

Egypt reveals NAC progress with 'smart government' on horizon

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-01 01:26

Egypt has trained 23 percent of New Administrative Capital (NAC) employees, Saleh El-Sheikh, head of the Central Agency for Organization and Administration, has said.

El-Sheikh said that 119 parties are moving to the New Administrative Capital, whether through complete, partial or leadership transfers. Egyptian Cabinet heads and 31 ministries will be transferred to the capital, too.

He added that 45 bodies affiliated with ministries will be transferred completely, while four bodies associated with ministries will be partially transferred.

El-Sheikh said that 17 agencies that will transfer their leadership positions only.

As part of the project, 13 fully independent bodies will be transferred, three independent parties will be partially transferred, while one independent party will transfer leadership.

The news came during a meeting chaired by Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly to review the positions of ministry authorities that will be transferred to the New Administrative Capital. The talks reviewed training programs and efforts to structure a number of ministries and affiliated bodies as part of the efforts to prepare for the move.

Madbouly said the government is aiming to provide the best training programs for employees moving to the NAC to enable them to perform their jobs efficiently.

Egyptian Minister of Planning and Economic Development Hala Al-Saeed said that the transfer of employees and ministries to the New Administrative Capital will happen in phases, starting from the middle of next year.

Al-Saeed said that by the end of 2021, the entire government will have moved to the capital in its new form as a "smart government."

She pointed to the provision of housing units and sums of money that employees receive as a form of motivation to encourage them to move.

The NAC is located on an area of about 170,000 feddans. Its first phase is about 40,000 feddans, and is set to accommodate more than 6 million people, providing job opportunities for more than 2 million people.



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[Egypt's New Administrative Capital](#)

Egypt to trial New Administrative Capital next year
First government headquarters launched in Egypt's new administrative capital

[Turkish research ship returns to port after Mediterranean survey](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-01 01:22

ANKARA: A Turkish seismic survey vessel returned to port from its gas exploration activities in the disputed waters of eastern Mediterranean on Monday morning, in a last-minute "goodwill gesture" to open room for negotiation with Greece and Cyprus in the coming days.

The presence of the Oruc Reis in the area since Aug. 10, where it has explored for potential natural gas reserves, has been at the heart of a dispute between Ankara, the EU and US.

EU leaders will decide during a Dec. 10-11 summit potential sanctions over Ankara's activities, which Greece has called a "direct threat to peace." The vessel was spotted sailing just seven miles off the coast of the Greek island of Kastellorizo on Thursday.

However, Ankara still maintains that it has rights in the region due to its long Mediterranean coastline. Tensions escalated back in August when Turkey sent the vessel into waters also claimed by Greece, which has so far rejected any talks with Turkey over its maritime claims as long as the Oruc Reis remained in the area.

The Turkish Energy Ministry also announced that the ship had collected "2D seismic data of 10.955 kilometers" (7,000 miles) during its excursion. Gallia Lindenstrauss, senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, said the Oruc Reis's return to port was likely linked to the coming meeting of the European Council as an attempt to alleviate the situation and avoid sanctions, rather than a sign of genuine desire for negotiations.

"The decision whether or not to impose sanctions on Turkey depends very much on the position of Germany. As there are strong economic ties between Turkey and Germany and also a very large Turkish diaspora in Germany, Berlin has tried to mediate between Ankara and Athens," she told Arab News.

Lindenstrauss added, though, that two incidents may have shattered some of the goodwill toward Ankara in Berlin.

"The first was the re-sending in October of the Oruc Reis to what Greece sees as its economic waters, while German mediation efforts were in play. The second, at the end of November, was the strong negative reaction of Ankara to what happened when a German navy crew searched a Turkish cargo ship on suspicion that it violated the arms embargo on Libya, as Berlin thought the search was completely legal under the mandate of the Irini operation," she said.

Last week, the European Parliament called for sanctions against Turkey over President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Northern Cyprus, and Turkey's continuing operations in the Eastern Mediterranean, which Brussels says are illegal.

FASTFACT

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During his daily press conference on Monday, Peter Stano, the lead spokesperson for the external affairs of the EU, said Brussels could not take steps based on a single statement or move, and added that the manners and statements given throughout this period would be taken into account w during the summit.

"It is a cat and mouse game," said Fiona Mullen, director of Cyprus-based Sapienta Economics.

"We can assume that the EU expected Oruc Reis to return to port before the summit. But there has been no change on Varosha or the Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone, so the EU will have to word the conclusions carefully to make sure any threat of sanctions remains credible," she told Arab News.

According to Charles Ellinas, a senior fellow and energy expert at the Atlantic Council, given what happened in September when Oruc Reis was pulled back, only to return mid-October after the special European Council meeting on Oct. 1, it is difficult to take this new development at face value. "Based on the previous experience, it looks as if Oruc Reis' return to base may be linked to the forthcoming European Council meeting on Dec. 10, which will consider EU sanctions on Turkey. This time round, though, the EU may not take the bait. Sanctions are still likely," he told Arab News. Sanctions that specifically target hydrocarbon-related areas of Turkey's economy are likely to be taken during the summit, experts note. "The EU will also demand firmer commitments from Turkey – to stop activities in the disputed areas to enable resumption of discussions with Greece," Ellinas said. However, the withdrawal of Oruc Reis may also be linked to the change of presidency in the US. "Erdogan has already started making conciliatory remarks towards the US and the EU – such as 'Turkey is part of Europe' and 'Turkey-US relations are of a strategic nature,' following Joe Biden's election," Ellinas said. But, the energy expert added, remarks alone may not be enough. "There will be a need for a reset and a willingness by Turkey to cease aggression and return to diplomacy and negotiations, without the threat of intimidation," he said.



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Egypt and South Sudan action group to study agricultural cooperation
Egypt pledges full support to Palestinian cause

Egypt and South Sudan action group to study agricultural cooperation

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-01 01:16

CAIRO: Egypt and South Sudan have agreed to form an action group to study ways for agricultural cooperation to be implemented.

The action group will also study bilateral cooperation in the fields of capacity building, technical assistance in research studies, seed production, agricultural extension, agricultural cooperatives, and value chains.

Egyptian Minister of Agriculture El-Sayed El-Quseir met his South Sudanese counterpart Josephine Lagu, who is visiting Egypt as part of enhancing bilateral cooperation.

El-Quseir said that both sides had agreed to establish three Egyptian joint farms in South Sudan including a fishery and animal husbandry.

He said that both sides were to draft agreements to be jointly adopted and signed to enter into force.

The minister underlined the importance of this visit, which coincided with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's trip to South Sudan to meet President Salva Kiir.

El-Quseir said that such a visit reflected the depth of relations between the two countries.

Lagu thanked the Egyptian government and agriculture minister for her visit, which was aimed at enhancing bilateral relations in agriculture and added value chains to boost and develop the economy. She added that such cooperation also covered technology transfer, learning from Egyptian expertise, establishing fisheries and animal husbandries, in addition to developing animal production which would lead to South Sudan achieving food security.

FASTFACT

Both sides agreed to establish three Egyptian joint farms in South Sudan and to draft agreements to be jointly adopted and signed to enter into force.

She said that after returning to Juba she would be expecting Egyptian experts to take on the operating procedures needed to activate bilateral cooperation on the ground.

El-Sisi met Kiir to discuss regional and international issues of mutual concern, especially developments in the strategic areas of the Horn of Africa and West Africa.

Both presidents also discussed ways of containing the potential repercussions of such developments on the region.

El-Sisi said that his country's vision was based on the Nile River being a

source of cooperation and development for all people of the Nile Basin countries.

He reiterated that his country would remain a faithful supporter of the South Sudanese people.

“We are committed to giving all forms of support through the existing mechanisms between the two countries,” he said at a press conference after his talks with Kiir.

“I call on the international community to fulfil its pledges and commitments to South Sudan in its path toward a better future. We support efforts to lift international sanctions on South Sudan so as to support the current political transitional process.”

El-Sisi hailed efforts by South Sudan’s political powers to press ahead with implementing the benefits of the transitional period in line with the articles of the activated peace agreement, and to support the efforts of the National Unity Government in drafting a new constitution that would achieve the aspirations of the South Sudanese toward peace, stability, and development.

“We also agreed to further enhance cooperation in the fields of transferring Egyptian expertise, providing technical assistance, and capacity building of national calibers in the brotherly country of South Sudan. This would be achieved by resuming the training programs provided by the Egyptian Agency of Partnership for Development in fields such as education, health, agriculture and irrigation, as well as other civil and military fields.”



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Egypt pledges full support to Palestinian causeEgypt finance minister says

expects disbursement of \$1.6bn of IMF funding by December-end

[Egypt pledges full support to Palestinian cause](#)

Author:

Tue, 2020-12-01 01:01

CAIRO: Egypt on Monday pledged its continued full support for the Palestinian issue during a visit to Cairo by the state's President Mahmoud Abbas.

During a meeting, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said the Palestinian cause remained a key political priority for Egypt and that the country would back Palestine in whatever demands it made toward a peaceful settlement and the restoration of the legitimate rights of its people.

El-Sisi added that solidarity and an intensification of Arab efforts to revive the peace process were needed now.

Also present at the talks between the two presidents was Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry, Director of Egypt's General Intelligence Service Abbas Kamel, and Palestinian Ambassador to Egypt Diab Al-Louh.

Bassam Rady, official spokesman for the Egyptian Presidency, said that the summit dealt with the latest developments in relation to the Palestinian issue and the peace process in the Middle East.

Abbas noted the importance of maintaining regular consultation and coordination with the Egyptian president on the overall Palestinian situation and thanked Egypt for its long-standing support for Palestinian national unity.

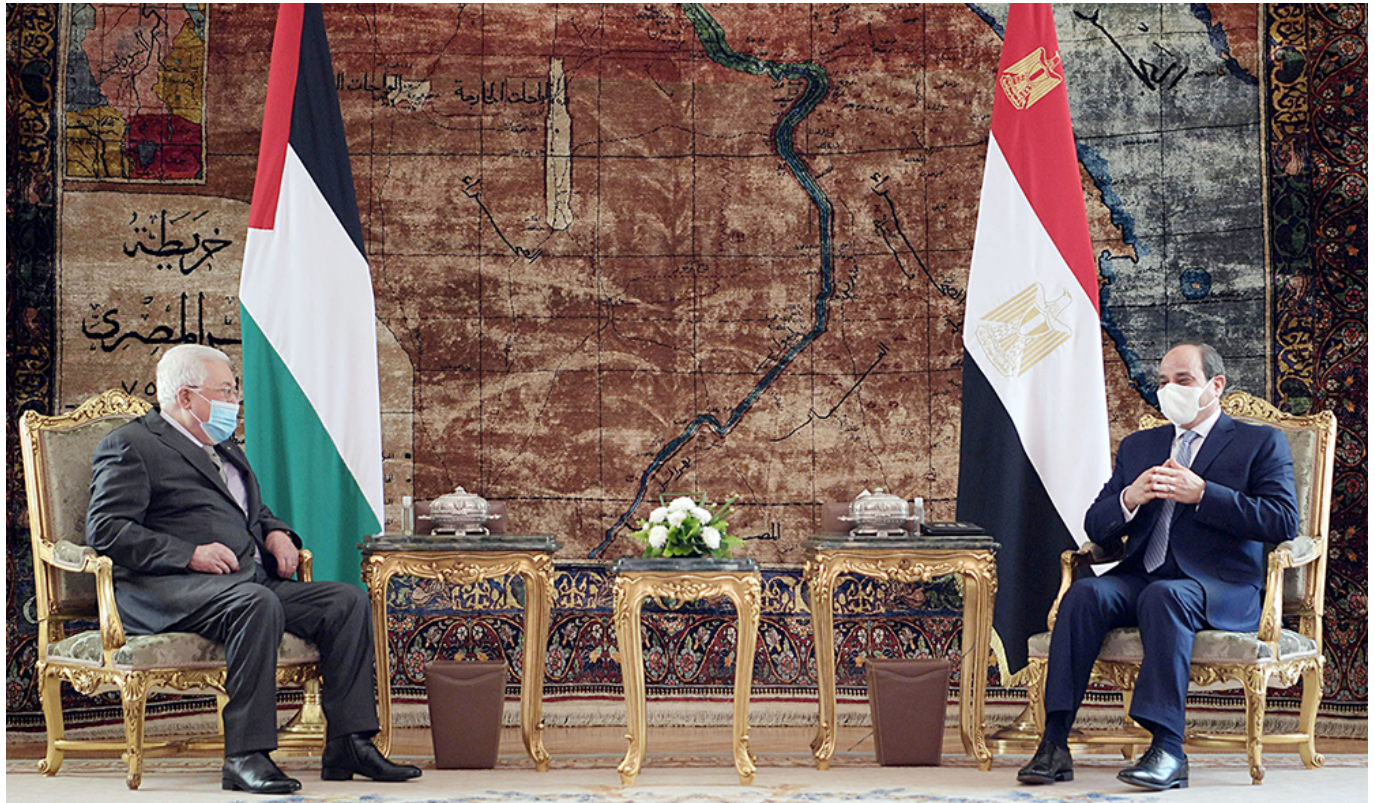
The meeting also reviewed ongoing Egyptian efforts to bring stability to the Gaza Strip and help improve humanitarian, living, and economic conditions there, while pushing the reconciliation process with a view to achieving political consensus.

As part of his first foreign tour since the beginning of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Abbas was also due to meet with Jordanian King Abdullah II. His trip comes days after the Palestinian Authority (PA) announced the restoration of security coordination with the Israelis.

Sources said that Abbas wanted to coordinate Arab positions and rally support for a new unified political process in the region before the US President-elect Joe Biden came into power, adding that the PA had already been in contact with the incoming American president's team.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki said that the PA had indirectly informed Biden's administration of its readiness to return to negotiations with Israel on the basis of international law decisions.

Earlier, Israeli reports said that Abbas had sent several messages to Biden's team declaring his willingness to abide by conditions that would allow the opening of a dialogue between him and the new administration in Washington.



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Egypt's El-Sisi warns of instability after protest calls Palestine's Mahmoud Abbas asks UN for international peace conference next year

[Schools in Lebanon reopen, other sectors gradually](#)

Author:

Mon, 2020-11-30 01:05

BEIRUT: The Ministry of Education will reopen schools for integrated

education starting on Monday.

This comes after two weeks of closure and amid objections from civil bodies and commentators working in the public field.

Hilda El-Khoury, director of the counseling and guidance department at the Ministry of Education, said: "Returning to education through the combined method will be within the preventive measures that were previously approved."

However, the Civil Emergency Authority in Lebanon said: "The decision will lead to a health crisis affecting the most vulnerable people, namely children and underage students, especially with the number of cases not declining since before the closure, and with the noticeable increase in the daily number of deaths."

The Ministerial Committee for Combating the Coronavirus has meanwhile maintained its decision to impose a partial curfew in Lebanon but amended its implementation hours. Instead of starting at 5:00 p.m. each evening, the curfew now begins at 11 p.m. and ends at 5 a.m., provided that restaurants, cafes and malls close at 10:00 pm.

During its meeting on Sunday, the committee decided to restore vehicle movement on roads but maintained the suspension of social activities, cinemas and nightclubs.

Health minister for Lebanon's caretaker government, Hamad Hassan, said that the adoption of the strategy, permitting odd/even license plate vehicles on the roads on alternate days, had doubled the number of COVID-19 cases due to people's reliance on shared transportation.

He said: "The rate of commitment to complete closure in all Lebanese territories has reached 70 percent over the past two weeks."

Hassan said that the aim of the measures was to alleviate the pressure on the medical and nursing staff.

"The required medical measures, completed in terms of expanding the hospitals' capacity to accommodate the COVID-19 cases, have been completed," he said.

The death toll in Lebanon has reached 1,000, while the total number of confirmed cases has jumped to more than 126,000 cases, at a rate of more than 1,200 cases per day during the past two weeks.

Abdul Rahman Al-Bizri, an infectious disease specialist and member of the emergency committee on coronavirus, regretted the lack of plans for the period following the closure due to a lack of coordination on COVID-19 between state departments.

He said that this had kept the country in a state of confusion and chaos while citizens paid a high price in light of the difficult economic and living conditions.

Al-Bizri said: "The repeated closures are unsuccessful, and one of their consequences is the decline in economic activity, the life cycle, and the living conditions."

Meanwhile, video footage of Health Minister Hamad Hassan went viral on Saturday. It showed him cutting a cake for the birthday of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in the open market in Baalbek city.

The video was circulated on social media and caused a scandal following a similar episode in which the same minister was involved months ago.

The people of his town in the Bekaa met him during the peak of the spread of coronavirus, and he danced among them carrying a sword. Some people carried him on their shoulders and other social distancing measures were also not observed.

The Syndicate of Owners of Restaurants, Cafes, Night-Clubs and Pastries has called in the past few days for the sector to reopen to save what is left of it.

In a statement issued on the eve of the ministerial committees' meeting, the syndicate called on the caretaker prime minister, Hassan Diab, to "adopt a health-economic approach for the benefit of the rest of the sector."

The syndicate added: "The sector has fully fulfilled its duties with regard to the preventive measures.

"We have also advanced a new approach related to the capacity of institutions, whereby chairs and tables are reallocated to accommodate only 50 percent of the original capacity, guaranteeing that no overcrowding will occur.

"We insist on adopting this as a new measure, and we discussed it with the minister of interior, and the sector will reopen its doors on Monday morning while remaining committed to all procedures and laws."

Bechara Asmar, the head of the General Labor Union, called for the reopening of the country "because it secures a return to the economic cycle during the month of the holidays, protects workers, employees and daily-paid workers in all private, public, and official sectors, and preserves their livelihood at a time when they risk having their wages reduced, starving to death or dying of the coronavirus."



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Lebanon to ease virus curbs from Monday
Coronavirus threatens festive season in Lebanon