

Lebanese protesters block roads over economic meltdown

Tue, 2021-11-30 00:09

BEIRUT: Demonstrators blocked roads across parts of Lebanon on Monday in protest at the country's economic meltdown, days after its currency sank to new lows.

There has been little progress since Prime Minister Najib Mikati's government was appointed in September after more than a year of political deadlock.

Roads were blocked by piles of burning tires in central Beirut, Tripoli in northern Lebanon and the southern city of Sidon.

Schools were forced to close in Beirut after the protests made them inaccessible to students. Protesters in the city's southern suburbs, meanwhile, blocked the road to the airport in front of Al-Aytam station.

Less than 24 hours before the Beirut protests, residents of Ali Al-Nahri, in the Bekaa Valley, launched their own protests, shouting "we are cold and hungry."

A spokesperson for the protesters said: "We will take to the streets more frequently in the coming days unless the governing authority put a stop to the deteriorating living conditions the Lebanese are facing."

He added: "The people of Beirut are noble. They are fighting extremely hard for their city and their livelihood.

"They are not thieves, and today's move does not have any political, electoral, parliamentary or ministerial dimension. Its sole purpose is the livelihood of citizens after a large number of students now go to school without any food."

In a UNICEF report published last week, the agency said: "More than 30 percent of families have at least one child in Lebanon who skipped a meal, while 77 percent of families say they lack sufficient food and 60 percent of them buy food by accumulating unpaid bills or borrowing money."

The protests coincided with President Michel Aoun's visit to Qatar to attend the opening of the FIFA Arab Cup and inaugurate the new Olympic Stadium.

The president discussed Lebanon's economic meltdown and unprecedented diplomatic crisis with Gulf states during his talks with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Al-Thani reiterated Qatar's readiness to help in all areas needed for the rise of Lebanon from the "difficult circumstances it is going through."

He announced that Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman

bin Jassim Al-Thani will visit Beirut in the coming period, to follow up on the developments and provide the country with necessary assistance.

He hoped for “a resolution for the crisis between Lebanon and a number of Gulf states in the near future, especially as Lebanon has always stood by all the Arab and Gulf states.”

Aoun welcomed any “investment from Qatar to implement developmental projects in Lebanon in the area of energy, electricity and banking, where there are many opportunities.”

Qatar will continue to stand by the Lebanese people and to do anything in its power to alleviate their suffering, said the president.

“There was a consensus that this phase needs the brotherly Arab states, especially the Gulf states, to stand by Lebanon,” said Aoun.

He pointed out that the Lebanese-Gulf relations “always were, and must remain, based on mutual fraternity.”

Aoun stressed the need to overcome any defects in these ties, notably because Lebanon desires to the best relations with brotherly states.

“My presence in Doha today only confirms our commitment to those relations and our genuine desire to cooperate on keeping them serene and restoring them to a normal state, thus serving Lebanon and the brotherly Gulf states,” he said.

Aoun’s remarks came as Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rahi took a firm position against “attempts to change Lebanon in order to impose a new governing formula by force or persuasion.”

In a televised speech broadcast on Monday, Al-Rahi touched on the secretary-general of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, reprimanding judicial authorities, asking: “Is he above the judicial authority?”

Al-Rahi said the country “is highly influenced by Hezbollah.”

He asked: “In contrast, where is the state and where is the president of the republic? Why are they submissive if someone is intimidating us?”

He noted that “the one disrupting the government is practically disrupting the life of the homeland and causing the hunger of citizens.”



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[Egypt and Saudi Arabia hold talks on possible exchange of military experience, technology](#)

Mon, 2021-11-29 23:48

CAIRO: Egyptian Minister of Military Production Mohamed Ahmed Morsi and the president of the Saudi General Organization for Military Industries Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Mady held talks on the possibility of exchanging experiences and manufacturing technology.

They met on the sidelines of the Saudi delegation's visit to Egypt to

participate in the Second International Defense Expo, which is being held in Cairo until Dec. 2.

Morsi said there was a need for integration between Arab countries in the defense industries field, especially between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The minister said Egypt was witnessing a state of stability as a result of the efforts made by the state to enhance the security situation and economic reform measures to attract more foreign investment.

Al-Mady praised the minister's role in meeting the needs of the Egyptian armed forces.

He said the Saudi General Organization for Military Industries took part in the first EDEX, in 2018, and was keen to participate in this year's event as the exhibition represented a distinguished international gathering of major authorities and companies.

Al-Mady called for Egypt to participate in the first World Defense Show in Riyadh, to be held next March, which will provide a unified platform for stakeholders in the military and security industries sector.

He said Saudi Arabia was following up on the latest technology in all military fields to keep pace with developments in the sector in order to confront the threats facing the Kingdom and enhance its capabilities to deter any attempt to interfere in its internal affairs.



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Saudi Arabian Military Industries launches composite manufacturing facility
Saudi military industry delegation meets investors in London defense show

[**A Middle East hospitality project pushes the boundaries of sustainable construction**](#)

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Mon, 2021-11-29 23:21

DUBAI: From forest fires and landslides to desertification and flooding, the effects of climate change increasingly are manifesting in all manner of destructive ways, laying waste to animal and plant habitats and vulnerable rural communities.

But urban areas not immune to the risks either and, as such, they too are being forced to adapt.



THE FLOATING SEAHORSE

The UN has warned that by 2030 greenhouse-gas emissions need to be reduced by between 25 and 55 percent of 2017 levels. With these figures in mind, developers are exploring innovative ways to reduce the carbon footprint of cities while also improving the quality of life for residents.

Josef Kleindienst is one of them. He is the chairman of Kleindienst Group, the developer of the Heart of Europe project that is underway in Dubai. Rather than simply build sustainably, the firm says it aims to change the climate.

The Heart of Europe occupies a section of Dubai's World Islands, a collection of man-made islands off the coast of the city built in the shape of a map of the world. When complete, it is expected to be an upscale, eco-friendly resort showcasing the use of the latest technology to mitigate the effects of climate change in urban locations.

According to the developer, Heart of Europe will include, among other things,

a cooling, climate-controlled Rainy Street, an outdoor snow plaza and the world's first floating, smart police station.

"The vision was to create a touristic project while bringing in innovation on these islands," Kleindienst told Arab News.



GERMANY

"The islands project was launched in 2003, and a coral nursery was built on a structure, producing 100,000 corals a year to plant on our reefs. The interesting part for me is that Dubai always had futuristic visions, and this is pure sustainability."

According to the developer, sustainability is at the core of the Heart of Europe, which will include more than 500,000 square meters of coral reef, and olive trees from Andalusia in southern Spain.

The project, once operational, will feature sustainable landscaping that is free of pesticides and fungicides, and irrigated with recycled water, says the developer. It will be automobile-free, powered by clean energy and will eventually offer visitors sustainable water transportation.

Solar panels will supply much of the resort's power requirements, while its water supply will be completely recycled and reused for purposes such as flushing toilets and watering plants, says the developer.



HONEYMOON ISLAND

It adds that, in addition, the Heart of Europe will have zero-discharge and zero-microplastics policies to help protect marine life around the islands, and the wider waters of the Arabian Gulf.

The Coral Institute, an in-house research and development center, has been entrusted with creating new coral reefs, helping to expand the marine ecosystem, and working to rebalance the underwater environment as part of Kleindienst Group's Corporate Social Responsibility program.

Beginning next year, the institute also plans to regenerate and develop corals from 10 reefs and diving sites around the globe, according to the Kleindienst Group.

FASTFACTS

- The Heart of Europe has a zero-discharge and zero microplastics policy to ensure the protection of the Arabian Gulf and marine life.
- It is powered by solar and hydro fuels, has pesticide and fungicide free landscaping, a car-free environment, and recycles water.

In 2018, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development published a report on the megatrends that are shaping the future of tourism. It said sustainable tourism is a growth area that will radically change the industry.

Tourism is a resource-intensive human activity, it said, yet it can play a pivotal role in driving the transition to a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy.

“Due to its cross-cutting nature and close connections to numerous sectors, even small improvements will have important impacts,” the report said.



MARBELLA

“It will become increasingly important for governments and industry to work together in a proactive approach to ensure the sustainable development and management of attractions for the benefit and enjoyment of local communities and tourists.”

Countries, cities, islands and other destinations that fail to embrace the sustainability trend will most likely lose business, because consumers are growing increasingly concerned about the environment, it added.

“Dubai has been looking to do this since 2003, because they added a zero-discharge regulation on these islands,” Kleindienst said. “We are not allowed to discharge anything that could pollute the air or the water. This is as sustainable as it can be if you want to protect the environment.”

One of the novel innovations in the Heart of Europe development, according to Kleindienst, is the Rainy Street, a 1km thoroughfare that uses sensor-controlled technology to generate precipitation that helps to provide visitors with a comfortable climate even during scorching summer temperatures that can surpass 50 degrees Celsius.



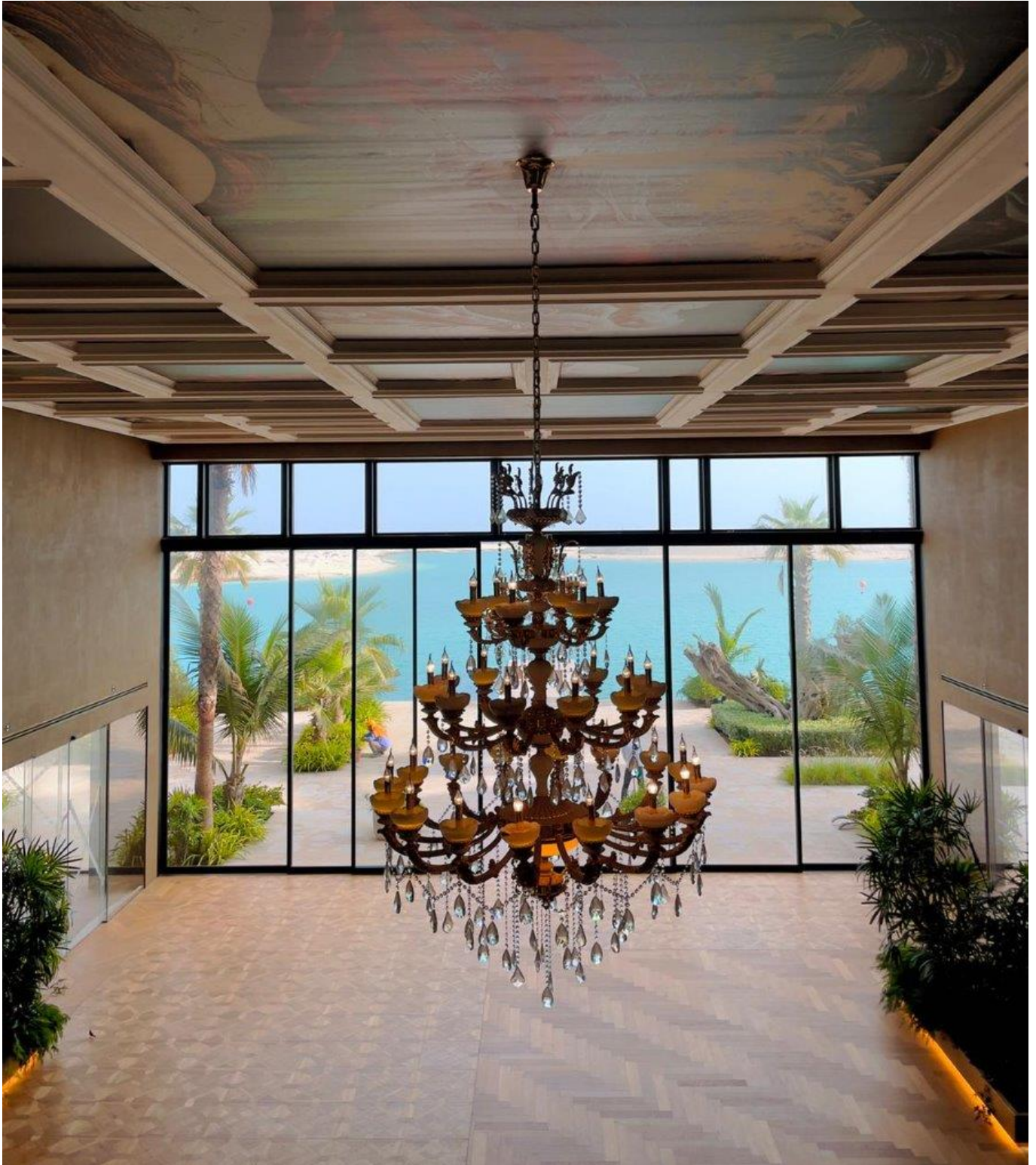
COTE D'AZUR

Along the street, which will host shops, restaurants and bars, an ambient air temperature of about 27 degrees Celsius will be maintained through the using of state-of-the-art technology that can literally control the outdoor

climate.

“We invited consultants and specialists from around the world to bring us solutions,” Kleindienst said.

“The Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft Institute in Germany is number one when it comes to building these technologies, which use water and remove humidity from the air. When the temperature goes above 27 degrees Celsius and humidity hits 60 percent, it releases rain.”



PORTOFINO

Another climate-control innovation is the snow plaza, according to the Kleindienst Group. It uses a similar concept to the air conditioning systems used in malls, which cool water to 5 degrees Celsius to create cool air. By further reducing the water temperature to 2 C, snow can be generated.

“We started working on the technologies in 2008 and we’re now ready,” Kleindienst said. “It took over 4 years (just) to develop, test and optimize the technology required to achieve the vision for the masterplan. We tested it on the hottest days in the middle of summer and it works – it will come from a piping system, just like in the movies.”



MARBELLA

The Heart of Europe’s initial soft opening began on Oct. 28 with the connection of all utilities. About 300 technical tests will be carried out over the course of a month and, if all goes to plan, it will soon begin to welcome guests at a reduced capacity ahead of its full launch with opening of the Monaco boutique hotel. But Dubai could be just the start.

“We have been invited to Saudi Arabia and Egypt to discuss projects there, but our goal is to complete this project first before discussing expansion,” Kleindienst said.

COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference, which took place in Glasgow, Scotland, this month, has once again highlighted the importance of issues such as sustainability and conservation. Kleindienst said his company is rising to the challenge.



SWEDEN

“We should take care of the environment,” he added. “We didn’t know how fast climate change would come and how significant the impact would be on our lives.

“We must bring back the planet, the climate and nature to how it was before, and sustain it for our children and their children. It’s a big obligation for us.”

In line with the growing trend toward sustainability, eco-friendly tourism projects are being launched across the region. The Hatta Sustainable Waterfalls in Dubai, for example, is due for completion at Hatta Dam by November next year. The falls will collect water, recycle it and pump it back to the top of the dam.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, launched the Sustainable Tourism Global Center last month. The global travel and tourism sector is responsible for about 8 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions, and the Kingdom has therefore prioritized support for the sector to help accelerate its transition to net zero.

“(These emissions are) expected to grow if we don’t act now,” Ahmed Al-Khateeb, Saudi Arabia’s minister of tourism, said at the official launch of the center.



THE FLOATING LIDO

“Tourism is also a highly fragmented sector; 80 percent of businesses in tourism are small and medium-sized enterprises who rely on guidance and support from sector leadership. The sector must be part of the solution.”

The Kingdom is working with global partners that prioritize tourism, small and medium enterprises and the climate to create a broad coalition that can lead the tourism industry’s transition to net zero, he added.

“By working together and delivering a strong joint platform, the tourism sector will have the support it needs. The STGC will facilitate growth while making tourism better for the climate, nature and communities,” Al-Khateeb said.



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[UK, Israel to work together to stop Iran gaining nuclear weapons](#)

Author:

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Sun, 2021-11-28 22:42

Britain and Israel will “work night and day” in preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power, the foreign ministers of the two countries wrote in a joint article.

“The clock is ticking, which heightens the need for close cooperation with our partners and friends to thwart Tehran’s ambitions,” the UK’s Liz Truss and her Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid wrote in the Telegraph newspaper on Sunday.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said earlier in the day that his country was “very worried” that world powers will remove sanctions on Iran in exchange for insufficient caps on its nuclear program, as negotiators convene in Vienna on Monday in a last-ditch effort to salvage a nuclear deal.

Meanwhile, Israel and Britain will sign a 10-year agreement on Monday to work closely on areas such as cybersecurity, technology, trade and defense, according to the Telegraph.

The foreign ministers added in the article that Israel will officially become Britain’s “tier one” cyber partner, in a bid to improve its cyber defenses as countries around the world face increased threats.



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[Iranian riot police patrol city's dry river after water protests](#)

Author:

Mon, 2021-11-29 01:34

TEHRAN: Iranian riot police on Sunday patrolled a dried-out riverbed in the central city of Isfahan where protests against a water shortage led to violent clashes two days earlier.

Drought and water diversions have been blamed for drying up the Zayandeh-Rood waterway that runs from the Zagros mountains and through the city known for its iconic river bridges.

Water protests since Nov. 9 have drawn at times thousands of demonstrators to the city, where a large rally on Friday escalated into clashes in which 67 people were arrested.

Calm has returned and it held on Sunday, a local photographer said by phone from Isfahan, the country's third-largest city 340 km south of Tehran.

"In the morning, the city was calm and traffic was normal," the photographer said.

"I saw riot police patrolling the riverbed between the historic bridges, but their numbers were lower than on Saturday."

The protesters blame the authorities for diverting water to neighboring Yazd province, which is also desperately short of water.

Authorities Saturday announced 67 arrests of the "main perpetrators and troublemakers" in the rally that had drawn "2,000 to 3,000 rioters."

The arrests were made by the police, intelligence services and the Revolutionary Guards.

BACKGROUND

Water protests since Nov. 9 have drawn at times thousands of demonstrators to the city, where a large rally on Friday escalated into clashes in which 67 people were arrested.

Police had on Friday fired tear gas at the protesters, who threw stones, smashed the windows of an ambulance and set a police motorbike ablaze, according to the Fars news agency.

Nourodin Soltanian, a spokesman for Isfahan University Hospital, said a number of protesters were wounded, including "two in serious condition."

Isfahan police chief Mohammed-Reza Mirheidari called the protesters “opportunists and counter-revolutionaries,” and the ultraconservative newspaper Kayhan accused “mercenary thugs” of being behind the “riots.” US State Department spokesman Ned Price said Washington was “deeply concerned about the violent crackdown against peaceful protesters.” He added on Twitter that “the people of Iran have a right to voice their frustrations and hold their government accountable.” The Kayhan daily meanwhile also linked Friday’s protests to the scheduled resumption of nuclear talks on Monday in Vienna between Iran and a group of major powers. Friday’s events “testify to the infiltration of a US fifth column, in the run-up to the Vienna talks, to provoke a riot and push for (new) US sanctions” against Iran, it said. The Zayandeh-Rood river that runs through Isfahan has been dry since 2000, except for a few brief periods. Iran has endured repeated droughts over the past decade, but also regular floods, a phenomenon that can intensify when torrential rains fall on sun-baked earth. Scientists say climate change amplifies droughts and that their intensity and frequency in turn threaten food security.



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[Iran water protests](#)

Iranian riot police deployed after 67 arrested in Isfahan Protesters, police clash in central Iran after rally over water shortages