

US expects seventh round of Iran nuclear talks; no details when

Wed, 2021-07-07 22:24

WASHINGTON: The United States said on Wednesday it expected a seventh round of indirect US-Iran talks on resuming compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal to take place “at the appropriate moment,” but did not say when that might be.

“Of course, nothing is certain in the world of diplomacy, but I think we have every expectation that there will be a seventh round of talks at the appropriate moment, at the right time, and our team looks forward to being engaged in that next round of talks when it does begin,” US State Department spokesman Ned Price told a regular news briefing.



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Iran accuses Israel of June attack on civilian nuclear site

Maronite patriarch tells Hariri: 'Form govt or Lebanon will die'

Author:

Wed, 2021-07-07 21:38

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rahi on Wednesday urged Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri to urgently form a government in collaboration with President Michel Aoun "according to the spirit of the constitution."

Al-Rahi's statement followed his return from the Vatican, where he took part in a prayer and gathering for Lebanon hosted by Pope Francis.

After meeting Aoun, Al-Rahi blamed Lebanon's worsening crisis on "the absence of a government, which is ruining the economy, increasing unemployment and closing enterprises."

Without executive authority, the country will die, he warned.

Last week at the Vatican, Al-Rahi said that "everybody is responsible for the current situation in Lebanon, including the president."

On Wednesday, at the Presidential Palace, he reiterated that "everybody has violated the constitution."

Two days ago, Hariri visited Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, whose initiative to form a government of 24 ministers was obstructed by Aoun's insistence on a blocking third, or a third of all Cabinet seats, effectively giving his team veto power over government decisions.

This coincided with reports on Wednesday that Hariri intends to abandon his efforts to form the government, a mission assigned to him nine months ago by Aoun and parliament.

At that time, Hariri had agreed to form a government of 18 ministers of technocrats to implement economic, financial and administrative reforms, according to the French initiative.

On Wednesday, Arab News was told that efforts were being made to find a replacement for Hariri in order to avoid a government vacuum.

However, the figures being considered, including former prime ministers, refused to take on the role because of past failures to reach an agreement.

MP Bilal Abdullah, a member of the Democratic Gathering bloc, told Arab News: "Renewing the talk about the intention of Hariri to end his mission is lethal for the Lebanese and the economy. It adds to the humiliation of the citizens who are trying to secure their medicines, transportation and food. What we

need are serious steps to form the government without obstacles or high demands, as the president and the PM-designate are doing now.”

He said that Al-Rahi’s appeal to form the government will put pressure on Hariri to resign.

“The patriarch is the one who worked most on reconciliation between the two sides but failed. He is not a party and should work on eliminating obstacles, and not call on one side to rush in forming the government,” Abdullah said.

“If Hariri resigns, there will be repercussions, especially if he chooses to join the opposition.”

Abdullah said that any replacement for Hariri was destined to fail, adding: “We should focus on reconciliation.”

Al-Rahi called on the Lebanese to show resilience and be patient, saying that “after dark there will be daylight.”

However, Wednesday’s dawn presented another bleak picture of Lebanon.

Sheikh Hassan Merheb, imam of a mosque in Tariq El-Jdideh, posted a photo of a man praying with his oxygen device next to him.

Merheb wrote: “The man has no electricity at home, so he came to the mosque at dawn to use the power generated by the mosque’s generator. Damn all those who got us to this situation.”

Shortages of fuel and medicine as subsidies are gradually lifted from many commodities and goods are adding to the problems facing Lebanon’s hard-hit population.

Dr. Sharaf Abou Sharaf, head of the Lebanese Order of Physicians, said: “Lebanese children have started to suffer from the unavailability of vaccines. This poses a serious threat to new generations.”

Protesters in Tripoli stormed a drugs warehouse and said that they found “hundreds of medicines that are unavailable in the pharmacies.



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[Biden to host Jordan's King Abdullah on July 19: White House](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1625682631842296300

Wed, 2021-07-07 18:28

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will host King Abdullah of Jordan at the White House on July 19, the White House said on Wednesday. Biden reaffirmed strong US support for the monarch shortly after the kingdom announced it had quashed a rift within the royal family that shook Jordan's

image as a beacon of stability in the region.

“His Majesty’s visit will highlight the enduring and strategic partnership between the United States and Jordan, a key security partner and ally of the United States,” the White House said in a statement.

“It will be an opportunity to discuss the many challenges facing the Middle East and showcase Jordan’s leadership role in promoting peace and stability in the region.”

Abdullah is on a three-week visit to the United States that will include Biden’s first meeting with an Arab leader at the White House since taking office, a July 1 statement from the palace said.

Abdullah strongly opposed former US President Donald Trump’s Middle East peace plan, which he saw as a national security threat that would also undermine his Hashemite family’s custodianship of holy sites in Jerusalem. Officials say the shift in US policy under Biden toward a more traditional commitment to a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict has relieved pressure on Jordan, where a majority of the population of 10 million are Palestinians.



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Jordan court sets Monday for ruling in plot to destabilize kingdom

Egypt in diplomatic push at UN over GERD

Author:

Wed, 2021-07-07 20:34

CAIRO: Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry will participate in a special session of the UN Security Council on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on Thursday.

Shoukry continued his intensive meetings in New York with several of his ministerial counterparts, permanent delegates of Security Council member states, and officials of the UN, to reiterate Egypt's firm position on the issue.

He emphasized Egypt's desire to reach a binding legal agreement on the filling and operating of the dam that takes into account the interests of the three countries involved – Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia – while preserving Egypt's water rights.

Shoukry also held a meeting with the African Union group, comprising the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa and Senegal, to explain the Egyptian position.

He held similar meetings with the permanent representatives of Russia and China in the Security Council and stressed the need for the council to assume its responsibilities toward this issue.


In televised statements, he said that negotiations with Ethiopia would not be indefinite, adding that Egypt and Sudan must defend their water interests in the Nile.

Shoukry said Egypt seeks a peaceful solution to the issue through negotiation with Ethiopia.

He said Egypt aims to defuse any tension or escalation, explaining that it is the responsibility of the Security Council to work with preventive diplomacy.

The minister said the issue of the dam is of utmost importance due to its direct connection to Egypt's national security and considers it an "existential issue."

He reiterated Egypt and Sudan's rejection of the unilateral measure taken by Ethiopia, which started the second filling of the GERD this week.





Battle for the Nile

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Egyptian minister accuses Ethiopia of intransigence over GERD
Egypt FM seeks UN counsel in GERD dispute amid Ethiopia threats

Ethiopia 'driving a wedge between Arab League and African Union'

Author:

Mohammed Abu Zaid

ID:

1625680981492113000

Wed, 2021-07-07 21:02

CAIRO: An official source at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States has expressed dissatisfaction over Ethiopia's statement in its recent letter to the UN Security Council on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) issue.

The Arab League announced last month it was backing the Security Council intervention, despite Ethiopia's insistence that talks proceed under an existing process led by the African Union.

Ethiopia said on Tuesday that it rejected "unwelcome meddling" by the Arab League in a long-running dispute with Egypt and Sudan over the mega-dam on a tributary of the Nile River.

The statement from the Foreign Ministry came as Egypt voiced its anger at the renewed filling of the GERD reservoir.

"Ethiopia rejects the unwelcome meddling by the League of Arab States on the matter of the GERD following the league's submission of a letter to the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly to intervene in the matter," Ethiopia's statement said.

"The League of Arab States has a reputation for its unfettered and unconditional support to any claim Egypt has presented on the issue of the Nile," it added.

In response, the Arab League source said Ethiopia's statement could undermine the friendly and cooperative relations between the league and the African Union.

The source said that Ethiopia's message contained many inaccuracies, but "the most dangerous thing was the clear attempt to drive a wedge between two regional organizations that have maintained close and solid relations."

The Arab League is not about to engage in any form of controversy or confrontation with the African Union, especially since its members include 10 Arab countries, the source added, noting that the league maintains different and multiple frameworks and mechanisms for consultation and joint action with the African Union.

The league's intervention in the dam is logical since the issue affects the interests of two of its members, Egypt and Sudan, the source said.

According to the source, Ethiopia is seeking to portray the issue as an Arab-African conflict, "which is wrong and causes alarm."

The source called on Addis Ababa to review its "unhelpful approach."



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