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Environmental Affairs ministry turns to the media to enhance its image

By Yasmine Saleh

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CAIRO: Environmental activists say the media reports about government efforts in holding violators accountable are part of a publicity stunt.

The Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs is launching a media campaign to enhance its image in the public eye, Amr Aly, managing director of Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA), told Daily News Egypt.

Aly's statement came in reaction to an article that was published in Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper on Sunday suggesting that Environment Minister Maged George issued an official decree to stop construction work taking place in Palm Resort, Hurghada.

The article states that the resort's owner has been referred to the attorney's office to be charged with illegally refilling around 1,853 meters of the beachfront.

According to Aly, the story about Palm Resort is old news, and has only been published in the press now in order to counter the impression that the ministry is failing in its battle against "the obvious enormous environmental violations that are taking place in Egypt."

Aly's statement was said after he had conducted some phone calls with official



sources. Daily News Egypt has found corroboration for Aly's statement through its own official sources.

Aly added that the Egyptian press does not provide enough attention to the violations that are taking place in the environmental sector in Egypt, and blamed the national press for skewing facts in order to excuse the government's lack of attention towards the environment.

"I read a horrible headline in Rose Al-Youssef magazine a while ago that read that coral reefs in the red sea are a threat to investment," Aly said, adding that the article said that protecting the environment is an obstacle in the way of investment.

Last year, The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) allegedly gave a local council official in Hurghada a permit to dig approximately 1,700 meters into the Red Sea to lay the foundations for a new five-star hotel, destroying a million-year-old coral reef.

According to the World Conservation Union and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), reefs in 93 out of 109 countries have been significantly damaged or destroyed largely due to human impact.

One of the major factors contributing to the destruction of coral reefs is construction. The construction of resorts along the Red Sea coastline has had serious effects on the health of the reefs.




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