

SHOW US RESPECT OR TIES WILL SUFFER, SAUDI TELLS BRITAIN

LONDON: Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Britain criticized yesterday the breaching of "mutual respect" between the two countries, adding that the Gulf kingdom "will not be lectured to by anyone". The envoy's comments come after Britain this month cancelled a bid to provide training to Saudi Arabia's penal system, as criticism mounts over the absolute monarchy's human rights record.

Saudi Ambassador Mohammed Bin Nawaf Bin Abdulaziz spoke of his country's economic importance to Britain,

and of the value of Saudi cooperation on security matters. "We want this relationship to continue, but we will not be lectured to by anyone," Abdulaziz wrote in an opinion piece in Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper. "To further our shared strategic interests in the years ahead as we confront a variety of threats, it is crucial that Saudi Arabia be treated with the respect it has unwaveringly afforded the United Kingdom."

The ambassador's blunt and public criticism is unusual for Saudi Arabia, which has in the past preferred closed-

door diplomacy in its relations with allies. The kingdom has become more vocal in recent years with the intensification of conflicts in Syria and Yemen, and in response to the US nuclear deal with Iran.

There has been growing concern in Britain over several Saudi human rights cases in the last few months. The family of a septuagenarian Briton caught with home-made wine in Saudi Arabia have pleaded for the government to intervene following reports that he is going to be flogged. A prominent Saudi blog-

ger has been sentenced to the same punishment. The kingdom also plans to execute young pro-democracy activist Ali Al-Nimr, sparking a global outcry. New leftist opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn raised Nimr's case with Prime Minister David Cameron, urging him to intervene.

"One recent example of this mutual respect being breached was when Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition, claimed that he had convinced Prime Minister David Cameron to cancel a prison consultancy contract with

Saudi Arabia," Abdulaziz wrote. "If the extensive trade links between the two countries are going to be subordinate to certain political ideologies, then this vital commercial exchange is going to be at risk."

Saudi Arabia is Britain's most important trade partner in the Middle East and was its biggest market for arms exports last year. Cameron also says Saudi Arabia is a key partner on security issues, and has claimed Saudi intelligence has helped saved British lives. — AFP

ATTEMPT TO EASE TENSIONS AT AL-AQSA HALTS OVER CAMERAS

JERUSALEM: Efforts to douse Israeli-Palestinian tensions over Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound ran into trouble yesterday when the Islamic trust which administers the holy site accused Israeli police of blocking the agreed installation of cameras. Israel on Saturday agreed to install surveillance cameras at the highly-sensitive site after an intense diplomatic drive to calm spiraling violence that many fear heralds a new Palestinian intifada. In the latest in a wave of knife attacks by Palestinians, a 19-year-old Israeli was stabbed in the neck and severely wounded while his attacker was shot dead, the army said.

Attacks and clashes have become near daily occurrences since simmering tensions over the status of the Al-Aqsa compound boiled over in early October, leaving dozens dead. The site is sacred to both Muslims and Jews, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday agreed to install the cameras to allay Palestinian fears that Israel plans to change rules governing the site.

US Secretary of State John Kerry has said the cameras would be a "game changer in discouraging anybody from disturbing the sanctity of the holy site." However the Jordanian trust known as the Waqf which administers the compound said that when a team went to install the cameras yesterday morning, "Israeli police interfered directly and stopped the work."

"We severely condemn the Israeli interference into the working affairs of the Waqf, and we consider the matter evidence that Israel wants to install cameras that only serve its own interests, not cameras that show truth and justice," it said in a statement. Israeli police had no immediate comment.

Netanyahu was set to address parliament as part of commemorations of the 20-year anniversary of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, as the fresh wave of violence throws into stark relief the failure to resolve the decades-old conflict.

Rabin was gunned down on November 4, 1995 by a rightwing Jewish extremist who hoped to derail the landmark 1993 Oslo accords he inked with the Palestinians. The deal lies in tatters after repeated failed efforts to solve the conflict, the most recent of which collapsed in April 2014 amid bitter recriminations on both sides.

Prevent provocations

The latest clashes erupted in September as Muslims protested an increase in Jewish visitors to Al-Aqsa during their religious holidays. Palestinian protesters accuse the Jewish state of seeking to change the rules governing the compound which allows Jews to visit, but not pray there.

The Al-Aqsa mosque compound is situated in east Jerusalem which was seized from Jordan in the 1967 war. While Amman has retained custodial rights over the holy sites, administered by the Jordanian Waqf, Israel controls access. The compound is considered the third holiest site in Islam and is revered by Jews as their holiest site, known as Temple Mount.

Netanyahu said on Sunday that having cameras at the site would be in Israel's interest. "Firstly, to refute the claim Israel is violating the status quo. Secondly, to show where the provocations are really coming from, and prevent them in advance," he said. Jordan's Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh had said that technical teams from both sides would meet to work out the details of the new measures. Sheikh Azzam al-Khateeb, head of the Waqf, told AFP that the decision to install the cameras yesterday came from Jordanian King Abdullah II. "We want to have clear and open cameras for all the world," he said. "There is no other authority in the mosque except the administration of the Jordanian Islamic Waqf... no one has the right to (carry out) this action except the Waqf administration."

Knife attacks continue

The tensions over Al-Aqsa sparked a series of knife attacks and shootings by Palestinians that has left eight Israelis dead and dozens wounded. In the latest attack a Palestinian man stabbed and seriously wounded an Israeli in the southern West Bank before being shot dead by soldiers, the army said. "The assailant stabbed the Israeli in the neck, wounding him severely. The attacker was shot on site, resulting in his death. The wounded victim is now being evacuated for emergency medical care," a statement from the military read. On Sunday, a 17-year-old Palestinian girl was shot dead while allegedly trying to knife Israeli border police in Hebron. Yesterday's attack takes the number of Palestinians killed in attempted attacks and clashes to 54. An Israeli Arab attacker has also been killed. — AFP



ISTANBUL: People carry the coffin of Dilek Dogans during her funeral yesterday. — AFP

TURKISH POLICE IN SHOOTOUT WITH IS SUSPECTS, NINE KILLED

POLARIZED COUNTRY RATTLED FURTHER

DIYARBAKIR: Two Turkish policemen and seven Islamic State suspects were killed in a shootout yesterday that has further rattled the increasingly polarized country just six days ahead of snap elections. Police are hunting down IS militants after the suicide bombings that killed 102 people at a pro-Kurdish peace rally in the heart of the capital Ankara on October 10, the worst attack in Turkey's modern history.

Yesterday's gun battle in the main southeastern Kurdish city of Diyarbakir was the first on Turkish soil between security forces and the jihadists since Ankara launched air strikes on IS targets in Syria in July. Fears of further bloodshed have overshadowed the run-up to Sunday's vote, with an IS cell reportedly plotting major attacks, while Kurdish rebels have taken up arms again after the collapse of the peace process.

A police anti-terrorist squad launched dawn raids on several houses in Diyarbakir where militants were thought to be hiding out. The suspects opened fire and set off booby trap bombs, killing two police officers and injuring five, according to the Diyarbakir governor's office. Seven IS militants were killed and 12 arrested after at least two hours of heavy fighting, it said.

IS cell 'neutralized'

"This was an important operation... we can say we have neutralized a major Daesh cell," Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus told reporters, using an Arabic name for the IS group.

The authorities declared the IS group the number one suspect over the Ankara bombings, but many accuse them of security failings and of turning a blind eye to the jihadists fighting the Damascus regime.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan himself has vowed to fight all Turkey's "enemies" as his Justice and Development Party (AKP) battles to regain the parliamentary majority it lost in June's election, ending 13 years of single party rule. He said yesterday that Turkey would press on with its operations against "terrorists" before and after Sunday's vote, saying it makes no distinction between the PKK, the Islamic State and the DHKP-C, an outlawed Marxist group that has carried out a number of attacks.

And he urged voters not to cast their ballots for the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which won enough seats in June to wipe out the AKP majority. "They have the audacity to speak of peace... but that means blood," he said in a veiled reference to the HDP, accused of acting as a PKK accomplice.

Attack plot feared

Turkey launched air strikes on IS targets in Syria after a deadly bombing on a border town in July, before turning its fire on PKK rebels based in northern Iraq, triggering a wave of tit-for-tat violence that ended the peace talks with the outlawed Kurdish group.

The government says around 150 members

of the security forces have been killed in clashes or in PKK attacks, but there are no confirmed figures for Kurdish militant deaths. Ankara, which is staunchly opposed to the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad, joined the coalition against IS and allowed the United States to use its territory for the air war. A massive police hunt was also under way at the weekend for a suspected IS cell that included a German woman allegedly plotting to carry out other attacks, Turkish media reported. The Anatolia news agency said security forces feared they were preparing a major strike "such as hijacking a plane or a vessel or detonating suicide bombs in a crowded location". Police have been rounding up many suspected jihadists in the past two weeks, including four accused of having a direct role in the Ankara attacks. Photographs of fake Turkish identity cards allegedly being used by the wanted suspects were published at the weekend by local media, which said the woman was born in Kazakhstan but had a German passport.

One of the identity cards was said to belong to Omer Deniz Dunder, who had previously been identified by the media as one of the two Ankara suicide bombers-although other reports had suggested the bomber was foreign. The second bomber was officially identified last week as Yunus Emre Alagoz, brother of the man suspected of carrying out the July attack in the mainly Kurdish town of Suruc which left 34 people dead. — AFP



RAMALLAH: Palestinian protesters carry a wounded comrade who was shot in the thigh during clashes with Israeli security forces at the northern entrance of the West Bank town Al-Bireh yesterday. — AFP

SAUDI PRINCE HELD IN RECORD BEIRUT AIRPORT DRUG BUST

BEIRUT: A Saudi prince and four others were detained yesterday in Lebanon in the largest drug bust in the history of the Beirut airport, a security source said. Saudi prince Abdel Mohsen Bin Walid Bin Abdulaziz and four others were detained by airport security while allegedly "attempting to smuggle about two tons of Captagon pills and some cocaine," a security source said.

"The smuggling operation is the largest one that has been foiled through the Beirut International Airport," the source said on condition of anonymity. Captagon is the brand name for the amphetamine phenethylamine, a synthetic stimulant. The banned drug is consumed mainly in the Middle East and has reportedly been widely used by fighters in Syria. The security source said the drugs had been packed into cases that were waiting to be loaded onto a private plane that was headed to Saudi Arabia.

The five Saudi citizens were still in the airport and would be questioned by Lebanon's customs authority, the source added. In April 2014, security forces foiled an attempt to smuggle 15 million capsules of Captagon hidden in shipping containers full of corn from Beirut's port. Lebanon's state news agency also reported yesterday's drug bust, saying the private plane was to head to Riyadh and was carrying 40 suitcases full of Captagon.

Saudi Arabia's large royal family has had past run-ins with authorities in various countries. Late last month, a Saudi prince was arrested in Los Angeles for allegedly trying to force a woman to perform oral sex on him at a Beverly Hills mansion. But authorities decided not to pursue the charge, citing a lack of evidence. In 2013, a Saudi princess was accused in Los Angeles of enslaving a Kenyan woman as a housemaid, but the charges were also eventually dropped. — AFP

CLASSES SWELL IN CAMPS AS TEACHERS FLEE FOR EU

KAWERGOSK: The young Syrian refugees at the Kawergosk refugee camp in northern Iraq have already lost so much - and now they're losing their teachers. One after another, school teachers have packed up and left for Europe - searching for opportunity, safety and a better life.

With the school year just kicking off in Iraq, schools like this one are scrambling to accommodate the refugee students left behind. Nine of Kawergosk's teachers fled to Europe this summer and the remaining teachers are doubling up on students. Mizgeen Hussein, 28, is among those teachers left behind. A refugee from Derik, Syria, Hussein admits that despite her commitment to the students, she would leave if she had the money.

"The reason for me to leave is to have a future," said Hussein, who teaches a class of 37 children at the camp's school. "For sure this has an effect on us," she added. "For now, we'll solve it with the people who are here until they will bring other teachers." Camps across Iraq are experiencing the same exodus of teachers heading to Europe.

Meanwhile student numbers are on the rise as fighting continues to tear through Syria and Iraq, forcing people to flee their homes. An increasingly chaotic civil war has gripped Syria for nearly five years, and the Islamic State militant group has claimed territory in a third of both Iraq and Syria.

Uncertain future

Four of the 21 teachers at the Kobani primary school in Domiz camp have left in the past month. With over 1,000 students, manager Abdullah Mohammed Saed said the school's future is in jeopardy. "We need new people, otherwise we have to close the school," he said. "Our problem is that now our teachers are escaping to Europe," said Mazhar Mohammed, Kawergosk's principal. "We don't have any other

problems. The government is providing us with enough books."

Iraq's semi-autonomous northern region hosts approximately 250,000 Syrian refugees, with more than a third of them living in camps. Many have found work, opened shops and pursued some form of education. But their uncertain future has caused those in doubt to flee the region, either back to Syria or across the border to Turkey and beyond.

According to the UN refugee agency, the number of Syrians leaving northern Iraq for Europe has tripled in recent months. Among them are many Syrian teachers who have been getting paid by the Kurdish regional government to teach at the various camps. But the region is facing a severe financial crisis, and many teachers have not received salaries-another reason to leave.

On the first day of school at Kawergosk, children gripped the school's fence waiting for the gates to open. Hundreds flooded into the schoolyard, anxious to get back into their classrooms. The lessons are shortened, as there are not enough teachers to handle all the students. "We dropped the last lessons, so we send the students home earlier," Mohammed, the camp principal, said. The lack of teachers has forced many instructors to give lessons in areas outside their specializations, with history teachers covering geography and math teachers expanding into physics.

Some teachers, like Javeen Salah Omer, have nevertheless vowed to stay, whatever the cost. "The education of students is more important than anything," she said. "They became refugees and had to come here. This is the least we can do for them." — AP



IRBIL: In this Wednesday, Oct 7, 2015, file photo, 20-year-old teacher Wafa teaches fourth-grade students at a makeshift school at the Kawergosk refugee camp. — AP