

Yemeni PM criticizes UN report on central bank corruption

Tue, 2021-02-02 02:02

AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's Prime Minister Maeen Abdul Malik Saeed on Monday criticized a UN report accusing the country's central bank of corruption. Saeed said that the methodology for the report was wrong and that a Saudi deposit of \$2 billion into the central bank in Aden had "greatly alleviated the humanitarian crisis" in the country.

In its report last week to the UN Security Council, the Panel of Experts on Yemen found that the central bank had helped a group of Yemeni traders make \$423 million in profits from "a sophisticated money-laundering scheme of the Saudi deposit" and manipulating foreign exchange rules.

Saeed told reporters at a press conference in Aden that his government had reservations about the report's accusations and that they were cooperating with international auditors who would examine the central bank's financial activities, mainly with regards to the Saudi deposit.

"The government's principle is absolute transparency," he added. "We have reservations about the conclusions of the report."

HIGHLIGHT

Saeed told reporters at a press conference in Aden that his government had reservations about the report's accusations and that they were cooperating with international auditors who would examine the central bank's financial activities, mainly with regards to the Saudi deposit.

He criticized the UN report for saying the government's management of the deposit and its measures to address effects of the depreciation of the Yemeni riyal on prices of commodities were ineffective.

"The methodology on which the report was based is wrong and led to those conclusions. When they say (our) policy of subsidizing basic commodities is a destructive strategy, what does it mean? Should we leave our people to starve?"

He also said that food security was at risk in 2018, which had prompted Saudi Arabia to deposit the money. "The Saudi deposit has greatly alleviated the humanitarian crisis."

Yemen's parliament is investigating the UN's claims, the official news agency Saba reported on Sunday.

Sultan Al-Barkani, the parliament's speaker, ordered a committee of financial experts and officials to head to the central bank to investigate the allegations by auditing the bank's activities, quizzing the bank's workers and briefing the parliament's presidency on their findings.

The parliament has vowed to bring corrupt officials to justice, Saba added. Yemen family conglomerate Hayel Saeed Anam Group was named in the UN report. It received a substantial chunk of the Saudi deposit.

“The panel’s analysis shows that, between mid-2018 and August 2020, the Hayel Saeed Anam Group made a profit of approximately \$194.2 million from the letter of credit mechanism alone, excluding profits made from the import and sale of commodities,” it said.

The group on Sunday denied the UN accusations and pledged to assign professional auditors to respond to the allegations.

“HSA is aware of a report released by the Panel of Experts,” it said in a statement seen by Arab News. “The report contains unsubstantiated allegations of wrongdoing in relation to the KSA deposit. We reject any and all such allegations in the strongest terms. HSA will now commission an independent audit into the allegations.”

The group added that it had received a bigger part of the deposit because it was the largest trader and manufacturer of goods in Yemen. “HSA emphasizes that the company received the largest portion of the disbursement of the KSA deposit due exclusively to HSA’s status as the largest food importer and manufacturer in Yemen.”

Yemeni journalists, activists and politicians have demanded that the government form an independent inquiry to investigate the UN corruption allegations and to inform the public about the bank’s activities.

“We demand an investigation with (corrupt) officials of the central banks and referring those who are involved (in corruption) for prosecution,” tweeted Fatehi Bin Lazreq, the editor of Aden Al-Ghad newspaper. “People die of starvation and those (officials) steal.”



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Yemeni officials meet Saudi Islamic Affairs Minister

[El-Sisi rejects any procedure that violates Nile water rights](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-02-02 01:54

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has reiterated his rejection of any procedures that violate the rights to water from the River Nile, according to his spokesperson, Bassam Rady.

During a meeting with the chair of the African Union (AU) Commission, Moussa Faki, El-Sisi reaffirmed Egypt's aim to reach a comprehensive legal agreement between all concerned parties on the rules for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

This desire was reiterated by Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry, who also met with Faki.

BACKGROUND

During a meeting with the chair of the African Union Commission, El-Sisi reaffirmed Egypt's aim to reach a comprehensive legal agreement between all concerned parties on the rules for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Shoukry reviewed Egypt's position regarding the GERD, stressing Cairo's permanent readiness to engage in negotiations to reach a legally binding agreement on the procedures for filling and operating the dam, in a way that achieves the interests of the three countries in question – Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan – and which secures Egypt's rights and water interests.

Faki expressed his appreciation of Egypt's efforts to reach a solution over the GERD, stressing the importance of continued cooperation to reach a fair and balanced agreement.

Ahmed Hafez, a spokesman for Egypt's Foreign Ministry, said Shoukry and Faki also exchanged views on a number of additional issues and files, including on the conflicts in other African countries, and highlighted the need to provide political and financial support to provide "African solutions to African problems" to further the "Silencing the Guns on Continent" agenda.



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Sudan says Nile dam talks to resume Sunday
Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia restart Nile mega-dam talks

[GCC secretary general and Iraqi PM discuss Gulf power line project](#)

Tue, 2021-02-02 01:35

RIYADH: Iraq's prime minister and the GCC secretary general held talks on Monday to boost trade and supply electricity from the Gulf.

Iraqi leader Mustafa Al-Kadhimi and Nayef Al-Hajraf also discussed rebuilding Iraq after the war with Daesh.

Iraq has been blighted by a woeful power supply in recent years which feeds public anger and protests at the government's inability to provide basic services.

Iraq signed a deal in 2019 with the GCC to build a power line that would import 500 megawatts of electricity.

During their meeting in Baghdad, Al-Hajraf updated Al-Kadhimi on progress with the line that will connect Iraq to the Gulf's power grid from Kuwait.

The Iraqi prime minister, who took office in May last year amid a series of crises and widespread protests, said he wanted to strengthen relations with GCC countries "to accomplish goals and economic and commercial growth."

Al-Kadhimi stressed the importance of open dialogue between Iraq and the GCC, a statement said.

Al-Hajraf said it was important to strengthen Iraq and help with its efforts at targeting terrorism.

Iraq is still recovering from a devastating period between 2014 and 2017 when extremist group Daesh occupied swathes of Iraqi territory.

Relations between Iraq and Gulf countries have steadily improved in recent years. A donor conference in Kuwait in 2018 to help the country rebuild raised pledges of \$30 billion.

Last year, the GCC and Iraq signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation between the nations and enhance economic development, security and investment.



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Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Iraqi president discuss cooperationUK jets destroy Daesh cells in Iraq

[Egypt to launch satellite at end of 2021](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-02-01 02:00

CAIRO: Mohammed El-Qousi, head of the Egyptian Space Agency, said that Egypt is preparing to launch a satellite in December 2021, in addition to other projects to establish space science in the country.

He said that Egypt had an ambitious plan to build space systems and infrastructure, as well as strengthen international space relations, explore space and establish Egyptian space law, according to the Al-Youm Al-Sabea newspaper.

El-Qousi said that his country's ambitions in space science were greater than the five satellites that it currently had in orbit.

Cairo, in cooperation with German and Chinese partners, will launch new satellites, the first of which is a satellite for remote sensing and scientific research, weighing 65 kilograms. It will be launched in December this year.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Egypt will launch new satellites in cooperation with German and Chinese partners.
- The first satellite for remote sensing and scientific research.
- It will be launched in December this year.

The second satellite will be launched in March 2022 and used to monitor climate change.

The third will be launched in September 2022 and used in sensor applications, after the Egyptian Space Agency completes its design in cooperation with China.

El-Qousi said that among Egypt's goals in the coming years was the opening of a satellite collection and testing center by the end of September 2022 as one of the branches of a space city.

It will be the first of its kind in the Arab world, according to Egyptian

media.

El-Qousi said that Cairo was working on a project with Africa to launch a joint satellite, with the support of the African Union and with the participation of Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Sudan and Nigeria.



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Egypt receives 50,000 AstraZeneca jab doses from India
Egypt nominates Aboul Gheit as Arab League chief for second term

[Egypt receives 50,000 AstraZeneca jab doses from India](#)

Mon, 2021-02-01 01:39

CAIRO: Egypt received a shipment of about 50,000 coronavirus vaccines manufactured in India on Sunday as part of efforts to diversify the country's vaccine sources.

The shipment arrived at Cairo International Airport on Emirates EK 927 from India via Dubai, where authorities finalized procedures for its release. Presidential adviser Mohammed Awad Tag El-Din announced on Saturday that Egypt would gradually receive coronavirus vaccines from different sources, and referred to the arrival of 50,000 AstraZeneca vaccine doses.

Tag El-Din said that pregnant women will be unable to receive vaccinations as Egypt's jab stock had been urgently fast-tracked. The country will target healthcare workers, the elderly and those with chronic diseases.

FASTFACT

The Egyptian Drug Authority is studying Russia's Sputnik V vaccine for local registration and to make it available for Egyptian citizens along with China's Sinopharm jab, which has been approved for emergency use.

"Pharmaceutical factories have worked to cover our needs of medicine for the coronavirus treatment protocol. We have a strategic reserve of medical devices and equipment," Tag El-Din said. Egypt's Health Ministry also announced the launch of a vaccine application website.

Issam Salah, adviser to the minister of health for information technology, said the website was designed to handle requests to receive experimental COVID-19 vaccines, adding that the website has seen "great interaction" with Egyptians. It received more than 10,000 requests in the first hour of its launch.



Pharmaceutical factories have worked to cover our needs of medicine for the coronavirus treatment protocol. We have a strategic reserve of medical devices and equipment.

Mohammed Awad Tag El-Din, Presidential adviser

Salah said that there are three ways to submit an application on the site: Registering online, by phone, or in-person at listed hospitals that will be announced at a later date.

Egyptian citizens will be able to use the website to submit vaccination requests once registrations open in the coming days.

Aly Al-Ghamrawi, spokesperson of the Egyptian Drug Authority (EDA), told Egyptian media that the EDA is studying the AstraZeneca vaccine, and once the necessary requirements are met, an approval decision will be filed for its emergency use.

The EDA is also studying Russia's Sputnik V vaccine for local registration and to make it available for Egyptian citizens along with China's Sinopharm jab, which has been approved for emergency use. Mohammed Hassani, assistant to the minister of health for initiatives and a member of the ministry's Scientific Committee to Combat COVID-19, told media that a new clinical research study is being conducted in Egypt on the Russian vaccine.



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EU approves AstraZeneca jab as worries grow over virus strains
Kuwait approves emergency use of AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 vaccine