

Pakistan Reiterates Support for Afghan Peace Initiative

ISLAMABAD (Xinhua) – Pakistan's National Security Adviser Naseer Khan Janjua, who held talks with top Afghan leaders in Kabul on Saturday, reiterated on Sunday the country's full support to President Ashraf Ghani's recent dialogue offer to the Taliban insurgents.

Janjua said he had elaborate and successful meetings with Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, his counterpart Haneef Atmar, minister of defense and the intelligence chief on key issues particularly the peace offer made by Ghani.

The Afghan president unveiled his peace strategy on Feb. 28, offering recognition of the Taliban as a political party, allowing them to open office in Kabul, issue passports to their members and remove the names of senior commanders from the UN blacklists.

Janjua's office said he appreciated the long-awaited peace offer made by Ghani and termed the peace offer as a "light on the other side of the tunnel in a war which had become rather perpetual."

"Use of force only injures people, wars are however virtually won politically," he added, assuring of Pakistan's full support for the vision of peace. He, however,



Foreign delegates take part in the second Kabul Process conference at the Presidential Palace in Kabul, Afghanistan, February 28, 2018.

highlighted that isolated, blamed and coerced Pakistan is of lesser use to Afghanistan.

Ghani also extended an invitation to the prime minister of Pakistan to visit Kabul as soon as possible to initiate "comprehensive dialogue" between the two countries.

"The world has started to look at and undermine Pakistan through the prism of Afghanistan which is

not correct. We need to commit to each other and invest in bilateral relationship and Afghanistan needs to stand with Pakistan and both need to win peace together," Janjua said.

Ghani associated strong hopes with Pakistan and said, "We have made a sincere and serious offer of peace and together we have to make the best of it by rising beyond

past. Let's not remain prisoners of past and let's secure our future with the aim not to win the war but to end it for which Pakistan should help."

He also expressed strong support for regional connectivity with Central Asian republics to reap the benefits of ideal geo-strategic locations of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

MbS's ...

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Gerald Feierstein, a former U.S. ambassador to Yemen, outlined "fair prospects for passage" of the bill even though U.S. military backing for the war was "incidental" and halting it would "not force the coalition to withdraw".
"But, on the eve of the crown prince's visit, the Senate resolution should be seen as a warning to the administration and to the Saudis that patience over the continued war in Yemen and its humanitarian consequences is wearing thin," Feierstein told MEE.

"The Saudis do not have a great wellspring of support or sympathy to draw on here."

Bin Salman will enter a West Wing in flux – even by the standards of this turbulent administration. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was unceremoniously sacked via Twitter this week and national security adviser HR McMaster faces a similar fate.

Meanwhile, Kushner has been stripped of his top secret security clearance as federal investigators probe whether his talks with officials and businesspeople from Qatar, the Emirates and elsewhere had any influence on later White House policy.

Bin Salman must navigate this geo-strategic labyrinth. Tillerson worked to protect Qatar, which has been blockaded by Saudi, the Emirates and others over claims that it was too cozy with Iran and bankrolled terrorists, which Doha denies.

Tillerson's exit opens up Riyadh's ability to pressure Doha – a process that bin Salman has likened to the seven-decade rift between the U.S. and Cuba. The top U.S. diplomat's replacement, Mike Pompeo, may echo Trump's tougher lines on Qatar and Iran.

"The Saudis are much assured by Pompeo moving to State, they know him and he is a hawk on Iran," Riedel told MEE.

"Behind the formal meetings and official statements, the Saudis will try quietly to assess the future of Trump's team. The removal of Jared Kushner's top-secret clearance and the mounting legal jeopardy surrounding his future imperil the prince's most valued interlocutor."

On a recent visit to the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), executives told MEE they were working hard to convince Saudi officials to trade oil giant Saudi Aramco on Wall Street, rather than rival bourses in London, Hong Kong and elsewhere.

Bin Salman plans to sell five percent of Saudi Aramco and raise some \$100 billion to fund the war and other adventures, but is understood to have qualms about U.S. regulators and exposure to costly lawsuits over everything from climate change to the 9/11 attacks.

Alex Ibrahim, NYSE's head of international capital markets, addressed Riyadh's concerns, telling MEE that Wall Street is the only venue capable of delivering "very large complex transactions" like Aramco's looming initial public offering (IPO).

Anything bin Salman says about the IPO during his visit is likely to move markets.

In spite of much talk of closer Israel-Saudis ties, little of this was on display when Zionist PM Benjamin Netanyahu visited the U.S. earlier this month and urged Trump to block plans for selling nuclear reactors to Riyadh.

Bin Salman's comments about matching an Iranian nuclear arsenal doubtless added to fears in Washington that Riyadh's push for a civilian nuclear energy capability was worsening prospects of a Middle East arms race.

For the U.S. deal to go ahead, Washington has urged Riyadh to sign a so-called 123 nuclear agreement, under which it would not enrich the uranium used to power nuclear reactors, which can also be enriched further to build atomic weapons.

Nuclear watchers will follow Trump's meet with bin Salman for any development there. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the Republican chairman of a House subcommittee on the Middle East, has made her own plans to spotlight the deal.

A meeting on Wednesday marks an "opportunity to assess the status of Saudi Arabia's nuclear plans, the implications if the U.S. agrees to a deal below the so-called gold standard, and legislative options to increase Congressional oversight", Ros-Lehtinen said in a statement.

Russians ...

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A day of voting across Russia's 11

time zones began at 2000 GMT on Saturday on Russia's eastern edge, in the Pacific coast city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. Voting was to run until polls close at the westernmost point of Russia, the Kaliningrad region on the Baltic Sea, at 1800 GMT on Sunday.

Many Russians believe Putin has restored stability after the chaos that ensued after the Soviet Union collapsed.

A March 9 survey by state-run pollster VTsIOM gave Putin, who was first elected president in 2000, support of 69%. His nearest rival Pavel Grudinin, the Communist Party's candidate, was on just seven percent.

Ella Pamfilova, head of the commission organizing the vote nationwide, has said any fraud will be stamped out. She said those already alleging the election was rigged were biased and peddling "Russophobia".

Rouhani ...

(Continued From Page One)
Since 2015, Yemen has been the scene of a Saudi military campaign, which Riyadh says aims to push Houthi fighters out of the Yemen capital Sana'a and restore to power the fugitive president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi.

The Saudi campaign has left thousands dead and millions on the verge of starvation.

During the talks, Rouhani and the Omani diplomat also discussed bilateral issues. The Iranian president said Tehran is bent on strengthening bonds of friendship with Oman, stressing the need for greater efforts to boost "brotherly" relations between Tehran and Muscat.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to develop all-out relations with Oman," Rouhani said.

The president added Iran and Oman ought to encourage entrepreneurs and businessmen to form partnerships and implement joint projects, through removing obstacles to banking relations and facilitating trips between the two countries.

"There are great opportunities in Iran for investment in various sectors, particularly petrochemicals, energy, steel, aluminum, railroads and ports, that Omani investors can take advantage of," Rouhani said.

In turn, bin Alawi said Oman has always sought close relations with Tehran and is satisfied with the harmonious course of relations between the two countries in recent years.

The top Omani diplomat said his government agrees that there is need for encouraging Iranian and Omani businessmen to work together, and is considering measures to pave the way for broader economic and cultural relations.

Larijani's ...

(Continued From Page 2)
Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi denied speculations about a link between the top Omani diplomat's trip to Iran and a recent visit to the sultanate by U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis.

"Oman is an independent state that has very good relations with many world countries," Qasemi said, stressing that bin Alawi's trip to Iran had nothing to do with Mattis's visit to Oman or with the developments surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The top Omani diplomat is visiting Iran "according to a previous plan and in line with the enhancement and deepening of bilateral ties," Qasemi added.

Hailing Oman's contribution to regional peace and stability, the Iranian spokesperson said bin Alawi's visit revolves around issues related to economic cooperation between the two countries.

Rahim ...

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His detention comes after video uploaded on social media showed Mashaei demonstrating on Thursday outside the British embassy to protest against Baghaei's incarceration.

Baghaei was arrested on Tuesday to begin serving a 15-year jail sentence that was issued in December when a court found him guilty of embezzlement and illegal business transactions.

ISNA news agency cited Mashaei's lawyer, Mehran Abdolpou, as saying his client was arrested in the evening as he was leaving Baghaei's house.
"My client was probably arrested for having recently burnt a copy of Mr Baghaei's verdict outside the British embassy," the lawyer said.

Czechs Mull Moving Embassy Under Zionist Regime's Pressure



A Palestinian Muslim worshipper prays in front of the Dome of the Rock in al-Aqsa mosque compound prior to the third Friday prayers of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan on June 24, 2016.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Czech Republic is under pressure from the Zionist regime to follow in U.S. steps and move its embassy from Tel Aviv to al-

Quds, Israel's Channel 10 has reported.

The broadcaster cited a classified cable by the regime's Ambassador to Prague Daniel Meron, saying that pressures by the occupying regime following decisions from the U.S. and Guatemala to move their embassies have made the Czech Republic more open to following suit.

Prague "has begun a quiet internal staff evaluation to examine the possibilities and risks regarding the transfer of its embassy," the cable written to the Zionist foreign ministry last week said.

The decision will ultimately be made by Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis, who is seen as particularly risk averse, Channel 10 said.

US President Donald Trump recognized the regime's claim to al-Quds as its so-called "capital" last December, and set in motion a frozen

plan to relocate the American embassy there.

The announcement triggered an international storm and later that month, more than 120 countries voted at the UN General Assembly in favor of a resolution calling for the United States to drop the recognition.

Czech President Milos Zeman has strongly backed Trump's decision and drawn praise from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which wields considerable influence in Washington's policies.

According to the Lidové noviny newspaper, Zeman who in December announced his intention to relocate the embassy from Tel Aviv now wants to speed up the process.

The Czech Foreign Ministry, however, has objected to the relocation following consultations with its European counterparts, the report said.

Zionist Troops Arrest Palestinian After Month-Long Manhunt

AL-QUDS (Dispatches) – Following a month-long manhunt, Zionist troops have arrested a Palestinian who lives in the occupied territories suspected of perpetrating a deadly stabbing attack in February, the security source said on Sunday.

A statement released by the Shin Bet security forces said that Abd

Al Karim Assi, 19, was captured in the West Bank city of Nablus early on Sunday, in an overnight joint operation of the Shin Bet, military and police.

The forces also arrested several persons who allegedly assisted Assi to hide or knew his whereabouts and did not reported to the occupying

regime's authorities, the statement said.

The military said in a separate statement that the arrests were carried out following "many activities, and overt and covert intelligence efforts."

Zionist war minister Avigdor Lieberman said the arrest had

"brought a closure" and lauded the security forces for "a successful intelligence operation."

On February 5, Assi, armed with two knives, stabbed to death Itamar Ben-Gal, a rabbi from the Har Bracha settlement, at a bus station outside the settlement of Ariel in the northern West Bank.

Qatar Sues Online Critics of Gov't

NEW YORK (Reuters) – Qatar's government communications office has filed a U.S. lawsuit against people who it said are conducting an illegal social media and internet campaign to spread false information and hurt the country's businesses.

In a complaint filed with a New York state court in Manhattan, the office said the defendants have since October operated accounts under the QatarExposed

name, using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and a website, to post false statements about Qatar's government, "including promoting the sanctioning of Qatar."

The website describes itself as "a dossier on the world's leading state sponsor of extremism" and refers several times to what it considers Qatar's support for terrorists and terrorist groups.

Operators of the accounts mentioned in the lawsuit could

not immediately be reached for comment.

The government communications office said the defendants, who it identified as John Does 1-10, have used their anonymity to spread negative information, causing irreparable harm and injury to its operations and reputation.

It also said about 5 percent of Twitter followers of @ QatarExposed are automated "bots," which means most of the

false statements are spread to real accounts and people.

"Defendants' social media posts and attacks do not constitute opinion or protected political speech in its substance, content and purpose," the complaint said.

The government communications office is seeking unspecified damages in its complaint. A U.S.-based lawyer for the office did not immediately respond on Saturday to requests for comment.