

Egypt steps up efforts to maintain Suez Canal's transport advantage

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1612026731227598400

Sat, 2021-01-30 20:13

CAIRO: The head of the Egyptian Suez Canal Authority, Osama Rabie, has said that new incentives, projects and services are being provided to ensure the canal remains superior to its alternatives.

"So far, no project has appeared to compete with the Suez Canal," Rabie said. "In the far future, the Ashkelon road and railway project will appear; it will take five years to construct," he said.

Israel is working to establish the Ashkelon project, which is 254 km long, from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and which will provide a parallel route to the Egyptian Suez Canal through a network of pipelines that will transport oil and gas not only to the region but to many areas in Europe and Asia.

"Egypt is considering alternatives to this project, which will affect the oil ships passing through the Suez Canal by about 16 percent."

He stressed that any project in maritime transport parallel to the Suez Canal would affect it.

"Egypt has entered into a partnership with China in maritime transport on the Silk Road, which consists of three land, air and sea lines. The ships passing on the Silk Road will pass through the Suez Canal."

Rabie said that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi was in constant touch with him to keep up-to-date about developments regarding the Suez Canal due to its importance.

Speaking about the Egyptian fishing fleet, Rabie said that Egypt had not previously owned a fishing fleet. However, President El-Sisi had ordered the procurement of 100 fishing boats to be used in the employment of young people and to support the fishing fleet.

He said that the fishing boats carried equipment including a water desalination plant, an ice-production machine and an ultrasonic device to locate fish.

The cost of a ship was about 18 million Egyptian pounds (\$1.15 million) and the fleet would cost 1.8 billion Egyptian pounds, Rabie said. The first phase of the project had ended and 34 ships had been built, while work was underway for the second phase, he said.

The Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) has praised the Suez Canal Authority as its revenue has increased by 8 percent, despite the pandemic causing the global trade to decrease by 16 percent.

The organization attributed the increase in the Suez revenue to the canal's incentive measures and management.



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Egypt has 'passed peak' of second coronavirus wave
New archeological finds made in Egypt

[New archeological finds made in Egypt](#)

Sat, 2021-01-30 19:52

CAIRO: The Egyptian-Dominican mission of the Santo Domingo University, headed by Kathleen Martinez and which has been working at the Tabosiris Magna Temple in western Alexandria, has uncovered 16 stone-carved burials.

The mission has revealed several mummies in a poor state of preservation but that nonetheless highlight the characteristics of mummification in Greco-Roman antiquity.

Amulets of gold foil in the form of tongues were placed in the mouths of the mummies as part of a special ritual to ensure the ability of the dead to speak in the other world.

Martinez said the most important finds were two mummies that preserved the remains of scrolls and parts of the cartonnage layer.

The first has remnants of gilding that depict Osiris, god of the other world, while the other wears the Atef crown, decorated with horns and a cobra on the forehead. On the chest is a wide necklace bearing a falcon head, symbol of the deity Horus.

Khaled Abu Al-Hamd, director-general of Alexandria Antiquities, said that during this season, the mission has come across several archaeological finds, the most important of which is a funeral mask for a woman, eight golden flakes, and eight marble masks dating back to classical antiquity.

The items found by the mission in the last 10 years have changed popular perception of the Temple of Tabosiris Magna, where coins bearing the name and image of Queen Cleopatra VII were found.

The foundation panels of the temple suggested it was built by King Ptolemy IV.



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Egypt prepares to transport royal mummies to Fustat Museum Egypt unveils

animal mummies of lion cubs, crocodiles, birds

Egypt has 'passed peak' of second coronavirus wave

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1612018396396659600

Sat, 2021-01-30 17:54

CAIRO: Egypt has recorded a significant decrease in the number of COVID-19 cases, leading officials to believe that the country has passed the peak of the second wave.

The Ministry of Health on Friday recorded 589 new cases and 48 deaths, bringing the total number of infections to 16,871, with 128,800 recoveries and 9,217 deaths.

There were 521 cases and 54 deaths recorded on Thursday.

Presidential adviser Mohamed Awad Tag El-Din said the official statistics did not reflect the actual number of infected cases and were only a general indication.

"Recorded cases by the Health Ministry first reached 1,000 and then decreased to around 500, which means the passing of the second wave of the coronavirus," he said.

He added that state-enforced strict precautionary measures, reduced gatherings, online education and other steps had contributed to a significant reduction in cases.

"Large numbers are treated outside health institutions. However, the number of deaths covers both who died inside hospitals and outside."

Egypt's Health Minister Dr. Hala Zayed said the vaccination process would have a role in reducing the number of deaths and that the vaccine would have an effect on reducing symptoms, preventing infection and limiting the outbreak.

Egypt last Sunday began treating medical workers with the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.

Zayed said that the country was one of the first to prepare itself to combat the virus shortly after the first infections were announced. He added that Egypt's health system had experience, knowledge and information about the pandemic.

Mohamed Abdel Fattah, head of the Central Administration for Preventive Medicine Affairs at the Health Ministry, said that the number of daily cases recorded by the ministry had decreased by more than 50 percent from last December to this January, in addition to a decrease of more than 15 percent this week compared to the previous week.

This decline was not the only sign that Egypt had passed the peak, he said, as the remarkable decrease in the number of people visiting hospitals and

seeking medical services was also an indication that the country was on the right path.

The third indicator was people's commitment to precautionary measures to combat the virus. Most citizens wore masks in public places and on transport. Therefore, he added, Egypt was moving very well on its way to ride out of the crisis.

Hossam Hosni, head of the scientific committee aiming at combating the virus, said in televised statements that the virus had "come under control."

The epidemiological situation was also better than it had been in the past two weeks, as occupancy rates in hospitals, oxygen consumption and the use of ventilators had decreased.

"Recovery rates are very good and we hope the epidemic will end," he added.



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Greater cooperation between nations has been 'silver lining' of COVID-19: Egyptian minister Egyptian Health Ministry to receive 50k AstraZeneca vaccine doses in February

[UAE confirms 3,962 new COVID-19 cases, 7 deaths amid UK travel ban](#)

Author:

Sat, 2021-01-30 00:46

LONDON: The UAE has been informed of the United Kingdom's decision to place travel restrictions on flights coming from the country, the foreign ministry said on Friday.

It also said the Emirates "affirms that it will continue to maintain its role as an important travel and logistics hub in accordance with the highest health and safety standards."

Thousands of people have been left stranded or had their travel plans disrupted after the British government introduced a total ban on flights arriving from the UAE.

Hind Al-Otaiba, director of the Strategic Communication Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, said, "the cornerstone of fighting the pandemic is the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and the UAE scored the highest per capita test rate in the world."

She also said: "in light of the new changes taking place in the world, the UAE has intensified its efforts to mitigate these risks."

Al-Otaiba said the new measures include requiring incoming travelers to submit a negative PCR test, imposing restrictions on places of entertainment and gatherings, and implementing awareness campaigns continuously with high transparency.

"We are confident in our ambitious vaccination program, which ranks second in the world in the total number of vaccine doses distributed in relation to the number of individuals, and we have full confidence in the medical infrastructure and frontline workers."

She also said that the UAE will extend visit visas, without any additional fees, for British travelers affected by this decision, in light of the current circumstances.

Meanwhile, the UAE on Friday recorded 3,962 new coronavirus cases and seven virus-related deaths.

Officials from the Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHAP) said the total number of cases since the pandemic began had reached 297,041, while the death toll rose to 826.

It also said that 2,975 people had recovered from the virus over the past 24 hours. The total number of recoveries is 269,999.

MoHaP also said that more than 3 million doses of the vaccine have now been administered as part of the Emirate's national inoculation campaign, which aims to immunize 50 percent of the population by April.

Health minister Abdul Rahman Al-Owais said the vaccine centers across the country witnessed increasing turnout, adding that the recovery phase is approaching.

Dubai Municipality announced it had intensified its inspection campaigns. It said two businesses were ordered to close, six were fined and warnings were issued to 37 for not complying with precautionary measures.

Dubai Municipality has carried out half a million inspections since March 2020, during which 6,500 establishments were either fined, warned or closed for not adhering to the precautionary measures against Covid-19. [@DMunicipality pic.twitter.com/TkzhF93pP9](https://pic.twitter.com/TkzhF93pP9)

– Dubai Media Office (@DXBMediaOffice) [January 29, 2021](https://twitter.com/DXBMediaOffice/status/1354891234567890123)

The authority also said it carried out half a million inspections since March 2020, during which 6,500 establishments were either fined, warned or ordered to close down for not adhering to the coronavirus precautionary measures. Dubai Tourism also said it closed 23 establishments and fined 238 others during January, for not adhering to the precautionary measures. Elsewhere, Kuwait reported 658 new cases of COVID-19, raising the total in the country to 164,108. The death toll remained 958 after no additional deaths were reported in the past 24 hours.

تعلن [#وزارة_الصحة](https://twitter.com/KUWAIT_MOH) عن تأكيد إصابة 658 حالة جديدة، وتسجيل 516 حالة شفاء، ولم تسجل أي حالة وفاة جديدة بـ [#فيروس_كورونا_المستجد](https://twitter.com/KUWAIT_MOH) COVID-19 ، ليصبح إجمالي عدد الحالات 164,108 حالة pic.twitter.com/b9pyS0eImi

– وزارة الصحة – الكويت (@KUWAIT_MOH) [January 29, 2021](https://twitter.com/KUWAIT_MOH/status/1354891234567890123)

In Bahrain the death toll stands at 372 after no new deaths were reported. The number of confirmed cases in the country increased by 468.

Out of 13535 COVID-19 tests carried out on 29 January 2021, 468 new cases have been detected among 198 expatriate workers, 265 new cases are contacts of active cases, and 5 are travel related. There were 284 recoveries from [#COVID19](https://twitter.com/MOH_Bahrain), increasing total recoveries to 97948 pic.twitter.com/UZtA5FVj5I

– مملكة البحرين | وزارة الصحة (@MOH_Bahrain) [January 29, 2021](https://twitter.com/MOH_Bahrain/status/1354891234567890123)



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Saudi Arabia announces 2 more COVID-19 deaths
UAE flight ban leaves thousands of Britons stranded

[The Cairo-trained violinist who wants Saudis to pursue their musical](#)

ambitions

Sat, 2021-01-30 00:00

DUBAI: Elyas Yaseen is unlike other men his age from Yanbu, a small port city on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast. He is a gifted musician, known for his proficiency at playing the violin, the oud and the qanun. The young Saudi talent also has an aspiration: to establish, with the government's help, a music school in his coastal hometown so he can teach others to play and allow more young Saudis like him to realize their potential.

In the absence of specialist academies and music in the Kingdom's national curriculum, most Saudi musicians are self-taught, relying on platforms like YouTube to pick up the basics. Others look to friends or family for private lessons, limiting their scope for development. But with the country's social-reforms programs taking hold, this is beginning to change.

Yaseen, the youngest of six, has been interested in music since the age of eight when he first fell in love with string instruments. "I was raised among musicians," Yaseen told Arab News. "My older brother, who played the qanun, and my father, who was one of the musical pioneers here and played Yanbu's local instrument – the simsimiyya – are musicians and both of them gave me the passion to play. This is how I started."



Following a few rudimentary lessons from his father and brother, Yaseen spent the next decade mastering the instrument at home. (Supplied)

Born and raised in Yanbu, Yaseen attended his local university before realizing his true calling lay in music. After learning to play the *simsimiyya*, a traditional lyre instrument, he discovered his passion for the violin.

Following a few rudimentary lessons from his father and brother, Yaseen spent the next decade mastering the instrument at home. He was largely self-taught – until an unmissable opportunity presented itself to study abroad.

“I went to Egypt and met a very famous violinist called Abdo Dagher and I took many classes with him at the Cairo Opera House to improve my skills on the violin,” he said. “I knew by then that I wanted to play the violin professionally and that I wanted to be a professional musician in Saudi Arabia.”

Opportunities to study and perform music in Saudi Arabia were limited until fairly recently. Now the Ministry of Culture has started issuing licenses for the Kingdom’s first musical training institutes. Once it begins accepting online applications in the coming months, a vibrant domestic music industry is sure to follow.

The liberalization of music culture is part of a broader effort to promote the entertainment and leisure sectors in Saudi Arabia, aimed at creating jobs and weaning the country off its economic dependence on oil, while also sharing its homegrown talents with the world.



Yaseen is seeking support from the Saudi government to establish his own music academy in Yanbu. (Supplied)

Now Yaseen is seeking support from the Saudi government to establish his own music academy in Yanbu, offering classes in the gamut of instruments to students of all ages.

“We don’t have that yet, but I really hope we will achieve it,” he said. “For now, I provide private classes to my friends, the youth and children who are interested in learning the violin and the oud.”

As a Saudi whose training in Egypt enabled him to reach standards of musicianship that most people can only aspire to, Yaseen hopes the Ministry of Culture will heed his call.

“We have to go through many processes. There’s a lot of bureaucracy. But there’s a lot of demand from young Saudis who want to play instruments, and I receive many requests daily from both men and women,” he said.

“It’s a passion for them too and they want me to teach them, but I don’t have a place that is large enough to teach everyone. I just want to help others in their musical journey because it’s enjoyable for me.”

FASTFACTS

Music in the Kingdom

- * **Saudi Arabia granted licenses for two music colleges in Dec. 2020.**
- * **The institutes will offer cultural and artistic training programs.**
- * **Licenses to be granted for theater, music, literature, publishing, translation and museums.**
- * **Licenses for music practitioners will cover musicians, acoustics and production.**

Some of Yaseen’s earliest musical inspiration came from Egyptian singer and actress Umm Kulthum, one of the best-selling Middle Eastern artists of all time, whose songs he set to the violin. “They’re not easy to play by a young person like myself,” Yaseen said.

However, it was Yanbu’s distinctive culture that truly captured his imagination.

“We have traditional music here, which includes special songs for locals, describing their life, from the old generation to the young generation. And from that, I created a new genre on my own,” he said.

Even as his musical proficiency grew under Dagher’s mentorship, Yaseen never lost sight of these early influences. Progressing in leaps and bounds, he soon graduated from Helwan University’s Faculty of Music Education in Cairo with an outstanding grade.

He still feels a deep debt of gratitude to his teacher. “I feel very grateful to him,” Yaseen said. “He is the main reason I am where I am today. We are still in touch. We talk regularly and we still have a strong friendship.”



As a Saudi whose training in Egypt enabled him to reach standards of musicianship that most people can only aspire to, Yaseen hopes the Ministry of Culture will help others follow in his footsteps. (Supplied)

Returning to his home city three years ago, Yaseen quickly made a name for himself. Agencies were getting in touch with him with requests for appearances in Jeddah and Riyadh. Before long, he had a certain amount of name recognition thanks to clips of his performances shared on social media.

In 2019, Yaseen received a reward from famed Saudi singer and composer Abadi Al-Johar for an outstanding solo performance in Dammam. A year later, he received an award from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Riyadh for his rendition of the Saudi national anthem.

“Music is like therapy for me,” Yaseen said. “My favorite moments are spent playing music. It relaxes me. Music is my soulmate and I feel well when I play the violin or any other instruments. I spend most of my day playing it.”

Thus, when the coronavirus pandemic forced the closure of concert venues across the region last year, Yaseen was grateful for the free time to practice at home.

“The lockdown was great for me because I didn’t feel it,” he said. “Music gives me a sense of freedom that no lockdown can ever take away.”



Cairo Opera House’s National Arab Music Ensemble (AME) performing at the King Fahd Cultural Centre in Riyadh in 2018, the first event of its kind in the Saudi capital. (AFP/Saudi General Culture Authority/File Photo)

Yaseen nevertheless hopes someday to perform internationally. “I want to be the first Saudi who represents Saudi Arabia as a violinist in the world,” he said. “I fell in love with the instrument, which is why I dedicated my life to it.”

He hopes other young Saudis will pursue their musical ambitions, no matter how daunting the challenges.

“I encourage them to learn music and to keep going because there are no music

academies so far. We need to help each other as much as we can,” Yaseen told Arab News.

“For all young Saudis who want to pursue their passion in music or play an instrument, I would tell them to not give up because I’ve already seen many of my friends give up. Keep pursuing your goals and passion, and always expect good things. It’s important not to put yourself down when you’re on this journey and believe you will move forward.”



Yaseen is especially grateful for Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 reform plan, which has made it a national priority to support the Kingdom’s youth and promote the arts and culture. (Shutterstock)

Yaseen is especially grateful for Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 reform plan, which has made it a national priority to support the Kingdom’s youth and promote the arts and culture. The importance of the ongoing social and cultural changes became especially obvious to him during the pandemic.

“Everything is changing in the new Saudi Arabia. It’s not as we have known it before. It’s changing for the better and I’m happy to see all these shifts,” he said.

“I just hope the government will answer my call to support a large, dedicated music education center and the teachers needed for people to learn.

“I have so many ideas that are ready to be implemented. I want to get the ball rolling as soon as possible.”

Twitter: [@CalineMalek](https://twitter.com/CalineMalek)



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Music business: Is musical talent the new commodity? Saudi R&B star Hamza Hawsawi premieres music video