

## TURKISH COURT DEALS BLOW TO ERDOGAN, OVERTURNS LAW THAT SHUT RIVAL'S SCHOOLS

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's top court has struck down legislation that would have shut thousands of private schools, dealing a blow to President Tayyip Erdogan's efforts to curb the influence of a cleric he has accused of covertly seeking to topple him.

Many of the schools are run by followers of US-based Islamic cleric Fethullah Gulen, providing his Hizmet (Service) network with revenues and new recruits. The law was ushered through by Erdogan in 2014.

Erdogan accuses Gulen, whose followers wield influence in the police and judiciary, of concocting a corruption scandal in December 2013 in a bid to bring down his government.

Gulen, who lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania and presides over a worldwide network of schools and businesses, denies plotting against the state.

Erdogan has made purging state institutions of "Gülenist" influence a priority, removing or reassigning hun-

dreds of prosecutors and thousands of police officers deemed loyal to the cleric. It is unclear how strongly his battle against what he variously calls a terrorist group or a "parallel state" can now be pursued, after the ruling AK Party he founded lost its parliamentary majority for the first time in a June 7 election.

### 'Parallel state'

Shutting the university-preparatory schools would have deprived Hizmet of one of its chief sources of financing. But

in its ruling late on Monday, the constitutional court said the legislation violated freedom of education, the *Hurriyet* newspaper reported.

The decision marks a victory for the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), which held a first round of coalition talks with the AKP on Monday. It had appealed to the constitutional court to overturn the legislation.

Pro-government media have said that Erdogan has made the continuation of the fight against the "parallel

state" one of his conditions for any coalition deal.

Should Turkey's political parties be unable to agree a working coalition by late August, Erdogan has the right to call a snap election, widely seen as his preferred option as it may offer a chance for the AKP to regain its majority. Erdogan said late on Monday, as coalition negotiations formally began, that the nation was growing impatient and that if no deal was reached quickly, a new vote would be necessary. —Reuters

## THE REAL HEROES OF THE NEW SUEZ CANAL

**SUEZ:** The buildup to the launch of the New Suez Canal has resonated across the world, reaching millions of people from all walks of life. Its economic impact has been recognized, its construction appreciated, and its leadership honored - but who are the real heroes of the New Suez Canal project?

"I am not here for the money. I am very proud to be a part of the future of my own country," says Mostafa Abd Almaugoud, an Ismailia resident and Egyptian national.

He's worked on the New Suez Canal project for the last six months as an assistant engineer. It's a very warm July day, the sun is beating down on the construction site and the launch of the new canal is just days away. Mostafa is in high spirits. He's part of a team of three, working tirelessly to secure the banks of the canal with local stone. This is a vital aspect of the project, and one that needs to be completed in full along the entire 35 kilometers of additional waterway before the first ship transits through.

Mostafa, and the thousands like him traveling to the canal each day to ensure the project is completed on time, is a proud national. He speaks of the cultural importance of the new canal, a sentiment largely shared among residents in Ismailia City.

"Egypt deserves this," says a videographer working on the project. "It's not been the easiest last few years for the country, and the completion of this project will signify a new start."

### Collaboration

That new start has been talked about since Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announced the project in August 2014, but little has been said about the efforts of those on the ground that have collaborated for the past 11 months, and are now on the brink of completing a labor effort on par with the greatest in history. Such efforts aren't new in this part of the world. When Khufu ruled during the first half of the Old Kingdom of Egypt around 2589-2566 BC, he began construction of the first and great pyramid during Egypt's time of peak prosperity.

A project spanning more than 20 years, resulting in a monument weighing over 6.5 million tons, the great pyramid is landmark not only recognized as a symbol of Egypt locally, but the world over. That persistence and determination to build something that acts as a beacon for a nation, a symbol of greatness and grandeur, and a landmark studied, visited and loved by people around the world is telling of the Egyptian people.

That culture has stood the test of time, and the New Suez Canal project has served as the perfect example. The original timeline for the New Suez Canal project was three years from initiation to completion. However, El-Sisi, keen to demonstrate the determination of the Egyptian people, stated the project would be completed in a third of that.

43,000 workers, including a significant number of engineers, were drafted in shortly after - an impressive amount of which are based in the surrounding cities of Port Said, Suez and Ismailia. Unlike many large construction projects, Egypt effortlessly sparked the interest and passion of its own people, and as a result can boast to have domestically taken control of the New Suez Canal project.

### Tough conditions

"We will say to the world, come and check what the Egyptians did," says Mostafa, when asked why the project is so important to him.

"All the people will be talking about us. People will talk about those who built the Suez Canal." Mostafa says he will tell his children about his participation in the project, "And they will tell theirs, too."

He's crouched down beside the bank, while his two colleagues operate a digger, shifting and replacing sand. In addition to stabilizing the banks, they're also inputting docking stations for boats and ships. "Long live Egypt! Long live Egypt!" chants Sayd Abd Al Hamid, a 51-year-old from Daqahliya Al Mansoura. He's been working on the construction of the new canal since the beginning, enduring tough conditions over the hotter months. But it hasn't fazed him. It doesn't appear to have fazed anybody.

"This project will bring goodness to the people of Egypt and the world," he states. "It will increase the national income and secure job opportunities for the unemployed." Sayd is determined to stay and finish his work on the canal until the launch on August 6. With labor in such numbers, and the sheer pace with which the Egyptian people have delivered this project, there's always a risk of danger to human safety. However, as of yet, the canal hasn't recorded any worker deaths or serious injuries.

"We are proud of our health and safety record during the construction phase," said a Suez Canal Authority spokesperson. "The safety and security of those working on the canal is of the utmost importance to the Suez Canal Authority."

With this, civilians are also being carefully accommodated on a daily basis, as hundreds of local Egyptian nationals continue to head to the canal for updates and tours. A pedestrian seating area has been erected near to several new statues and monuments where Egyptians can congregate and hear talks as well as witness the construction as it happens.

And the work isn't done; Mostafa claims the project needs more Egyptians to come and get involved. He's appealing for more locals to step forward and become a part of history as it happens. But with the new canal set to open its waterways as soon as August 6, the majority of the grueling hard work has already been completed, and the 43,000 people involved will soon be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor.



**ADEN:** Fire and smoke rises from the Aden oil refinery following a reported shelling attack by Shiite Huthi rebels in the embattled southern Yemeni city of Aden. Clashes have intensified in Aden, where rebels have besieged many areas controlled by southern fighters loyal to exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi and known as the Popular Resistance. — AFP

## LOYALISTS RETAKE AIRPORT IN YEMEN'S ADEN

### SAUDI-LED WARSHIPS OFF THE COAST POUND REBELS

**ADEN:** Loyalists of Yemen's exiled president recaptured the airport in second city Aden yesterday sealing a four-month battle with Iran-backed rebels with Saudi-led air and naval support, military sources said.

Fighting in the port city escalated as UN chief Ban Ki-Moon expressed disappointment over the failure of a UN-declared ceasefire to take hold over the weekend.

The retreat by the Shiite rebels came as Iran-regarded as their main foreign supporter-struck a historic nuclear deal with world powers that was seen as bringing the main Shiite power in from the cold but setting limits to its regional ambitions.

Leading Sunni power Saudi Arabia has been deeply concerned about Iranian influence in its impoverished southern neighbour and has led a devastating air campaign since March against the rebels and their allies in the armed forces.

Saudi-led warships off the coast pounded the rebels as they pulled back from positions in Aden they had held since forcing President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi into exile in Riyadh in March. Hadi was "personally supervising the operation" dubbed "Operation Golden Arrow for the Liberation of Aden," his chief of staff

Mohammed Mareh said. Aden airport had been in the hands of the rebels since soldiers of the 39th Armoured Brigade defected on March 25.

The Huthi Shiite rebels and their allies have since gone on to seize the presidential palace and Aden's main commercial port. Military sources in Aden said pro-Hadi fighters were now benefiting from ground support from Yemeni forces recently trained in Saudi Arabia, in addition to sophisticated weapons delivered by the coalition. "Forces recently trained in Saudi Arabia are strongly participating in the fighting alongside the Popular Resistance," said one source, referring to the southern militia that have been the mainstay of support for Hadi so far.

Retaking the airport of Aden is the first significant achievement for pro-Hadi fighters since the embattled president fled.

### UN chief 'disappointed'

The rebels overran the capital Sanaa unopposed in September and went on to seize much of the rest of the country aided by troops still loyal to Hadi's ousted predecessor Ali Abdullah Saleh. Aden's oil refinery-Yemen's biggest-was ablaze on Tuesday after being hit by rockets during the fighting for the city. Hadi loyalists

blamed the rebels for the blaze. The rebels blamed a Saudi-led air strike.

The fighting raged despite a UN-declared six-day ceasefire that was supposed to take effect shortly before midnight (2100 GMT) on Friday.

The UN chief said he was "very much disappointed" by the failure of the truce but retained hope the fighting might still end, his spokesman said. He added: "We continue to reiterate our call for an unconditional humanitarian pause."

"We have not lost hope and discussions are ongoing," Stéphane Dujarric said.

He also defended the decision to call the ceasefire, saying UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed "had received the commitments he felt were necessary for us to come out with this announcement".

The United Nations has declared Yemen a level-3 humanitarian emergency, the highest on its scale, with nearly half the country facing a food crisis. More than 21.1 million people-over 80 percent of Yemen's population-need aid, with 13 million facing food shortages, while access to water has become difficult for 9.4 million people.

The UN says the conflict has killed more than 3,200 people, about half of them civilians, since late March. —AFP

## IRANIANS WELCOME NUCLEAR DEAL, BUT PARTIES ON HOLD

**TEHRAN:** Iranians welcomed yesterday's nuclear agreement as a step toward better fortunes, but appeared to put any revelry on hold until sunset in line with Ramadan and after the summer heat. Authorities in recent days have appeared apprehensive about people taking to the streets to celebrate as they did after a preliminary deal was agreed with world powers on April 2. Such concern seemed to be heeded as Tuesday's news of a deal in Vienna came through around noon in Tehran where the temperature hit 39 Celsius (102 Fahrenheit).

With a few days left of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, however, it is thought the breaking of the fast later will see Iranians show joy at the deal that ends a 13-year international standoff.

"It's great news because the economy will boom," said Behnam Arian, an accountant said at Argentine Square, a busy commercial district in the capital. "The negotiations lasted a few years but they will lead to interaction with other countries," he said, echoing remarks of Iran's President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"During these talks Mr Zarif represented our country's positions better than his predecessors," he added, alluding to the long-running crisis over the Islamic republic's nuclear programme.

Hamid Bahri, an engineer, appeared relieved the talks in Vienna were finally over. "Any deal is better than no deal. There is no bad deal because each side will have benefits and the world powers will secure their interests in Iran in the coming few years," he said.

The possibility of cooperation between Iran and the West in a conflict-stricken Middle East, typified by Islamic State group jihadists in Iraq,

Syria and beyond, also won support. "Now the terrorist groups will be destroyed gradually," Bahri said. "When we speak of a political accord, it means that in the future they will definitely talk and cooperate on other issues as well." Others pointed to the need to try to open up the economy to competition and reverse the fortunes made by so-called "sanctions busters" on the black market that thrived under the nuclear standoff. "The sanctions were very profitable for

some within Iran and thank God their hands will be cut from now on," said Omid Shaterzadeh, a 27-year-old finance sector employee.

Social media also filled up with reaction to the deal. "Hello world, here's our unclimbed hand & open arms, let's give true friendship/peace a chance," a user named Soleil wrote on Twitter, which is filtered by Iranian authorities but accessible via illegal software that circumvents censorship controls. — AFP



**TEHRAN:** A handout picture released yesterday by the official website of the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani shows him delivering a statement in Tehran. Rouhani told Iranians in a live televised address that "all our objectives" have been met by a nuclear deal agreed with world powers. —AFP

