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Train crash kills 51 children in Assiut

MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION AND RAILWAY AUTHORITY CHIEF BOTH RESIGN

By Basil El-Dabah

A train in the Manfalout area of Assiut has collided with a school bus, killing dozens of children. Minister of Transportation Mohamed Rashad Al-Mateeny resigned after the deadly collision.

The Ministry of Health announced in a statement on Saturday afternoon that the death toll had reached 51 schoolchildren, with more than a dozen injured.

Families of those who died have blocked the agricultural road in Assiut, demanding the government respond swiftly to the tragedy.

Prime Minister Hesham Qandil went to Upper Egypt with a fact-finding committee a few hours after the accident. The team will prepare a report summarising the causes of the collision and gather eyewitness accounts.

"Those responsible will be given the maximum penalty," said the prime minister.

Activists claim Qandil and Interior Minister Gamal Eddin were thrown out of Assiut University Hospital by upset local residents.

The government has decided to initially compensate the families of those who died with EGP 5,000 for each child lost in the collision. A further compensation package is expected to follow.

Head of the Railway Authority Mostafa Qenawi also resigned, and will be referred to investigation.



Wreckage of the school bus lies tangled with the train that crashed into it killing dozens of children

Minister Al-Mateeny had reportedly already considered resigning in the aftermath of a train collision in Fayoum that killed three people and injured dozens. An initial investigation showed that the crash may have been due to negligence.

President spokesman Yasser Ali released a statement on Saturday morning saying that President Mohamed Morsy instructed the prime minister, the minister of health, the

minister of defence, and the governor of assiut to provide all the assistance they could to the families of the victims.

Morsy also expressed his condolences, and demanded that investigations be undertaken as soon as possible, as a first step to find those responsible and hold them accountable.

The crash occurred at around 7am on Saturday when a private school bus collided with a train heading northbound from Assiut towards Minya.

Many Egyptian political actors provided reactions to the train crash. Former presidential candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, who is the head of the Strong Egypt party, travelled to Assiut on Saturday to assess the damage.

"The full development of Egypt's rail system has become an issue of intolerable delay," said the Popular Current in a statement. "Any disruption to [improvements in the rail system] is complicity in death."

The Popular Current demanded that the government act in a strong manner not only to provide assistance to the families of victims, but to take steps to improve the poor condition of Egypt's railway system.

Al-Dostour party also released a statement saying that it would send a delegation to Assiut in order to express sorrow and solidarity with the families of the victims.

The Freedom and Justice Party of

federal its condolences and strongly recommended reform of the Ministry of Transportation, to avoid future tragedies of a similar nature. It also suggested that the government seek ways to provide support to the families of the victims.

The Egyptian Social Democratic Party mourned the event and said the resignation of the Minister of Transportation was not enough, advocating widespread reform for a sector of the country that it claimed had been long neglected.

Activists pointed to Saturday's collision as an example of the ineptitude of the current government, demanding the resignation of Qandil and his cabinet.

President spokesman Yasser Ali responded by telling reporters on Saturday that Morsy evaluates the individual performances of all his ministers separately, based on concrete guidelines.

Lawyer and activist Amr Imam began a hunger strike in response to the collision. "The responsibility lies with the president of the republic, the prime minister and the transportation minister," he said. "I don't care that the transportation minister resigned. He has to be put on trial for the death of more than 50 children."

Twelve people also died and three were injured on a desert highway on Saturday, when a truck crashed into a minibus. The truck was driving on the wrong side of the road, and the driver was arrested after the collision.

Morsy meets with Erdogan and Qatari emir

Qatar to send urgent aid with Egyptian cooperation

By Joel Gulhane

Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani and Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Cairo on Saturday for meetings with President Mohamed Morsy.

President spokesman Yasser Ali said the Emir announced that Qatar "will send urgent aid to Gaza with cooperation from the Egyptian side."

Al-Thani met Morsy to discuss developments in Gaza and Syria. He told Morsy that he supports the efforts Egypt is taking to resolve the crisis.

Morsy and Al-Thani also agreed on the importance for a unified and solid Arab position on Gaza, said Ali.

The emir last visited Egypt on his way to Gaza last month to inaugurate a \$254 million investment project to help rebuild parts of Gaza. At the end of October Morsy also announced that Egypt is sending ongoing aid to Gaza.

Earlier on Saturday Morsy and Erdogan discussed the latest developments in Gaza. Ali said that during the meeting Erdogan commended Morsy on Egypt's efforts to calm the situation.

Ali also confirmed that Erdogan and Morsy would meet in the eve-



Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel Amr (Back, 3rd from right) welcomes Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (centre) and his wife Emine at Cairo airport

ning to sign bilateral agreements, the framework for which was previously agreed upon during Morsy's visit to Turkey at the end of September.

According to a statement released by the foreign ministry, the foreign ministers of both countries met earlier on Saturday to review the 27 agreements which covered "areas of health, transport, culture, the preservation of Islamic monuments and

other areas of cooperation between the two countries."

Erdogan also travelled to the Arab league where an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers will take place to discuss the best way to resolve the Gaza crisis. Erdogan also gave a speech at Cairo University.

Before leaving for Cairo, Erdogan blamed Israel for the escalating violence; "it's a tactic of Israel's to point the finger at Hamas and attack Gaza," AFP reported him saying. He added, "Israel continues to make an international racket with its three dead. In fact it is Israel that violated the ceasefire."

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Ali also confirmed that Erdogan will also meet with Prime Minister Hesham Qandil and they would hold a joint press conference on Saturday evening.

Egyptian convoy heads to Gaza

Egyptians attempt to make a political statement by going to Gaza

As the Israeli operation in Gaza continues, activists in Egypt plan to go to the besieged strip in a demonstration of solidarity.

A conference at the press syndicate was held midday Saturday to announce the convoy's plan and goals. The convoy will gather at the press syndicate and will start their journey at 7am on Sunday.

Activist Mohamed Waked said, "the revolution in Palestine is a continuation of the revolution in Egypt... we have one battle, the battle against tyranny and injustice in Mohamed Mahmoud is the same as the battle against occupation in Gaza."

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Doctors reject full strike

Doctors prepare for lengthy battle with government and health ministry, rule out total strike action

By Hend Kortam

Doctors have agreed a new set of measures as part of their partial strike which has gone on for over 45 days.

In a meeting yesterday the committee governing strike said they intend to escalate the strike against the Ministry of Health, which they said has "ignored the demands of the doctors for more than a month and a half."

Their latest method of escalation is to gather signatures demanding the dismissal of the minister of health and three of his aides. In addition, they plan to hold a sit-in next month in which the younger doctors will participate. The residents and specialists who support the strike will not participate because their absence from hospitals might make it easier to break the strike.

The striking doctors have already engaged in several marches, including one at the health ministry and a march in Downtown Cairo where a symbolic funeral for health was observed.

The doctors' strike, which started on 1 October, gives free treatment to patients at public hospitals. It does not disrupt treatment but it allows patients to be treated at emergency departments instead of the outpatient clinics, where they would be charged.

The intention is to make the health ministry lose money and put pressure on the administration. The doctors on strike have faced resistance from the administration and doctors inside the hospitals, who benefit from the outpatient clinics.

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Currencies	Buy	Sell
CHF	6.3411	6.6473
USD	6.0875	6.1175
EUR	7.6373	8.0061
GBP	9.5315	9.9918
SAR	1.615	1.6346

Egyptian Stock Exchange		
	Closing	Weekly Change
EGX 30	5,662.39	0.91%
EGX 70	516.42	0.48%
EGX 100	856.38	0.57%
EGX 20	6,497.32	0.60%

Commentary

Ziad Akl writes: When Morsy became president, we were all waiting for the Muslim Brotherhood's stunning administrative capacity. We all waited for that well organised group that swept through the different elections winning them one after the other

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Mohamed Mahmoud defendants granted amnesty

TRIAL RESUMES BUT VERDICT POSTPONED UNTIL 15 DECEMBER

All but one of the 379 defendants on trial in relation to the Mohamed Mahmoud Street clashes have been granted amnesty and are expected to be acquitted.

The third session of the trial resumed on Saturday, when the judge handling the case received a list of all those granted amnesty. All the defendants in the trial were released last November, shortly after being detained.

President Mohamed Morsy announced a law in October granting amnesty to all those held or imprisoned for committing offences in support of the revolution. The names of all those granted amnesty were revealed two weeks ago by the public and military prosecutors.

The verdict was postponed until 15 December, when 378 defendants are expected to be officially granted the amnesty.

"Only [Ahmed Sayed] Al-Dardiri was not included on the amnesty list," said Aly Diab, lawyer at the Front for Defending Egypt's Pro-

testers (FDEP). Diab said Al-Dardiri was in possession of a drug, Tramadol, upon his arrest during the clashes last November.

"According to Morsy's law, the amnesty doesn't include those who were in possession of any drug," Diab said.

Al-Dardiri didn't attend Saturday's trial and neither did his lawyer. Diab stated that the FDEP has had no contact with him since his arrest last November.

"Since the arrests are random during such clashes, some of those arrested put the whole matter behind them upon their release," Diab said, in anticipation of the probable cause behind Al-Dardiri's disappearance. "Some defendants are more aware than others of the process."

Diab said that none of the lawyers who attended Saturday's trial could defend Al-Dardiri due to his absence. Should he attend the next session, Diab said the lawyers would advocate for him to be granted amnesty.

The defendants who did attend Saturday's session were disappointed with



Apart from one man, all defendants on trial in relation to the Mohamed Mahmoud Street clashes have been granted amnesty (File photo)

the judge's postponement.

"We were supposed to receive our amnesty today," detainee Mohamed Arabi Abdel Wahed said. "I'm tired of this story; I want to get it over with."

Abdel Wahed was arrested late November last year following the Mohamed Mahmoud street clashes. He remained in detention for three days.

"They released me after my family lobbied the prosecution," Abdel Wahed said, adding that police took his fingerprints before his release. "I thought it was all over until I was summoned to court last June."

The 379 defendants on trial are accused of assaulting policemen and being involved in the street clashes on 19 November 2011. The fighting started when a sit-in was attacked by security forces near Tahrir Square.

Serious clashes between protesters and the police left dozens of protesters killed and more injured. Most of the clashes, which continued until 24 November, occurred in Mohamed Mahmoud street.

Abu Islam trial postponed

Decision on radical Islamist's request for a new judge postponed

By Rana Muhammad Taha

A decision over a request filed by Ahmed (Abu Islam) Abdallah to change the panel of judges handling his case has been postponed until 16 December.

Supporters of Abu Islam gathered at the High Court on Saturday in a show of solidarity with the Salafi preacher.

In September, following an incident in front of the US embassy in Cairo Abu Islam, founder of Umma Islamic TV channel, his son Islam (Abu Yousef) Abdallah, and Hany Gad Allah, a news reporter, were charged with contempt of Christianity and burning the Bible.

"We have submitted 10 requests to court, all were turned down by the judge handling our case," Abu Yousef said, explaining why he and his father have requested changing the panel of judges. "Some of the overlooked requests, if considered, could dissolve the case and have us acquitted."

Among the requests the father and son filed to the judge was one involving the summoning of a committee from the Coptic Church to state whether



Supporters of cleric Abu Islam chant outside the courthouse in Cairo (File photo)

the copy of the Bible that was burned is recognised by the church as the genuine Bible, Abu Yousef said. The lawyer who filed the report against Abu Islam and Abu Yousef reportedly belongs to the Coptic Church.

"As long as the burnt Bible is not [the one recognised by the Coptic Church], I can't be punished for burning it," Abu Yousef claimed, adding that the copy of the Bible he burned is only recognised by the

Dove World Outreach Center, the Florida church of notorious Quran burning Pastor Terry Jones.

"We also requested summoning a committee from Al-Azhar to judge whether the copy we burned is the one recognised by Islam as the genuine Bible, according to the Quran," Abu Yousef said. This request, as well as the previous one, was disregarded.

"If all those requests have been overlooked, then on what basis am I

being tried?" Abu Yousef asked.

Abu Yousef denies any wrong-doing, stating that the book he and his father burned was not holy as there is only one holy book: the Quran.

"What we did doesn't breach United States law," Abu Yousef said, adding that the US allows "the burning of the Quran and using it as a doormat in bathrooms."

Abu Yousef also stated that the case is being treated unfairly both by the judiciary and the media.

"The judiciary is supposed to cut off the hands of anyone who touches the Quran," Abu Yousef said.

Abu Islam, accompanied by his son, was filmed burning the Bible in front of the US embassy in Cairo as a crowd of supporters cheered his actions on 11 September. Their actions were a reaction to the release of an anti-Islam film, *Innocence of Muslims*.

In a matter of hours the police entered, rounded up the Egyptians, and had them made ready to be deported in an abrupt legal process with little or no opportunity for the accused to defend themselves.

Popular Current member Mohamed Soliman confirmed that Popular Current members were being held in Kuwait.

Speaking about those arrested from Al-Dostor, party member Ahmed Al-Hawaly said, "they were responsible for recruiting Egyptians abroad. They

Egyptians arrested in Kuwait

Charged with illegal assembly and likely to be deported

By Connor Molloy

Eighteen Egyptians are being held in Kuwait charged with illegal assembly.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that Egypt's consul in Kuwait, Ambassador Wael Gad, visited the detainees on Friday to ensure they were being well treated.

The Egyptians were gathered for a private celebration of the Hijri New Year. The lights and voices attracted police who entered the house and saw political banners and t-shirts.

These political symbols had nothing to do with Kuwait, they were in support of the Egyptian Al-Dostor party and the Egyptian Popular Current.

Similar events took place in 2010, when Egyptians in Kuwait got in trouble for collecting signatures for Mohamed ElBaradei's appeal for change in Hosni Mubarak's Egypt. The charge of "political organisation" is a relatively common problem faced by Egyptian groups trying to organise in Gulf countries.

Al-Hawaly said, "I wish we could have better relations with the Gulf countries. I hope they would see that we are not meddling in their own politics. It is important for us to operate there because one of the objectives of Al-Dostor party is to keep Egyptians abroad very involved in domestic politics and have their voices heard."

Doctors reject full strike

Continued from page 1

The doctors say they are aware that they may have to continue the strike for a long time, citing examples of other countries such as Germany and Israel where doctors maintained partial strikes for months.

The committee has agreed that a full strike is not an option even though some doctors have called for more dramatic action after seeing how quickly the authorities responded to the Metro workers' strike.

The committee added that a full strike may lead to the closure of some hospitals, which may harm some patients and render the strike unprotected by international treaties "and would be punishable by law."

Nadia Younis, Deputy Head of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at the Kafra Al-Dawar General Hospital, and the coordinator of the strike there said, "some departments in hospitals and some hospitals have cancelled the free treatment for emergencies... Emergencies specifically have to be treated for free until there is health insurance for everyone."

"The law still ensures free treatment for emergency cases," Younis said.

Younis was investigated last week by her hospital administration, for her part in making free treatment available.



The Doctor's Syndicate has ruled out a total strike in their struggle with the government

The doctors also plan to be more active in their group resignation campaign, which involves collecting resignations that they plan to hand in when the number reaches 15,000. All the doctors will hand in the same resignation form with

the same reasons for resignation. Legally they can all be accepted together or rejected wholly but not partially.

The doctor's strike aims to achieve three goals, raising the salaries of everyone who works in the

health ministry, creating harsher punishments for people who commit attacks against hospitals and gradually raising the budget for health to 15 per cent of the state budget. It is currently less than five per cent.

words, reported the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU) on its website. Abdel-Maqsood explained that only the cables connecting the channels' studios in Dream Land to the Nile Sat have been disconnected.

Dream has been transmitting from Dream Land, a town in 6 October city, but Abdel-Maqsood stated that the only legal transmission site is the state-owned Media Production city. Former Minister of Information Mamduh Al-Beltagy reportedly gave Dream permission to transmit from another location. Copies of the written permission were reportedly distributed among the attendees of Saturday's press conference.

A Dream TV anchor, Gehan Mansour, has been referred to misdeemeanor court for insulting leading Freedom and Justice party figure Esam El-Erian.

El-Erian filed a complaint against Mansour, accusing her of insulting him by calling him a "fascist politician" during a phone call broadcast on her TV show.

Dream channels have been broadcasting live since 2001.

Dream TV will not give up

Channel's owner holds a press conference explaining the details of the ban on the channel

Dream TV owner Ahmed Bahgat has stressed that he would not give up on the right to transmit the channel from within Cairo.

"It seems that we have upset the ruling regime," Bahgat said in a press conference held in Dream Land on Saturday, reported state-owned Akhbar Al-Yoush. "despite being the only channel which hosted Muslim Brotherhood members before the January 2011 revolution."

Bahgat stated that ever since taking power, the Brotherhood has been trying to silence the media. "But this isn't possible, since we can transmit from anywhere around the world using satellites other than the Nile Sat."

Dream has suspended transmission since Thursday evening, broadcasting only a written disclaimer which states that a decision issued by Hesham Qandil's cabinet bans any broadcast, "despite the broadcast's legality."

Minister of Information Salah Abdel-Maqsood denied that the decision bans the channels' broadcast, explaining that the channels' ability to broadcast the disclaimer is the biggest proof of his

Churches withdraw from Constituent Assembly

CITE LACK OF "NATIONAL CONSENSUS" AND "DIVERSITY" IN DRAFT CONSTITUTION



The three churches with official representatives in the Constituent Assembly announced their total withdrawal from the body

By Basil El-Dab

The three churches with official representatives in the Constituent Assembly announced their total withdrawal from the body on Friday evening, signaling their rejection of the draft constitution.

The decision came after a three-hour long meeting at St. Mark's Cathedral in Abbasseya between acting head of the Coptic Church Bishop Pachomius, and the Coptic, Catholic, and evangelical churches' members of the Constituent Assembly and their legal and political advisers. Presidential adviser Samir Morsos also attended the meeting, although not in an official capacity.

In a joint statement the churches said they had been closely following

the work of the Constituent Assembly and had examined the current draft constitution before coming to a final decision.

"The Egyptian churches followed the work of the Constituent Assembly with interest and studied the outcome of the draft constitution," read the statement. "The Egyptian churches felt discomfort with the trends that prevailed in the writing of the draft constitution. The constitution in its current form does not achieve the national consensus desired and does not reflect the identity of the diverse Egypt that is entrenched across generations. It is a departure from the Egyptian constitutional heritage instituted by the country's Muslims and Copts and is the diminution of the rights, freedoms, and citizenship

gained by Egyptians through the ages."

Pachomius and other members of the meeting took special exception to Article 221, which is an extension of Article 2 of the draft constitution. The article states "the principles of Islamic Shari'a include its general sources, the principles and maxims of its theoretical and practical jurisprudence, and its reliable and authoritative sources in Sunni legal and theological reasoning."

The head of the Coptic Church and other members in the meeting agreed that the article provided too much loose wording that could be manipulated by Islamist political groups.

Church representatives, alongside Al-Azhar, withdrew from the last Constituent Assembly, which was eventually dissolved. "There

was no coordination with Al-Azhar this time," said Naguib Gabriel, who was involved in the church deliberations. "Al-Azhar doesn't have the same issues with the constitution that we have."

"Our withdrawal wasn't just for the sake of Copts, but for the cause of a civil state," Gabriel added.

A body of 50 members at the cathedral made the decision. Forty three voted in favour of withdrawal, five voted to delay withdrawal and two objected. Before the meeting, Bishop Paul of Tanta, who was a member of the assembly, visited the Coptic Church's next Pope, Bishop Tawadros of Beheira, at St. Bishoy's Monastery in Wadi Al-Natroun, to discuss his perspective of the draft constitution ahead of his Sunday enthronement.

death toll on the Palestinian side is 39, including children and a pregnant woman. On the Israeli side, three have been killed.

According to The New York Times, Israel targeted the offices of Gaza's Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh overnight on Saturday as well as 200 other targets. Ma'an news agency reported that nine were killed in raids overnight, including three members of Hamas's armed wing. The New York Times added that these strikes early Saturday were in response to rockets fired from Gaza which have reached Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Rockets fired by armed groups in Gaza in the past have usually not reached as far as Tel Aviv.

The Tunisian Foreign Minister visited Gaza on Saturday and said that the attacks are against international law.

Prime Minister Hesham Qandil visited the strip on Friday and met the injured. He also spoke with Haniyeh.

Egyptian hospitals in the Governorate of North Sinai are ready to receive injured from the Gaza Strip and ten ambulances in Egypt are ready to transport the injured from the Rafah border. The injured who have already been treated in Sinai hospitals are being transported to Cairo where they will resume treatment.

World powers turn to Egypt to mediate on Gaza

Leaders urge Egypt to use leverage to de-escalate crisis

By Joel Gulhane

World leaders, including the United States president, called on Egypt to mediate on the situation in Gaza in a flurry of telephone conversations on Friday.

United States President Barack Obama called President Mohamed Morsy on Friday to discuss the situation in Gaza. Obama "commended Egypt's efforts to de-escalate the situation and expressed his hope that these efforts would be successful," according to a statement from the White House.

A spokesperson for the US department of state, Victoria Nuland, said Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke to Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, King Abdullah of Jordan and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Nuland said, "we are urging those countries with influence on Hamas and other groups in Gaza to use that influence to get a de-escalation."

Russian President Vladimir Putin also contacted Morsy and "expressed his support for Cairo's efforts to normalise the situation." German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was in Russia with Putin "called on the Egyptian government to use its influence on Hamas and persuade them to stop the violence."

British Prime Minister David Cameron and Morsy "agreed that the priority must be to de-escalate the crisis and that Britain and Egypt should continue to urge both sides to take steps to reduce tensions." British Foreign Secretary William Hague said, "the

Egyptian and Pakistani relations warm up

Two powers speaking out against Gaza plan to meet over economy

Egypt and Pakistan are drawing closer together in the build-up to a summit next week in Islamabad. It will be the first time since 1983 that an Egyptian head of state travels to Pakistan.

The two nations have both condemned the Israeli airstrikes in Gaza and asked for United Nations security council action.

State-owned news agency MENA reported that Morsy made a personal phone call this Friday to Pervez Ashraf, the Pakistani Prime Minister. They discussed the Israeli action in both legal and humanitarian terms. These conversations are particularly pertinent because Pakistan currently has a place among the ten rotating members of the security council.

The Embassy of Pakistan in Cairo reported that their representative on the security council said, "these are senseless killings. The Israeli retaliation is excessive, the response disproportionate. The international community should step in. The security council should ensure that hostilities cease forthwith and further escalation is arrested, without caveats and qualifications."

However, as a non-permanent member, they do not have veto power, while the United States is sure to use their veto against any resolution critical of Israel.

Pakistan also recently joined Egypt in professing support for Palestine's bid to become a non-member observer state in the UN.

Egyptian convoy heads to Gaza



Rasha Azab, left, and Mohamed Waked hold a press conference in Cairo announcing the formation of a "political convoy" to the Gaza strip

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Most of the people taking part in the convoy are individuals who don't belong to political groups but some of the participants are from Al-Dostour party, the Social Popular Alliance party and the Arab Democratic Nasarist party. Political groups such as the Popular Current and the Revolutionary Socialists are also participating. The programme of the convoy in Gaza includes a press conference and a visit to the injured in hospitals.

Many meetings have been held in Egypt regarding Gaza. Khaled Mish'aal, head of Hamas, has arrived to discuss the situation. The Qatari head of state, Emir Khalid Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, as well as Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Cairo on Saturday to discuss the deteriorating situation in Gaza.

The situation remains tense as possible ground operations by the Israeli army loom closer. According to MENA, the Israeli army is spreading mobile artillery in the areas surrounding the Gaza Strip in preparation for ground operations.

Israel claims that the military operation targets terror sites and that in the past three days, the number of rockets fired into Israel total 410, in addition to over 200 which were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defence system. So far the

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From Riga to Cairo

LATVIA'S YOUNG PRIME MINISTER TO THE EGYPTIAN YOUTH: SELF-ORGANISATION BY FORMING POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS AND NGOS IS THE SOLUTION

Interview by Maher Hamoud

When he was first elected at the age of 37, Valdis Dombrovskis was Europe's youngest prime minister. Now 41, Dombrovskis is considered responsible for much of the economic and political stability in his country. During his tenure the country has been admitted to the European Union, and at the beginning of 2014, Latvia will join the Euro Zone.

Dombrovskis discusses with Daily News Egypt a set of critical issues regarding the Egyptian revolution, the Arab Spring, the Palestine-Israel conflict, Iran's nuclear programme and Egyptian-Latvian economic and political relations.

Except for one agreement to promote and protect investments between the two countries, signed in 1997, very few agreements have been signed between Egypt and Latvia. Why don't we see something significant out of this agreement since it was signed about 15 years ago?

Just to give a background, diplomatic relations between the two countries were created more than 20 years ago. And in fact Egypt was one of the first countries in the Middle East and North Africa to recognise Latvia's independence, which we certainly appreciate. Also since 2007, we've had an embassy in Egypt.

But regarding investments and economic developments, that is primarily in the hands of businesses. They should come with their initiatives and seek opportunities. It is good to have this framework of investment protection, which means that possibilities are there. And the question is; how keen are businesses from both sides to engage?

We have seen some increase in trade volume in the past. However, though relations are maintained, they are significantly down. But again recently trade volumes are starting to increase with Egypt after the revolution. And as you know, Egypt is quite a popular tourist destination for Latvians.

Since Egypt represents a huge consumer market, are there any specific plans to expand trade and investment relations between the two countries?

Well, our embassy is working on creating some events in this regard. Also, sometimes when we have large ministerial level visits, we take some business delegations with us. And I see there are possibilities for businesses to actually come and seize the opportunities.

Concerning the relationship between the two peoples and how to reinforce cultural exchange and awareness between the two countries, are there any future projects in this regard popularising Latvia among Egyptians or vice-versa?

We know that we are relatively far away. In Latvia for example, we have The Arab Cultural Centre, which covers Egypt. But, since there are only some 120 Arabs living in Latvia and maybe only 30 of them are Egyptians, of course we have to try to put it in regional context. And I think the same is true for Egypt looking at Latvia in a regional context as Baltic or Nordic Baltic to develop that kind of cooperation. But we also do make use of some possibilities of other organisations like say Anna Lind Foundation, as an example.

Certainly, there are also some other possibilities there in 2014, when Riga is the cultural capital of Europe, which will help having some exchange with Egypt in this regard.

And I know that some people are looking in that direction as well.

How do you see the particular role of Latvia in the dialogue between The EU and Egypt? What benefit can Latvians share with Egyptians in this regard?

As regards to the EU dialogue, in general we are supportive of increasing EU active role in the neighbourhood, whether it is a partnership with the Mediterranean, North African or eastern partnership. In general, we are supportive of those developments. We are also supportive of facilitating trade links to promote free trade agreements and these kind of developments, which in turn will reinforce commercial ties and free trade between the EU and neighbouring countries.

Latvia's reaction to Europe's economic crisis was to increase austerity measures. How are these economic crisis measures going so far? And when do you expect the Latvian people to feel economically relaxed and reap the fruit of their patience?

Currently Latvia is the fastest growing EU economy. Last year we had an economic growth rate of 5.5 per cent, which made us third fastest growing EU economy. This year we are going to have economic growth maybe close to 5 per cent, which makes us the fastest growing EU economy. So, to an extent, one can say that the Latvian reform programme has worked.

What we mainly did when we were facing the crisis, is that we understood that we first needed to regain financial stability. So, we did very substantial austerity measures totalling 17 per cent of GDP. But financial stability here is not only about ratings, it is also about whether banks are lending to citizens and businesses, whether companies are investing and whether citizens are spending. For all of this, you need financial stability as a precondition. And as soon as we did it, we returned to economic growth and this is how it works now.

For our budget deficit this year, we expect it to be below 1.9 per cent of GDP. Next year it is going to move down to 1.4 per cent. So, we see that budget deficit is under control and the economy is growing.

We also have the structure of the economy changing. We now have more emphasis on industrial production and exports. Last two years we had an average of 10 per cent growth in industrial production and 30 per cent growth in exports. It is a quite sustainable increase.

Currently, one of the issues for Latvia is to join the Euro Zone. We already fulfilled the criteria, so we expect to join by January 2014.

As for when people are starting to see the fruit of this economic growth, I think it is already happening. Unemployment is decreasing, which means that people are finding jobs. Also just this year, we are starting to raise salaries in the public sector. We started with teachers, employees of the interior system, justice system and the social system. Teachers have already gotten their salaries increased since September. The rest of categories will get salaries increased as of January next year. You'll also see this wage growth happening in public sector as well as in the private sector.

Now, focusing more on Egypt. How would you evaluate the performance of post-Mubarak-Egypt?

Certainly, I would say it was very impressive to see those developments during the Arab Spring and aspiration for democracy, for dignity and for good governance. Now

I would say it is also clear that after such kind of events, a revolution if you want to call it, there of course many challenges. You need to change the governance structure, so you probably need to deal with some corrupt officials, and so on. And sometimes there are some disappointments. But there is no immediate prosperity after the next day or next month following the revolution. It takes certain patience to overcome all those obstacles and set the governance structures right.

I think there have been some good steps taken. There were parliamentary elections, there is a democratically elected president. And now of course, there is this important constitution drafting process. Also it is important that principles of personal liberties, of gender equality, of minority rights be enshrined in a constitution. Now I think it is very important to see how this drafting of the constitution goes and then down to institutional building, so to say.

Do you have concerns on the rise of political Islam in Egypt with the Muslim Brotherhood leading the government now?

This is why it is important to see this in the constitution first. It is important to see those religious freedoms, minority rights, gender equality protected. Because again, this time you can really say that it is the democratic choice of the Egyptian people a free elections. This is how a government is composed. Then the question is, whether those political forces try to create another alternative regime or not? In this case, an Islamic one? Or they stick with the values of democracy? I think we still need to wait for the answer to this question. But of course we hope that those democratic principles will be observed. And in this case, if this is relevant to the Egyptian people to have this government now, maybe ten or twenty years later there will be a different composition of government. It is still premature to say. It is still in the institutions building stage.

Do you have any individual thoughts about how the issue of Jerusalem can be resolved?

We see it is a very complex issue.

And of course we know that Palestinians also see it as their future capital. I do not have ready-made recipes and no one has. Otherwise it could have been resolved by now.

But it is also clear that it takes political will from both sides to resolve it.

And that is probably what we need.

We need to concentrate, sit around the table and seriously negotiate for the two-state solution.

Unfortunately, in the last years, we

have not seen too much progress towards this solution.

I was personally an observer in the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections. At that time I was an observer from the European Parliament in the West Bank.

Don't you see a contradiction in European attitude against Iran in comparison to Israel that has a hostile nuclear technology?

Of course, we know the aim of many countries in the west is to ensure nuclear non-proliferation.

And certainly right now Iran is seen as one of the points of worry.

From this point of view, as I said, we respect Iran's right to nuclear technology, but of course in a frame [work] of non-proliferation.

We, the EU and other entities, would like to see a peaceful programme.

Back to Egypt and its revolution. What kind of a message would you send to the revolutionary youth, who are left out of political power?

This is exactly the point. If you are building up the democracy, there shouldn't be such a thing as being left out of political power.

This is because there are many ways to participate in political power.

By forming political parties and being active through the NGO sector.

By forming interest groups. I think opening up and taking much more



Valdis Dombrovskis foresees continued high level cooperation between Egypt and Latvia

Courtesy of Latvian prime minister's office

What is the stance of Latvia regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Our stance is similar to those of most of the EU countries. We prefer a two-state solution and we see that this should be achieved through negotiations.

No reference to 1967 borders?

Well, a two-state solution, then to go into more details based, more or less, on the 1967 borders with possible land swaps, taking into account settlements near the borders. And of course Jerusalem is a big issue to be resolved.

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Having mentioned this, what do you think about the blockade enforced on Gaza after Hamas won elections?

Well, we know that Hamas is internationally recognised as a terrorist organisation, which states its aim to destroy the state of Israel. So, it is a question of whether Hamas is ready to transform itself. And of course as long as their declared aim is to destroy the state of Israel, I think no wonder Israelis are not willing to negotiate with them. What would they negotiate, their own destruction?

So, I think it is now for Hamas to transform themselves. And it is also a question to Egypt now. How would Egypt deal with their border crossing? Will the borders be opening? What sort of control over the borders would be? I think it is a very big issue for Egypt.

And what's your opinion on Iran's nuclear ambitions?

We respect Iran's right to develop nuclear technology, but it's important that Iran is also taking steps to address the rest of the world's concerns about the peaceful nature of this programme. And there have been some positive developments, which is to convert part of its highly enriched uranium for use in civilian reactors. Which is a good move, but it certainly also requires from Iran's side more transparency and to actually ensure the world what the aim of this programme is.

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opportunities to be engaged in political processes or to be engaged in public the process. It's a bit of a question of self-organisation right now to put this youth potential also to some productive direction. And there are many ways of doing it.

Also, maybe the EU can be looked at as a model of how to make a democratic system work, make a multi-party system work and how to make the NGO sector work.

What did it take to become prime minister of a country at the age of 37, like you did back in 2009?

Interestingly, I'm not the youngest prime minister in Europe anymore. Now the Finnish prime minister is a couple of months younger than I am. So, youth is something that tends to disappear unfortunately.

It was very important to me that I have this political experience. I have been working as the finance minister before. I have been working in the national parliament, the European parliament. I have been nominated as a prime minister from my party several times before. So, it is not necessarily something that was unexpected. What was different that Latvia at that time was facing huge economic crisis and we had to deal with it.

So which position you think that made such a significant change in your political career?

In early 2002 we formed a new political party with the governor of the Bank of Latvia, where I was working. Then in October 2002 we won parliamentary elections and formed the government. At that time I was elected as a member of parliament and then I became the finance minister. Certainly being a member of parliament is a significant step in any case. Of course for us we have this system that if you are a minister you typically suspend your parliamentary mandate.

Do you have plans to visit Egypt anytime soon? And what is the most interesting touristic spot that you would like to invite your family to?

Well, I'm very open to visit Egypt and I have been there a couple of times as a tourist before and been to quite a few places already. And I must say they are quite impressive indeed. Starting from the pyramids, the temples all the way to the Valley of Kings. Also the Red Sea really is one of the most beautiful places to dive, an activity I enjoy. It's something you should be careful to protect and sustain its beauty.

Courtesy of Latvian prime minister's office

Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis

Banque Misr chases Turkish delights



Banque Misr to open an office in Turkey

By Mohamed Salah Eldin

Banque Misr has acquired the Central Bank of Egypt's (CBE) permission to open an office in Turkey, said Mohamed Barakat, the bank's chairman, on the sidelines of the annual Arab Banking Conference in Beirut, reported MENA.

The step, which will be announced during the visit of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to Egypt on Sunday, aims at simplifying the commercial exchange between Egypt and Turkey in the coming period, added Barakat.

The bank's chairman denied any political motivations behind the office's inauguration, saying that the

board decided to take this step solely to increase the commercial transactions between the two countries.

The bank's vice president Mohamed Abbas Fayed had announced on Wednesday that the bank is seeking to get the CBE's approval to open the first Egyptian representation bureau in Turkey. He said to the Turkish Anadolu Agency that there is a growing interest from Turkish investors in the Egyptian market, and that it was normal for Egyptian banks to approach them and establish partnerships to launch new projects in Egypt.

Fayed added that Banque Misr is trying to promote trade between

Egypt and Turkey and to meet the needs of investors from both sides. The bank has strong foreign representation and banking units in the European Union, Gulf Area and Africa.

The liaison between business and the presidency, Hassan Malek, expects the Turkish investments in Egypt to grow from \$1.5 billion to \$2.5 billion in 2013, in a statement to Anadolu Agency Tuesday.

The Egyptian bank is currently studying increasing its AED 180 million capital in the United Arab Emirates as a part of an integral plan to raise its performance in the Emirati market, after opening two new branches in Lebanon last September.

Orascom Telecom Holding: Third quarter 2012 financial results

Orascom Telecom Holding S.A.E. ('OTH', or 'the Group') (EGX: ORTE, CA, ORAT EY, LSE: ORTEq, OTLD, LI), a leading provider of mobile telecommunications in Africa, Asia and North America, announces its consolidated financial and operating results for the period ending September 30, 2012, demonstrating 14 per cent subscribers growth, 6 per cent revenue growth and EBITDA growth on an organic basis year on year (YoY).

Total subscribers surpassed 85 million, an increase of 14 per cent YoY.

- Revenues reached USD 885 million, exhibiting an organic growth of 6 per cent YoY.
- EBITDA amounted to USD 425 million, showing an organic growth of 6 per cent YoY, driven by top line growth and operational excellence initiatives despite the negative impact from Ramadan.
- Stable YoY group EBITDA margin of 48.1 per cent. EBITDA margins for the subsidiaries were as follows: Djazzy 58.3 per cent, MobiLink 43.0 per cent, Banglalink 29.4 per cent, and Telecel Globe 47.7
- Net income before minority interest stood at USD 111 million, mainly driven by foreign exchange gain coupled with healthy profit from continuing operations. Net income attributable to equity holders amounted to USD 106 million compared to a net loss of USD 1.5 million for the same period last year.
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COMMENTARY

Disclaimer: Commentaries published by Daily News Egypt do not reflect the position of the paper, but the independent opinions of their authors.

Columns debate Gaza violence and restrictions on media

The recent Israeli attacks on Gaza have grabbed the attention of columnists across the country, and more than one writer has praised Egypt's intervention in support of Palestine. On another note, some columns have criticised the recent ministerial decision to ban the live airing of Egyptian satellite channels like Dream TV, censuring the Muslim Brotherhood's move.

The importance of presidential elections after the new constitution
Saad Al-Din Ibrahim
Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper



Since the new constitution draft defines a set of authorities to the president of the state, Ibrahim suggests holding new presidential elections after passing the constitution. He argues that the new constitution furnishes the legislative, executive and judicial authorities with powers that could vary from the existing ones. Therefore, new presidential elections should be mandatory to rebuild a stronger Egypt. When Ibrahim proposed the idea in front of two Islamist leaders, both of them rejected the suggestion, stating that Morsy has already been elected for four years. Ibrahim responded that the currently dissolved parliament had also been elected for four years.

In order for Egypt to re-establish its institutions, Ibrahim believes that probably the only solution is to repeat all elections that have already taken place. Commenting on the constitution, the writer suggests an alternative secular constitution to face off with the Muslim Broth-

erhood designed document. Egyptians would then have the option of choosing between two documents instead of falling in the trap of a 'yes' or 'no' that imitates the experience of the 19 March 2011 constitutional referendum.

The law between "Dream" and "Abdel Rahim"
Mahmoud Mosalem
Al-Watan newspaper



Mosalem criticises the recent ministerial decisions to ban the live airing of Dream TV and to ignore the administrative court decision to return Al-Gomhuria former editor-in-chief Gamal Abdel-Rahim to his position. In the writer's opinion, it has become easier for the Muslim Brotherhood to limit freedom of expression than to feed Egyptians' hungry mouths.

It would be naive to believe the Ministry of Information's statement that it functions to implement the law, writes Mosalem. Minister Salah Abdel-Maqsood has probably forgotten that Dream TV allowed several media figures like Magdy Mehana, Mona Al-Shazly, Wael Al-Ibrashy and Ibrahim Eissa to oppose Mubarak's regime and crystallise the role of the

opposition even more. With the recent decisions to restrict the airing of Dream TV, Mosalem believes the move signifies the Muslim Brotherhood's desire to control the most important institutions, including the media. Further channels will be vulnerable to challenges according to Mosalem, which will hinder media development.

The Egyptian giant awakes
Mohamed Salmawi
Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper



Praising the recent Egyptian initiatives supporting Gaza, Salmawi writes that Egypt has only now recovered its strong position in the Arab world. After the diplomatic letter that was sent to our ambassador to Israel, the president has ordered the withdrawal of the envoy amid the recent violence hitting the Gaza strip.

Two years ago, Egypt's role in the region was at a low point, states Salmawi. However, after Prime Minister Hesham Qandil visited Gaza, accompanied by a large delegation, the country's status as a regional power was manifest.

Describing Egypt as a once-sleeping giant, Salmawi commands Egyptians for gathering in Tahrir Square to express their frustration towards the incidents. The move led him to conclude that the entire country will unify its efforts to help put an end to the bloodshed in Gaza. The writer believes that recent presi-

dential decisions in reaction to the Israeli attacks on Gaza does not mean anything more than proving to the Arab region that Egypt will not remain passive seeing its brothers being violently attacked. Egypt will not allow foreign hands to kill innocent civilians in Gaza, writes Salmawi.

What's happening in Gaza: two axes with the Brotherhood in between
Moataz Abdel-Fattah
Al-Watan newspaper



Moataz Abdel-Fattah conducts an in-depth analysis of the possible repercussions for Egypt's future foreign policy under the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood after the current crisis in Gaza. He examines the situation in light of the regional power semantics, and warns the current leadership from slipping into the trap of uncalculated military confrontation with Israel. The difficult outcome of unconditionally supporting Hamas will be regarded by the United States and Israel as an allegiance with the Iran-Hamas-

Hezbollah axis; the primary regional enemies of the Hebrew state. On the other hand, post-revolutionary Egypt is hardly expected to maintain passive or active neutrality in the face of the current Israeli assault on Gaza.

Abdel-Fattah states that those who wished to see Mitt Romney elected president of the United States direct their scepticism towards Barack Obama on the grounds that there is no hope to find suitable peace partners in the region. Their viewpoints were further consolidated by the rise of Islamists in the wake of the Arab spring. While Syria's position in the Iranian axis has been jeopardised, the neo-conservatives predict that Egypt is on its way to fill Syria's vacuum. Abdel-Fattah calls for the establishment of an Egyptian-Turkish-Gulf axis, and for the formation of a "Blue-Ribbon" style committee to set out Egypt's foreign policy in the coming decades.

Emad Al-Din Hussein
The key to the constitution is in the hands of America
Al-Shorouk Newspaper
Using historical reasoning, Hussein examines the nature of the relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the United States. While the standard line portrays such relationship as one of mutual distrust and suspicion, Hussein suggests the total opposite. He recounts the covert coordination between the Iranian ayatollahs and the CIA, whereby the former received Is-



raeli weapons and utilised them against Saddam Hussein, while allocating the revenues of the deal to fund the Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua. This Iran-Contra scandal was revealed despite of the staunchly anti-American discourse vocalised by the mullahs.

Accordingly, Hussein sees that the US's mere approval of the Muslim Brotherhood's rule and their acceptance of the IMF loans to the Egyptian government constitute sufficient proof that the Islamist movement has been actively engaged in "deep coordination" with the US administration. The price the Brotherhood will have to pay in exchange is foreseen to be in the form of human rights improvements, up to the level that does not jeopardise the security of Israel. Hussein speculates that the US administration will even be in the position to dictate some of the constitution clauses to safeguard its interests in the region. He calls for a moderate and balanced constitution, which not dictated by any external party.

Morsy and the Brotherhood: one failure after the other

Like everybody else, I was taken aback by the Israeli attack on Gaza last week. I followed the news of what was going on, participated in a demonstration on Wednesday night and started to ask questions about what this war will mean for the Middle East. For a moment, I thought that I would be writing my column this week about Gaza. However, Mohamed Morsy, his government and his fellow Muslim Brotherhood hotshots did not give me the opportunity.

As I was organising my thoughts on the situation in Gaza, I was provoked by the fact that Morsy will not attend the Coptic Pope's coronation. One day later, I woke up to the devastating accident in Assiut, which was heavier on my heart than all the events in Gaza. As I was pulling myself together, I was given a blow to the head by the tweets of Essam El-Erian, deputy head of the Freedom and Justice party and the leading figure in the Muslim Brotherhood. At this point, all thoughts on Gaza were out of the picture and the mess in Egypt was a lot more important to me.

Out of the blue, and for no apparent reasons, President Morsy decided not to attend the coronation of the Coptic Pope. This neglect is not the first instance. Morsy did not attend the election on 4 November either. The president first said that he would attend if invited and when he received the invitation the president's spokesman said the president would attend if time allowed. Now that he is not attending, I assume that his time did not allow. This makes me ask President Morsy an important question: do you see the situation of Copts in Egypt as a priority? If the answer is no, then please make it clear; and if the answer is yes, then let me tell you that you haven't done anything to prove it.

Morsy's recurring neglect of the church's invitations is a clear sign that the man does not want to visit a church. At a time where attacks on Copts are increasing day after day, at a time where Islamic sentiments are being injected into every aspect of society and at a time where reli-

gious radicalisation is overshadowing coexistence and tolerance; at this time, Morsy cannot even offer some symbolic reassurance. Mr President, your presence at the coronation wouldn't have assured the Copts of Egypt that the state guarantees them equal rights and bans discrimination against them, but it would have at least sent a message saying that you serve all Egyptians equally. But then again, maybe that is not on your agenda.

But Morsy's attendance is not the only issue here; the real issue is with the presidential decree he issued concerning the Coptic Pope. President Morsy used the word "appoint" in this decree. Article 1 of that decree states that "Bishop Tawadros is to be appointed as Pope". Now, he who has the right to appoint to duty also has the right to relieve from duty and Morsy does not have the right to relieve the pope from his duties. The president should acknowledge the new pope and ratify the selection process. The whole idea behind the presidential decree is to say that the state recognises the fact that there is a new pope in the Coptic Church, but it does not appoint the man. Mr President, I know you pray a lot, but that does not give you spiritual authority, neither in Islam nor in Christianity.

Then another train accident took place, this time killing more than 50 children. I cannot describe how painful it feels and I cannot imagine the heartache that the families of those children must be going through. I can only see how low it was of El-Erian to use this catastrophe as a lobbying opportunity to resurrect the parliament. El-Erian tweeted that the accident in Assiut calls for parliament to be back in session so that it can hold the government accountable. As I saw that statement I wanted to ask the man one question: what did your parliament do? When 72 innocent football fans died in a game in Port Said what did your parliament do? When protesters were being shot with rubber bullets and pellets while your parliament was in session, what did it do? When thousands of



civilians were put on trial before military tribunals, what did your parliament do? And inside that parliament, when did the Muslim Brotherhood listen to any other voice but its own? When Morsy became president, we were all waiting for the Muslim Brotherhood's stunning administrative capacity. We all waited for that well-organised group that swept through the different elections winning them one after the other. Like any other Egyptian, I believe this country deserves an efficient administration, and if the Brotherhood through Morsy can deliver one then so be it. But month after month, the Brotherhood's administration has been one of failure, inefficiency and misfortune. The Brotherhood's political leadership potential so far turned out to be a myth. In a country that's in dire need of reform in its infrastructure, in dire need of equality and citizenship rights, in dire need of leadership that recognises the dignity and value of the Egyptian citizen; in that country, politicians are busy with banning porn sites and allowing girls to marry at the age of nine. Mr President, please set your priorities straight before you take this country down further.

Ziad Akl is a political sociologist and a Middle East specialist at the Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. He is a senior researcher at the Egyptian Studies Unit and managing editor of the periodical "Egyptian Affairs".

The IMF loan in the context of economic reform

The air of ambiguity surrounding Egypt's receipt of the IMF loan provides a distraction from what the loan is really about, and the clandestine nature of the negotiations goes a long way towards substantiating the true objective of the loan. For the sake of dodging bouts of public rage in times when they're as frequent as the cabinet's conflicting statements, the government decided to close the kitchen door in an attempt to conceal what's cooking: a deal which is very likely to infuriate the public.

Obviously it's not about the money, and our ministers have reiterated that point on a number of occasions. What is a \$4.5 billion loan when we're talking about jumpstarting an economy as big as Egypt's? It's an insignificant loan in the context of revitalising a nation's economy on the verge of depression.

It was also clearly noted by the same ministers that the loan is a testament to the security and stability of the investment climate in Egypt. Getting the loan, according to officials, would facilitate the flow of foreign investment by those who are wary of the prospects of Egyptian economic recovery.

One major point that pundits elect to ignore when addressing the public, which is arguably the most significant, is how the loan is a test for Egypt to gauge the government's willingness, or rather seriousness, in taking radical policy measures to steer the nation towards genuine economic

reform, measures that are likely to incense public opinion.

For instance, will the government assume the risk of slashing a decent portion of the budget spent on subsidies and confront the public with a full picture of the economy's dire status? Or will it recoil, as it always does, at the first sign of public outrage?

Is the government strong enough to take a decisive action with regards to the valuation of the Egyptian pound and let it float? Taking into account that the initial repercussions incurred would be skyrocketing inflation, rising levels of unemployment, poverty, crime, and naturally public outrage?

Is Egypt willing to become an international player and open its books transparently, and without attempting clichéd tricks to hide the dirt? Will the loan be utilised constructively or will it fall through the cracks in the system? These are the questions the IMF is seeking answers for. These are the matters stalling the signing of the loan.

The loan will be granted, simply because its monetary value is objectively insignificant, but what comes after that is the real test for the first post-revolution government. It is essentially a test to the cabinet's philosophy in balancing priorities.

Will austerity policies and their aftermath, harsh as it may be, trump appealing public opinion in an era of a highly volatile political conflict and struggle to expand political clout?

These are the hard-hitting



choices facing the current government. And it's only natural for an inexperienced, precarious cabinet to negotiate such tough measures in the shadows, if only to stall the public's expected reaction. Yet, how long will the administration prevaricate?

It is only a matter of time before the reality of the negotiations come to the fore, and then the feared ire of the public will hit twice as hard, as the government will have unwittingly opened the door to accusations of deception and misleading the public.

The real question here becomes, what sits atop the cabinet's priorities? Is it the protection of the current administration with its already-tainted image against further public discontent? Or would it secure and pave the way for the draconian-yet-imperative reform train to take its proper course?

m.bahrawi@thedailynewseypt.com



SOCIAL NETWORKING

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2012 DAILY NEWS EGYPT 7

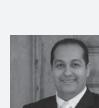
www.thedailynewsegypt.com

EGP 5,000 per victim

As 60 children died in a train accident in Assiut, social networkers expressed their anger over the government's reaction to the incident. They are especially critical of the government's response compared to its reaction to what is happening in Gaza. They criticise the lack of accountability, and the lack of punishment for people responsible for the railways. One might agree or disagree with some of their opinions, but what is definitely true is that an Egyptian soul is worth more than the EGP 5,000 compensation offered to victims' families.



#ASSIUT_ACCIDENT



@FBOUSHRA

When a country spends millions to close porn websites and does not care for closing train barriers



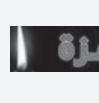
@EMSORADY

The problem of railways is that they are inhuman, especially those serving Upper Egypt. Railways need comprehensive restructuring.



@MOHAMED_ELSALKH

Why does some one's child die because a careless worker was sleeping and not watching the railway barriers?



@EMSORADY

Negligence and corruption are killing us every single day!



@ANOSH129

38 died in Gaza until the moment. 50 died in Assiut's accident, predominantly children. The consequences of negligence are greater than that of war :)



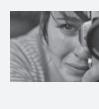
@PHILOMAURICE_PM

Loading a new, more violent revolution...



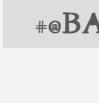
@ALIELSAUDI

You protest, you die. You go to a match, you die. You go to school, you will also, die!



@THEEGYPTIONMAN

Only in Egypt: The road to heaven is easier than the road to school!

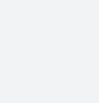


#@BARACKOBAMA_AR (PARODY ACCOUNT)



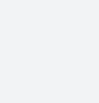
@BARACKOBAMA_AR

Even in Gotham people don't die in the buses in the streets. They die by the Joker and his gang. Even the Joker did not kill children!



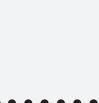
@BARACKOBAMA_AR

When a country that has no wars, famines or epidemics kills thousands of its citizens by its negligence, then the priorities of reform are clear: Bikinis and alcohol!



@BARACKOBAMA_AR

When you liberate your minds, you will liberate Palestine.



@BARACKOBAMA_AR

You rose for Gaza in seconds, but you did not even move for Syria in months. It is your hatred for Israel that stimulates you, not your love for Palestine.

TWITTER

#WHO_IS_RESPONSIBLE



@ALYZIZO

28 January, Mohamed Mahmoud, the Battle of the Camel, Cabinet clashes, Maspero massacre, 74 martyrs in Port Said, 16 martyrs in Sinai, 50 children. Who is next? Who is responsible?



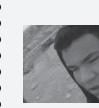
@IBRAHIM_DIAB

EGP 5,000 indemnity for humans! Dogs are sold for EGP 7,000 and 10,000, criminals!



@DR_MINASAMIR

The government is focusing on shutting down porn websites and stores, while Morsi is threatening Israel of the Egyptian anger. And you are still asking about the one responsible for Assiut's clash?



@SIKA

A tragedy: to wake up in the morning on the news of the death of 65 children!



@ASELUO74

The aftermath of every accident: the minister resigns, he turns his cell phone off and leaves for Sharm El-Sheikh or Marina to chill out!



@DR_MINASAMIR

In short, if Morsi is not responsible for Assiut's train accident, then Mubarak was not responsible for Al-Salam ship accident and train accidents during his regime.



@IBRAHIM_DIAB

They will hold nobody accountable after the resignation, it is only the barrier worker who will pay for everything.

GAZA



LOAI MOSTAFA @LOAI

The Zionist enemy was not ready for ground operations at first. Conducting ground operations now means that the Zionists are incurring severe losses.



@DRWESSAM

Infrastructure is not on the list of government's priorities. Shutting down stores, porn websites, opposition TV channels, and supporting Gaza are more important, indeed!



@SALAMAH

I know many people who would not mind the extermination of Gaza just to prove Morsi's failure. Sick people!



@MEDSLK

How foolish are the Israelis! They think that those who shed blood to be liberated from tyranny will not do the same to be liberated from occupation!



VIRAL POSTS

Source: Asa7be Sarcasm Society



Hello Sameh, listen...
Which incident had higher number of victims, hurricane Sandy or Gaza bombardment?
Assiut's train!!



Source: El Haggag Om El-Ekhra'



Source: Carlos Latuff – the painter of the revolution



Qabila - "Economic and social rights"

Political awareness is often alleged to be severely lacking in Egypt. Now that the constituent assembly is drafting Egypt post-revolution constitution, Qabila has decided to launch a new series explaining everything about the constitution. In this episode, Qabila is talking about the economic and social rights in the constitution.

Any constitution is divided into three main sections; a section outlining the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of the state, a section including the citizens' rights and obligations, and a section determining the type of the state's political system.

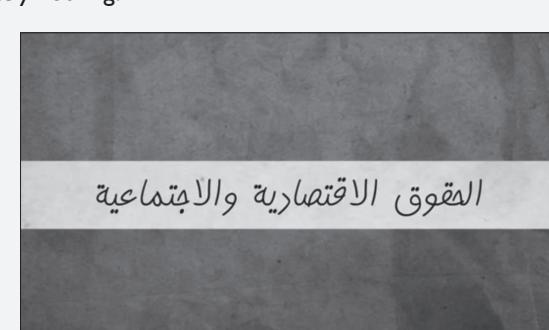
In the second section, the constitution should outline a set of indispensable economic and social rights provided for every citizen. The rights include the right to food, free education in elementary stages, the right to own private property, the right to form coalitions and syndicates, the right to work, the right to housing, and the right to be provided with the adequate health care and living allowances for elders. When such rights are mentioned in the constitution, citizens have the right to hold the government responsible if it deprived them of their rights. But what happens if they are not mentioned? Citizens can do nothing, absolutely nothing!



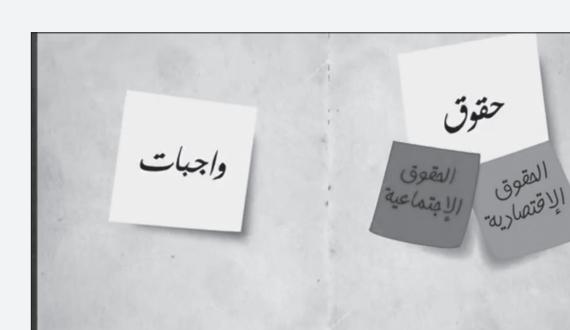
Qabila logo



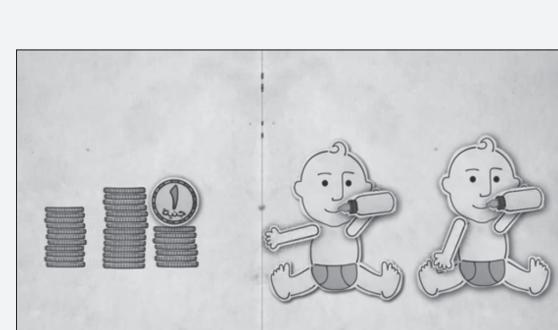
DMFD Campaign (Citizen's guide to understand the constitution)



Economic and social rights



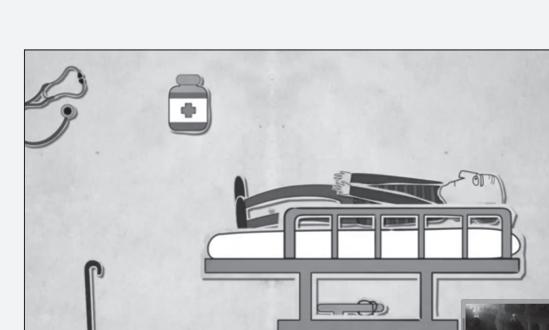
Citizens have economic and social rights



The right to food



The right to work



The freedom to health care



Citizens can hold the government accountable for rights mentioned in the constitution

ART & CULTURE

Art should make a statement and Culture is what surrounds us.

EVENTS

MUSIC

Adam Miller Band

If you are tired of all the pop masquerading as jazz, head on to the Cairo Jazz Club where none other than renowned musician Adam Miller will be playing uncompromised jazz just the way you want to hear it. Reservations are recommended.

Cairo Jazz Club
197, 26 of July Street
Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 3345 9939
18 November 10pm

FILM

Sex Talk

The libertine Dutch may have liberal attitudes towards sex (and everything), but this documentary is actually Egyptian and director Amr Bayoumi will be present for a discussion afterwards. The film examines sexuality in Egyptian society and attendance is free so be there early! Netherlands-Flemish Institute I, Mahmoud Azmi St, Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 27382520
18 November 7pm

Weather

Sunday, November 18

Alexandria	25°C / 16°C
Aswan	33°C / 19°C
Cairo	26°C / 16°C
Hurghada	28°C / 20°C
Luxor	31°C / 18°C
Sharm El-Sheikh	31°C / 20°C
Suez	23°C / 12°C

Art Lab Festival raises money for independent cinema hub in Alexandria

By Omar El Adl

Maadi's dilapidated villas have been put to some outlandish uses over the years, chiefly as pubs and restaurants. Perhaps one of the better projects is Art Cafe, right next door to the Maadi police station. Art Cafe is a friendly, open air cafe that has a spacious indoor area dedicated to art activities.

The cafe hosted Art Lab Festival as a fundraiser for Spaces of Expression, a project by CISV Egypt's International People's Program and Gudran Association For Arts And Development. The day-long festival included daytime art workshops for kids, with food provided from the delicious, but overpriced, Cairo Kitchen. The money goes to a good cause though; establishing a permanent space for independent and audio and visual arts in Alexandria. Tickets had a suggested price of EGP 40 for adults and EGP 30 for children under 12, though some opted to pay more.

The art workshops started at 1pm and the short film screenings at 2pm. From 6-9pm the audience was treated to Like Jelly's humorous and spontaneous songs.

The art activities ranged from painting mugs to free painting in what Art Cafe called the creativity room. The cafe hosted the festival free of charge, aiming to add as much money as possible to the EGP 21,000 the project managed to raise prior to the festival.

As expected, the crowds started filling up the venue just around the time Like Jelly were set to play. The event had no information available in Arabic, but staff members were available to talk at length on the project and CISV.



Kids had a good time being creative during Art Lab Festival

"CISV Egypt is a registered NGO under CISV international which operates in 65 countries and 200 cities, focusing on intercultural learning and educational activities with a focus on informal learning or learning through participation and living in multicultural settings," said Rowan El Shimi, staff member of Spaces of Expression.

CISV Egypt's International People's Program is inviting 25 volunteers, both local and international, from 12 countries, to live in Alexandria for three weeks starting on 27 December. The volunteers will work on renovating a spacious 12-bedroom apartment in Alexandria that used to belong to Bahna Films; one of the bigger production companies in Egypt that operated from 1932 to 1962.

"The owner of the apartment, Bassil Bahna, is donating the apartment to Gudran to transform it into a hub for independent cinema. It is a huge apart-

ment but we hope to be done with two rooms by the time the volunteers leave, 16 January, so Gudran can use it for activities," said El Shimi.

The apartment will also feature a cafeteria and a museum for Bahna films, with some memorabilia including original actors' contracts, complete with signatures.

"In addition to the museum and the screenings, the 12 rooms will host other artistic activities, similar to Mo-sireen but not necessarily political," said El Shimi.

The Art Lab Festival raised EGP 9,000 and CISV Egypt hopes to raise more. El Shimi says these things have a "way of working out."

"We still need EGP 16,000 but we are hopeful and we are planning other activities. We are hosting a movie night on 1 December at the CISV office where we will screen Wasteland and have a discussion afterwards."

New in the Movies

By Adel Heine

The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn

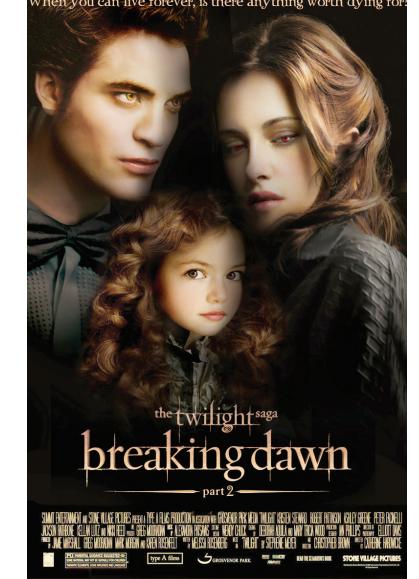
part 2

The final instalment of the Twilight series will undoubtedly rake in the millions, just as its predecessors did, but that has little to do with its quality. The transformation, finally, of Bella into a vampire means that she actually displays more than one facial expression. The fact she gives birth leads to the ultimate vampire battle to end all battles - and thankfully the series.

The trite romantic premise of love conquering all, including death, has had audiences spellbound for years now. The lack of acting ability never hampered those portraying vampires since most of their job involves standing around and looking gorgeous. Reviewers are not very impressed with the film, but that will have little to no influence at the box office. We are just grateful that it is done.

Cairo: IMAX Cinema, Galaxy Cineplex, Galaxy, Golden Stars, Stars Cinema, Ramses Hilton, El-Salam Concorde Cinema
Alexandria: Green Plaza, Amir

When you can live forever, is there anything worth dying for?



Frankenweenie

Tim Burton's latest film is a feast of black and white animated fun in 3D.

Set in a gloomy version of suburbia and filled to the creaking rafters with references to horror films, the film tells the story of a boy who brings his much loved dog back to life - in true Frankenweenie fashion. He sets a trend as his classmates join in on the undead fun, resulting in a parade of Frankenpets in the shadowy streets of New Holland.

The combination of Burton and Disney may not seem the most obvious, but the result is very much worth watching. Most critics agree that Burton has added yet another quality title to his long list of wonderful oddities, and references to his own work are artfully hidden in the many shades of grey of the film. The few who disagree point out that it is a bit more of the



same, but when it comes to Burton, his same is usually hauntingly entertaining.

Cairo: Stars Cinema, IMAX Cinema
Alexandria: Green Plaza

٤ معارض دولية كبيرة لخدمة الصناعة المصرية



المعرض الدولي السادس
لوسائل النقل
وقطع الغيار



المعرض الدولي الحادى عشر
للتكنولوجيا الهوائية
المضبوطة ومستلزماتها



المعرض الدولي الثاني عشر
لمعدات المنشآت والتغذية
والأنواع والسيور والمصانع
والآلات الورش والمصانع
والعدد والمعدات الخام والقطع



المعرض الدولي الثاني عشر
للاتraction و المنشآت
والآلات الورش والمصانع
والعدد والمعدات الخام والقطع

٢٥ - ٢٦ نوفمبر ٢٠١٢
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