

"The king's decorating of this prestigious medal is an indication of the high position that he enjoys in the US, and the great appreciation for the prominent roles and major contributions he has made in enhancing security, stability, and prosperity with the vision of spreading peace in the region," the statement added.

In its final days in office, the Trump administration announced the designation of both Bahrain and the UAE as "major security partners" of the US, a status unique to both countries that demonstrated a "new level of partnership" and "represents an enduring commitment to economic and security cooperation.

"It also reflects their extraordinary courage, determination, and leadership in entering into the Abraham Accords," the White House said on Friday.

Bahrain, the UAE, Morocco, and Sudan joined Egypt and Jordan to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel last year, in deals brokered by the US. Also, on Friday, Trump decorated Morocco's King Mohammed VI with the same accolade bestowed on King Hamad for "vision and personal courage," especially his decision to resume ties with Israel, that "have positively reshaped the landscape of the Middle East and North Africa and ushered in a new era of security and prosperity for both our countries and the world."

The Legion of Merit is a military award that was created to honor Allied leaders in World War II and had gone into obscurity until it was revived by Trump, who last month also presented it to the prime ministers of Australia, India, and Japan.

(With AFP)



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AUTHORIZED BY ACT OF CONGRESS JULY 20, 1942
HAS AWARDED
(DEGREE OF CHIEF COMMANDER)

THE LEGION OF MERIT

TO
KING HAMAD BIN ISA BIN SALMAN AL KHALIFA
OF BAHRAIN

FOR
EXCEPTIONALLY MERITORIOUS CONDUCT
IN THE PERFORMANCE OF OUTSTANDING SERVICES
FROM MARCH 1999 TO DECEMBER 2020
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS 8TH DAY OF DECEMBER 2020

Christopher C. Miller

Acting Secretary of Defense



Donald Trump

President of the United States of America





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US designates Bahrain, UAE 'major security partners' Bahrain, US sign deal to establish commercial zone

[Antony Blinken: US must act urgently to stop Iran nuclear weapon](#)

Tue, 2021-01-19 22:50

LONDON: A new nuclear deal could address Iran's aggressive policies in the Middle East, America's next top diplomat Antony Blinken said on Tuesday. The secretary of state-designate told his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the administration of President-elect Joe Biden would seek a "longer and stronger deal."

But he warned that the time needed for Iran to make enough fissile material for a single nuclear weapon had fallen to three or four months from more than a year since Donald Trump took office.

Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which Biden had helped negotiate under President Barack Obama.

The deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), stemmed

Iranian nuclear activity in return for an easing of international sanctions. But it was criticized by Gulf countries and in the US for allowing Tehran to pursue aggressive policies in the region and ballistic missile development. Blinken said the new administration had “an urgent responsibility” to do what it could to stop Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon.

“The breakout time – the time it would take Iran to produce enough fissile material for one weapon – has gone from beyond a year, as it was under the JCPOA, to about three or four months, based at least on public reporting,” Blinken said.

President Biden, he added, would rejoin the deal if Iran returned to complying with its terms.

“But we would use that as a platform with our allies and partners, who would once again be on the same side with us, to seek a longer and stronger agreement,” he said.

A new agreement could address Iran’s “destabilizing activities” in the region as well as its missiles, Blinken added.

On Israel and Palestine, Blinken said he backed a two-state solution but said he was doubtful that such a deal was possible soon.

“The only way to ensure Israel’s future as a Jewish, democratic state and to give the Palestinians a state to which they are entitled is through the so-called two-state solution,” Blinken said. “I think realistically it’s hard to see near-term prospects for moving forward on that.”

“What would be important is to make sure that neither party takes steps that make the already difficult process even more challenging,” he said.

In his farewell speech, President Donald Trump will highlight the Abraham Accords deals, which normalized ties between Israel and several Arab states.

*With AFP and Reuters



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[Egypt flies aid to Jordan as talks focus on peace, trade](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-01-19 22:06

CAIRO: Egypt sent a military aircraft loaded with medical aid to Jordan ahead of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's official visit to Amman.

The medicines and medical supplies will help the country in its fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

The military flight landed in Jordan before El-Sisi's arrival on Monday to meet Jordan's King Abdullah for talks on a range of regional issues.

Senior ministers and officials from both sides were joined by Jordanian Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah for discussions on ways to strengthen bilateral relations and "the latest developments in the regional and Arab arena, foremost of which is the Palestinian issue," the state-run news agency Petra reported.

King Abdullah affirmed Jordan's "clear and firm stance" on Palestine and called for a just and comprehensive peace based on a two-state solution guaranteeing the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Both leaders discussed enhancing bilateral relations in trade, development, investment, security cooperation and exchange of information.

Talks also focused on eliminating the threat of terrorism and extremism in order to ensure stability, maintain territorial integrity and encourage prosperity.

During their meeting, the two leaders also "discussed mechanisms to expand tripartite Jordanian-Egyptian-Iraqi cooperation, and their aspiration to continue building on what has been accomplished in the previous three summits."

Regarding the latest efforts to revive the Palestinian peace process, El-Sisi said that Egypt will continue its support for the Palestinian cause "since it is one of the fundamentals of Egyptian policy."

King Abdullah said that he appreciated Egypt's "relentless efforts in supporting the Palestinian cause, which is an extension of its historical role."

He added that these are in line with Egypt's efforts to promote stability, and improve living conditions and economic security in the Gaza Strip.

The monarch praised efforts aimed at advancing the reconciliation process and encouraging political consensus between all Palestinian factions.



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Jordan's King Abdullah, Egypt's El-Sisi meet in bid to reignite Mid-East peace talks
Egyptian leader in Jordan for post-Trump strategy talks

Egyptian city hosts Libyan constitutional talks

Tue, 2021-01-19 21:46

CAIRO: The southern Egyptian city of Hurghada is set to host three days of meetings to discuss Libya's constitutional path with the Libyan House of Representatives and the State Council, sponsored by the country's UN Support Mission.

The meetings will discuss ways to reach an agreement between the two chambers on a project to create a constitutional and legal base, according to which the December elections will be held.

A committee of 30 members split equally between the House of Representatives and the State Council will submit periodic reports to the Presidency of the Council, provided that it submits a final report within 40 days or less.

They will discuss constitutional regulation mechanisms for this year's elections.

The meetings follow the legal committee of the Libyan Forum for Political Dialogue presenting their recommendations regarding the constitutional basis for the elections. The virtual meeting was conducted under the auspices of the UN.

The UN Support Mission in Libya said that over recent months, several meetings were held to discuss the roadmap that ultimately achieves a comprehensive settlement of the Libyan crisis.

The mission stated that the roadmap, drawn up in Tunisia last November, was the first critical step to renew the political legitimacy of Libyan institutions and restore the country's sovereignty through holding national elections on Dec. 24.

It added that the participants in the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum also agreed on clear steps leading to the elections.

The elections will be held on an agreed constitutional base, and the forum will set a reasonable timeframe for politicians and the relevant institutions to prepare for the event, with sufficient planning for possible failures.

Forum participants, during their recent sessions in Geneva, agreed on the need to restructure the executive authority that governs Libya in the pre-election period, provided that the role of the new unified government is to provide the necessary conditions for holding elections, launching national reconciliation, fighting corruption and restoring public services.

Cairo hosted a meeting between Oct. 11 and 13 between the delegations of parliament and the State Council during which constitutional issues were discussed.



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