

Sudan PM says he returned to safeguard economic gains

Author:

Tue, 2021-11-23 00:48

KHARTOUM: Sudan's Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said on Monday that maintaining the economic gains from the past two years was among the reasons he had decided to return to his post, under a deal with the military nearly a month after he was removed in a coup.

In an interview at the Khartoum residence where he had been held under house arrest following the Oct. 25 military takeover, Hamdok said he believed a technocratic government he is expected to appoint would have a chance to improve living standards.

Prominent political parties and Sudan's powerful protest movement have opposed Hamdok's decision to sign the agreement with the military on Sunday, with some calling it a betrayal or saying it provided political cover for the coup.

"Among the reasons for my return is preserving the economic gains and the economic opening to the world," Hamdok said.

Since Hamdok was first appointed prime minister in 2019 under a power sharing deal following the overthrow of Omar Bashir, Sudan has carried out economic reforms including the lifting of fuel subsidies and a managed float of its currency.

The reforms, monitored by the International Monetary Fund, won Sudan approval for forgiveness on much of its more than \$50 billion in foreign debt – a deal that was thrown into doubt by the coup.

The World Bank and some bilateral donors paused badly needed economic assistance after the military takeover.

"We will continue our contacts with international financial institutions, and the new budget that will begin in January will proceed on the path of economic reform and open the door to investment in Sudan," Hamdok said.

The civilian coalition that had been sharing power with the military before the coup and its former ministers said they rejected the agreement, citing a violent crackdown on anti-military protests over the past month.

But Hamdok said a new, technocratic government could help improve Sudan's economy, which has suffered a prolonged crisis involving one of the world's highest rates of inflation and shortages of basic goods.

It could also work toward completing a peace deal signed with some rebel groups last year to end years of internal conflict, Hamdok said.

“Implementing the Juba agreement and completing the peace processes with groups that did not sign the Juba agreement are at the top of the new government’s agenda,” he said.

After the deal between the military and Hamdok was announced on Sunday, protesters who had previously championed Hamdok began shouting slogans against him. Hamdok said he signed it to prevent further bloodshed.

“We are committed to the democratic path, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and greater opening to the world,” he said on Monday.



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Blinken tells Sudan leaders that US wants more progress before restoring aid
Sudan PM Hamdok reinstated after coup, protester killed

[Jordan, Israel, UAE ink energy-for-water agreement](#)

Author:

Tue, 2021-11-23 00:32

AMMAN: Jordan, Israel, and the UAE on Monday signed a declaration of intent to begin deliberations over the feasibility of an energy-for-water project.

Omar Salameh, spokesperson of the Jordanian Water Ministry said that the signing of the declaration was “neither a technical nor legal agreement” and it only means that the three sides will start the feasibility studies for the mega project as of the beginning of 2022.

Stopping short from giving further details, Salameh only said that resource-poor Jordan is to receive 200 million cubic meters of water annually under the project, adding that the joint venture will not be implemented without obtaining the stipulated amount of water.

The spokesperson explained that Jordan is among the poorest countries in the world for water, with a water deficit expected to hit 45 million cubic meters in 2022. He added that Jordan’s annual water resources are less than 80 cubic meters per person, below the international threshold of 500 cubic meters per person.

Salameh also said that Jordan obtains a total of 35 million cubic meters of water from Israel under the 1994 Wadi Araba Peace Treaty and another 10 million cubic meters outside the peace deal between the two countries.

Jordan signed an agreement with Israel in October to purchase an additional 50 million cubic meters of water outside the framework of the peace agreement and what it stipulates in regard to water quantities.

In a recent report, the US news website Axios said that a massive solar farm in the Jordanian desert under the project that will generate clean energy to be sold to Israel in return for desalinated water.

According to Axios, the solar farm will be built by the UAE government-owned alternative energy company, Masdar.

The plan calls for the solar farm to be operational by 2026 and will be designed to produce 2 percent of Israel’s energy by 2030, with Israel paying \$180 million per year – divided between the Jordanian government and the Emirati company.

Axios also claimed that the project has been pushed by US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry.

Jordanian Ammon news website said that the declaration of intent was signed on Monday by Jordanian Minister of Water and Irrigation Mohammad Najjar, UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment Mariam Al Mheiri, and Israel’s Energy Minister Karine Elharrar on the sidelines of Expo 2020 Dubai.

The signing ceremony was attended by Kerry and Sultan Al-Jaber, the UAE’s minister for industry and advanced technology and the special envoy for climate change, according to the website.



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New water protests hit Iran
Jordan dam reserves at all-time low as water crisis looms

[Blinken encourages Tunisia reform in talks with leader](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-22 00:20

TUNIS: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken encouraged Tunisia's leader to make reforms to respond to Tunisians' hopes for "democratic progress," the US State Department said on Sunday, nearly four months after President Kais Saied seized political power.

Saied said last week he was working nonstop on a timetable for reforms to defuse growing criticism at home and abroad since he dismissed the Cabinet, suspended parliament and took personal power in July.

Last week, thousands of Tunisians protested near parliament in the capital, demanding he reinstate the assembly, while major foreign donors whose financial assistance is needed to unlock an International Monetary Fund rescue package for the economy have urged him to return to a normal constitutional order.

“The secretary encouraged a transparent and inclusive reform process to address Tunisia’s significant political, economic, and social challenges and to respond to the Tunisian people’s aspirations for continued democratic progress,” the State Department said in a statement about a call between Blinken and Saied.

It added that Blinken and Saied discussed recent developments in Tunisia, including the formation of the new government and steps to alleviate the economic situation.

A Tunisia presidency statement said earlier that the US would offer support to Tunisia once it has announced dates for political reform. Saied seized nearly all powers in July in a move his critics called a coup, a decade after the Arab Spring’s first and only successful pro-democracy uprising, before installing a new prime minister and announcing he would rule by decree.

Saied has defended his takeover as the only way to end governmental paralysis after years of political squabbling and economic stagnation, and he has promised to uphold rights and freedoms won in the 2011 revolution.



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Tunisian protesters try to march on suspended parliament
Tunisian town revolts over trash crisis

[New water protests hit Iran](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-22 00:12

TEHRAN: More than 1,000 Iranians marched Sunday toward the governor's office in the western province of Chahar-Mahal Bakhtiari to demand a solution to water shortages, state media reported.

The march came two days after thousands of protesters converged on the central city of Isfahan to vent their anger after the lifeblood river dried up due to drought and diversion.

Footage broadcast by state television showed crowds of protesters marching in the streets of Shahr-e Kord, the provincial capital of Chahar-Mahal Bakhtiari.

They were heard chanting "it is forbidden to divert the water of Chahar-Mahal" and shouting slogans against "projects to transfer water to other regions."

Iran has endured repeated droughts over the past decade, including in the south.

Iran has also experienced regular floods in recent years, a phenomenon made worse when torrential rain falls on sun-baked earth.

Scientists say climate change amplifies droughts, and their intensity and frequency in turn threaten food security.

State television said Sunday's protest come as wells, aqueducts and rivers have been drying up, including the Zayadneh Rood River that runs from the Zagros mountains in Chahar-Mahal Bakhtiari province to south of Isfahan city.

Last week, hundreds of farmers also rallied to protest the drying up of the Zayadneh Rood that has been depleted of water since 2000.

Earlier this month President Ebrahim Raisi promised to resolve water issues and said a committee would be formed to rehabilitate the river.



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One killed in Iran water shortage protests: state media
Time shrinking for Iran nuclear deal, US envoy warns

[Abu Dhabi crown prince and US defense secretary discuss strategic bilateral relations](#)

Sun, 2021-11-21 23:16

DUBAI: Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed held talks with US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin on Sunday, state news agency WAM reported. During the meeting, which took place at the Al-Shati Palace in Abu Dhabi, the two sides discussed the existing strategic relations between the UAE and the US at various levels, especially in defense and military affairs, in addition to international and regional issues of common concern.

“The leaders discussed a range of shared security threats, including working together to increase regional defense and continuing to combat terrorism,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a statement.

“Secretary Austin thanked the UAE for its long-standing hospitality in

hosting US forces and conveyed his appreciation for the UAE's instrumental role as a transit location as the US military conducted the evacuation and retrograde mission from Afghanistan," the statement added. The meeting was attended by UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed.



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UAE's ADNOC secures \$3bn loan from Japan's JBIC and four other banks