



A gift to the nation: Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El Sisi helps a young boy wave the country's flag from a yacht during the opening ceremony of the new Suez Canal yesterday. AFP Photo

Flying the flag for Egypt

■ Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid sends the UAE's congratulations to Egyptians

■ El Sisi says the new Suez Canal will become a symbol of the new Egypt

■ Dr Sultan Al Jaber tells of UAE's pride in supporting project and making it a reality



People who do not admit despair: as joyous Egyptians celebrated in Tahrir Square yesterday Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid said that the new Suez Canal proves to the world that the Egyptian people do not know the impossible, Mohamed Abd El Ghany / Reuters

Frank Kane

ISMAILIA // The new Suez Canal – Egypt's self-proclaimed national "miracle" – was declared open in a spectacular ceremony on the edge of the Sinai desert in the presence of world leaders, dignitaries and proud citizens.

The Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El Sisi took charge of the inauguration of the project, which was completed in one year, a third of the expected time.

He said: "The new canal will become a symbol of the new Egypt, a gift from the nation to the world, and a demonstration of the determination and commitment of the Egyptian people."

Among those attending the ceremony was a top-level party from the UAE, led by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President and Ruler of Dubai. UAE companies were members of the consortium that helped build the canal extension, cementing the already close ties between the governments of the UAE and Egypt.

"The quick completion of the Suez Canal proves to the world that the Egyptian people do not know the impossible and do not admit despair," said Sheikh Mohammed. "Congratulations to the Egyptian people on the canal and to us on the Egyptians' joy."

Egypt sees the canal, which gives the existing sealane the capability to take two-way traffic for its entire 160-kilometre length, as a crucial part of its growth strategy, creating em-

ployment in the economically deprived Sinai.

The project involved the digging of another stretch of canal running parallel with the existing one for 35 kilometres, as well as dredging and widening some of the rest. It cost US\$8.2 billion (Dh30.1bn), raised entirely by public subscription in the country, and employed 43,000 people in its construction.

The canal, which is Egypt's main source of foreign currency earnings, is projected to bring in \$12.3bn by 2023, double the current figure.

As the first ship passed through the waterway, Mr El Sisi pledged that his country would defeat terrorism. "Egypt during this year stood against the most dangerous terrorist ideology, that would burn the world if it could," he said. "We are fighting them and will defeat them."

Dr Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of State and head of the UAE-Egypt Liaison Office, lauded Egypt's leadership, government and people on the completion of the new Suez Canal.

He said: "We would like to congratulate the leadership, government and people of Egypt for this monumental achievement that has brought into fruition the strategic vision of the president of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El Sisi. His unwavering insistence that this project is finalised in one year, truly reflects the resilience of the Egyptian people."

Suez Canal, continued on 2 →