

Egyptian minister accuses Ethiopia of intransigence over GERD

Sat, 2021-07-03 21:24

CAIRO: Egypt's minister of water resources and irrigation accused Ethiopia of intransigence over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on Saturday.

Mohamed Abdel-Aty was representing his ministry while addressing a conference organized by the German government.

He said Egypt is one of the driest countries in the world and suffers from water scarcity; Egypt's water resources are estimated at 60 billion cubic meters annually, most of which comes from the waters of the River Nile, in addition to very limited amounts of rainwater, estimated at 1 billion cubic meters, and deep, non-renewable groundwater in the deserts.

The project on the River Nile has been a source of diplomatic tension between Cairo and Addis Ababa since its construction began in Ethiopia in 2011. The Ethiopian government sees the hydroelectricity project as crucial for the economy and a vital source of energy. But Egypt and Sudan, which are downstream, fear the \$4 billion GERD will greatly reduce their access to water.

Ethiopia began the second phase of filling the reservoir behind the GERD in early May.

Abdel-Aty added that total water needs in Egypt amount to about 114 billion cubic meters annually, and the gap is compensated by reusing agricultural drainage water and surface groundwater.

He said Egypt and other countries were witnessing increasing climatic changes, pointing to the resulting threats to sustainable development and the human right to water.

"In addition to the risks that the most fertile lands are facing as a result of the expected rise in sea levels, the intrusion of saline water, which affects the quality of groundwater, will lead to the displacement of millions of Egyptians residing in the north of the delta," he said.

In his speech, Abdel-Aty stressed Egypt's desire for negotiations to reach an agreement that met the aspirations of all parties over the GERD.

He added that Egypt would not accept unilateral action to fill and operate the dam; Cairo, he continued, did not object to a dam in Ethiopia and supports its development, but wanted a fair settlement for both itself and Sudan.

Abdel-Aty said any shortage of water resources would cause severe damage, as the lack of 1 billion cubic meters of water could cost 200,000 families their main source of livelihood in agriculture.

“This means that 1 million citizens will be affected,” he said.

The agricultural sector in Egypt employs at least 40 million people, and any shortage of water resources will have huge repercussions on a large percentage of the Egyptian population, the minister said.

This could lead to societal instability, and possibly a wave of emigration to Europe and other countries, or a rise in young, disillusioned people turning to extremist groups.



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[Egyptian president inaugurates July 3 naval base](#)

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Sat, 2021-07-03 21:04

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on Saturday inaugurated a naval base in the Gargoub area on the northwest coast, near Libya. The opening ceremony was attended by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Mohamed Al-Menfi, president of the Libyan Presidential Council, as well as other international leaders and officials. El-Sisi inspected units at the July 3 Naval Base after signing the establishment document and raising the Egyptian flag.

Ahmed Khaled, commander of Egypt's Naval Forces, said the July 3 Base was adding to the country's growing capabilities within a comprehensive modernization program for the armed forces.

It was within the political leadership's strategic vision to develop the armed forces, Khaled said, and the new base sent out a message of peace and development.

He added that Egypt was implementing a plan for progress after achieving victory over terrorism and extremism with the weapons of thought and comprehensive development.

He said the challenge was great and that factors of time, accuracy, quality, and good resource management were a strong element in implementing the comprehensive development plan for the armed forces.

The July 3 base is the latest Egyptian military base on the Mediterranean and, according to a statement from the presidency, it is designed to secure the country in the northern and western strategic directions, preserve its economic capabilities, secure maritime transport lines, and maintain maritime security by using combat groups.

It will launch centers for the logistical support of Egyptian forces in the Red and Mediterranean Seas to confront any challenges and risks that may exist in the region, as well as combat smuggling operations and illegal immigration.

A few days ago the Ministry of Defense said that July 3 and its facilities complied with the code of international naval bases.

It was an integrated military zone that constituted a launch pad to protect the nation along the strategic northern and western directions, it added.

It said the July 3 base would witness the Qader 2021 maneuver, which is one of Egypt's largest military exercises.





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[Israeli officials say cargo ship possibly attacked en route to UAE](#)

Sat, 2021-07-03 20:10

JERUSALEM: Israeli defense officials were checking whether Iranian forces were behind a possible attack on a cargo ship under partial Israeli ownership on Saturday on its way from Jeddah to the United Arab Emirates, Israel's N12 Television News reported.

The crew were not hurt and the ship, possibly hit by a missile, was not badly damaged and continued on its journey after the incident, N12 said, citing unnamed sources within Israel's defence establishment. Lebanese pro-Iranian TV channel Al Mayadeen had reported earlier that the ship was attacked in the Indian Ocean.

N12 said the vessel, the Tyndall, was owned by Zodiac Maritime Ltd. Zodiac Maritime's website says the CSAV Tyndall is a container ship that sails under a Liberian flag.

A source familiar with Zodiac Maritime's fleet said the company had sold the CSAV Tyndall several months ago and that no such incident had taken place involving any of its vessels, they said.

Ship-tracking data from Refinitiv Eikon showed a vessel called the CSAV Tyndall that was last docked in Jeddah was off the coast of Dubai.



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Israeli settlers leave West Bank outpost after government deal
Israeli, UAE airlines announce cooperation deal

[Israeli settlers leave West Bank outpost after govt deal](#)

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Fri, 2021-07-02 13:32

BEITA, Palestinian Territories: Israeli settlers were leaving a West Bank wildcat outpost Friday in adherence to an agreement struck with nationalist premier Naftali Bennett's new government, an AFP reporter said.

The last cars were streaming out of Eviatar in compliance with the 4:00 p.m. (1300 GMT) deadline to leave the outpost.

Dozens of settler families several weeks ago started to build the settlement

in defiance of both international and Israeli law, sparking fierce protests from Palestinians in nearby villages.

"I hope we'll be back here very soon," Sarah Lisson, a mother of six, told AFP before driving off. "We can build a big house."

The hilltop area where the settlers established a settlement of trailer homes, shacks and tents lies near Nablus in the northern West Bank, Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967.

Under the terms of the deal published by the Israeli government on Thursday, the settlers had to leave by Friday afternoon.

However, their temporary homes will remain, and the Israeli army will establish a presence in the area.

As settlers departed, soldiers were at the site, an AFP reporter said.

The defense ministry will then assess the area to possibly declare it as state land, where Israel allows settlers to build.

Should this happen, the military would then allow a community with a religious school to be built.

The Palestinians, who claim the land as their own, had harassed the settlers by burning car tires, sounding horns and pointing laser beams at them, leading to deadly clashes with Israeli security forces.

On Friday, Palestinians were again gathering across the valley to protest, hurling stones and burning tires.

The dispute around the flashpoint site put an early strain on Bennett's diverse eight-party coalition, that includes his right-wing nationalist Yamina party as well as left-wing groups and Arab-Israeli lawmakers.

The deal was rejected by leftwing Israeli groups, as well as the mayor of Beita, the nearby Palestinian village, who told AFP on Thursday that "clashes and protests will continue" as long as any Israeli "remains on our land."



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Israeli settlers agree to leave flashpoint West Bank outpost
Israeli gov't and settlers reach deal over West Bank outpost, Palestinians angered

[US drops sanctions on three Iranians, move unrelated to nuclear talks](#)

Fri, 2021-07-02 17:49

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury said on Friday it removed sanctions on three Iranians but said this did not reflect a change in its sanctions policy toward Iran and had nothing to do with talks on restoring US and Iranian compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

A Treasury spokesperson named the three as Behzad Ferdows, Mehrzad Ferdows, and Mohammad Reza Dezfulian, adding: "These delistings do not reflect any change in US government sanctions policy toward Iran. They have nothing to do with ongoing (Iran nuclear deal) negotiations in Vienna."

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