

‘Jordan Seeks to Restore Diplomatic Relations With Syria’

AMMAN (Press TV) – Jordan plans to restore full diplomatic relations with neighboring Syria in a further sign of Arab states embracing President Bashar al-Assad.

Jordanian Minister of State and Agriculture Samir Habashneh said Thursday he will travel to Syria later this month as part of a nearly 30-strong delegation, Arabic-language Ammon news website reported.

Former Prime Minister Taher al-Masri will head the delegation to restore Amman-Damascus bilateral relations to the level prior to the outbreak of foreign-sponsored Syrian conflict, it said.

Habashneh said Jordan and Syria actually have common areas of interest, stressing that the visit should have taken place much earlier in order to enhance communication between the two countries.

Commenting on a possible meeting with President Assad, he stated that the matter is in the hands of the Syrian side, and that the Jordanian delegates would like to sit for talks with the 54-year-old Syrian leader, senior officials and representatives of the Syrian people.

Jordan’s official Petra news agency, citing Foreign Ministry spokesman Sufian Qudah, reported earlier



A Syrian flag flutters in central Damascus, Syria, on September 15, 2018.

this year that the Amman government had appointed a new chargé d’affaires to its embassy in Damascus.

“It was decided to appoint a Jordanian diplomat at the rank of charge d’affaires in the Jordanian embassy in Damascus,” the Jordanian official said.

He underlined that the “decision has been made in line with Jordan’s stance since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011 to keep the Jordanian embassy in Damascus open.”

Jordanian lawmakers first asked for the improvement of Jordan-Syria ties to the level before the start of the Syrian crisis last year,

stressing that the relations are beneficial to both nations, Arabic-language Rai al-Youm newspaper reported last December.

Around the same time, Bahrain announced that work at the kingdom’s embassy “in the Syrian Arab Republic is going on whilst the Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Kingdom of Bahrain is carrying out its duties and flights connecting the two countries are operational without interruption.”

It came a day after the United Arab Emirates officially reopened its embassy in Damascus.

Earlier this week, the UAE’s top diplomat in Syria praised President Assad for his “wise leadership”, in

one of the strongest expressions of support yet from a country that once backed Damascus’ enemies in the war.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark UAE national day on Dec. 2, UAE charge d’affaires Abdul-Hakim Naimi said he hoped “security and stability prevails throughout the Syrian Arab Republic under the wise leadership of President Bashar Al-Assad.”

“Syria-UAE relations are solid, distinct and strong,” he added, according to a video posted by Russian broadcaster RT.

Arab countries’ restoration of diplomatic ties with Damascus takes place at a time when the Syrian army troops are finalizing their victory against foreign-backed terror groups and restoring peace and stability to the war-torn country.

Earlier this year, Reuters news agency cited sources as saying that Washington had lobbied Persian Gulf states including the UAE to hold off restoring ties with Syria.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups wreaking havoc in the country.

Ayatollah...

(Continued From Page One)

On Thursday, a mass rally was held in the country’s capital city of Baghdad to show support for the top cleric’s earlier calls for peaceful protests.

The protesters also chanted slogans and carried placards decrying U.S., Israeli and Saudi meddling in the country. Similar protests were held in Baghdad and other cities on Friday.

The developments come as nearly two months of protests have rocked primarily Baghdad and the southern areas of Iraq. The protesters have been expressing frustration with a failing economy and have demanded reforms.

The rallies have, however, turned into violent confrontations on numerous occasions.

Since October 1, more than 300 people have been killed in the country, according to the Iraqi parliament’s human rights commission.

Iran Warns...

(Continued From Page One)

On Thursday, Zarif rejected the European accusations as a “desperate falsehood” seeking to cover up the EU3’s “miserable incompetence” in fulfilling their commitments under the accord.

Zarif also posted a letter written by the head of Iran’s mission to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi sent to Guterres detailing a legal response to the European accusations.

Ravanchi argued that Iran’s activities “related to space launch vehicles and ballistic missiles fall outside of the purview of competence of Resolution 2231 (2015) and its annexes.”

Washington withdrew from the multilateral nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in May 2018 and reimposed harsh sanctions against Iran.

The Trump administration made the move demanding a “new deal” that would limit Iran’s defensive missile capabilities and regional anti-terrorism and defense cooperation with its regional allies.

At the time, European signatories of the deal vowed to make efforts to counter Washington’s sanctions and shield their trade relations with Tehran.

Those promises, however, were never delivered as Europe gave in to America’s pressure.

Tehran has since responded by reciprocally suspending its nuclear obligations as permitted by the JCPOA and pledged to go further if other signatories do not uphold Iran’s rights under the deal.

The remaining signatories to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal met in Vienna. Envoys from Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia and Iran took part in the meeting, which was the first time the six parties have gathered in this format since July.

China’s envoy said European parties to the Iran nuclear deal did not trigger a mechanism that could lead to the renewal of UN sanctions at talks in Vienna on Friday.

“All countries need to refrain from taking actions that further complicate the situation,” Fu Cong, director general of the Department of Arms Control of the Chinese Foreign Ministry told reporters after the talks. “In our view there is an element of automaticity into this and we can’t be sure that countries can keep this process under control. It could aggravate tensions.”

He said the European powers had not indicated whether they would trigger the mechanism.

The UN Security Council is due to meet on December 20 to weigh the state of Iran’s compliance with the resolution in question, and the European letter “will add to that discussion”, a senior European diplomat told Reuters News Agency.

Iranian parliament speaker Ali Larijani warned Sunday that if European partners triggered the dispute mechanism, Tehran may “seriously reconsider” its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which monitors the deal’s implementation.

Iran Self...

(Continued From Page 2)

On November 30, Iran’s Navy also announced the mass production of the indigenously-designed and submarine-launched “Jask” cruise missile along with unveiling a handful of other military projects and technological achievements.

Navy chief Rear Admiral Hussein Khanzadi announced the mass production of the Jask missile while visiting a Navy exhibition showcasing a number of the force’s recent achievements on Saturday.

Khanzadi said all of the force’s submarines will be equipped with the weapon and that the missile’s current range will be improved “substantially” in the future.

The missile “will surely be a serious surprise for the enemy,” he said.

Kuwaiti...

(Continued From Page 2)

Tehran has repeatedly said outsiders not only cannot safeguard the region, but will fuel tensions there. Iran believes it is the countries of the very region which can ensure regional peace.

Rouhani said in October that measures taken by some extra-regional countries, especially the United States, in the Persian Gulf region only serve to render the region’s problems more complicated and make it appear less secure in the eyes of the world.

U.S....

(Continued From Page 2)

Rood was asked several times about reports that 14,000 more troops could be sent to the region. He repeatedly said Esper hasn’t made a decision yet, but didn’t specifically confirm or deny the number, so his answers appeared only to confuse senators. Shortly after the hearing, Pentagon press secretary Alyssa Farah sent out a statement flatly denying the 14,000 number, saying Esper told the Senate committee chairman Thursday morning that “we are not considering sending 14,000 additional troops” to the region.

Gunman ...

(Continued From Page One)

“Police declined to identify the shooter or whether or not they were in the military. They also would not say if they thought the act was motivated by terrorism. Commanding officer Timothy Kinsella said the base’s security forces first responded to the shooting before outside police agencies arrived. The facility, which is used for training and made up mostly of classrooms, “is shut down until further notice,” he said. Witnesses to the shooting described a chaotic scene as police rushed to respond. “There’s probably been 100 or so various law enforcement vehicles” driving through opposing traffic towards the base, Jeff Bergosh, a county commissioner who is a contractor at the facility, told the Pensacola News Journal newspaper. White House press secretary Judd Deere said President Donald Trump “has been briefed on the shooting at Pensacola Naval Air Station... and is monitoring the situation.” Broadcaster WEAR showed footage of an injured person being wheeled into a hospital. Federal agencies are investigating, authorities said, including the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Just two days prior on Wednesday, a U.S. sailor fatally shot two people and wounded a third at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii before taking his own life. The Pensacola naval air station hosts 16,000 military personnel and more than 7,000 civilians, and is home to a flight demonstration squadron. It is an early training center for naval pilots, and is known as the “cradle of Naval aviation.” While mass shootings in the United States are common, those at military facilities are rare. In July 2015, Muhammad Youssuf Abdulazeze carried out an attack at two military installations in Tennessee that killed four Marines and a sailor, with the FBI concluding that the violence was inspired by a “foreign terrorist group.” Two years earlier, Aaron Alexis killed 12 people and wounded eight others at the Washington Navy Yard, just two miles (three kilometers) from the U.S. Capitol building, before being shot dead by officers. Four years before that, Major Nidal Hasan, a U.S. Army psychiatrist, killed 13 people and wounded more than 30 others at Fort Hood. He was considered a “lone wolf” who supported terror network Al-Qaeda. Supporters of tighter gun laws seized on the latest shooting. “Our veterans and active-duty military put their lives on the line to protect us overseas -- they shouldn’t have to be terrorized by gun violence at home,” Cindy Martin, a volunteer with the Florida chapter of Moms Demand Action whose daughter works at the naval base, said in a statement.

Zionist PM’s Top Aides Indicted on Corruption Charges

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime’s prosecutor’s office has published charges in the large-scale corruption scheme, known as Case 3000, that involved bribes to regime officials for soliciting multi-million-dollar contracts on nuclear submarines with German company Thyssenkrupp, media reported.

In November 2018, the police recommended prosecutors to indict several individuals close to Benjamin Netanyahu over Case 3000 on various corruption-related charges, including suspicion of fraud, breach of trust, and conspiring to commit a crime.

The prosecution laid out brib-

ery charges against former navy chief Eliezer Marom, former Netanyahu bureau chief David Sharan, former cabinet minister Eliezer Zandberg, and Thyssenkrupp representative in the occupied territories Miki Ganor, the Times of Israel reported, citing a publication by the state attorney’s office.

The regime’s attorney general announced last month charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust against Netanyahu in three different corruption cases, dubbed Cases 1000, 2000 and 4000.

The corruption cases have earned him the nickname “crime minister” by people, who had

been holding regular rallies in front of the attorney general’s residence to promote his indictment.

An opinion poll recently revealed that more than half of settlers in the occupied territories believe Netanyahu must quit after being indicted on a series of corruption charges.

According to the survey conducted by Channel 13 and published last Friday evening, 56% said the charges leveled against Netanyahu were too much for him to continue as the Zionist regime’s prime minister, while 35% said he needed not to step down and the remaining 9% of the respondents said they didn’t know.

‘Russia, Turkey Working on New S-400 Missile Contract’

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Russia and Turkey are working on a contract for the delivery of a new batch of Russian S-400 missile systems, the Interfax news agency cited a senior official at a Russian military cooperation agency as saying on Friday.

Such a deal would be likely to further strain Ankara’s relations with Washington which has suspended Turkey from the U.S. F-35 stealth fighter jet program, in which it was a producer and buyer, to penalize it for buying S-400 batteries this year.

“We’re gradually working on this question. Most importantly, both sides

are intent on continuing cooperation in this sphere,” the head of Russia’s Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation was quoted as saying.

The official, Dmitry Shugayev, said he thought there was a “fairly high likelihood” Turkey and Russia would sign a contract for the delivery of an additional batch of S-400s next year.

The head of Russia’s state arms exporter told RIA news agency on Nov. 26 that Moscow and Ankara were actively discussing Ankara taking up an option in its original missile contract for it to receive more S-400 systems.

Almost Half of Land Sold for First Phase of Egypt’s New Capital

CAIRO (Reuters) – Egypt has sold almost half of the land earmarked for the first phase of a huge project to develop a new capital 50 km east of Cairo, an official at the state-owned company building it said.

The as-yet unnamed city is being built in the desert by a company owned 51% by the military and 49% by the Housing Ministry.

The government has said it wants to start running Egypt from the new city as soon as the middle of next year. But the \$58 billion project has struggled to raise funds and faced other challenges after some investors pulled out.

The first phase is “40,000 feddans (168 square km), of which 17,500 feddans have been sold so far. We plan to sell 6,000 feddans (more) by June 2020,” said Magdy Amin, head of the real estate sector at the company, called the Administrative Capital for Urban Development (ACUD).

Much of the land has been sold to real estate developers.

Known for now as the New Administrative Capital, the government expects the city to be 700 square km upon completion, about the size of Singapore.

The first phase will include ministries and other government buildings, diplomatic and business districts and residential neighborhoods.

Announced at an economic conference in 2015, the new city is envisioned to replace Cairo, the existing capital on the Nile that has become a traffic-clogged, urban sprawl of more than 20 million people.

Launched a year into Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s presidency, the project aims to offer a clean and efficient base for the government and finance industry, as well as homes for at least 6.5 million people.