

Israel PM Makes Secret Oman Visit

JERUSALEM - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made an unannounced visit to Oman, an Arab state with which Israel has no diplomatic ties, and met with Sultan Qaboos, the premier's office said Friday.

The two leaders discussed the Middle East peace process "and other issues of shared interest", it said in a statement released after Netanyahu returned from the first such visit by an Israeli premier for more than two decades.

Netanyahu was accompanied by his wife Sara and his delegation included Mossad intelligence chief Yossi Cohen and National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat.

The visit came at the invitation of Sultan Qaboos and followed



"lengthy contacts between the two countries", the statement said.

It formed part of "the policy outlined by Prime Minister Netanyahu on deepening relations with the states of the region", it said.

In 1994, then-Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin visited Oman, and acting prime minister Shimon Peres also made a visit in 1996 and the two countries agreed to open trade representative offices. (AFP)

Stopping Saudi Arms Sales over Khashoggi 'Pure Demagoguery', Macron Says

BRATISLAVA - Halting arms sales to Saudi Arabia because of the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi would be "pure demagoguery", French President Emmanuel Macron said Friday.

The sale of weapons "has nothing to do with Mr Khashoggi. One shouldn't mix everything up," he said at a press conference during a visit to Bratislava.

If sanctions are called for, "this should be a European response, across the board," but only "once all the facts are known", he said.

Earlier this week, French government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux also suggested France might take "punitive measures", but only if Saudi Arabia was "proven" to be behind the murder at its consulate in



Istanbul of Khashoggi, a harsh critic of the Saudi government.

Riyadh was the second-biggest purchaser of French weapons between 2008 and 2017, after India, with deals amounting to some 12 billion euros

(\$13.8 billion).

On Sunday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Berlin would suspend arms exports to Saudi Arabia following Khashoggi's murder. (AFP)

India Police Arrest More Than 2,000 Over Temple Protests

NEW DELHI - Indian police have rounded up more than 2,000 people for stopping women from entering a flashpoint Hindu shrine in defiance of a Supreme Court order, officials said Friday.

Hindu hardliners prevented women aged 10 to 50 from reaching the Sabarimala temple complex in Kerala state over the last week -- the first time the temple has opened since the court ended a longstanding ban on women of menstruating age from worshipping there.

Protesters, including women and children, massed at the bottom of a hill leading to the shrine,

threatening and manhandling any women who attempted to reach the temple.

Some protestors smashed car windows and clashed with police, who started a crackdown on the blockade Wednesday.

"We have arrested 2,061 people under various sections of the Indian penal code, including inciting communal violence, the arms act and destruction of public property," a police official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The official added that 452 cases had been registered against the suspects so far.

More arrests appeared likely as



details of hundreds more suspects were to be published, police said.

The temple has become the centre of a gender equality battle, pitting traditionalists against progressive voices pushing for a more liberal Hinduism. (AFP)

Jordan Searches for Survivors after Floods Kill 20 People, Many Children

AMMAN - Rescuers combed the shores of Jordan's Dead Sea early on Friday, searching for survivors, after flash floods killed at least 20 people, most of them children on a school outing.

Thirty-seven people were rescued in a major operation involving helicopters and divers searching for survivors of the floods, which swept through valleys to the shores of the area, the lowest point on earth, civil defense sources said.

Among the dead were three Iraqis, two children and a 20-year-old woman who accompanied them on their school bus, a civil de-



fense source said.

Police chief Brigadier General Farid al Sharaa told state television the torrential rains swept away a bus carrying 44 children and teachers who were on a school trip picnicking in the popular destination. (Reuters)

(1) Seventh Security...

- Afghanistan's Economy: From Rentier State to Developing Economy.
- Afghanistan & The Grand Bargain of South Asia.
- The Taliban: What Do They Want?
- Afghanistan's Foreign Policy Status: Neutral, Connector or Divisive?
- The Way Forward: Do we need a Second Bonn Conference/Process?

(2) Over 13,000...

voters to cast vote in support of their favorite candidates.

"As the only legitimate authority, our provincial offices will assess the complaints for 15 days. After that, they will share the outcome of their investigation with complainers," said IECC deputy chief Humaira Haqmal.

The IECC states that local lawbreakers also closed down polling centers and rigged votes in favor of their candidate and even some provincial chiefs and governors intervened in elections.

Election watchdogs have also said that their observers registered hundreds of fraud and rigging cases on the election day.

"Up to 1,300 serious cases of violations and fraud were reported and they can have impacts on the elections," said Naeem Asghari, deputy head of Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA).

"We have gathered majority of result sheets from polling centers and election sites. There are videos which show fraud and riggings in the process," said Naeem Ayoubzada, CEO of Free and Fair Election Forum of Afghanistan.

The IEC meanwhile said it has assigned a task team to investigate the fraud claims.

A footage seen by media from IEC commissioners indicate that election management bodies are also quite concerned about the

shortcomings on the polls day.

As well on Wednesday, IECC said that most of the complaints lodged so far are related to shortcomings by the Independent Election Commission on election day. "They (IEC) did not publish the lists. Unfortunately most of the complaints are related to the lists. Again, we are blamed that Afghans couldn't manage it well," said Haqmal.

A footage obtained by TOLONews from Baghlan province reveals that a large scale fraud took place in several districts across the province.

The footage shows some security force members enter polling centers with a number of armed men and intimidate IEC employees.

Majority of fraud has taken place in Khost, Baghlan-e-Markazi and Tala Wa Barfak districts of Baghlan province, the documents obtained by TOLONews show.

"There were some lawmakers. Threats were high against us. They warned us, even we were not allowed to take a photo from the issue or make a video so that we could manage the process properly," said Mohammad Yunus, an IEC employee in Baghlan. In addition, some election candidates have claimed that local officials in Baghlan were involved in fraud.

"IEC officials had an upper hand in the fraud and played a key role in this issue specially in Khost district," said Mawlawi Raji, member of Baghlan Provincial Council.

The IEC officials in Baghlan said supporters of some candidates were involved in security issues in the province.

"Majority of these fraud and violations happened by those who were supposed to help us in the process. I once again say that part of security threats was artificial," said Abdul Qaer Wahab Safai, head of IEC office in Baghlan.

According to IEC officials, at least 30 polling centers remained closed in Baghlan on the election

day due to security threats. (Tolo news)

(3) US Coordinates...

Taliban that they will not win on the battlefield, they have to sit down at the negotiating table. Stoltenberg added.

So that's the main way we help Afghanistan in term of capacity building, train, assist and advise. "We support the Afghan-lead and Afghan-owned peace process but at the same time he think that direct contacts between the US and Taliban was also valuable and I am absolutely certain that the US does what it can to make sure this is coordinated with Kabul."

He said, for us the important thing is that it is an Afghan-lead and Afghan-owned peace process and I am absolutely sure that the US coordinate their efforts with Kabul and the Afghan government, and I know they have discussed their efforts several times. Stoltenberg added: "It is also an issue we discuss when we meet in NATO and we will meet today so that will provides us with a new opportunity to have US and Afghanistan and all NATO Allies around the table to discuss the peace efforts and the peace process." (Pajhwok)

(4) Trade Between...

of commerce was also agreed upon.

Kamela said at the end of the discussion a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two countries would be signed. (Pajhwok)

(5) OSCE Supports...

National Security Secretariat from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan; Hideharu Maruyama, Director, Entry and Status Division of the Immigration Bureau of Japan; and Hideo Tsuda, Director of the Customs Branch of Haneda International Airport. (Agencies)

(6) Cabinet Approves...

comprehensive discussions. The Ministry of Finance was ordered in the meeting to review

the draft budget again with ministers and department heads for the final approval. (Pajhwok)

(7) Humayon Accuses...

Governor Spokesman Talib Mangal said: "The issue has nothing to do with the provincial government because the distribution of Tazkeras was the responsibility of Population Registration Department and we have asked the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission to investigate the issue," Noor Walli Khan, head of the provincial Population Registration Department said, he was unaware of the distribution of fake Tazkeras and added he was on leave during the distribution of Tazkera and the sticker process was headed by Afzal Khann Fitrat. (Pajhwok)

(8) Hekmatyar...

Ariananews. Meanwhile, Hekmatyar also declared that foreigners are the main decision makers of Afghanistan issues and the Afghan government is weak in its affairs.

"All the decisions of the country are being taken by the foreigners. They take the decision about different issues of the country," he added.

The leader of Hezb-e Islami has recently called the parliamentary election ridiculous and a bloody game. (ATN)

(9) NATO, Afghan Forces...

We have not stopped operations but conduct them from a distance, in particular through phone and email."

Pajhwok reached to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for its point of view in this regard but the officials did not respond.

It is worth mentioning that around 150 NATO and US soldiers have been killed and up to 200 injured in insider attacks since 2008. (Pajhwok)

(10) Those Involved...

Afghan forces take advises and receive training from foreign

forces."

He said he had been directed by the president to travel to Nangarhar and investigate civilian casualties. "The president has given serious directions so foreign and national forces should act in accordance with the security agreement," he said.

Nangarhar governor Hayatullah Hayat said multiple military operations were launched in the lead up to and after the Wolesi Jirga elections and many insurgents were killed and injured.

However, he said some civilians also suffered casualties during these operations.

Hayat said he had asked the central government to take decisive steps for preventing civilian casualties in future.

Afghan Special Forces killed 19 civilians including children and wounded two women and two children in Surkhrod and Rodat districts of Nangarhar just in last five days.

The Special Forces in the past had also killed many civilians during their operations in Nangarhar districts. (Pajhwok)

(11) Displaced Imam...

district suffered human and financial losses due to airstrikes.

"We visited these villages, people suffered casualties and huge financial losses and the residents of these areas are poor and don't have the financial ability to rehabilitated their homes," he said.

Walli asked the government to support the resident in the rehabilitation of their homes and provided them aid.

Qurban Ali, a displaced person, said no government or other authorities have not reached to them.

Salam Hashami, head of the Refugees and Repatriation Department, said the survey of displaced persons in Imam Sabib district was underway and assistance to the displaced persons would be provided soon. (Pajhwok)