

Suez Canal says deal reached to free seized vessel

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Sun, 2021-07-04 11:12

CAIRO: The Suez Canal Authority on Sunday said it has reached an agreement to settle a financial dispute with the owners of a hulking container ship that blocked the crucial waterway for nearly a week earlier this year.

The authority did not reveal details on the settlement deal with the Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd., the Japanese owner of the Ever Given. It said the deal will be signed in a ceremony in the Suez Canal city of Ismailia on Wednesday. The vessel would be also freed Wednesday, it said.

The head of Egypt's Suez Canal Authority, Lt. Gen. Osama Rabie, said last month the parties had agreed on a compensation amount. But he said it would not be made public as they had signed a non-disclosure agreement until the signing of the final contract.

The vessel had run aground in the single-lane stretch of the canal on March 23 before it was extracted six days later after a massive salvage effort by a flotilla of tugboats.

Since it was freed, the Panama-flagged, Japanese-owned vessel, which carries cargo between Asia and Europe, has been ordered by authorities to remain in a holding lake mid-canal, along with most of its crew, as the two sides negotiated a settlement.

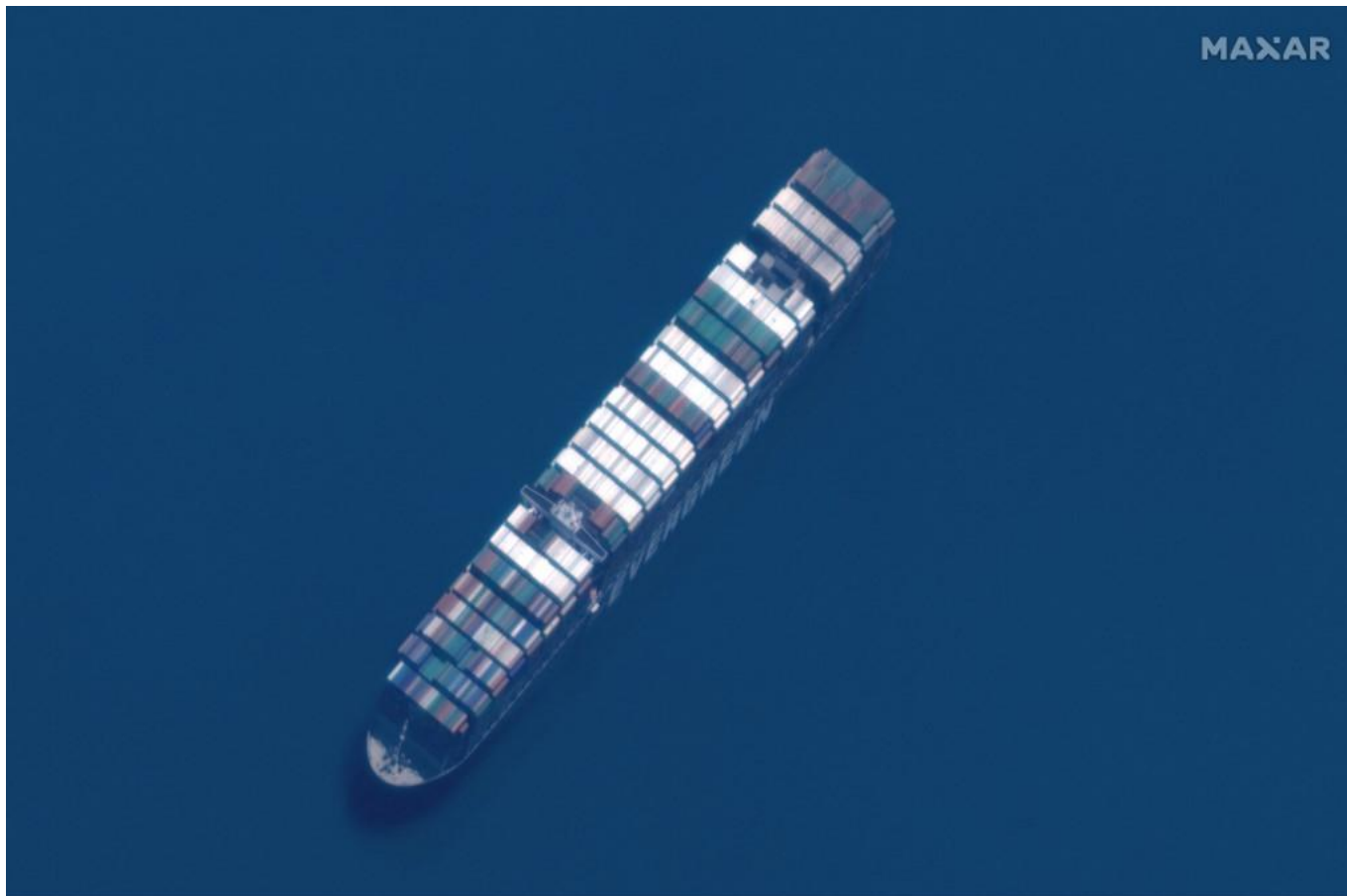
The disagreement had centered on the compensation amount the Suez Canal Authority is claiming for the salvage of the vessel.

The money would cover the salvage operation, costs of stalled canal traffic, and lost transit fees for the week the Ever Given blocked the canal.

At first, the Suez Canal Authority demanded \$916 million in compensation, which was later lowered to \$550 million.

The two sides have traded blame for the vessel's grounding, with bad weather, poor decisions on the part of canal authorities, and human and technical error all being thrown out as possible factors.

The six-day blockage disrupted global shipping. Hundreds of ships waited in place for the canal to be unblocked, while some ships were forced to take the much longer route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa's southern tip, requiring additional fuel and other costs.



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Suez Canal Authority showing 'full flexibility' in Ever Given compensation talks
Egypt plans rethink on claim against Ever Given

[UAE approves Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1625396870852650000

Sun, 2021-07-04 09:49

DUBAI: The UAE's Ministry of Health and Prevention (MoHAP) on Sunday announced the approval of the emergency registration of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine.

The health ministry said in a statement on state news agency WAM on Sunday that the UAE has reported the spread of the Beta, Delta and Alpha variants in the country of some 9.2 million people.

The ministry also announced on Sunday that it recorded 1,599 new coronavirus cases, bringing the total number of recorded cases in the UAE to 639,476. Three new deaths have been reported due to COVID-19 complications, bringing the total number of deaths in the country to 1,834.

Around 73.8 percent of the UAE's population has received one vaccine dose while 63.7 percent are fully vaccinated, the health ministry said in a Twitter post on Saturday.



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UAE reports 1,632 new COVID-19 cases, six deaths overnight
Emiratis barred from traveling to 14 countries included in UAE's no-entry list

Four dead as Cyprus forest fire rages

Author:

Reuters

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Sun, 2021-07-04 07:24

NICOSIA: Four people were found dead as a huge fire raged for a second day in Cyprus, razing tracts of forest in a blaze one official called the worst on record.

The blaze, fanned by strong winds, affected at least 10 communities over an area of 50 square kilometers (19 square miles) in the foothills of the Troodos mountain range, an area of pine forest and densely vegetated shrubland.

The victims, thought to be Egyptian nationals, were found dead close to the community of Odou, a mountainous community north of the cities of Limassol and Larnaca.

"All indications point to it being the four persons who were missing since yesterday," Interior Minister Nicos Nouris said.

The EU's executive, the European Commission, said fire-fighting planes had departed from Greece to battle the fire and Italy was also planning to deploy aerial firefighters.

The EU's emergency Copernicus satellite was also activated to provide damage assessment maps of the affected areas, the Commission said in a statement.

"It is the worst forest fire in the history of Cyprus," Forestries Department Director Charalambos Alexandrou told Cyprus's Omega TV.

Attempts were being made to prevent the blaze from crossing the mountains and stop it before reaching Machairas, a pine forestland and one of the highest peaks in Cyprus.

The cause of the fire, which started around midday on Saturday, was unclear. Cyprus experiences high temperatures in the summer months, with temperatures in recent days exceeding 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). Police said they were questioning a 67-year old person in connection with the blaze.



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Cyprus to open up doors to vaccinated tourists from 65 countries
Turkey insists on 'two-state solution' in Cyprus

[Palestinians: Israeli forces kill man in West Bank clashes](#)

Author:

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1625341625846065900

Sat, 2021-07-03 19:01

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Health Ministry says Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man Saturday evening during clashes in the occupied West Bank. The ministry identified the slain man as Mohammad Fareed Hassan, 20, from

Qusra village near Nablus city.

The official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, reported that Hassan was shot in the chest as residents confronted settlers who stormed the village from a nearby settlement. It said Israeli troops accompanied the settlers.

Palestinians have been holding weekly protests against the expansion of Israeli settlements at several locations of the West Bank.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want it to form the main part of their future state.

Nearly 500,000 Israelis live in more than 130 authorized settlements and dozens of outposts across the occupied West Bank.

The Palestinians and much of the international community view all settlements as a violation of international law and an obstacle to peace.



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Israel strikes Gaza after Hamas launches incendiary balloons

Yemenis express hope that new UN envoy will help to end war

Author:

Sat, 2021-07-03 21:36

ALEXANDRIA: Yemenis have expressed hope for a deal to end the war, amid reports that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will name a new envoy to the country.

Politicians, rights activists and experts want the new envoy, tipped to be EU Ambassador to Yemen Hans Grundberg, to apply an inclusive approach for mediation between the warring parties.

Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi, Yemen's former foreign minister, hailed the Swedish national as an experienced envoy with knowledge about the complications of the crisis as he had been working as a diplomat in the country for years.

A good knowledge of the region and its conflicts, a deep understanding of the Yemeni issue as ambassador to the country, and being aware of the obstacles and mistakes of previous envoys may help Grundberg get out of obstacles and failures, Al-Qirbi tweeted. He said the new envoy had to cooperate with regional forces to succeed in reaching an agreement that would end the war.

Activists said the envoy should focus on ending Houthi rights abuses and secure the release of hundreds of war prisoners.

"We strongly demand he personally pay attention to the issue of abducted and detained women in Houthi prisons and to provide them with psychological and legal support," Amat Al-Salam Al-Hajj, chair of the Mothers of Abductees Association, an umbrella organization for thousands of female relatives of war prisoners, told Arab News.

The outgoing envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths was appointed in Feb. 2018 but he, like previous envoys before him, failed to convince the Yemeni parties to strike a deal to end the war.

However his biggest achievement might be brokering the Stockholm Agreement, which defused a major offensive by government forces on the western city of Hodeidah through which most of the country's humanitarian and food supplies enter.

He also sponsored an inmate swap between the government and Houthis that led to the freedom of more than 1,000 war prisoners.

Yassin Saeed Noaman, Yemen's ambassador to the UK, said Grundberg would succeed in brokering a peace deal in Yemen if the EU used its relationship with Iran to pressure the Houthis to accept peace initiatives.

"Some hope can be expected that this huge European bloc will play a positive role in its relationship with Iran, which alone has the power to put pressure

on the Houthis," Noaman added.

In Riyadh, the Yemeni government had not been officially informed about the name of the new UN envoy, a senior government official told Arab News on Saturday.

Yemen experts argued that the new envoy would inherit a difficult situation as his predecessor had exhausted all options to convince factions to accept peace ideas.

"The world awaits the announcement of a new envoy whose mandate will be to find a swift path to peace where no obvious one exists," Elana DeLozier, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said on Friday. "The path is more likely to be a long, hard slog that requires a renewed focus on laying the groundwork for sustainable peace."

Others advised the UN to expand talks to end the war beyond the government and Houthis and to include other parties such as women and leaders of military units and politicians.

"The Crisis Group has long advocated for the UN to expand the talks beyond the two-party framework," Peter Salisbury, a senior Yemen analyst at the International Crisis Group, said last month. "It should include militia leaders and politicians who can make a ceasefire stick, as well as organizations, particularly women-led groups."

Salisbury advised the new envoy to spend more time shuttling between Yemeni cities, mediating between different factions and groups instead of traveling between regional and international capitals.

"UN member states should press the new envoy to spend as much time in Yemen as possible, consulting widely among, and even mediating between, a range of groups," he added.



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