

Ever Given owner vows to remain a regular customer of Suez authority

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Thu, 2021-07-08 21:46

CAIRO: Shoei Kisen Kaisha, the Japanese owner of the Ever Given cargo ship, said on Thursday that it will remain a regular and loyal customer of the Suez Canal Authority (SCA).

In March, the giant container ship ran aground during its crossing of the Suez Canal, causing disruption to international traffic, particularly oil tankers.

On Wednesday, the ship resumed its journey and left the Suez Canal, 106 days after becoming wedged across a southern section of the waterway for nearly a week.

After being dislodged, it was held by the SCA under court order while the authority sought compensation from the ship's owner and its insurers.

After protracted negotiations, an undisclosed settlement between the parties was reached and the SCA announced that the ship would be released.

In a statement, the company said it still maintains a good relationship with the SCA and that it has been strengthened through the experience.

Shoei Kisen Kaisha also thanked the authorities and those who worked to release the ship as soon as possible.

Yukito Higaki, head of Imabari Shipbuilding Co., which owns Shoei Kisen Kaisha, said the Suez Canal is one of the main pillars of international maritime trade.

In a recorded speech during the signing ceremony of the settlement agreement with the SCA, he praised the authority's help in floating the ship safely within seven days, noting that the company owns a large fleet of ships and will remain a regular and loyal customer of the SCA.

Higaki said that the situation was difficult, and expressed his gratitude to Lt. Gen. Osama Rabie, SCA chairman, and the Egyptian people for accomplishing the task of floating the ship.

He expressed his happiness over the "excellent relationship" between the ship-owning company and the SCA that had been maintained and had even been enhanced through the success of floating the ship.



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Egypt's headline inflation up slightly at 4.9 percent in June
Egypt to release megaship impounded over Suez blockage

[Amid Lebanon's drastic fuel shortages, the rare site of a woman petrol station attendant brings hope](#)

Thu, 2021-07-08 20:40

BEIRUT: Amid Lebanon's fuel shortage crisis, a young woman has emerged as a symbol of hope as possibly the country's only female petrol pump attendant.

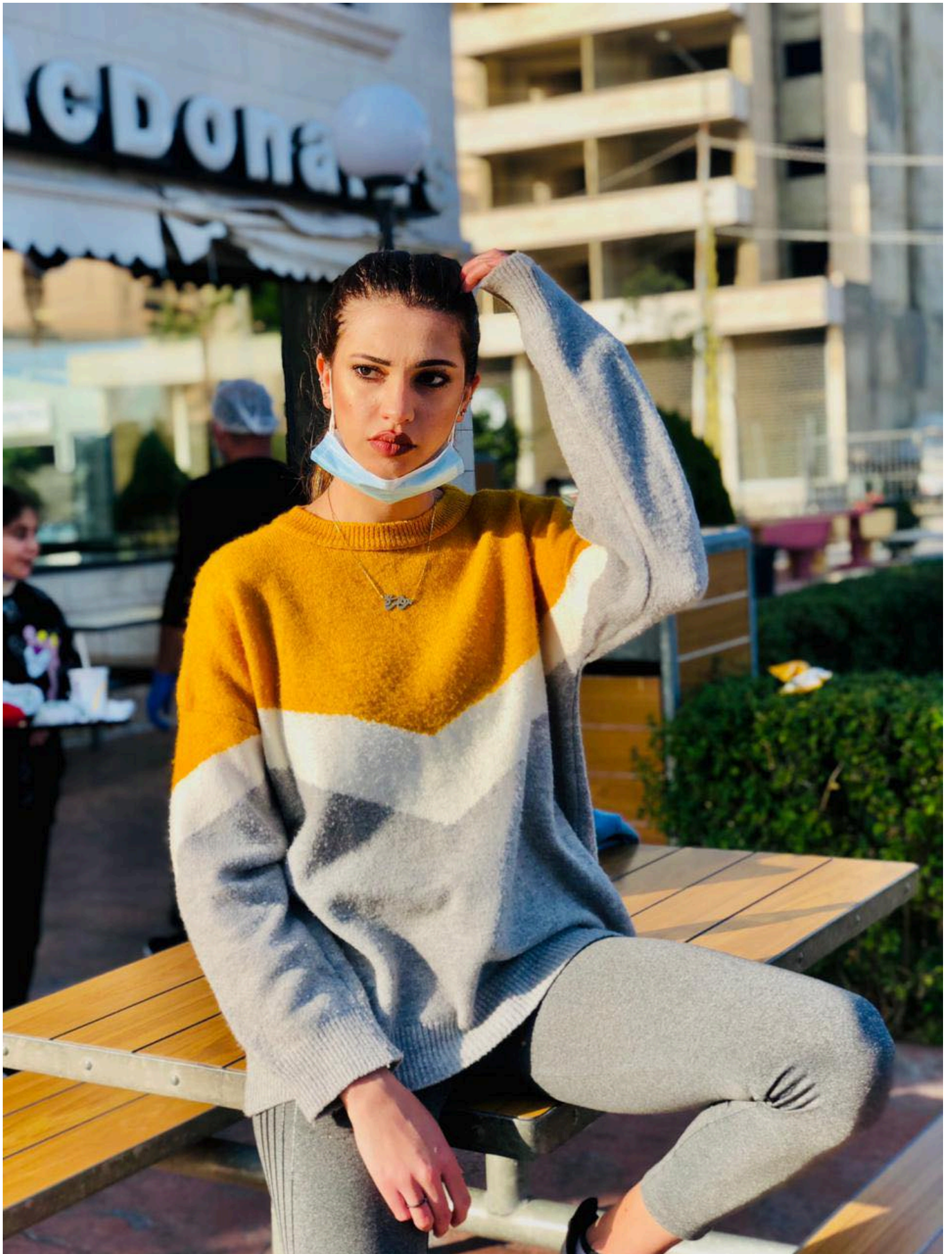
Amani Mneimneh, 21, defies social taboos when each day she rolls up her sleeves and helps refuel drivers' cars.

Lebanon has been suffering massive fuel shortages as the country slides deeper into economic collapse.

Long queues outside petrol stations have sparked brawls, traffic jams, accidents and even gunfights.

Aside from the fuel crisis, most people are not used to seeing women fill their tanks in what many Lebanese would consider a job for men.

<https://www.arabnews.com/sites/default/files/main-image/2021/07/08/27047...>



Amani Mneimneh, 21, has drawn praise for taking up the job of a gas station operator as Lebanon's economy collapses (Supplied)

Two weeks ago, and struggling for work, Mneimneh defied social pressure, along with the increasingly hostile atmosphere on the roads, and started work

at Queen Station in the southern seaside city of Saida.

“I refuse to be branded by anyone,” Amani told Arab News. “I love this decent job that helps me earn my living,”

Mneimneh first worked at Queen Station in 2017 for a year after she attained her national diploma. At the time, the petrol station was the country’s only one staffed by women, but the ground-breaking business idea ran out of steam and the female staff slowly left.

“In 2017, five girls and I worked here ... they couldn’t withstand the job requirements and challenges, unlike me, I stayed for a year then quit to study,” Mneimneh said.

She enrolled in an institute to study interior design but was unable to complete the course due to financial difficulties, so instead she studied hairstyling and worked in a salon.

She said Lebanon’s devastating and deteriorating economic situation, meant she was left needing work and that’s when she went back to Queen Station.

Her parents and five siblings support her to “the maximum.”

“I am grateful and proud of them ... I am even prouder to be supporting mum and dad financially,” she said.

Last week, Hussein Taboush, an acquaintance of Amani, went to get petrol. When his turn came, he spotted Amani, who rushed shyly to hide inside. He brought her out and took photos of her working then posted them on his Facebook with a message praising her for being “hardworking, courageous and upright.”

Taboush’s post received an overwhelming reaction, with 11,000 likes, 1,300 shares and 1,700 comments.

“I had a couple of thousand followers on Facebook,” said Amani. “When Hussein posted the photos, I sarcastically asked him if he was going to make me famous.”

When she woke up the next day, her followers exceeding 10,800.

She said her phone was inundated with WhatsApp messages and calls she received in reaction to Taboush’s post.

“I couldn’t believe my eyes. There were thousands of comments, shares and likes. Many of them invigorated and supported me while others criticized and shamed me for taking up what many label by a man’s job,” she said.

Mneimneh earns 700,000 Lebanese pounds a day (the equivalent of \$42) and works six days a week from 8am-3pm.

Recalling an affectionate incident at work, she said one woman, who was weeping and exhausted having queued for hours, “came down from her car and hugged me in support when I gently told her to smile and be patient.”

Asked whether she had faced abuse from irritated customers, she said she always smiles and asks them to “calm down and be patient.”

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11K

1.8K Comments 1.4K Shares

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Expatriate workers at gas stations in Lebanon face insults, threats and assault amid fuel shortage. Mother and four daughters killed as they looked for fuel amid Lebanon's petrol shortage.

[How Hezbollah has permeated the Lebanese state](#)

Thu, 2021-07-08 20:36

LONDON: Hezbollah has used its financial backers in Iran and its significant military arsenal to “permeate the Lebanese state,” according to a paper launched this week.

The paper – authored by Lina Khatib, director of London-based think tank Chatham House’s Middle East and North Africa program, and launched at an online event on Thursday attended by Arab News – details how Hezbollah morphed from a resistance group against Israeli occupation to a hybrid power holding the Lebanese state in an ideological stranglehold.

“Hezbollah has spread its influence throughout the Lebanese state, from the presidency of the republic to representative political institutions and the civil service, as well as Lebanon’s military and security institutions,” the paper said.

“This influence is due to a number of factors: Hezbollah’s benefiting from a reliable external patron – Iran – unlike other parties in Lebanon; Hezbollah’s capacity in terms of organization, funding, physical resources and numbers of followers, which dwarfs that of other Lebanese parties.”

Other means used by Hezbollah, the paper said, include the “weakness of the Lebanese state” and the existence of “a political system based on elite pacts.”

Khatib told event attendees that she urges analysts, particularly in the West, to take a “nuanced” approach to understanding the relationship between Lebanon and Hezbollah.

“While Hezbollah is a contributing factor to the weakness of the Lebanese state, it’s also a product of the political system in Lebanon,” she said.

“As long as the current political system in Lebanon continues to exist, it won’t be possible to reverse Hezbollah’s sway over the Lebanese state.”

Khatib said the characterization of Hezbollah as a “state within a state” – popular in academic and policymaking circles – is inaccurate.

This characterization “implies that Hezbollah is operating in a way that’s completely detached from the Lebanese state at large. Instead, what I argue is that Hezbollah permeates the state in Lebanon,” she added.

“And when we say ‘the state,’ I’m not just talking about the state institutions, I’m also talking about the state as the space for the contestation of power in Lebanon.

“This, I think, is vividly illustrated by how Hezbollah, unlike other groups in Lebanon ... has surveillance capacities. That means it’s monitoring not just what happens inside state institutions, but it’s monitoring its allies and its opponents in all kinds of arenas: Cultural, social, education, economic. This is something that gives it a huge tactical advantage.”

Khatib said other parties also take advantage of the Lebanese state for their own benefit, but “it’s Hezbollah, unlike the others, that has coercive power over both its opponents and its allies – this also gives it the edge.”

Mona Yacoubian, a senior advisor at the US Institute for Peace, said Hezbollah moved from “the crucible of resistance to Israeli occupation” at

the end of the 20th century, to becoming the “praetorian guard of Lebanon’s corrupt, cronyism system.”

Hezbollah is different from other parties in the country “by virtue of its arms, and that these arms sit outside the gambit of state control,” she added.

Despite being a late arrival to the Lebanese political scene, Yacoubian said, the Shiite group has “adopted and emulated some of the most corrupt practices of Lebanon’s political class, and in a sense has become completely enmeshed with Lebanon’s political system.”

She added: “It has increasingly exploited state institutions – Parliament, ministries, the civil service – and used its influence to garner power, to spread patronage and to gain revenues.”

However, Yacoubian said this behavior has come back to bite the Iranian proxy. “What we saw in the October 2019 protests (in Lebanon) and beyond is that Hezbollah is no longer viewed as above corruption,” she added.

“We see that it has been tarnished by this behavior. Even within its own base, there’s growing disaffection.”

Lebanon is experiencing its worst financial crisis in more than 150 years, and on Wednesday Prime Minister Hassan Diab warned that the country is “days away from a social explosion.”

Yacoubian said because of this approaching explosion, her key question moving forward is: “What would be the impact of a total state collapse on Hezbollah? Because I think that’s a real possibility.”



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Lebanon's Hezbollah hails Raisi's election win in Iran
Pentagon official warns of Hezbollah threat to Lebanon's stability amid financial crisis

[Ethiopian intransigence over dam project led Egypt, Sudan to approach UN: President El-Sisi](#)

Thu, 2021-07-08 20:09

CAIRO: Ethiopia's intransigence over the controversial Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project had left Sudan and Egypt with no option but to approach the UN Security Council on the issue, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said.

And Addis Ababa's attempts to impose a fait accompli on the two countries had

led to the faltering of negotiations being held under the auspices of the African Union, he added.

El-Sisi had made his comments to Felix Tshisekedi, president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), who had called him on Thursday.

The huge Nile dam scheme, set to be Africa's largest hydroelectric project when completed, has resulted in a near decade-long diplomatic stand-off between Ethiopia and downstream nations Egypt and Sudan.

Ethiopia has maintained that the project was essential to the nation's development, but Cairo and Khartoum fear it could restrict their citizens' vital access to water supplies.

El-Sisi said the aim of involving the UN Security Council was to help the three countries move toward a binding agreement to operate the dam within a clear and specific timeframe.

The Egyptian leader noted his appreciation of the DRC's – current chair of the African Union – concerns over the issue and efforts made by Tshisekedi to sponsor talks between the three countries to try and reach a deal that protected the trio's interests and preserved their water rights. Tshisekedi hailed Egyptian moves to resolve the impasse through negotiation.

Meanwhile, during a meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry pointed out the need for the world community to help work toward resolving the GERD dispute.

He noted the danger of taking unilateral actions that could impact on the stability and security of the region and Egypt's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ahmed Hafez, said the minister had urged the international community to push Ethiopia through the UN to seriously engage in settlement talks.

Shoukry told the Associated Press that he would be calling on the UN Security Council to require Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia to negotiate a binding agreement within six months on the contentious issue of water availability from the dam.

He said that almost 10 years of discussions over the hydroelectric scheme on the Blue Nile had failed to secure assurances that water would continue to flow downstream in sufficient volumes to Sudan and Egypt, where 100 million people are dependent on the river as their only source of water.

Tunisia, the Arab representative on the council, has circulated a draft resolution requesting Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia to resume negotiations at the invitation of the African Union chairman and the UN secretary-general to finalize a legally binding agreement by January on the dam's operation and flow of water into it.

It said any deal must ensure, "Ethiopia's ability to generate hydropower ... while preventing the inflicting of significant harm on the water security of downstream states."



Battle for the Nile

How will Egypt be impacted by Ethiopia filling its GERD reservoir ?

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Battle for the Nile: Why Ethiopia's GERD reservoir filling may be just the start of Egypt's worries
Ethiopia building up forces on western border over 'national threat'

[Putin lifts ban on charter flights to Egypt six years after crash](#)

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1625757337422082200

Thu, 2021-07-08 14:49

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin scrapped Russia's ban on charter flights to Egypt on Thursday, six years after suspending them for national security seasons in the aftermath of a plane crash.

The flights were stopped after a Metrojet plane taking Russian holiday makers back from Sharm El-Sheikh to St. Petersburg broke up over the Sinai Peninsula in October 2015, killing 224 people.

Russia concluded the plane was destroyed by a bomb. A group affiliated with Daesh militants claimed responsibility.

Putin's decree lifting the ban will be a boon for Egypt's year-round resorts in Sharm Al-Sheikh and Hurghada which attracted large numbers of Russians in the past.

Russia and Egypt agreed to resume all flights in a call in April between Putin and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Egypt's presidency said at the time.



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Russian plane with 28 on board crashed into seaRussia says foiled Daesh attacks in Moscow, south