

# Turkish 'sea snot' plague prompts cholera fears

Thu, 2021-06-03 21:52

LONDON: A mucus-like substance known as "sea snot" is blanketing the shores near Istanbul after covering huge areas of the Marmara Sea, threatening sea life and prompting warnings that it could bring deadly diseases in its wake.

The problem is particularly acute in the Gulf of Izmit, southeast of the city, with fishermen unable to work because they cannot operate motors or nets in the sludge.

The brown, viscous substance is a mixture of fat, carbohydrates and protein emitted by tiny phytoplankton, which multiply rapidly when chemical pollutants and sewage are pumped into the water.

It kills sea life by blocking out vital sunlight and, as it sinks, coats the sea floor and accelerates the decomposition of creatures.

The phytoplankton responsible grow out of control when nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus are widely available in seawater. Rising sea temperatures add to the problem.

Divers have reported large numbers of fish dying, and say that marine life has been forced to seek refuge in small holes or other forms of aquatic shelter.

Experts have also warned that the substance provides fertile ground for dangerous bacteria, including cholera.

Istanbul has suffered from frequent cholera epidemics in its history. The most recent, in 1970, left 50 people dead and thousands more infected.

Cholera usually strikes countries with poor sanitation and water hygiene infrastructure. Victims commonly experience vomiting, diarrhea and muscle fatigue.

Turkish Environment Minister Murat Kurum said that a 300-strong team had been sent to tackle the "sea snot" problem.

However, the rapidly multiplying plankton quickly recovered from attempts to sweep it away.

Muharrem Balci, a marine biology expert at Istanbul University, said: "A short-term solution is very difficult, I would say impossible.

"The first thing to do is to reduce run-off and associated pollution, then international cooperation is needed for the improvement and protection of marine life in the Mediterranean and Black Sea ecosystems, which are connected to the Marmara Sea through the Turkish straits."



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Turkey facing 'sea snot' invasion on popular shorelines Sea pollution threatens livelihood of fishermen

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## [Egypt's local production of Sinovac vaccine to begin by end of June](#)

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Thu, 2021-06-03 21:43

CAIRO: Egypt's local production of the first batch of the Chinese Sinovac coronavirus vaccine will start by the end of June, according to Health Minister Hala Zayed.

Khaled Mujahid, the Ministry of Health and Population's spokesman, said once the production of the first batch is completed, it will be sent to the Egyptian Drug Authority for analysis.

Mujahid said Chinese experts were currently in Egypt to supervise the

manufacturing process and transfer expertise to both the Egyptian Holding Co. for Biological Products and Vaccines (VACSERA) and the Egyptian Drug Authority.

He said Egypt is one of the first countries in the world to manufacture the Sinovac vaccine following an agreement reached in April, and stressed clinical trials had been conducted on the jab and that competitive prices were fixed in the agreement.

Sinovac's efficacy, he added, was 91 percent based on clinical studies conducted in Brazil, Chile, Turkey, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Second doses, he said, will be administered 21 days after first doses.

The ministry has allocated more than 400 centers nationwide and urged citizens – especially the elderly and those with chronic diseases – to register to get the jabs.

The government has also approved 179 new facilities to provide doses for those who work abroad and have filed requests for vaccination.

More details about their locations will be shared on the ministry's website to ease the process. Requests for vaccine certificates for travel are also being addressed.

The ministry announced that mobile medical clinics will be stationed in front of post offices in all governorates to vaccinate pensioners from the first until the 10th of each month.

These clinics are equipped with two data entry points to electronically register pensioners, and devices to check blood pressure and blood sugar before administering the vaccine.



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Egypt to locally produce 2m doses of China's Sinovac jab

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## [US says expecting sixth and further rounds of Iran nuclear talks](#)

Thu, 2021-06-03 21:38

WASHINGTON: The United States expects to have a sixth round of indirect talks on reviving compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and probably more, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Thursday.

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

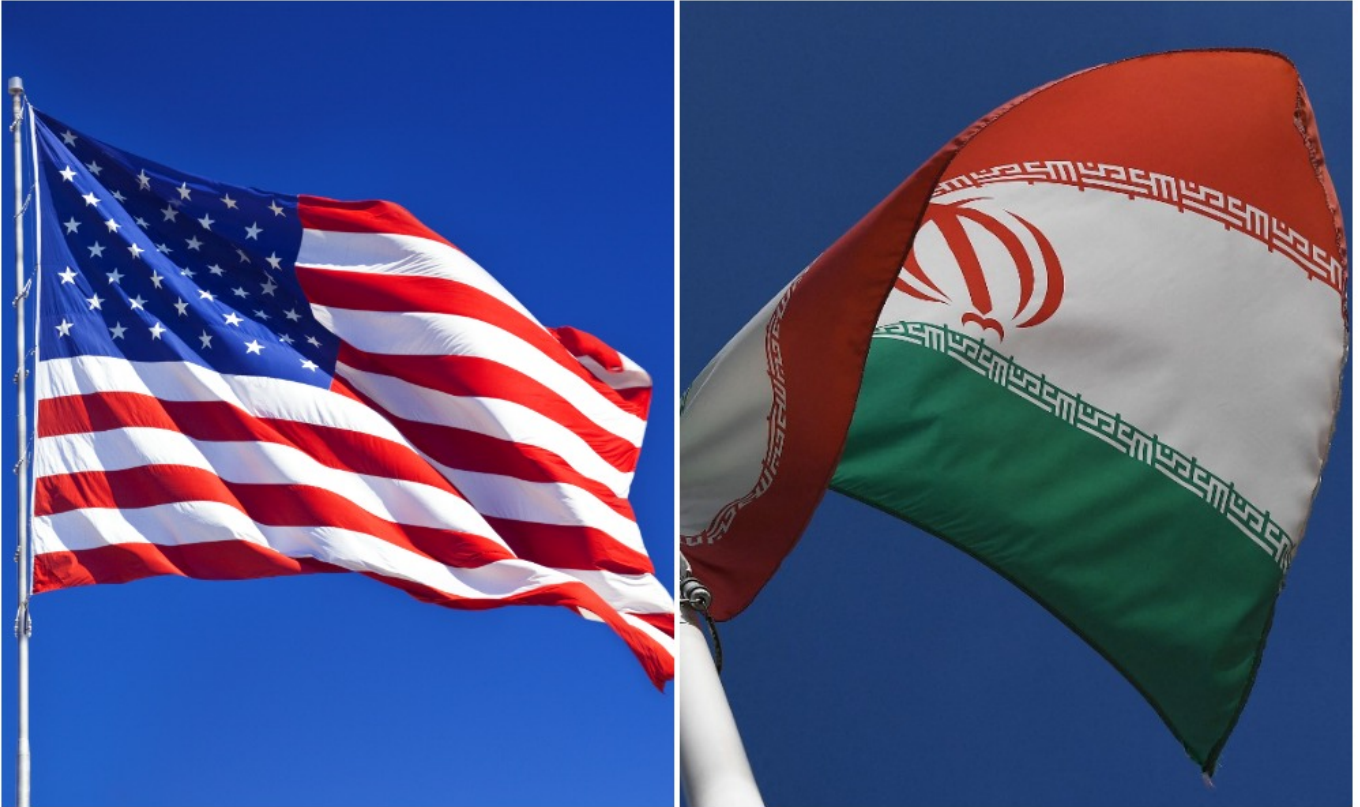
Price said hurdles remained after the fifth round of talks that concluded on Wednesday and offered a more cautious outlook than the EU official, even as he did not rule out the possibility of an agreement in the next round.

"We expect there will be a sixth. I think there's just about every expectation that there will be subsequent rounds beyond that," Price told reporters. He said the hurdles included the fact that the talks are indirect – Iran refuses direct discussions with the United States – and the issues complex.

"There is no lack of distrust between and among Iran and the other partners and allies with whom we're working on this," he added.

Former US President Donald Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018, arguing it gave Iran excessive sanctions relief for inadequate nuclear curbs.

US President Joe Biden wants to restore the pact's nuclear limits and, if possible, extend them.



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UN nuclear watchdog chief 'concerned' over undeclared Iran sites

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## [Palestinians see little difference in old and new Israeli leaders](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2021-06-03 21:18

RAMALLAH/GAZA: Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza on Thursday mostly dismissed a change in Israeli government, saying the nationalist leader due to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would likely pursue the same right-wing agenda.

Naftali Bennett, a former official in Israel's main West Bank settler organization, would be Israel's new leader under a patchwork coalition struck

on Wednesday.

“There is no difference between one Israeli leader and another,” said Ahmed Rezik, 29, a government worker in Gaza.

“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.”

Bassem Al-Salhi, a representative for the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said Bennett was no less extreme than Netanyahu, adding: “He will make sure to express how extreme he is in the government.”

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

“Palestinians have seen dozens of Israeli governments throughout history, right, left, center, 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.

In what would be a first in Israel, a governing coalition would include an Islamist party elected by members of Israel’s 21 percent Arab minority, who are Palestinian by culture and heritage and Israeli by citizenship.

Its leader, Mansour Abbas, said the coalition agreement would bring more than 53 billion shekels (\$16 billion) to improve infrastructure and combat violent crime in Arab towns..

But he has been criticized in the West Bank and Gaza for siding with what they see as the enemy.

“He is a traitor. What will he do when they ask him to vote on launching a new war on Gaza?” said Badri Karam, 21, in Gaza.

“Will he accept it, being a part of the killing of Palestinians?”



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Visiting Israeli defense chief seeks to reaffirm US support  
Red Cross chief urges Israel, Palestinians to end cycle of violence

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## [US envoy announces new Syria aid, seeks delivery access](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2021-06-03 20:35

ANKARA: The US Ambassador to the United Nations announced on Thursday nearly \$240 million in humanitarian funding to support the people of Syria, Syrian refugees and countries hosting them.

The ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, also called for access through international crossings to allow the delivery of aid.

She made the announcement during a visit to the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing between Turkey and Syria – the sole remaining point of access for humanitarian aid to enter the conflict-ravaged country.

The ambassador is in Turkey on a four-day visit seeking to ensure that humanitarian aid can be delivered to Syria across borders – a program which Russia, Syria's closest ally, has severely limited in recent years, insisting that the Syrian government should control all assistance to millions in need. The international crossing points were reduced to a single border crossing from Turkey to Syria's rebel-held northwest at Russia's insistence.

"I'm proud to announce the United States is providing nearly \$240 million in additional humanitarian funding for the people of Syria and for the communities that host them," Thomas-Greenfield said, according to a statement from her office. "Right now, more than 13 million Syrian people are in dire need of assistance. That's the population of Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington D.C. combined."

She added: "Four in five people in northwest Syria need humanitarian assistance. For millions of civilians in Idlib, this is their lifeline. Over the last year and a half, some members of the Security Council succeeded in shamefully closing two other crossings into Syria... Bab Al-Hawa is literally all that's left."

The United States is seeking the reauthorization of UN access at Bab Al-Hawa

and the reopening of other border crossings before the current UN Security Council mandate for humanitarian aid deliveries expires on July 10. There is strong support in the 15-member council for maintaining and even adding border crossings, but Russia holds the key.

"This isn't a complicated issue. We want the UN to bring food to starving children and protection to homeless families. We want the UN to be able to deliver vaccines in the middle of a global pandemic. We want the suffering to stop," Thomas-Greenfield said.

She met Wednesday with Ibrahim Kalin, a top aide to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey hosts some 4 million refugees.

The talks come ahead of US President Joe Biden's first meeting with Erdogan on the sidelines of the NATO summit in Brussels on June 14.

Ties between Ankara and Washington, which once considered each other as strategic partners, steadily deteriorated in recent years over differences on Syria, Turkey's cooperation with Russia and Turkish naval interventions in the eastern Mediterranean, which US officials have described as destabilizing.

The US Agency for International Development, or USAID, said the new US funding announced by Thomas-Greenfield, would support aid agencies providing assistance, "including food for displaced families in Syria and the region" and support bakeries in Syria.

It would also provide psychosocial support and other services for children, rehabilitate water and sanitation systems and provide cash or vouchers to help Syrians meet basic needs.

USAID said the United States was the world's largest donor to the Syria crisis, and has provided more than \$13 billion since the start of the conflict.



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US ambassador to UN demands information on Syria detainees  
US announces nearly \$600m in humanitarian aid to Syrians