



AN EGYPT WITHOUT CORRUPTION? Page 7



TAHIA RECALLS THE GOOD OLD DAYS Page 9



EGYPTIAN MAIL

The Middle East's oldest English-language weekly

The weekly edition of The Egyptian Gazette

97th Year, Issue No. 26

Tuesday, July 5, 2011

10 Pages • LE2.50

Gas pipeline to Israel blown up

SABOTEURS blew up a pipeline carrying gas from Egypt to Israel and Jordan, forcing a shut-down in the flow of gas, Egyptian security sources said yesterday.

The explosion took place in the early morning at a station along the pipeline in the northern Sinai Peninsula at Bir al-Abd, 60 km east of the Suez Canal, the sources said.

It was the third attack since early February on the pipeline, which supplies natural gas to Israel and Jordan, local cement plants and a power station. A security source said men with machineguns in a small truck forced guards at the station to leave, then planted explosive charges.

"We do not have sufficient information until now, but in principle the explosion happened in the same way that the two previous explosions happened," another security source told Reuters.

Officials said a car had parked near the pipeline in the Bir al-Abd area, 80 kilometres (about 50 miles) from the North Sinai town of el-Arish, shortly before the explosion.

They said the bomb was activated remotely. Emergency services were deployed to the area to try to bring the fire under control, an official said.

Witnesses said the flames reached as high as 10 metres (32 feet). There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The natural gas company that runs the pipeline closed it down after the explosion, the source said. Witnesses said the sound of the explosion boomed out across the desert, frightening nearby residents, and tongues of fire could be seen above the station.



AHEAD OF FRIDAY'S PROTEST: Demonstrators outside their tents in Al Tahrir Square yesterday. Photo by Ashraf Shaaban

Divisions ahead of Friday's protest

By Ashraf Madbouli

SOME revolutionary groups continued to urge Egyptians to join an open-ended protest due on Friday under the slogan 'Revolution First'. They also urged Prime Minister Essam Sharaf to attend the rally, while others rejected the call because of its 'vague, unjustified demands'.

The Revolution Youth Coalition and the April 6th Youth Movement issued statements calling for Egyptians to join their Friday protest in Al Tahrir Square. However, the two groups gave different reasons for protesting.

"All Egyptians of every class and sect are urged to join the 'Revolution First' protest on Friday. Prime Minister Essam Sharaf is also urged to join Egyptians, until the demands of the revolution are met," the Revolution Youth Coalition said in a statement. It added that the protesters' demands fall into three categories.

Some want Premier Sharaf to have full authority to purge ministries and State bodies and issue laws appropriate at the current stage.

"Others call for freedom of expression, support for the right of workers to create unions and an end to the practice of civilians being referred to military tribunals," the statement read.

The third category of protesters want security to prevail by purging the Interior Ministry, according to the statement.

April 6th Youth Movement, meanwhile, distributed 260,000 copies of a leaflet to citizens in different Cairo suburbs, which urged them to show up in the iconic square, under the slogan, 'The Poor First... Friday of Determination'.

"The people are stronger than the rulers. Let's get out and press for the demands of the revolution to be met, starting with social justice," said Ahmed Maher, the movement's co-ordinator.

Because of fears that violence could erupt during the rally, the group said the entrances to Al Tahrir Square will be secured by popular committees comprising revolutionaries.

Some other revolutionary groups have called on the Interior Ministry to deploy policemen in the Square on Friday.

The Free Front for Peaceful Change, meanwhile, said it has suspended a campaign to collect 15 million signatures to pressurise the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces into drafting a constitution first.

"We have suspended the campaign in solidarity with the Friday protest. At the present time, unity, not differences, among the revolutionaries is vital," said the Free Front in a statement.

Another 14 minor groups said in a joint statement that they will not join the Friday protest as the demands are vague and some of them unjustified.

Around 200 protesters, camping in Al Tahrir Square, were attacked on Sunday, apparently by thugs, while trying to move their tents. Their attackers were armed with knives, metal bars, stones and Molotov cocktails.

No policemen or soldiers were deployed in the Square or intervened to contain the situation. By late on Sunday, things had become a little calmer.

Local market, aid to fund budget deficit

EGYPT plans to fund its LE134 billion budget deficit through a combination of local market issuance and aid from Arab states, Finance Minister Samir Radwan said yesterday.

"Egypt can go at least a year without World Bank or IMF [support], but only with the help of Arab countries," Radwan told reporters in the United Arab Emirates' capital.

"We plan to cover LE120 billion from the local market and we're looking for another LE14 billion from Arab countries."

Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which took over after the ousting of Hosni Mubarak on February 11, yesterday endorsed Egypt's budget for fiscal year 2011/12, with priority given to social justice, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement yesterday.

"Public expenses will hit LE491 billion [\$83 billion], up 15 per cent on the current fiscal year, with 54 per cent devoted to social development," read the statement carried by the official Middle East News Agency (MENA).

It added that the Government will be committed to protecting low-income families from economic fluctuations, particularly

the recent, large hikes in world food prices.

The education sector has been allocated LE52 billion, a 10 per cent increase on the current fiscal year, while health provisions are up 17 per cent to LE23.9 billion. The housing sector and community facilities are up significantly by 39 per cent to LE16.7 billion, according to the statement.

One of the striking features in the budget is an increase in social protection for workers and pensioners.

A total of LE118 billion has been allocated for wages after pay rises, up 22 per cent on the current fiscal year.

"This figure includes the long-awaited

increase in the minimum wage for State employees - costing LE9 billion and set to benefit 2 million workers - and 15 per cent in workers' bonus payments, costing LE3 billion," the statement pointed out.

The largest increase in social spending comes via pension reforms and a plan to increase pensions by 15 per cent retrospectively, as of April 2011. Pension contributions will also rise to 30 per cent, with the current average pension of LE100 being raised in a bid to help improve pensioners' living standards.

This will cost the Government an annual LE2.8 billion, bringing benefits to some 7.5 million Egyptians.

Egypt not to blame for E. coli, says minister

By Ihab Shaarawy

EGYPTIAN Minister of Agriculture Ayman Farid Abu Hadid declared yesterday that Egypt's agricultural products have been unaffected by the E. coli outbreak in Europe.

Abu Hadid, who described reports about Egyptian seeds being to blame for the outbreak of E. coli as 'untrue and illogical', said that a letter that was posted on Sunday at the European Commission website from Germany stressed that the Egyptian seeds are not to blame.

Ali Salem, the head of Egypt's Central Administration for Agricultural Quarantine, said that he has a copy of the letter which disappeared from the website a few hours after it was posted. No German official was available for comment.

Salem stressed that it was easy to challenge anyone who claims Egyptian fenugreek seeds are to blame.

"They were exported from Egypt two years ago and went through four European countries. How could they host such bacteria undetected for all that time and through all these countries? How can a disease come from Egypt when it doesn't exist in Egypt?" he asked.

No E. coli cases have been reported in Egypt.

Last week, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) said a "rapid risk assessment" it conducted with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) had shown the Egyptian seeds could have been to blame.

"At the request of the EU, we tested some seeds in various prestigious laboratories and all the samples proved negative," said Salem on the sidelines of an event to celebrate the activation of a project to create an integrated agricultural production system between Italy and Egypt.

The purpose of the project is to harmonise production, as well as improving and increasing the quality of agricultural produce, including fruit, in Egypt and Italy, allowing the two countries to meet their seasonal needs.

NEWS LINE

48 Military Technical College graduates

HEAD of the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, yesterday attended the graduation ceremony of 48 officers from the Military Technical College.

Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Sami Anan, deputy head of the SCAF, also attended the passing out of these officers.

4 new parties approved

EGYPT'S Party Affairs Committee yesterday endorsed four new parties, which have met all the criteria enshrined in a new law issued in March.

The four include the Free Egyptians Party, founded by telecom mogul Naguib Sawiris, while the other three are the Modern Egypt, Egypt Revolution and Egyptian Social Democratic parties.

In March, the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, in power since the ousting of Hosni Mubarak, ratified a law allowing the formation of new political parties upon notice, a move seen as a key step towards transition to civilian democratic rule.

10,000 civilians sentenced by military tribunals

AT least 10,000 civilians have been sentenced in military trials since Egypt's January 25 uprising that ousted president Hosni Mubarak, a human rights group said yesterday.

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information called on the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to reconsider the sentences, saying the activists jailed in military prisons do not get a fair trial. There has been an uptick in protests to pressure the council, which has been in charge of the country since February, to stop the military trials of civilians.

Request to free alleged spy rejected

THE Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has turned down calls from the US to release Ilan Chaim Grapel, an Israeli-American who is accused of spying for the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad.

SCAF Vice President Sami Anan said the ruling military council will not intervene with the judicial system, according to media reports.



Photo by Suleiman el-Oteifi

UAE PRESIDENT RECEIVES EGYPT'S PM: Recent developments in Egypt and boosting bilateral ties dominated the talks held yesterday in Al Ain City between UAE's President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahayan and Egypt's Prime Minister Essam Sharaf. Sheikh Khalifa stressed the UAE's desire to support Egypt during the transitional stage the country is going through, in order to consolidate what it has achieved and ensure a better future.

Advertisement for 'PYRAMIDS AND THE REVOLUTION' at the Cairo Opera House. The ad features a woman holding a flag and lists performance dates from July 4 to 9 at 8 p.m. Contact information: 27390132 - 27390144, http://cairoopera.org

