

No diplomatic process with Palestinians

Israeli PM moves to play down defence chief's talks with President Abbas

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett yesterday sought to play down any notion of a move towards renewed peace negotiations with the Palestinians after the highest-level Israeli-Palestinian meeting in years.

Hours after Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met, the main Israeli media outlets quoted "a source close to the prime minister" as saying: "There is no diplomatic process with the Palestinians, nor will there be one."

The session, which was not announced in advance, covered only "routine issues", according to the source. Hussein Al Sheikh, a member of Abbas' Fatah Central Committee, said the talks included "all aspects" of Palestinian-Israeli relations.

Gantz, who heads a centrist party, and Abbas convened two days after Bennett, a far-right politician who opposes Palestinian statehood, met in Washington with U.S. President Joe Biden, who backs the idea. A White House statement said Biden reiterated to Bennett his support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and "underscored the importance of steps to improve the lives of Palestinians".

Bennett did not mention Palestinians in public remarks at the White House that focused largely on arch-enemy Iran's nuclear programme. Gantz has called in the past for resumption of a peace process with the Palestinians, who aspire to a state of their own in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Israel captured those territories in the 1967 Middle East war.

But any renewed movement on the issue could shake the foundations of Bennett's government of left-wing, rightist, centrist and Arab parties that in June ended Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year run as prime minister.



Afghan men take pictures of a vehicle from which rockets were fired, as Taliban forces stand guard, in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'We have received assurances'

100 nations cite Taliban vow to allow continued departures of foreigners

AFP, Washington

The Taliban has assured 100 countries that it will continue to allow foreigners and Afghans with foreign travel papers to leave the country "in a safe and orderly manner," even after the US troop withdrawal ends today, the countries said in a statement Sunday.

The 100-nation group includes the United States, Britain, France and Germany.

"We have received assurances from the Taliban that all foreign nationals and any Afghan citizen with travel authorization from our countries will be allowed to proceed in a safe and orderly manner to

points of departure and travel outside the country," the statement said.

"We are all committed to ensuring that our citizens, nationals and residents, employees, Afghans who have worked with us and those who are at risk can continue to travel freely to destinations outside Afghanistan," added the statement, which was also signed by the European Union and Nato.

The group said it would continue issuing travel documents to "designated Afghans," adding that "we have the clear expectation of and commitment from the Taliban that they can travel to our respective countries."

China and Russia were not among the

signatories to the document.

Jake Sullivan, the national security advisor to US President Joe Biden, said earlier Sunday that any Americans who elect to remain "are not going to be stuck in Afghanistan."

The US has "a mechanism to get them out" if they choose to leave in the future, Sullivan added on the Fox News network, without elaborating. "The Taliban have made commitments to us," he said.

France and Britain planned to call on the United Nations yesterday to create a "safe zone" in Kabul to allow humanitarian operations to continue, French President Emmanuel Macron told the Journal du Dimanche.

MORE NEWS

Russia calls on US to release Afghan reserves

Russia yesterday called on the United States to release Afghan central bank reserves that Washington blocked after the Taliban's takeover of Kabul earlier this month. "If our Western colleagues are actually worried about the fate of the Afghan people, then we must not create additional problems for them by freezing gold and foreign exchange reserves," said the Kremlin's envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov. The United States must urgently unfreeze these assets, he said on the state-run Rossiya 24 network, "to bolster the rate of the collapsing national currency".

Malaysian PM in quarantine

Malaysia's new prime minister missed the inauguration of his own cabinet yesterday after coming into contact with someone infected with the coronavirus and being forced to self-isolate, his office said. Ismail Sabri Yaakob's ministers headed to the national palace for a swearing-in ceremony before the king, two weeks after the previous government collapsed during fighting. But Ismail Sabri -- himself inaugurated earlier this month -- had to skip the occasion after the virus contact, his office said in a statement, without giving further details. He will also have to virtually join celebrations today to mark Malaysia's National Day.

Russia sees possible increase in West Nile virus cases

Russia yesterday warned of a possible increase in West Nile virus infections this autumn as mild temperatures and heavy precipitation create favourable conditions for the mosquitoes that carry it. Originally from Africa, the virus has spread in Europe, Asia and North America. It is mainly transmitted through mosquito bites and can lead to a fatal neurological disease in humans, although most people infected never develop any symptoms. Scientists have said that milder temperatures attributed to climate change could cause diseases such as the West Nile virus.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



AUGUST 31

1907 - The Anglo-Russian Convention was signed in St Petersburg, settling differences between Britain and Russia over Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet.

1990 - East and West Germany signed a treaty to harmonise their legal and political systems after merging on Oct 3.

2005 - About 1,000 Iraqi Shias died in a stampede over a Tigris River bridge in Baghdad, panicked by rumours that a suicide bomber was about to blow himself up.

SOURCE: REUTERS



Migrants and asylum seekers from Central America and the Caribbean walk in a caravan headed to the Mexican capital to apply for asylum and refugee status, on a highway near Escuintla, in Chiapas state, Mexico on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Renewed activity 'troubling'

Says IAEA on North Korea nuclear reactor

REUTERS, Vienna

North Korea appears to have restarted a nuclear reactor that is widely believed to have produced plutonium for nuclear weapons, the UN atomic watchdog said in an annual report, highlighting the isolated nation's efforts to expand its arsenal.

The signs of operation at the 5-megawatt (MW) reactor, which is seen as capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium, were the first to be spotted since late 2018, the International Atomic Energy Agency said in its report dated Friday.

"Since early July 2021, there have been indications, including the discharge of cooling water, consistent with the operation," the IAEA report said of the reactor at Yongbyon, a nuclear complex at the heart of North Korea's nuclear programme.

More plutonium could help North Korea make smaller nuclear weapons to fit on its ballistic missiles, said David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security.

"The bottom line is North Korea wants to improve the number and quality of its nuclear weapons," he added.

While intelligence on North Korean nuclear weapons is limited, making it impossible to know their number, Albright estimated the country had the capacity to produce material for four to six bombs a year.

The IAEA has had no access to North Korea since Pyongyang expelled its inspectors in 2009. The country subsequently pressed ahead with its nuclear weapons programme and soon resumed nuclear testing. Its last nuclear test was in 2017.



Teachers should be priority group for Covid jabs: WHO

AFP, Copenhagen

Teachers and school staff should be among the groups prioritised for Covid-19 vaccinations so that schools in Europe and Central Asia can stay open, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Unicef said yesterday.

Measures to ensure that schools can stay open throughout the pandemic "include offering teachers and other school staff the Covid-19 vaccine as part of target population groups in national vaccination plans," the UN agencies wrote in a statement.

The recommendation, already made by a group of WHO experts in November 2020

before the vaccination roll-out, should be done "while ensuring vaccination of vulnerable populations," the statement said.

As schools reopen after the summer holidays, the agencies said it was "vital that classroom-based learning continue uninterrupted," despite the spread of the more contagious Delta variant of the virus.

"This is of paramount importance for children's education, mental health and social skills, for schools to help equip our children to be happy and productive members of society," the director of the WHO European region, Hans Kluge, said in the statement.

China bans written school exams for kids

AFP, Beijing

Beijing yesterday banned written exams for six- and seven-year-olds, as part of sweeping education reforms aimed at relieving pressure on pupils and parents in China's hyper-competitive school system.

China's exam-oriented system previously required students to take exams from first grade onwards, culminating in the feared university entrance exam at age 18 known as the gaokao, where a single score can determine a child's life trajectory.

"Too frequent exams ... which cause students to be overburdened and under huge exam pressure," have been axed by the Ministry of Education, according to new guidelines released yesterday.

The ministry said the pressure on pupils from a young age "harms their mental and physical health."

Leaded petrol runs out of gas, century after first warnings: UN

AFP, Nairobi

The use of leaded petrol has been eradicated from the globe, a milestone that will prevent more than 1.2 million premature deaths and save world economies over \$2.4 trillion annually, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said yesterday.

Nearly a century after doctors first issued warnings about the toxic effects of leaded petrol, Algeria -- the last country to use the fuel -- exhausted its supplies last month, UNEP said, calling the news a landmark win in the fight for cleaner air.

"The successful enforcement of the ban on leaded petrol is a huge milestone for global health and our environment," said

Inger Andersen, executive director of UNEP, which is headquartered in Nairobi. Even as recently as two decades ago, more than 100 countries around the world were still using leaded petrol, despite studies linking it to premature deaths, poor health and soil and air pollution.

Concerns were raised as early as 1924, when dozens of workers were hospitalised and five declared dead after suffering convulsions at a refinery run by US giant Standard Oil, nicknamed the "looney gas building" by staff.

Nevertheless, until the 1970s almost all the gasoline sold across the globe contained lead.

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e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date & Time	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	600612	Procurement of Nitrogen Cylinder	29/08/2021, 16:00 PM	15/09/2021, 03:45 PM	16/09/2021, 11:00 AM

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

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তারিখঃ ২৯/০৮/২০২১ খ্রি:

“সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে ঠিকাদার তালিকা ভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তির সংশোধনী”

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, মাগুরা সড়ক বিভাগ, মাগুরার স্মারক নং- ৩৫.০১.৫৫০০.৪৪৩.০৭.০০১.২১-০৮৭; তাং-৯/০৭/২০২১ খ্রি: এর মূলে আহবানকৃত বিজ্ঞপ্তিটি CPTU কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত আবেদনের ফরম বিক্রয় ও জমাদানের তারিখ এবং সময় অনিবার্য কারণ বশত: নিম্নরূপ সংশোধন করা হলো।

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