

Egyptian authorities focus on water resources and irrigation

Author:

Thu, 2020-10-08 22:45

CAIRO: Egypt has lifted its state of emergency in preparation for the season of floods, torrents and rains, and instructed officials to follow up locally on the matter.

Mohammed Abdel Aty, minister of water resources and irrigation, held a virtual meeting with the heads of the central departments of water resources and irrigation for the governorates of Upper and Lower Egypt on Thursday to discuss mechanisms for dealing with flood season.

The ministry stressed that preparatory measures needed to be completed urgently – including ensuring that all bridges are secure enough to withstand any emergency, and that emergency units in hot spots in the West Delta region are fully prepared for the expected torrential rains.

The ministry is also focused on removing all waste from canals to ensure there are no obstacles to hinder the flow of the water.

Mohammed Al-Sibai, spokesman for the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, said the ministry “is in a state of emergency throughout the year,” but especially during the flood season at the end of October, but said it has managed to deal with it well so far despite the high water levels and heavy rain.

“We are prepared to deal with all volumes of torrents and rain during the coming period,” he said.



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Egypt's farmers fear impact of dam as water dwindlesEl-Sisi: Egyptian water rights are 'national security issue'

[Jordan returns to weekend lockdown as COVID-19 cases mount](#)

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Thu, 2020-10-08 15:27

AMMAN: Jordan will enter a nationwide 48-hour lockdown on Friday for the first time in months as health officials worry a major spike in coronavirus infections could threaten its stretched health care system, officials said. The country has seen what officials say is an "exponential" rise, with around 10,000 cases confirmed in just over a week – a near-doubling of the total number of infections since the first cases in early March and a reversal what had been among the lowest infection and death rates in the Middle East. Senior officials are struggling to avoid a broader lockdown that the hard-hit economy can ill afford. The IMF forecasts the economy, which was struggling even before the health crisis, will shrink 6% this year, the first contraction since 1990.

“The last thing we want is a complete lockdown for two weeks or three weeks, we don’t want to reach this ..It remains the last weapon if cases rise unbelievably high and lead to our hospitals being overwhelmed,” Health Minister Saad Jaber told state television this week.

The community spread of the virus has forced authorities to maintain the closure of schools for 2 million pupils, after a brief resumption of lessons at the start of last month, and impose strict bans on large public gatherings.

Thousands of troops have been deployed to enforce the lockdown, which begins at midnight.

Daily cases hit a peak of 1,824 last Monday, with total number of infections now standing at 20,200 and 137 deaths.

Officials blamed the initial outbreak in Jordan on infected truck drivers crossing the northern border with Syria. Authorities have tried to control the spread of the virus with partial curfews to isolate neighborhoods in the capital and outlying towns.

King Abdullah has criticized the government for mistakes in handling the pandemic, and ordered newly appointed Prime Minister Bisher al Khaswaneh on Wednesday to raise hospital capacity in coming weeks and ramp up testing. The king has also pushed the armed forces to help set up a 2,000-bed field hospital in the Dead Sea region.



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Israel signs deal with Jordan to open airspace Jordan's king appoints veteran diplomat Bisher Al-Khasawneh prime minister

[Egypt records no COVID-19 cases among tourists since resorts reopened](#)

Thu, 2020-10-08 22:37

CAIRO: No coronavirus cases have been detected in tourists in Egypt in the past three months, according to Egyptian presidency spokesman Bassam Rady.

Rady said that President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi had paid great attention to the tourism sector and Egyptian citizens. The pandemic was a surprise test for state sectors but Egypt had dealt with the crisis successfully.

The country had made great efforts to confront the repercussions of the coronavirus, he said. The minister of health had indicated that the incentive packages implemented had supported the tourism sector, and the president had renewed the directive to protect employment in this area.

Rady said that indicators of the resumption of tourism in Egypt were linked to the international situation and that there were signs of the return of visitors, especially from countries in the Eastern Bloc.

He said that tourists visiting the Red Sea, Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada did not record any coronavirus cases, despite the large number of people coming from different countries.

Rady said that the situation was under control but called on citizens to continue to adhere to health precautions.

Soha Bahgat, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, said that the state was making a constant effort to support the sector during the pandemic.

Bahgat added that the state had issued a set of executive packages to support the sector during the coronavirus crisis, most significantly for workers. This was represented by the continued subsidy provided by the emergency fund at the Ministry of Solidarity, she said, referring to the exemptions from paying fees for arrivals to tourist governorates until April 2021.

Bahgat indicated the renewed approval of the Cabinet to postpone electricity, gas and water payments for tourism and hotel facilities until Dec. 31, 2020.

She said that 300,000 tourists from 15 countries had visited Egypt since the gradual return of tourism began, and considered this number very reasonable in light of the global pandemic.



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Egypt records 300,000 tourist arrivals in 3 months amid the pandemic
Egypt launches campaign to promote nature reserves and ecotourism

[Jordan's king appoints veteran diplomat Bisher Al-Khasawneh prime minister](#)

Wed, 2020-10-07 21:56

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II on Wednesday appointed veteran diplomat and palace aide Bisher Al-Khasawneh as the new prime minister, days after accepting the resignation of Omar Al-Razzaz, the royal palace said. The monarch dissolved parliament on Sept. 27 at the end of its four-year term, a move that under constitutional rules meant the government had to resign within a week.

In a letter of designation, the king said he entrusted Al-Khasawneh, who has been a palace advisor since last year after a career mostly spent as a diplomat and peace negotiator with Israel, to form a cabinet of qualified ministers who would rise to the country's challenges.

Al-Khasawneh will oversee parliamentary elections due on Nov. 10 whose outcome is expected under an electoral law that marginalizes the Islamist opposition to maintain a majority of pro-government deputies.

The country is facing a peak in COVID-19 infections at a time of rising popular discontent over worsening economic conditions and curbs on public freedoms under emergency laws.

Jordan's economy is expected to shrink by 6% this year as it grapples with its worst economic crisis in many years, with unemployment and poverty aggravated by the pandemic.



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Jordan's King Abdullah accepts resignation of Prime Minister Omar Al-Razzaz
Jordan to deploy armed forces in all governorates to enforce weekend COVID-19 curfew

Two-state solution, Mideast peace at stake in US election: Activists

Wed, 2020-10-07 19:45

CHICAGO: The two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Middle East peace in general, are at stake for Arab Americans in the Nov. 3 election battle between US President Donald Trump and Joe Biden, activists for each side argued on Wednesday.

Ed Gabriel, former US ambassador to Morocco and a spokesman for the organization Arabs for Biden, and Republican activist and Trump supporter Dalia Al-Aqidi were both guests on "The Ray Hanania Show," broadcast in Detroit on the US Arab Radio Network.

They said Arab Americans will help define which way the US moves forward in the Middle East.

Gabriel said Biden is "the last chance" for the two-state solution, and for giving Palestinians a stronger negotiating footing with Israel.

"We're hanging by a thread on a two-state solution," Gabriel said during the live radio show, which is sponsored by Arab News. "I think he can get us there because of the trust and confidence he has. One thing I learned in diplomacy: If you don't have the trust and confidence of both sides, you're in trouble ... Joe has got that."

[Watch: The Ray Hanania Show with guests Ed Gabriel and Dalia Al-Aqidi.](#)

Gabriel said in such matters, Biden is "very close in personality and approach" to former President Bill Clinton. "Biden has balance, he's trusted by both sides and he can bring them together," Gabriel added.

Noting that American Arabs and Muslims tend to be conservative socially and politically, Al-Aqidi questioned the failures of past Democratic administrations to deliver on their promises of peace, while Trump has delivered results.

"We just witnessed the most important two deals between two Middle Eastern countries (the UAE and Bahrain) and Israel ... More to come," she said.

"It's one of the best things to have happened to the Middle East in 40 years. This is step one to a more peaceful region."

Al-Aqidi said Arab Americans can play a role in supporting policies that keep threats from extremists such as Hezbollah and Iran in check.

"Let us not forget that in the Middle East, there's a huge threat from the Iranian regime and from Turkey as well," she added.

"It's the right time now for people in the Middle East to live in peace.

That's what President Trump did, which many presidents failed in this aspect."

Gabriel said a Biden administration would be "tough" on Iran and Hezbollah. "We're going to go beyond a nuclear deal with Iran to look at missile technology and their proxies in the region that foment terrorism," he added.

"But ... this is America. We don't lead with our guns. We should be leading with our values. Joe Biden leads with his values. As Joe would say, inshallah."

Gabriel criticized Trump for ostracizing not only the Palestinians during his Middle East peace efforts, but also American Arabs and Muslims.

Biden "produced a six-page Arab-American policy paper which you can go online and read – six pages of how this future administration would deal with Arab Americans on domestic and foreign policies," Gabriel said.

"We have dozens of meetings every month with all kinds of sub-groups of the Arab-American population. We're listening and we're changing. We're always one email away from Joe Biden ... It comes from his heart," he added.

"Last week in the (presidential) debate, he looked at Trump in the eyes, and when Trump gave one of his comments Joe said 'inshallah.' And Joe said that for a reason ... He has been across the table from Arab leaders ... He has a warmth about him that's very Arab."

The broadcast is available on the Arab News Facebook page, where the interviews were streamed live.



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'Just shut up, man' – Biden and Trump trade personal insults in first presidential debate
Trump 'looking forward' to next presidential debate