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AFP Photo / Ricardo Garcia Villanova

Fighting in Syria has left it unsafe for many, prompting Egyptian authorities to evacuate Egyptians living in the conflict-ridden country

By Luiz Sanchez

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on Monday in which it revealed the Egyptian embassy in Damascus will resume the evacuation of Egyptians from Syria starting Tuesday. The statement was made by the Egyptian chargé d'affaires in Damascus, Alaa Abdul-Aziz, who said a new regiment of flights leaving from Damascus and Lebanon has been made available for those wishing to flee the civil war.

Abdul Aziz said there is a group of 60 civilians, 28 of which are set to leave by land to Lebanon before boarding a flight to Egypt. The rest will be flown directly from Damascus to Cairo.

The embassy said it has managed to produce documents for those who have lost their passports as a result of being in areas with heavy fighting, and is paying for the journey of 24 Egyptians who are unable to do so.

Abdul Aziz explained that the

land-based evacuation to Lebanon is being carried out in coordination between the Egyptian embassies in Damascus and Beirut, and the convoy comes at the expense of the embassies. He stressed in the statement that the embassy in Damascus attaches great importance to the family unit, adding it would facilitate travel for non-Egyptians married to Egyptian citizens.

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, the embassy in Damascus

says more than 5,000 Egyptians have left Syria.

In February the ministry announced it would work with the embassy in Damascus to repatriate its citizens from Syria. The ministry said it would have convoys twice a month transport Egyptians to Beirut, where they could board a flight to Egypt.

It is currently uncertain to what degree the initial programme was implemented, as the ministry was unavailable for comment.

SJC to respond to Judiciary Law amendments

The Supreme Judicial Council says it will prepare a formal response to amendments to the Judiciary Law one day ahead of meeting with Judges' Club

By Basil El-Dabh

The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), headed by Momtaz Motwaly, said that it would prepare an appropriate response to the proposed amended Judiciary Law if it was presented to them, according to state-owned news agency MENA.

The statement came after the council met on Monday to review the developments concerning the amendments.

The SJC is scheduled to hold a joint meeting with the governing council of the Judges' Club on Tuesday at the High Court. The two will further discuss the amendments.

The amendments, proposed by Al-Wasat Party in the Shura Council, have become controversial, especially a proposal that would lower the maximum age limit for judges from 70 to 60.

Former Minister of Justice Ahmed Mekki proposed a compromise this week, suggesting that the maximum age be lowered to 65 and would not apply to active judges currently over the new limit.

Minister of State for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Hatem Bagato said that he would not allow a "judicial massacre" to take place and stressed that although

the Shura Council had the right to legislate, it should wait for the judiciary's consultation on such amendments.

The Shura Council referred the proposed amendments to its Committee on Constitutional and Legislative Affairs on Saturday while chairman of the council, Ahmed Fahmy, stressed that the legislative body would not encroach on the independence of the judiciary.

The presidency had previously attempted to calm the polarisation surrounding the Judiciary Law amendments by calling for a Justice Conference to discuss judicial reform as it related to the proposed amendments. However, the Judges' Club announced it would boycott the conference while the SJC decided it would stop preparations for the conference.

The possible changes to the Judiciary Law is a continuation of tensions between Egypt's judicial, executive and legislative bodies, which took root in President Mohamed Morsi's constitutional decree in November ousting Prosecutor General Abdel-Meguid Mahmoud and appointing Talaat Abdallah. The decree also called for the retrial of Mubarak-era killing of protesters, and other aspects interpreted by the judiciary as an infringement on its independence.

Egypt leads North Africa in achieving Millennium Development Goals

Despite leading in several key indicators, Egypt falls behind in terms of gender equality and female representation in parliament

A new report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has listed Egypt as one of the leading countries in its efforts to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in North Africa. The report analysed the African continent's progress on the seven MDG goals set forth by the UNDP, which include: efforts to halve the rate of hunger and poverty, achieving universal primary education, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Egypt has accelerated or maintained its rate of progress in 11 of 20 MDG indicators accessed. The report highlighted that Egypt, Tunisia and Liberia lead Africa in the reduction of child mortality rates, having surpassed the target goal of reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds. The report attributed Egypt's success to a focus on "high-impact interventions, strengthening health systems, investing more in health and its social determinates, enhancing medical technology and improving education, child protection and economic growth".



AFP Photo / Cite Bournoise

A new United Nations Development Programme report highlighted that Egypt is among the leaders in Africa in the reduction of child mortality rates as per the Millennium Development Goals

Although Africa as a whole has made progress on the matter, Central Africa maintains a high infant mortality rate, with 139 under-five deaths for every 1,000 births.

Egypt also ranks alongside Eritrea as the only two African countries on track to meeting the MDG goal of

reducing maternal mortality rates, with Equatorial Guinea being the only African nation to have already achieved the MDG target with an 81% drop in maternal mortality rates since 1990.

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Central Bank and Finance Ministry talk taxes

Joint committee by Finance Ministry and Central Bank discuss banks' concerns over new tax on provisions

By Muhammad Mahrus

Finance Minister Fayyad Abdul-Moneim announced the formation of a committee including officials from his ministry and the Central Bank of Egypt to diffuse concerns by the banking sector over taxes on loan loss provisions.

Abdul-Moneim said that the committee's formation stems from the ministry's keenness to help stabilise the country's banking sector, which he said is considered the main pillar of

the Egyptian economy, and boost its prospects for growth. He also underlined the importance of coordinating with Central Bank Governor Hisham Ramez on issues involving the country's fiscal and monetary policies in order to help promote the growth of Egypt's economy.

A law that was recently passed by the Shura Council to cancel the tax deductibility granted to 80% of loan loss provisions held by Egyptian banks has stirred an outcry from the sector's officials. The bill, originally

presented by a Freedom and Justice Party member of the congress, is claimed by bankers to hurt the inflow of investments to a country that is already grappling with an ailing economy.

Loan loss provisions are expenses set by banks to cover estimated losses on loans due to defaults and nonpayment. The combined total of provisions in the Egyptian banking system exceeds some EGP 57bn.

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Primary verdict suspends interior minister

Court sentences minister of interior to prison for refraining from carrying out a court verdict

By Rana Muhammad Taha

Nasr City Misdemeanour Court sentenced on Monday Minister of Interior Mohamed Ibrahim to two years in prison for failing to out a court verdict.

Ibrahim was also suspended from his position as minister, fined EGP 202, and was appointed an EGP 2,000 bail.

Aly Ahmed and Abdel Aleem Selim had previously filed a lawsuit against Ibrahim, accusing him of refraining from carrying out two court verdicts issued by the Administrative Judiciary Court, granting them EGP 25,000 each as compensation for political de-



AFP Photo / Fayez Nureldine

Minister of the Interior Mohamed Ibrahim was handed a two year suspended sentence by Nasr City Misdemeanour Court on Monday

tention from 1994 to 1996, reported Al-Ahram.

Gamal Eid, lawyer and director of the Arab Network for Human Rights Information, stated that the

crime of refraining from carrying out a court verdict is punishable by imprisonment.

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| Currencies | Buy | Sell |
|------------|---------|---------|
| CHF | 7.1459 | 7.6867 |
| USD | 6.9819 | 7.012 |
| EUR | 8.9498 | 9.5785 |
| GBP | 10.4759 | 11.2119 |
| SAR | 1.854 | 1.9264 |

| Egyptian Stock Exchange | | |
|-------------------------|----------|--------------|
| | Closing | Daily Change |
| EGX 30 | 5,319.90 | 0.37% |
| EGX 70 | 441.11 | -0.57% |
| EGX 100 | 742.86 | -0.35% |
| EGX 20 | 6,070.21 | -0.32% |

Commentary

Iris Boutros writes: International wheat prices remain high and volatile. With self-sufficiency an unrealistic goal, Egypt will be vulnerable as a major importer

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Tahrir Doctors’ Society paramedic tried

PARAMEDIC AND 6 APRIL MEMBER BOTH DENY POSSESSING POLICE-OWNED WEAPONS

By Rana Muhammad Taha

The Fifth Settlement Court reviewed on Monday the trial of Ahmed Abu Gabal, a paramedic and member of the Tahrir Doctors’ Society, and 6 April Youth Movement member Hamada Al-Masry.

Abu Gabal and Al-Masry were arrested on 13 February following clashes between lawyers and policemen outside Boulak Abul Ella Police Station. They are accused of breaking into the police station, attacking a public servant and possessing weapons.

The defendants denied the charges, while their lawyers requested permission to get a copy of the criminal records of the witnesses to the alleged attack Ahmed Farouk, a Tahrir Doctors’ Society member, claimed that the two eyewitnesses are registered criminals.

They also requested a copy of the reports filed by the police regarding the theft of a police-owned pistol which the defendants were later ac-



Photo from We are All Hamada Al-Masry Facebook page

6 April member Hamada Al-Masry is being tried alongside Tahrir Doctors’ Society paramedic Ahmed Abu Gabal for alleged possession of police-owned weapons. Al-Masry is pictured here with Mahmoud Al-Khodayry during a protest in Tahrir Square.

cused of possessing during their arrests. The lawyers requested as well the summoning of policemen that witnessed the events for further investigation. Farouk stated that the court accepted the lawyers’ requests.

The session resumed amid maximum security presence, though protesters still demonstrated outside the courthouse in solidarity with the detainees.

On Sunday, the Tahrir Doctors’ Society released a statement claiming that the crimes for which Abu Gabal is facing are all fabricated.

“This is just a new episode of the Ministry of Interior’s criminal targeting of the society’s members,” the statement read. Tahrir Doctors’ Society added that such targeting is a form of punishment for their “medical and political independence” and their support of the 25 January Revolution’s demands.

Clashes erupted in February when police forces prevented a lawyer from visiting a detainee. The lawyer

was allegedly ill-treated by the police forces and subsequently called fellow lawyers for assistance.

Abu Gabal and Al-Masry arrived with the lawyers to check on the lawyer’s health and offer any necessary medical assistance. They were in turn physically assaulted by police officers and “thugs”, the defendants alleged. The lawyers went to the police station to file a report documenting the attack and the police detained Abu Gabal and Al-Masry “because neither of them were lawyers”.

Abu Gabal was released the next day, while Al-Masry remained in jail until last Saturday for charges pressed against him in a different case. Al-Masry is accused of complicity in the alleged attack against Islamist activist Abdel Rahman Ezz while visiting Mohanad Samir in a hospital in January. Samir, a teenage political activist, was shot near Tahrir Square on 31 December 2012. Al-Masry’s next court session is on Wednesday.

Conditions at Zagazig University dorm kitchens ‘unacceptable’: Report

By Rana Muhammad Taha

The preventive medicine committee established by the Zagazig University chairman Mohamed Abdel Aal stated on Monday in its report that the conditions at its dorm kitchens are unacceptable.

The committee was established to look into the condition of the dorm kitchens when 150 residents were rushed to hospital on Friday after suffering from food poisoning.

In its report, the committee stated that the cooking areas inside the dorms are filled with spiders, garbage and rusty water-pipes, reported state-owned Al-Ahram. It added that most of the kitchen’s windows are broken.

“All the kitchens are unacceptable due to their lack of cleanliness and the presence of bacteria,” the report read. The committee recommended the renovation of the kitchens.

The medical report on the poisoned students’ health status is yet to be released, Al-Ahram reported. The university chairman had ordered the closing down and renovation of the dorm kitchens after the poisoning incident. To replace the meals in the interim, Abdel Aal allocated an EGP 15 daily food allowance for each student until the kitchens reopen.

Students protested the allowance, calling it insufficient. Amr Al-Waseefi, a student and dorm resident, said, “EGP 15 is not enough. We can barely afford a quarter of a chicken with that sum, and it’s supposed to last us all day long.”

Al-Waseefi said that the students have been conducting a sit-in inside the dorms since Sunday, preventing entry and exit of workers.

“We want to be heard,” Al-Waseefi said. “We want Abdel Aal to come to us so that we can put forward our demands.”

The students are demanding the dismissal of the university deputy chairman, Ahmed Refaai, the university dorms manager, Ahmed Shaarawi, and the official responsible for providing food within the dorms, Al-Waseefi said. They are also demanding an alternate solution to the absence of meal supply other than the EGP 15 allowance.

“We want the Armed Forces to provide us with our daily meals as they did with Al-Azhar University dorm after their food-poisoning incident,” Al-Waseefi said.

Last April, hundreds of students in Al-Azhar University suffered food poisoning in two separate incidents. An investigation launched into the incidents led to the conclusion that the reason for the poisoning was the Salmonella strain of bacteria, according to the Health Ministry.

Egypt leads North Africa in achieving Millennium Development Goals

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Egypt has also made valiant strides in detecting and combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and a host of other diseases such as Tuberculosis. Egypt detected 64% of Tuberculosis cases, up from 11% in 1990. It still ranks far behind countries such as Tunisia and Morocco, who have detected 90% of cases as of 2010, and out-ranks Sudan and Sierra Leone, detecting 50 and 32%, respectively.

Since the mid-1980s, the number of African food emergencies tripled, the report said. The UNDP says Africa faces several challenges which has kept it from moving wholly past food insecurity, which include “ineffective regional and global responses, underdeveloped agriculture, a lack of modernisation, poor land structure, chronic poverty and a lack of political focus”. Overall, Africa’s hunger rates

have dropped since 1990, but the UNDP says the situation has not greatly improved. Egypt is currently ranked fourth place by the UNDP, with a hunger index rate of less than five from a scale of 100, behind Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. In terms of poverty, the UNDP has said African nations are not reducing poverty rates fast enough to meet the 2015 MDG target. “Africa’s growth has not been job-rich, and most jobs are vulnerable,”

the report said. “Over the past 10 years, Africa’s labour force added 91 million people but only 37 million jobs in wage-paying sectors.”

High levels of income, gender and rural-urban inequalities are also factors which have hampered the bridging of the growth and poverty gap on the continent.

Africa as a whole also struggles to bridge gender inequality, with wage rates remaining universally unequal. The report said women

across the continent are becoming more empowered, entering primary and secondary education and holding seats in government.

The UNDP said the average percentage of seats held by women in African national parliaments is nearly 20%, taking its place as one of the highest in the world after Latin America and the Caribbean.

Egypt’s Shura council, by contrast, only has eight out of the 270 seats occupied by women, or 2.9%.

Courthouses and prosecution offices enter digital age

Spokesperson for public prosecution admits old hiring methods were not transparent

By Ahmed Aboul Enein

Job vacancies at public prosecution offices will no longer be filled through the recommendations of judges and prosecutors but will instead be assigned on merit, prosecution spokesperson Mostafa Deweidar said on Monday.

“We have to admit that the way the prosecution used to hire people in the past for administrative posts was not transparent at all. From now on people will be hired on merit and not based on the recommendations of others. We have already announced a job posting,” Deweidar said in a Monday press conference about the prosecution’s achievements.

He went on to describe a digitisation process for courts and prosecution offices that Prosecution General Tala’at Abdallah ordered recently.

“Citizens will now be able to fill

marriage and divorce paperwork online and have important documents delivered to their homes. They will also be able to make online requests regarding the payment of speeding tickets and someone will be sent to collect the fees and deliver a proof of payment certificate,” Deweidar said.

Reports, case files and all other important documents stored in courts and prosecution offices will also be scanned and stored digitally, saving the state the cost of paper as well as ensuring the protection of important documents, he added. The decision was prompted by the recent fire at the South Cairo Court that, Deweidar said, had resulted in the destruction of some important documents.

“We are also going to choose a court and make it completely electronic to test out our new systems before implementing them nationwide,” he said.

Electricity minister: Calls to not pay bills ‘irresponsible’

By Basil El-Dabbh

Campaigns calling on citizens to not pay their electricity bills until the government rectifies rolling power outages are “irresponsible”, according to Minister of Electricity and Energy Ahmed Emam.

The minister addressed the Shura Council’s Industry and Energy Committee on Monday, saying that private sector participation would “end the power crisis”. He added that private sector intervention would not impact prices. Emam also said that 300,000 street lights in Cairo had gone out as a result of the outages, saying 121 hotlines were being set up to respond to electricity-related complaints.

He added that a new electricity bill would be introduced “soon”, and builds on the \$200m provided for the purchase of diesel fuel and \$500m in reserves.

Emam insisted that his ministry was not asking citizens to stop using



Ministry of Electricity and Energy handout

Minister of Electricity and Energy Mohamed Emam says the country’s electricity issues have improved in the past few days

electricity, but stressed the importance of using discretion in an effort to conserve energy. The minister said the country’s power situation had continued to improve each day and

that improvements needed to be implemented without imposing further burdens on the state budget.

Civil Aviation Minister Wael Al-Maadawy said that Cairo International Airport would seek to save energy by reducing lighting at Cairo International Airport and ministry departments by 20 percent starting in June.

He added that the airport would only be partially closed during the nighttime, but otherwise would function on a normal basis, pointing out that one runway was sufficient to deal with air traffic at night, according to state-owned Al-Ahram.

On Sunday the Ministry of Electricity and Energy credited the improvement in the electricity network to provisions of additional natural gas and diesel by the Ministry of Petroleum for power plants. The problem, according to the ministry, took root when it was affected by shortages of fuel needed to run the plants.

Additional reporting by Ibrahim Al-Masry

Nile University still awaiting verdict to go into effect

The verdict gives the university sole ownership of three disputed buildings

By Nourhan Dakrouy

Students at Nile University have been struggling for /07/04/fate-of-egypt’s-first-research-university-hangs-in-the-balance/”nearly two years to recover ownership of three buildings which had been given to Zewail Science City by former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq’s government.

The court announced /04/24/administrative-court-dismisses-zewails-challenges/”its verdict on 24 April, returning full ownership of the buildings to the university, but no action has been taken since, said Nader Abdel Qader of the Re-

search Students Association at Nile University.

Abdel Qader said that the Zewail Science City researchers refuse to vacate the buildings, leaving Nile University researchers to do their research and experiments at home, or in other research centres.

He added that the university offered to let the Zewail Science City researchers stay in the buildings if they still have not finished their research after the buildings are returned to the university, but they refused.

According to Abdel Qader, Nile University officials met with gov-

ernment officials twice last week to discuss the matter.

The Minister of Higher Education said that the verdict clearly stated that all buildings belong to the university, but the matter must be discussed in a Ministerial Committee before it goes into effect, said Abdel Qader.

He added that the university will give Zewail Science City until 1 June to evacuate the building.

“If we don’t get the buildings back by then, we will have to file a lawsuit against the company and the government for defying the court’s decision,” Abdel Qader said.

Shafiq appeals against presidential election results

Lawyer of former presidential candidate lodges appeal against presidential election result

By Joel Gulhane

Former presidential candidate Ahmed Shafiq has filed an appeal to challenge the results of the 2012 presidential election, which he lost to President Mohamed Morsi.

Shafiq’s lawyer Shawky Al-Sayed filed an appeal on Monday, with the Supreme Constitutional Court challenging the Presidential Elections Committee’s decision to award Morsi the victory, reported state-owned Al-Ahram.

In the appeal Al-Sayed claimed that the election was fraudulent and there were a large amount of irregularities in the electoral process, reported Al-Ahram.

Shafiq’s appeal goes against Article

28 of the Constitutional Declaration of March 2011, which states “The commission’s decisions are final and carry the full force of the law, and will not be subject to objections from any party, in the same manner as it is forbidden for the decisions to be stopped or cancelled”.

Shafiq, the former civil aviation minister under ousted president Hosni Mubarak, left Egypt following his defeat in the presidential elections in 2012 and has remained in the United Arab Emirates since. In April Shafiq was acquitted in absentia of squandering public money. Later in the same month he was fined EGP 10,000 for defaming Deputy Chairman of Al-Wasat Party Essam Sultan.



POLITICS

Beni Suef doctor attacked

ASSAULT RESULTS IN A STRIKE EXECUTED BY ANGERED DOCTORS

By Hend Kortam

Doctors in Beni Suef General Hospital's emergency department have started a strike in response to an assault on one of the doctors on Sunday.

The strike, which started on Sunday, has continued until Monday afternoon. Ola Yassin, the secretary general of the Beni Suef branch of the Doctors' Syndicate and a doctor at the hospital, said the doctors are planning to remain on strike until security is provided.

The strike started when a man, known to be a registered convict, beat a doctor and tried to attack another orthopaedic doctor with a bladed weapon. "Security personnel were there but did not intervene," she said. After the assault, the offender got on his motorcycle and fled the scene.

The strike was started by orthopaedic doctors who were later joined by surgeons and other doctors from the hospital.

Regarding whether or not the strike will take escalatory steps,

Yassin said: "Is there more than the emergency department in the biggest hospital in Beni Suef being shut down?" The majority of accident victims in Beni Suef receive their treatment in Beni Suef General Hospital.

Yassin said the syndicate supports the strike until they are provided with security "in order to preserve their lives". After every incident, the doctors are promised that there will be more security, she said, adding that they have been hearing these promises for the past five or six months.

Last October, doctors started a

strike demanding better pay, a higher state budget for health and harsher punishment against anyone who commits a crime against hospital staff. On 19 May, the Doctors' Syndicate presented a new plan for security enforcement inside hospitals.

A doctors' rights group called Doctors Without Rights recently demanded that people who attack hospitals be charged with attempted murder. Along with the demand, the rights group announced they will be organising a protest in front of the Ministry of Health on 15 June.

Primary verdict suspends interior minister

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Article 123 of the penal code states: "Any public employee who refrains from carrying out a court verdict is to be punished by imprisonment and suspension."

"Nevertheless, this is a primary verdict," Eid said. "If Ibrahim challenges it, then the verdict will not be carried out unless it is ratified by the Court of Cassation."

The Ministry of Interior released a statement saying that the court verdict was issued in absentia. It added that the ministry is currently

carrying out the process of challenging the verdict.

The ministry stated that it is devoted to carrying out all compensation verdicts issued before the January 2011 revolution. It said EGP 84,647,621 worth of compensations have been paid this year to fulfil 4,426 court verdicts, implying that the process of paying compensations is time-consuming. It added that the ministry is coordinating with the Ministry of Finance to be able to afford carrying out all the accumulating verdicts, some dating back to the 1980s.

Students and drivers protest in Alexandria

By Luiz Sanchez

Alexandria witnessed two protests on Monday, one led by students who had called for the expulsion of the dean of the Alexandria University Faculty of Engineering, and one by drivers looking to dissolve their union's management.

Students from Alexandria University's Faculty of Engineering called for the dismissal of the dean. The protest, according to the Revolutionary Socialists, was held in response to the dismissal of a student by the administration. The students gathered at the university carrying signs accusing the dean of suppressing political activities by students.

According to the Revolutionary Socialists at the time of writing, the students managed to remove the dean from the building.

On Sunday the Revolutionary Socialists said in a statement that one of their members, Mohamed Abu Hadid,



Revolutionary Socialists' Facebook page

Students at Alexandria University's faculty of Engineering protest the dismissal of a fellow student

was being dismissed by the dean of the faculty for a term. The group said he was dismissed without facing interrogation and a disciplinary trial in which he could defend himself.

Meanwhile, a second protest took place outside the headquarters of the Drivers' Union in the district of El-Seif. According to state-owned Al-Ahram the drivers demanded elections be held to replace the current board of directors.

Protesters are said to have been angry because the union does not hold elections and are calling for reforms.

The drivers are demanding a draft be prepared outlining a proposal for restructuring of the union, including elections, in order to provide its members with a better standard of living. The protesters also demanded health insurance which covers the drivers for disabilities and injury.

Chinese graffiti in Egypt causes a stir in China

By Menna Mourad

Chinese graffiti in the Temple of Luxor caused outrage in China this week after a tourist posted a picture of it online.

The graffiti scratched by a 15 year old on the temple's wall spells out "Ding Jinhao was here" in Chinese characters.

According to BBC News China, the teen's mother explained that the graffiti was scratched years ago when they were visiting Egypt and that the teen is now very sorry for his actions.

"We want to apologise to the Egyptian people and to people who have paid attention to this case across China," the mother told media on Saturday.

This incident came in the wake of Chinese official Wang Yang's comment in state-run media about Chinese tourists' "uncivilised behavior" abroad. Among other behaviours, he specifically mentioned "willfully carving characters on

items in scenic zones".

Meanwhile, Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities was not aware of the incident and the Ministry of Antiquities was unavailable for comment.

Archaeologist Monica Hanna said no one noticed the incident "because it was kept on a low profile by the ministry on purpose".

Hisham Al-Shattary, secretary general of the Tourist Guides' Syndicate, said any violation of the sanctity of antiquities should be reported by guides to the Tourism and Antiquities Police.

Hanna said it is the responsibility of the inspector and the custodian to keep the site constantly under surveillance.

"The current status of archaeological sites and those of heritage value is really miserable, where years of accumulated corruption and current lack of security is causing the very rapid loss of Egyptian heritage," she added.

Ramlet Boulaq criminal case postponed, verdict expected today

By Ahmed Aboul Enein

South Cairo Criminal Court postponed the Nile City Towers clashes court case on Monday after listening to pleadings from defence lawyers.

"We started our defence argument today for the first 10 defendants and the court postponed the case. We will be defending the rest of the detainees in the coming sessions," defence lawyer Mohamed Adel, a member of the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights (ECESR) legal unit, said.

On 2 August 2012 police officer Yasser Ali shot dead Amr El-Bunni, a resident of the Ramlet Boulaq slum area adjacent to the Nile City Towers, in Cairo's Fairmont Hotel.

The incident led to clashes between enraged residents and police in front of the tower. Police arrested 51 people in the aftermath and charged them with rioting and vandalising the hotel.

Residents have since been complaining of an arbitrary arrest and police brutality campaign. Some

facied arbitrary police raids on their houses, with policemen sometimes seizing their money or possessions. The prosecution investigated those claims but charged no police officers.

Defence lawyers from the ECESR told the court many of the detainees, including children, had been tortured in detention. They also said police had taken several of the area's women hostages to force their male relatives to hand themselves in.

Hamdy Al-Ghafir, one of the defence lawyers, revealed at a previous session that a 16-year-old defendant had only been arrested because his name was similar to that of another man on the run who is wanted for the case.

Separate from the criminal case proceedings, the residents of Ramlet Boulaq have filed a lawsuit against the Cairo governor with the Administrative Judiciary Court demanding the reversal of his decision to seize their lands.

Residents have long complained they have been facing forced migration attempts at the hands of the government allegedly on behalf of

businessman Naguib Sawiris who owns the nearby Nile City Towers and wants the land on which their shacks are located for expansion plans.

ECESR lawyers argue that a land seizure order is illegal and that the governor should have instead issued a temporary eviction order. Land seizure decisions are temporary and are usually taken when the government plans to renovate, restore or generally improve an area.

The lawyers argue that in this case the Cairo governorate plans to do none of these things, it just plans on removing the houses there, which means the governor should have issued an eviction order not a seizure order.

An eviction order requires the government to pay the evicted citizens fair compensation for having been removed from their homes. A land seizure order does not require the government to pay such compensation since the area is supposedly being improved for its residents.

The Administrative Judiciary Court is scheduled to make a ruling on Tuesday.

Islam Afifi fined EGP 10,000 for libelling Essam Al-Erian

A criminal court in Cairo has ordered former editor-in-chief of Al-Doustour newspaper Islam Afifi pay a fine of EGP 10,000 and a temporary compensation of the same sum for committing libel against the Vice-Chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party and Shura Council Majority Leader Essam Al-Erian.

In response, El-Erian posted on Facebook, "Thank God. If those who committed the same crime do not apologise, we will sue them."

Afifi was brought to trial after Al-Erian sued him for an article published in Al-Doustour in June 2012 that suggested secret meetings between Muslim Brotherhood figures, including Al-Erian and Deputy Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood Khairat El-Shater, were held to plan violence should Ahmed Shafiq be announced the winner of last year's presidential race, state-run news agency MENA reported.

The article claimed that if Shafiq had won, the Muslim Brotherhood would have had snipers shoot protesters on the streets, and planned on assassinating 300 public figures, including ousted



We Are All Islam Afifi Facebook page

Islam Afifi has been ordered by a criminal court to pay a fine and compensation for insulting Essam Al-Erian

president Hosni Mubarak.

While he was found guilty of libel against Al-Erian, the court acquitted Afifi of additional charges, which included: sparking panic among the public, disturbing the public peace, and harming the public interest.

The prosecution said Afifi was publicly spreading false information with malicious intent.

More media practitioners were put under the limelight, with investigations

of Lamis El-Hadidi and three others beginning on Monday. They are being accused of broadcasting recordings and documents that were attained illegally, documents that disturb public peace and national interests, MENA reported.

The investigations have been opened up as a result of an episode in which TV presenter El-Hadidi alleged that the Brotherhood was exchanging phone calls with Hamas during the 2011 Revolution.



Botschaft
der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Kairo

Bekanntmachung für Deutsche zur Wahl zum Deutschen Bundestag

Am 22. September 2013 findet die Wahl zum Deutschen Bundestag statt.

Deutsche, die außerhalb der Bundesrepublik Deutschland leben und im Bundesgebiet keine Wohnung mehr innehaben, können bei Vorliegen der sonstigen wahlrechtlichen Voraussetzungen an der Wahl teilnehmen. Für ihre Wahlteilnahme ist u. a. Voraussetzung, dass sie

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Kairo, den 23. Mai 2013

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Libyan assembly chief ‘to quit after Gaddafi-era law’

AFP - The president of Libya's highest political body will resign on Tuesday after a law was passed banning those who served under the ousted regime of late dictator Muammar Gaddafi, an aide said on Monday.

Mohamed al-Megaryef "will on Tuesday evening submit his resignation before members of the General National Congress," or the national assembly, one of his advisors told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"The members of the General National Congress will elect a new president in the coming days," the advisor said, but without elaborating on the reasons for Megaryef's planned resignation.

Megaryef was Libya's ambassador to India in the 1980s before he defected and joined the opposition in exile.

The state news agency Lana, quoting a statement from Megaryef's office, said he will announce his resignation in a speech on Tuesday evening.

On 5 May, the national assembly passed a controversial law banning officials who served under Gaddafi between 1 September, 1969 and the fall of his regime in October 2011 from holding any political role.

The law, which comes into force on 5 June, was adopted under pressure from armed groups demanding the ouster of former regime officials from current political office.

Megaryef was elected to head the

GNC last August following Libya's first post-uprising elections the previous month.

A British-educated economist, he was born in 1940 in the eastern city of Benghazi, the cradle of the uprising that toppled Gaddafi's regime.

Megaryef spent 31 years in exile, including 20 years as a political refugee in the United States, and along with other dissidents he founded an opposition group that had tried to overthrow Gaddafi.

African Union to establish emergency military force

The International Criminal Court targets Africans on a racial basis, African Union chairman says

By Jenny Vaughan and Aude Genet

AFP - The African Union (AU) said on Monday it will set up an emergency military force to rapidly quell conflict on the continent, amid frustration that a planned peacekeeping force was still not operational after a decade.

"Almost all countries have agreed that we will have rapid response capability in Africa," AU Chairman and Ethiopian President Hailemariam Desalegn told reporters at the close of a two-day AU summit.

The AU's "African Standby Brigade" to intervene in sudden crises, a proposed force of 32,500 troops and civilians drawn from five regions of the continent, has made little headway since preparations for it started a decade ago.

Only two of five regional sections are close to becoming operational.

"This is meant as an interim measure pending the full operationalisation of the African standby force," AU Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra told reporters at the pan-African bloc's headquarters in the Ethiopian capital.

"In the meantime, crises, constitutional changes of government, massive violations of human rights are likely to happen here and there, so from a responsible point of view, we say we cannot wait until we get a perfect tool to be used."

South Africa, Uganda and Ethiopia have pledged troops to the proposed interim force, Lamamra said. Funding and troop contributions will come from member states on a voluntary basis.

The AU was criticised for not responding fast enough in Mali, after soldiers seized power in a coup in March 2012, opening the way for Islamist rebels to take over the

country's north.

This led to the rapid collapse of one Africa's more stable democracies, prompting a French military intervention to oust the extremists in January.

"Africa could have done better, could have moved faster and could have perhaps made some significant effort so that the French contribution would not have been indispensable," Lamamra added.

"It's quite unfortunate that 50 years after our independence our security is so much dependent on a foreign partner."

The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), the bloc's body for tackling conflict, remains hampered by financial constraints, with military missions largely funded by western donors.

However, the AU's force in Somalia, where 17,700 AU troops from five nations are fighting to claw back territory from Al-Qaeda linked Shebab insurgents from the government, has made impressive achievements.

But this success is not without cost.

One senior UN official recently estimated as many as 3,000 African troops had been killed in Somalia since 2007, similar to the numbers of UN peacekeepers killed worldwide since 1948.

Although funding for that mission comes mainly from Western backers, its role in Somalia shows the potential for an AU force.

The commitment of African nations to peacekeeping roles is clear: the peacekeeping mission in Sudan's war-torn western Darfur region is a hybrid AU-UN force, while Mali now has a, belatedly deployed, African-led international support mission.

Five of the top ten contributors of soldiers and police officers to UN missions are African.

Syria violence reaches ‘horrific dimensions’: UN’s Pillay

AFP - UN human rights chief Navi Pillay decried Monday the "horrific" level of rights violations in war-torn Syria, amid a flurry of diplomatic activity to organise a new summit in Geneva aimed at ending the conflict.

"A humanitarian, political and social disaster is already upon us, and what looms is truly a nightmare," Pillay told diplomats as she opened one of the UN Human Rights Council's four annual sessions in Geneva.

She warned that the rights violations in Syria had "reached horrific dimensions", describing the situation in the country as "an intolerable affront to the human conscience".

"Confronted with the flagrant disregard of international law and human life on every side, I feel utter dismay," she said, lamenting that "we in the international community are failing to meet our fundamental obligations to the victims".

"It sometimes seems that we can do little more than cry out in the darkness and try to count the dead," she said of the 26-month crisis that has cost more than 94,000 lives and forced more than 1.5 million Syrians to flee to neighbouring countries.

Pillay said the regime was using "indiscriminate and disproportionate force in residential areas," including reports of the direct targeting of schools and hospitals.

She also decried "wanton human rights violations" by rebel groups,



A Syrian youth rebel fighter runs down a destroyed street in the southern city of Daraa during clashes with government troops

including extrajudicial killings and accounts that some women and girls have been forced to marry combatants.

Pillay also voiced alarm over the ongoing battle for control over the strategic town of Qusayr, near the Lebanese border, with reports that hundreds of civilians have been killed or injured and thousands may remain trapped.

Despite the seemingly hopeless situation, Pillay insisted there was room for the international community

to act, reiterating her call for the deadlocked UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

"These war crimes and crimes against humanity cannot be allowed to go unpunished," she said.

Pillay's comments came ahead of a top-level Paris meeting between the foreign ministers of Russia, France and the United States to push for an international peace conference.

EU foreign ministers were also

gathering in Brussels on Monday to discuss whether to lift an arms embargo and arm the Syrian rebels.

Last Friday, the United States, Turkey and Qatar joined forces to request an urgent debate on the situation in Syria and especially in Qusayr before the human rights council.

The US ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe, told the council on Monday that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime "has killed or injured untold numbers of civilians".

Anti-Al-Qaeda fighter among three killed in Iraq attacks

AFP - Attacks in North Iraq mostly against security forces killed three people on Monday, the latest in violence that has raised tensions in a country only a few years removed from brutal sectarian conflict.

In the disputed province of Kirkuk, separate gun attacks killed an anti-Al-Qaeda militiaman and a private generator operator, while a roadside bomb in the main northern city of Mosul left a police colonel dead, security and medical officials said.

Both areas are home to substantial populations of Sunni Arabs, the minority community that has for months held demonstrations against alleged government targeting and discrimination.

Analysts say government policies that have disenfranchised Iraqi Sunnis, coupled with the authorities' refusal to make any major concessions to the protesters, have given militant groups fuel and room to manoeuvre among the disillusioned community.

The violence comes amid myriad political rows and fears that civil

war in neighbouring Syria could spill over into Iraq and plunge the country further into crisis.

Iraq is struggling to contain a wave of violence that has killed more than 440 people so far this month, the second month in a row in which more than 400 people have died in unrest.

The violence has decreased from its peak in 2006 and 2007, but attacks remain common, killing at least 200 people each month so far this year.

Israeli army investigates explosions in Metulla



United Nations peacekeepers stand next to their armoured vehicles on the Lebanese side of the border with Israel, opposite the northern Israeli village of Metulla (background), on Monday. The Israeli army was investigating the possibility that projectiles were launched at the northern Israeli border village from Lebanon overnight, after residents reported hearing explosions.

Iran, an increasingly burning issue for world powers

AFP - A controversial nuclear programme, suspected growing involvement in the Syrian conflict and tightly-controlled presidential elections, Iran is an ever-increasing source of concern for Western powers.

Tehran last week excluded most would-be candidates from its 14 June elections, keeping only those loyal to the all-powerful supreme leader, dashing any hopes that a more moderate president would be voted into power.

And as world powers concentrate on rallying support for a June peace conference on Syria, the role of close Damascus ally Tehran in the bloody conflict is coming under increasing scrutiny.

"We see... that day after day Iran's forces are strongly engaged on the

side of (Syrian President) Bashar al-Assad, and this is certainly not the way to advance peace," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said on Sunday.

The issue is likely to come up at a Monday meeting in Paris on the Syria conference, planned for June in Geneva, between Fabius and his US and Russian counterparts.

Iran is accused by Western and Arab countries which back rebels fighting al-Assad of supplying weapons and sending military forces to the Syrian military, in a conflict that has claimed some 94,000 lives since 2011.

A top US official has said that Iranians are working alongside their Shiite Lebanese ally Hezbollah fighters to back Syrian troops battling to retake the rebel strong-

hold of Qusayr, near the Lebanese border.

But Iran has denied this, saying it has never sent military forces to Syria "and will never do so".

France has expressed reservations over any involvement of Iran in the peace conference, and Fabius said Sunday that Tehran's participation risked "preventing a political solution rather than favouring one".

Any hope that Iran's presidential election would bring about a change of tack was dashed last week when the country's Guardians Council barred hundreds of would-be candidates from taking part in the vote.

The unelected election watchdog cleared just eight individuals loyal to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's ultimate decision maker.

Most significantly, it rejected Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a moderate ex-president who had held huge political sway.

Analysts say the move indicates that Khamenei is tightening his grip and eliminating any potential in-fighting ahead of a new government.

"The lack of transparency makes it highly unlikely that that slate of candidates is either going to represent the broad will of the Iranian people or represent a change," US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Friday.

Alireza Nader of the US-based non-profit research organisation RAND Corporation said: "There was some hope that a more moderate figure like Rafsanjani could be elected and soften Iran's stance on the nuclear issue."

But he said the eight candidates allowed to contest the polls are almost all "tightly linked to Khamenei. So we must not expect much if one of them becomes the next president."

Western powers accuse Tehran of developing an atomic bomb under cover of a civilian nuclear programme, which Iran has always categorically denied, and the two sides have for years been locked in negotiations on the issue.

These talks, involving Iran and the so-called P5+1 group that includes the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany, have not delivered any breakthroughs so far.

And the IAEA, the UN atomic agency, said this month that Iran was making significant progress in expanding its nuclear programme and had ac-

celerated the installation of advanced uranium enrichment equipment at its Natanz plant.

Khamenei's attempt to consolidate more power comes at a time when Iran is struggling to cope with harsh economic sanctions over its nuclear programme, targeting its vital oil exports.

According to a top official at the US Treasury, Iran loses \$3bn to \$5bn per month due to these sanctions that have pushed inflation in the country above 30%.

One Western diplomat who refused to be named said there should be even more pressure on Iran.

"Either we bring them to their knees economically, or there will be a military strike, which we would like to avoid," said the diplomat.



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COMMENTARY

TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2013 DAILY NEWS EGYPT 5

www.thedailynewsegypt.com

The sixth stage of grief

On a relatively hot summer night, in lieu of nothing, a bunch of revolutionary friends were discussing the state of gloom that has befallen the majority of the population, and came up with a theory: We have all gone through the five stages of grief throughout this revolution. The Denial Phase started with the first army attack on the square in March; the Anger Phase started at the 8 April attack until Mohamed Mahmoud Clashes in November; the Bargaining Phase started with the parliamentary elections (vote or boycott) until the presidential elections (vote for which loser/boycott/invalidate) and ended with the constitutional declaration; and then the Depression Phase started in earnest. The debate centred on whether we have entered the Acceptance Phase, or whether that will happen if the military commits a coup. I stayed out of the debate, since I was already at stage six, and been there for a while: Moving on and enjoying life. How come? Well, weirdly enough, it all started with President Mohamed Morsi.

Inexplicably, I have started to love President Morsi more lately, and I finally figured out why: We are watching a live filming of an Adam Sandler-esque

movie starring Mohamed Morsi. Like any of the interchangeable Adam Sandler movies, we have an out-of-his-depth buffoonish character that found himself coincidentally in charge of Egypt, alongside his band of misfits. Embarrassing situations galore and hijinks ensue, while the "villainous" Muslim Brotherhood is unable to reach their goals to their utter frustration. If you didn't watch Adam Sandler movies (and why should you?), think "Ismail Yassin in Itihadiya" or "The Mr Bean Presidency" and you are there. I personally cannot wait for the sequels to this newly-introduced comic legend: The Adventures of Morsi in Space (we will fire him there), and The Adventures of Morsi in the Afterlife (spoiler: Mubarak will still be alive).

It's a cartoon. We are living in an amusing cartoon. And more than anyone, the Muslim Brothers are cartoonish characters. Look at Essam Al-Erian or Khairat El-Shater or even Belagay and tell me that they don't look like cartoon villains. And not only do they look like cartoon villains, they act like cartoon villains and even want to control the world like cartoon villains. It's incredibly amusing, because they

are operating based upon cartoon logic, and you are not amused because they are sucking you into it. You are concerned about the "Ikhwansisation" of the state, while forgetting that it's a mirage state, and one that failed the older and stronger Mubarak regime, and they knew how to run it. Sure, the Brotherhood reign is destructive to the economy, but it's also destructive to them, and while economies recover, they won't. For example: Their cartoonish solution to the diesel shortage by cutting off the electricity frequently for a week but providing trucks with diesel, then not cutting the electricity and not providing trucks with diesel.

So now the residents are threatening bill collectors not to even knock on their doors. These bill collectors are on strike, and soon you will find truck drivers doing the same thing. If you want to see how cartoonish things have gotten, please skip Morsi's speech from the empty wheat fields where he asserts that this is the year where Egypt will "import its wheat from Egypt", and watch the minister of youth press conference, which has been my comedic highlight of last week.

Many of the revolutionaries are

not amused by this, but that's because they are refusing to admit two things: 1) They were participants in a "mirage revolution"; just like the mirage state; it looked it, but lacked all of the things that made it real (messaging, grassroots campaigning, social and cultural change), and 2) that the real deal is happening now, without them. Say what you will about the effectiveness of the Tamarod campaign, but its virality proves 1) the creation of the larger Egyptian society that is unifying against the Brotherhood and 2) the rise of the second generation of revolutionaries, completely separate from the bickering and idiotic old guard (thank God), and far more successful. Or observe the meteoric rise of Like Jelly, a band whose fun music (a mix between humour, social commentary with a dash of anti-Brotherhood messaging) has garnered thousands of fans all over the country and opened doors for a multitude of bands like them, and revolutionising the music industry and cultural scene.

Observe the hapless government with its lack of solutions for the energy or housing crisis and juxtapose this with Karmasolar, who are not only developing solar-energy applications



MAHMOUD SALEM

that are competitive with fossil fuels, they are building an entire solar operated village (energy, water, buildings) for 600 people at less than one million dollars. Travel to Aswan and observe the development project "Keno Nubia" started by a lone twenty-something Nubian woman called May Gahallah who made zero salary and now has an operation and multitude of volunteers and achievements on the ground. Go to the showcase of a company called Flat6Labs started by an Egyptian-American investor called Ahmed Al-Alfi and look at the new tech start-ups they have created (solar desalinisation machines, mobile phones that don't need the mobile operator networks or inter-

net), and this is their fifth cycle. Then revert back to our current government, look at our new minister of investment, who couldn't even get promoted to manager at Vodafone last year, but got this job because he is a Muslim Brother; or look at the Brotherhood themselves and their inability to keep their intelligent or promising youth (the 13-21 crowd, especially those growing up in Brotherhood families, is abandoning them in droves) and ask yourself this: Does this look like a lasting regime to you?

25 January is dead. Good riddance. It was too angry, repetitive and depressing at the end, and this is not how we got rid of the Mubarak regime. We got rid of them through humour, hard work and innovation, and we had fun doing it. Now, it's all happening again, on the hands of people who are finally creating solutions instead of complaining about the problems. Now, you can either partake or focus on yourself; both choices are equally valid, but get over your Acceptance Phase quickly. The sixth stage awaits you. It's time to move on.

Mahmoud Salem is a political activist, writer, and social media consultant.

Reducing risks: Wheat supply in Egypt

Wheat supply matters for Egypt's food security. Production is high but demand is higher. Self-sufficiency in wheat is not a realistic goal given limits in water and land, as well as dismal agricultural investment levels. So, imports are high. Risks from both domestic and international wheat markets coupled with reduced purchasing power from the current economic crisis mean that consumers are now more vulnerable than ever. The issues are complicated, and while there are some protections from supply risks, further reducing vulnerability is certainly possible.

With Egypt's large and growing population, even with past reductions in fertility levels, demand has and will continue to grow. As a water-poor nation with less than 4% of arable land, domestic production to fully meet wheat consumption has been infeasible for some time. Significant increases in domestic wheat production have occurred. Crop yield efficiency, the amount of wheat produced per feddan of land, has increased by about 75% since 1980 when noticeable improvements first began. A decade later, the area under harvest began to increase and the amount of wheat produced has increased four-fold since the start of efficiency improvements.

Despite these gains, Egypt faces a "quantity risk" in the short-term, and quantity risk will continue to rise in the medium and long-term. This means that the quantity of wheat needed to fulfil demand may not be available, even if there are sufficient funds for purchase. Meeting demand with imports will remain a challenge if foreign currency reserves drop even further. And domestic farmers have increasingly less incentive to grow wheat as profits have declined, squeezed between rising input costs and fixed government pricing. In the medium to long-term, water scarcity, climate change and population growth will raise quantity risk.

Quantity risk could be reduced though not eliminated through domestic production, but not with the current supply chain and system of government intervention. For example, the government, the largest purchaser of wheat, announces the purchase price some time after the planting decision is made. To keep farmers interested in growing wheat in future seasons, announcing the wheat price before planting begins

would reduce uncertainty of profits. So would a clearer understanding of costs and availability of major inputs, many of which are government provided, such as water, seeds, fertilisers, extension services, and rented farm equipment powered by diesel. In the current supply chain, many of these inputs are unavailable at government subsidised prices at the right time, and farmers have no choice but to seek black market inputs where hefty margins are easily collected because of the critical timing when inputs are needed in cultivation.

Reducing quantity risks would also benefit from reducing risks of post-harvest losses, estimated at 15% to 20% of domestic production. For instance, wheat grown domestically is often stored in open storage spaces, susceptible to rodents and bacteria because appropriate facilities are unavailable. In fact, Egypt has less storage capacity, measured in months of consumption, than any other Middle Eastern country. This is true despite the fact that it is reasonably well understood that as storage capacity increases, wheat prices decrease, because countries can strategically draw down on reserves or purchase more wheat depending on market prices.

Wheat imports easily reduce quantity risk, but the bigger issue is really "price risk". Price risk is the risk that wheat prices will be prohibitively high, making purchase difficult even though quantity is available on world markets. Since the food crisis of 2008, when food prices rose on the back of high energy prices, wheat and other food prices continue to be high. Food prices hit a new historic all-time high, higher than 2008 levels, in August 2012. Wheat prices decreased by 11% in the ensuing two quarters, October 2012 to February 2012, after the southern hemisphere harvest, but were overall 15% higher than a year before, from February 2012 to February 2013. Most experts globally agree that food prices will not return to pre-2008 prices and that high and rising food prices and volatility around these high prices are the new norm countries must strategise around. Given that wheat imports will remain essential for food security, a strategy to deal with this new norm is needed.

There are a number of ways to reduce price risk, chiefly by reducing exposure to market volatility and



IRIS BOUTROS

by ensuring macroeconomic stability. Ample foreign currency reserves and exchange rate stability are important. However, the more critical issue is reducing exposure to market volatility directly. Because even if Egypt could successfully reduce demand and increase domestic productivity, the country will still remain a net importer or wheat and will therefore be exposed to international price risks. Egypt imports more wheat than almost any country in the world.

Egypt has chiefly sought to reduce external price risk through land acquisition abroad. Land deals in the Sudan, for instance, are meant to meet domestic demand using resources in a country with more arable land and less water scarcity. Unfortunately, this strategy to reduce price risk has other risks. As an owner of land, this assumes risks from bad weather and political disruptions in the host country. It might be difficult to export a harvest to Egypt from a country that struggles with its own food security. This strategy also ignores that markets offer more flexibility than capital locked up in land, forfeiting the choice of which country to procure wheat from depending on harvest and price.

A number of other strategies would reduce price risk, some with great potential for cost reductions. If Egypt used certain financial instruments to protect against price risk, for instance, up to 20% of the costs of international wheat purchases during the height of the food crisis could have been saved. Between November 2007 and October 2008, when wheat prices were at a then historic all-time high, Egypt imported an estimated seven million metric tonnes of wheat. Actual prices are unavailable but estimates put the wheat import bill at about \$2.75bn.

A hedging strategy based on futures or options contracts would

have saved somewhere between \$150m to \$600m of that \$2.75bn, depending on the strategy. Options contracts allow for the purchase of wheat at an agreed price by a specified date with no purchase obligation. A futures contract allows for the purchase of wheat of a standardised quantity and quality and for an agreed price with payment and delivery at a specified future date.

The degree to which these financial instruments are utilized dictates the amount of savings. Contracting 25% of purchases in this manner would have saved closer to \$150m. Purchasing 100% of wheat this way would have saved close to \$600m, according to a 2009 report co-published by the World Bank, the FAO and IFAD. Utilising these contracts requires skilled personnel but they are very feasible and are essential to food security strategies for a number of countries. Given how much wheat Egypt imports, it is puzzling why these types of contracts or any of the other more modern price risk management mechanisms available are not already in use. The cost reductions are needed, particularly given the high budget deficit.

International wheat prices continue to be high and volatile. Since self-sufficiency is not a realistic goal, Egypt will remain vulnerable as a major wheat importer. Price risk and reduced purchasing power from the current economic crisis are most relevant today, but quantity risk will also continue to rise. The government does utilise a variety of mechanisms to reduce supply risk, such as land acquisition and price controls, but there is room for significant improvement. Risk management strategies reducing exposure to market volatility and increasing domestic production levels need to be constructed with consideration of all available options, not just those used in the past. Attention to the supply chain, affecting both domestically cultivated and imported wheat, and the incorporation of modern price risk management mechanisms are critical components of that strategy. The challenges are complicated, more so than this analysis suggests, but these risks are real and increasing. Vulnerability can be reduced.

Iris Boutros is an applied economist and strategist. She focuses on balanced growth, investment and decision-making

A country afraid of its parliament

BY RANA ALLAM

There is not one political faction that wants to hold parliamentary elections nowadays, except maybe the Salafis.

Elections were expected to be held in the next few months, right after the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. However, everyone seems to be dreading these elections, despite the show to the contrary.

It seems that all parties are relieved by the continuous postponement as the draft law keeps being rejected by the Supreme Constitutional Court. The single difference between the parties is that the Salafis continue to gain more ground than the secular opposition or the ruling Muslim Brotherhood (MB), as a 180-degree shift in their stance with the government in recent months has given them extra push on street level. In the previous parliament, Salafis won nearly 25% of parliamentary seats, the Brotherhood won over 45%, and the rest went to various other parties.

In the 2011 parliamentary elections, Islamists were fighting a single battle against secularists and civil state advocates, and 70% of voters gave their voices to the Islamist bloc, without much distinction between the Salafis and the Brothers – they voted for the so-called "religious lot". Now that the Brotherhood has proven a failure both in managing the country and in implementing their agreement with the Salafis to turn Egypt to an Islamic state, the Salafis have turned against them. They have now built upon the Brotherhood's failures to gain ground on the streets by openly opposing the MB, and in many cases, questioning their religiosity, calling them infidels and "traitors of the Islamic project". Salafis work mosques in rural and urban Egypt, with TV channels to voice their opinions, and millions of listeners – millions who are frustrated from their daily burdens and hold the Brotherhood responsible.

The Salafis have presented their position in opposing the MB through all-time-winner logic: the MB is not implementing the Islamic Shari'a, therefore the country is doomed and will never rise. This is simple logic – and goes straight to the hearts of the millions of semi-educated religious Egyptians. And what alternative is presented to these millions? Zilch!

The rest of the opposition bloc is at a standstill. On with their press conferences and TV appearances, on

with their internal elections and infighting, and nowhere near the public. These millions who have not even heard of the opposition's fronts and alliances are only provided with the Salafis as an alternative.

The irony is that the secular opposition knows that, and although they continue to criticise the elections law delay, they know it is for their best interest. They have failed over the past year to create wide public awareness of what they stand for, be it liberalism, socialism or anything in between.

The Muslim Brotherhood, for their part, would rather postpone elections indefinitely. They already have their Shura Council to pass whatever legislation they want, so why would they hold elections in these dire times when the man-on-the-street is cursing the day they came to power?

To hold elections in September (as initially proposed) would be the most idiotic move the Brothers could make.

Picture this story: it is mid July, and the very first week of Ramadan. A man wakes up sweating from the heat, his decades old electric fan not working, for there is no electricity. He gets out of bed, hoping for a shower, but there is no water because the water generator stopped working too, as there is no power. He stops himself from cursing, for this is the holy month and he is fasting. He leaves the house to get to work, but there is not enough gas in the car, heads to the station to stand in a two-hour long queue of people waiting to fill their cars and trucks with diesel. Half the day gone, he heads to work, then attempts to get back in time to break his fast, but the traffic is horrible and he spends an additional hour on his way home, in the heat of July and the thirst of fasting. Finally he gets there, only to find some fool and falafel, while his wife explains that meat and chicken prices are beyond their limited budget. He reluctantly eats, prays and decides to watch some TV, but by the time he is relaxed in his chair, the power is cut again, and there is no entertainment, and no air conditioning (even through his little fan). By the time the power is back on, the TV is showing the Freedom and Justice Party leaders campaigning for elections.

Do you honestly think that this man will vote for them? Absolutely not; he will, without a second thought, give his voice to the religious, God-fearing other bearded men: the Salafis!

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Central Bank and Finance Ministry talk taxes

Continued from page 1

Abdul-Moneim said during its last meeting, the committee discussed the concerns of commercial banks operating in the Egyptian market about the new law. He added that officials from both sides had reached an agreement regarding this matter and that attempts would be made during the committee's next several meetings to come up with legal measures to address these issues.

Abdul-Moneim praised the efforts of Central Bank and the recent paradigm shift seen in its fiscal policy, which he says has gone a long way to help strengthen the government's confidence in its ability to stabilise the country's banking sector. This policy, he said, would do much to help attract new foreign investment into Egypt.

However, Abdul-Moneim made a point of emphasising that recent quotes attributed to him and one of his advisors in the Ministry of Finance seen recently in a number of Egyptian newspapers, in which he claims that differences in opinion exist between

the ministry and the Central Bank, are in fact fabricated and false. He went on to state that the country's Finance Ministry appreciated the role being played by the Central Bank in adopting fiscal policies that will help promote growth and stability throughout Egypt's markets.

Osama Towekel, President of the Large Taxpayers' Center within Egypt's Tax Authority, recently hosted a meeting attended by officials from the Federation of Egyptian Banks (FEB), to review the contents of a report released on the FEB's stance regarding amendments set to be implemented on the legal regulations of Egypt's stamp tax law. Such amendments would re-determine how stamp taxes on loans and credit lines would be applied. Methods to establish new calculation mechanisms to determine such tax rates, in ways that are compatible with the computer operating systems used by the country's banks, were also discussed, in an effort to prevent banks from having to rework their systems and suffer additional burdens.

Egypt bans male masseuses from women's spas

Ban by tourism ministry an attempt to fight mounting problems within tourism sector

By Dahlia Ali

The Ministry of Tourism has ordered restrictions on male employees in women's spas across the country in an attempt to protect tourists from sexual harassment and to combat negative perceptions of the country in light of recent insecurity.

Hotels and spas that defy the ministerial decree will be shut down, state-run Al-Ahram quoted Minister of Tourism Hisham Zaazou as saying. Further challenges of the rule would subject the facility to the revocation of its license and a cut in its rating, the state news agency reported.

The move is one of a number of other measures which the ministry will adopt to end sexual harassment targeting tourists, Zaazou said according to the newspaper. Revenue from the tourism sector has rebounded 20% to \$10.1bn but is still about 20% less than revenues recorded in 2010.

A slumping tourism sector in post-revolutionary Egypt has largely contributed to the country's eroding foreign reserves. Egypt's international reserves reached \$14.4bn in April according to the

latest figures on the Central Bank's website. This is about 60% lower than levels recorded before the beginning of the revolution. Tourists, who are a main source of foreign exchange flowing into the economy, have been repelled by the sporadic political unrest from which the country is still struggling to recover.

Egypt was ranked last among 139 other countries in terms of safety and security on the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index issued this month by the World Economic Forum. The country's overall rank dropped 10 places this year to 85 on the index, which cited the continuing political unrest. The report also deemed rules and regulations to be "less inclusive to the development of the sector". Egypt was also ranked 138 in terms of the business costs of terrorism, and held the 129th place in the business costs of crime and violence.

According to the report, however, Egypt's ranks still have the advantage of a rich cultural heritage, with the seven World Heritage cultural sites and the hosting of several international fairs and exhibitions. Price competitiveness continues to lever-



Daily News Egypt

The Ministry of Tourism has banned male employees from working in female spas

age the country's rank as low fuel costs, hotel prices and transportation are an attraction.

Al-Ahram reported that about 2.86 million tourists arrived to Egypt during the first quarter of

2013, marking a 14.4% rise year on year. However, this is still below 2010 levels, when Egypt recorded the arrival of about 14.7 million tourists, generating a revenue of \$12.5bn, according Al-Ahram.

Egypt's evolving insurance market

Insurance Federation of Egypt: Local insurance companies suffer EGP 1bn in losses since revolution

Egypt's insurance sector has suffered EGP 1bn in losses since the outbreak of the 2011 revolution according to the president of the Insurance Federation of Egypt. Abd Al-Rauf Qutb said on Monday most of the losses were from payments made on insured property because of increased public disorder throughout the country.

He said the country's insurance companies initially sought not to provide coverage to clients for property damages incurred as a result of the popular uprising, choosing instead to label such events as compromising of "unique set of circumstances", and declined to pay compensation for property that was looted or vandalized. However, they eventually yielded to demands to do so after being subjected to increased pressure from the Insurance Federation of Egypt.

He added that the Egyptian insurance market was weak compared to its counterparts worldwide, and even that of other Arab and African markets, with its total output equaling just



Mohamed Omar

Initially after the 2011 revolution insurers refused to pay compensation for property that was looted or vandalised

1.2% of the country's GDP. Total premiums paid to insurance companies during the previous fiscal year totaled

EGP 10.5bn, EGP 6bn of which went towards property insurance, with the remaining EGP 4.5bn being paid to-

wards life insurance.

Expanding Egypt's insurance market was difficult, he said, as high rates

of poverty and illiteracy have made most of the country's citizens unaware or unable to purchase insurance services. The outbreak of the 2011 revolution further exacerbated these problems, he said.

Despite this Qutb said that Egypt's life insurance sector recently witnessed 10% growth, in addition to 7.7% growth in the property insurance sector.

He further added that insurance companies sought to participate in the financial bonds market, saying that it was the job of such companies to use their savings collected from clients to help contribute towards national development projects.

He also pointed to the industry's desire to participate in providing coverage to large national projects such as the Suez Canal Development Project, a move which would reflect positively on the sector and demonstrate the versatility and wide reach of Egypt's insurance companies.

He further stated that the Central

Bank's new policy to revive the country's banking insurance sector would have a large positive effect on the industry within the coming months. Such a policy will provide insurance companies and their branches located throughout various governorates in Egypt to make new tools and products available to their clients.

He asked that the Central Bank participate in debates with the Insurance Federation over new market controls set to be implemented to help prevent banks and insurance companies from repeating the same mistakes of the past. He further called on insurance companies and the Insurance Federation of Egypt to engage in mutual dialogue over the legal implications of pension and health insurance policies.

Qutb said that he expected Egypt's insurance industry, and its various sub-sectors, to achieve 50% growth over the next 5 years, in addition to yearly growth figures which have already begun to rise.

Daily EGX30 index performance

| Company Name | Reuters Code | Sector | Last Price | Close Price | Returns | | | Daily Performance | | Turn Over (EGP Mill.) | Volume Trade | Market Cap. (EGP Mill.) |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---|---------------|----------------|---------|---------|----------|-------------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| | | | | | Daily | YTD | 12-Mths. | Max. Price | Min. Price | | | |
| Commercial Bank | COMI | Banks | 35.7 | 35.23 | 1.38% | 1.91% | 40.25% | 35.80 | 34.66 | 20.07 | 569,612 | 20,855.64 |
| NSGB | NSGB | Banks | 28.28 | 28.28 | 0.39% | -19.68% | -7.28% | 28.30 | 28.28 | 0.059 | 2,100 | 12,494.41 |
| Ezz Steel | ESRS | Basic Resources | 9.75 | 9.69 | 0.21% | -2.42% | 43.56% | 9.76 | 9.56 | 4.28 | 441,873 | 5,253.37 |
| ELSWEDY ELECTRIC | SWDY | Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles | 19.99 | 20.00 | 0.00% | -12.70% | -9.79% | 19.99 | 19.98 | 0.010 | 495 | 4,468.36 |
| MRRDIVE | MOIL | Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles | 1 | 1.00 | 0.00% | -13.79% | -8.26% | 1.01 | 0.99 | 0.58 | 82,577 | 358.40 |
| AIC Contracting | AIND | Financial Services excluding Banks | 0.46 | 0.45 | 0.00% | -4.26% | -15.09% | 0.46 | 0.44 | 0.864 | 1,930,330 | 240.58 |
| Amer Group Holding | AMER | Financial Services excluding Banks | 0.54 | 0.53 | 0.00% | -17.19% | -17.19% | 0.54 | 0.52 | 0.62 | 1,169,296 | 1,611.04 |
| EK Holding | EKHO | Financial Services excluding Banks | 0.96 | 0.97 | -2.02% | -24.22% | -11.01% | 1.00 | 0.95 | 11.153 | 1,657,049 | 830.90 |
| EGF-Hermes | HRHO | Financial Services excluding Banks | 9.1 | 9.05 | 0.11% | -17.80% | -15.02% | 9.11 | 8.94 | 21.62 | 2,388,634 | 4,323.78 |
| Pioneers Holding | PIOH | Financial Services excluding Banks | 3.92 | 3.90 | -1.02% | -19.75% | 0.00% | 3.95 | 3.84 | 1.599 | 410,191 | 1,970.00 |
| Citadel Capital | CCAP | Financial Services excluding Banks | 3.29 | 3.24 | 0.31% | -14.29% | 12.11% | 3.29 | 3.19 | 5.31 | 1,638,454 | 2,111.51 |
| Raya Holding | RAYA | Technology | 5.28 | 5.31 | 0.38% | -6.18% | 2.12% | 5.36 | 5.23 | 0.441 | 83,120 | 339.74 |
| Telecom Egypt | ETEL | Telecommunications | 13.5 | 13.47 | 0.15% | -4.81% | 9.33% | 13.50 | 13.32 | 2.71 | 201,163 | 22,960.11 |
| Orascom Telecom Media And Technology | OTMT | Telecommunications | 0.49 | 0.49 | 2.08% | -10.91% | 33.55% | 0.50 | 0.48 | 6.561 | 13,400,103 | 2,517.93 |
| Orascom Telecom | ORTE | Telecommunications | 4.65 | 4.57 | 1.33% | 15.11% | 42.81% | 4.70 | 4.45 | 6.44 | 1,410,147 | 23,658.06 |
| Sidi Kerir Petrochemicals | SKPC | Chemicals | 13.16 | 12.98 | -0.08% | -2.04% | 7.99% | 13.16 | 12.87 | 1.004 | 77,370 | 6,819.75 |
| Egyptian Financial and Industrial | EFIC | Chemicals | 9.24 | 9.07 | -0.77% | -8.57% | -10.64% | 9.24 | 9.00 | 1.38 | 151,689 | 633.42 |
| AMOC | AMOC | Oil and Gas | 67.60 | 67.48 | -0.07% | -7.80% | -19.43% | 67.88 | 67.31 | 0.250 | 3,710 | 5,814.33 |
| Juhayna Food Industries | JUFO | Food and Beverage | 10 | 9.98 | 0.20% | 29.78% | 134.82% | 10.07 | 9.93 | 14.53 | 1,455,622 | 7,032.30 |
| Orascom Construction Industries (OCI) | OCIC | Construction and Materials | 234.99 | 232.64 | 0.07% | -7.81% | -13.55% | 235.00 | 231.25 | 11.173 | 48,026 | 48,574.00 |
| Delta Construction & Rebuilding | DCRC | Construction and Materials | 5.7 | 5.60 | -0.36% | -10.26% | 0.18% | 5.70 | 5.52 | 0.21 | 37,783 | 129.86 |
| Modern Co. For Water Proofing | WATP | Construction and Materials | 1.60 | 1.60 | -0.62% | -10.61% | -37.74% | 1.62 | 1.58 | 0.644 | 401,390 | 164.22 |
| Palm Hills | PHDC | Real Estate | 2.26 | 2.23 | -0.45% | -8.61% | 25.99% | 2.27 | 2.19 | 18.46 | 8,287,191 | 2,348.24 |
| TMGH Holding | TMGH | Real Estate | 4.10 | 4.06 | -0.73% | -8.35% | -1.22% | 4.12 | 4.00 | 7.095 | 1,747,140 | 8,439.97 |
| National Real Estate Bank | NRPD | Real Estate | 17.28 | 17.24 | 0.12% | -13.54% | -8.73% | 17.40 | 17.10 | 0.63 | 36,720 | 67.20 |
| Six of October | OCDO | Real Estate | 20.02 | 19.94 | 0.55% | -1.92% | 25.73% | 20.08 | 19.31 | 1.837 | 92,139 | 1,798.11 |
| El Kahera Housing & Development | ELKA | Real Estate | 6.1 | 6.09 | 0.16% | -7.31% | 35.63% | 6.15 | 6.02 | 0.88 | 144,270 | 570.00 |
| Arab Cotton Ginning | ACGC | Personal and Household Products | 3.56 | 3.51 | 1.74% | -20.23% | 39.84% | 3.56 | 3.35 | 5.975 | 1,703,110 | 913.61 |
| Oriental Weavers | ORWE | Personal and Household Products | 22 | 22.00 | 0.00% | -5.58% | 37.24% | 22.00 | 22.00 | 0.25 | 11,500 | 1,980.00 |
| Egyptian Tourism Resorts | EGTS | Travel & Leisure | 0.91 | 0.90 | 0.00% | -14.29% | -13.46% | 0.91 | 0.89 | 0.615 | 682,539 | 945.00 |

Market indices performance

| Index | Value | Daily Ch. | YTD Ch. |
|---------------|----------|-----------|---------|
| EGX 30 | 5,319.90 | 0.37% | -2.61% |
| EGX 70 | 441.11 | -0.57% | -7.54% |
| EGX 100 | 742.86 | -0.35% | -7.18% |
| EGX 20 Capped | 6,070.21 | 0.32% | -4.29% |

Market Brief

| Markets | No. | Volume | Value(LE) | Trades |
|---------|-----|------------|-------------|--------|
| Listed | 165 | 50,858,727 | 220,023,297 | 12,180 |
| Stocks | 164 | 50,833,548 | 195,152,514 | 12,179 |
| PDBonds | 1 | 25,179 | 24,870,783 | 1 |
| Bonds | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Nilex | 6 | 523,464 | 1,567,112 | 190 |
| OTC | 16 | 2,792,720 | 45,264,161 | 114 |
| Deals | 13 | 2,421,861 | 44,902,130 | 41 |
| Orders | 3 | 370,859 | 362,031 | 73 |
| Total | 187 | 54,174,911 | 266,854,570 | 12,484 |

| Direction | No. | Volume (000's) | Value (LE 000's) | No. of Trades |
|---------------|-----|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Listed stocks | 164 | 50,834 | 195,153 | 12,179 |
| Gainers | 48 | 24,412 | 111,060 | 5,189 |
| Decliners | 75 | 18,391 | 70,763 | 5,982 |
| Unchanged | 41 | 8,031 | 13,330 | 1,008 |





BUSINESS

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Investment minister: New chart for Egyptian investment to be launched soon

A NEW CATALOGUE OF INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS DIFFERENT SECTORS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE IN THE COMING MONTHS

Minister of Investment Yehia Hamed has said his ministry was currently reviewing a new plan that would catalogue new investment opportunities available in all of the country's economic sectors.

In a recent statement made at the 40th annual conference of the African Investment Organisation (AIO), hosted in Cairo on Monday, Hamed said that the country's new plan will include details on all investment opportunities available in the country in an attempt to help investors make informed decisions as to which sectors to do business.

He added that he expects Egypt's

economy to grow 4% in 2014, with this number increasing to 6% in 2016, saying that the government currently sought to include both the public and private sectors in working to pursue comprehensive economic development in Egypt.

He further said that growth and development would be impossible without including Egypt's businesses and the private sector, saying that the government was working to help decrease the backlog and congestion seen throughout the country's private sector since the outbreak of the 2011 revolution. He added that in the coming months great efforts would

be made to support reconciliation efforts between the government and private sector, in an attempt to restore the confidence of foreign investors seeking to do business in the country.

Hamed said that the government currently seeks to pursue a new three-dimensional economic policy based on openness and transparency with businessmen and investors in a way that guaranteed the legal rights of all parties involved.

He further stated that the Egyptian economy had proved resilient since the revolution, achieving growth despite the difficult circumstances fac-

ing the country, which at some points led to the large scale shutting down of production. He added that the government was currently trying to transform Egypt from a consumer into a producer country.

Hamed said that the Ministry of Investment had recently obtained approval from the country's cabinet allowing Egypt's governors and governorates to be more involved in decisions made by the ministry, particularly that which had to do with bids taking place in various provinces throughout the country, in addition to amending articles 7 and 8 of the country's law regulating investment.

He further stated that Egypt's cabinet had granted the ministry approval to amend the country's mergers and acquisitions law, particularly that which had to do with the sale of companies and privatisation. After the 2011 revolution, he said, laws were passed nullifying the privatisation of companies that took place in the years prior to the uprising, laws which Hamed described as impractical and difficult to implement. He said that these new amendments, however, would guarantee both the rights of the state and that of owners and investors with regards to factories

or companies owned.

He added that Egypt and a number of other African countries faced challenges in this sector, particularly after the global economic recession of 2008. During this period, the average rate of growth for developing countries fell from 4% of GDP to 3%.

Hamed stated that Egypt's insurance sector was affected more than other industries as a result of the global economic recession. Despite this, he said, the country was still able to achieve high levels of growth in the years following, reaching 8% in 2012.

EU welcomes pledge by Egypt for 'open' Internet

AFP - Europe's Digital Agenda Commissioner Neelie Kroes on Monday welcomed a pledge by Egypt to maintain an "open" Internet that would not be subject to government shut downs, as was the case during the 2011 uprising.

Kroes, vice-president of the European Commission responsible for the Digital Agenda, met on Monday with Communications Minister Atef Helmy during a visit to Cairo.

"The minister and I are on the same page...We are believers in an open Internet, a free Internet, and not being blocked by a government for political reasons," Kroes told reporters.

"We agreed that it is of the utmost importance to ensure that the Internet remains an open platform, that all attempts to fragment it into national 'Intranets' are resisted," Kroes and Helmy said in a joint statement calling for "openness, inclusiveness, accountability, effectiveness, coherence and respect for applicable laws".

Earlier this month, the European Commission unveiled plans for the Global Internet Policy Observatory (GIPO), an online platform to im-

prove knowledge of and participation of all stakeholders across the world in debates and decisions on Internet policies.

In their statement, Kroes and Helmy said that Egypt pledged to "work together with the Commission and all other interested countries and stakeholders to develop GIPO as quickly and inclusively as possible, on the basis of a shared commitment to an open, unfragmented and rules-based Internet".

The agreement hopes to avoid a repeat of a government-ordered Internet cut in January 2011 aimed at quelling an uprising against former president Hosni Mubarak that relied heavily on social networking for mobilisation.

During her visit to Egypt, Kroes also met with several civil society members who expressed concern over restrictions on freedom of speech, in light of several recent court cases for insulting religion and President Mohamed Morsi.

"There is still a great deal of concern about what opportunities NGOs are getting," Kroes said, saluting the "inspired and very capable people who are active in these groups".

NGOs oppose European bank's plan to fund oil drilling in Egypt

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development proposes \$40m loan for Kuwait Energy to drill for oil

By Joel Gulhane

A group of NGOs have announced their opposition to a proposed loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to fund oil drilling projects in Egypt.

The EBRD is expected to decide on Wednesday whether or not it will provide a \$40m loan to Kuwait Energy, according to a statement published by a coalition of NGOs including the Egyptian Centre for Economic and Social Rights, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights and European groups CEE Bankwatch and Platform.

Kuwait Energy intends to use the money to help fund a project which will drill in five different areas in Egypt, said the NGOs. According to the coalition statement these areas include "the edge of the Red Sea, in Upper Egypt on the border with Sudan and in the desert near Marina on the North Coast".

They urged the EBRD "to reject the loan, or at least postpone its decision".

The coalition prepared a briefing "warning the EBRD not to finance Kuwait Energy". The briefing claims that EBRD "failed to properly identify the beneficiary of the loan, or the country where it is incorporated". The coalition claims that Kuwait energy is incorporated in the United Kingdom island of Jer-



AFP Photo

A group of NGOs oppose a proposed loan from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to fund oil drilling projects in Egypt

sey, which is a known tax haven.

The briefing claims "the fossil fuel nature of Kuwait Energy's drilling will fail to improve developmental or social justice in Egypt". The coalition added that "while the EBRD claims to prioritise renewable energy, the reality shows a commitment to further oil and gas extraction".

The NGO's briefing highlights that the "loan is presented as a means to reduce heavily polluting gas flaring". The coalition does not believe that this is "used to disguise a loan es-

entially geared towards general oil extraction operations".

The coalition believes that EBRD's plan of "accelerated privatisation" for Egypt "would increase poverty and inequality, while weakening both social justice and democracy". It claims the "EBRD aims to expand Mubarak-era policies of economic neo-liberalism, which is described as a 'success story' despite the rampant corruption".

The EBRD funds projects around the world, which are "tailored to the

needs of the client and to the specific situation of the country", according to its website. The EBRD could not be reached for comment.

Kuwait Energy is an oil and gas exploration and production company currently operating in nine different countries, including Egypt. Kuwait Energy's first contract in Egypt began in December 1996 and there are currently five projects in Egypt; four in the Western Desert and one in the Eastern Desert.

Housing minister: Egypt's housing crisis is a result of a quantitative deficit

Minister says subsidies are a 'right we cannot do away with'

Minister of Housing and Urban Communities Tariq Wafiq has said housing subsidies for low income Egyptians is a "right that we cannot afford to do away with".

He made the statement during a meeting of the Shura Council's Economic and Financial Affairs Committee, under the leadership of Mohamed Abdel Magid, during which housing subsidies for low income Egyptians were discussed as part of a series of debates held regarding the national budget.

Wafiq added that Egypt's housing crisis was suffering from a quantitative deficit, with 30% of housing units within the country unused or vacant, particularly summer housing units whose high supply and low demand have caused many to go unsold.

The housing ministry has announced that it plans to provide cash subsidies for units, which will be leased out and rented as opposed to being put up for sale, a practice which led many homes remaining vacant.

The idea of providing cash subsidies, he said, was to better recycle state monies, making sure they are received by those who need them most. He added that the details for this policy were still up for discussion.

Under this new policy, small cash subsidies will be provided to renters for a designated period of time, to help citizens pay their rent.



Daily News Egypt

Minister of Housing Tariq Wafiq says Egypt's housing crisis is "quantitative", with 30% of the available units are unused

Wafiq called on the Shura Council to support the ministry's attempts to make such subsidies available to low income Egyptians as part of the new budget.

He admitted that corruption was prevalent in the sector, and that combating it would take time, but at the same time said the ministry was dealing seriously with attempts to reign in its influence. The minister said that responsibility for Egypt's housing crisis should gradually be placed under the

jurisdiction of Egypt's private sector, with state involvement in subsidies being limited.

Wafiq further expressed dismay at criticism of attempts to develop the Suez Canal Zone, saying that any differences or disputes regarding the project's implementation were merely cosmetic.

He likened the Sinai Development Authority to a "stillborn baby", saying it was an agency created without any powers. He added that suggestions

were recently made by President Mohamed Morsi to grant the authority the kinds of powers needed to effectively carry out the responsibilities entrusted to it.

With regards to the "My Son, Your House" programme, Wafiq said the idea was good but that its implementation was "random and uncoordinated", and that the project's administration committed a number of mistakes on the ground causing it to become "distorted".

Price of steel set to increase in June

Pound's devaluation against the dollar driving a rise in raw material prices

By Inam al-Adwi

Steel prices are expected to rise in June as a result of increases in the price of raw materials and the continued devaluation of the Egyptian pound, according to businessmen working in Egypt's construction sector.

Muhammad Towfiq, representative for the Ezz Steel Company, confirmed that prices for steel are expected to rise this June, citing dollar shortages and repeated increases in the price of the US dollar. The production of steel, he said, relied on the import of a number of raw materials from abroad, whose prices tend to rise with that of the dollar. This increases the cost of production for steel, a cost which is eventually passed on to customers.

Muhammad Hassabullah, representative for both the Ezz and Garhy Steel companies, said that the rise in world prices for raw materials such as billet are partially responsible for similar increases in the price of steel, in addition to the general recession seen throughout Egypt. He added that the coming of the wheat harvest season has also caused many of the sector's construction workers to begin working in agriculture, forcing companies to increase their pay in order to attract an adequate number of

labourers. This, he said, has also helped contribute to increases in the price of steel.

The rise in world prices for raw materials such as billet are partially responsible for similar increases in the price of steel, in addition to the general state of recession seen throughout Egypt

He added that imported steel has completely disappeared from local markets, as a result of dollar shortages and a new 6.8% protectionist fee on steel products recently enacted by the Ministry of Industry.

Samir Naami, director of Sales for the Ezz Steel Company, stated that recent increases in the price of the dollar on the black market to EGP 7.4 at a time when companies rely heavily on the import of raw materials needed to produce steel, will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the price of products for consumers.



ART & CULTURE

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

Aida El-Ayoubi returns to welcoming audiences

By Fanny Ohier

Egyptians have waited for Aida El-Ayoubi to return to Cairo's musical spotlight, and finally she was there, centre stage at El Sawy Culturewheel. On Sunday, El-Ayoubi gave her fans her first big concert since she retired from Egypt's music scene, appearing more than comfortable to be back on stage.

She began the concert with one of her first hit songs, Ala Bali, setting a brilliant tone to the whole performance. Finally, she was on the stage, filled with energy for her adoring fans.

In the first rows, people were whispering the songs they knew by heart along with El-Ayoubi. El Sawy River Hall, which is an outdoors theatre along the Nile, was packed. The captivated crowd kept applauding in rhythm and saluted the singer's perfect high notes by cheering loudly.

Aida El-Ayoubi is an Egyptian singer and oud player. She became famous in the early 1990s with her songs Ali Bali, Men Zaman and Rafiq Omry. Ali Bali, a song many interpret as a love song, is in fact dedicated to her brother, who went abroad to study. Despite being sometimes misunderstood, El-Ayoubi's songs seem to express her kind personality and optimistic outlook on life. In order to take care of her children, she left the music scene for several years until 2004.

"When I first returned, it was for religious chanting," she says. "That is why the whirling dervishes were in-



Aida El-Ayoubi in concert with guest singer Amir Eid at El Sawy Culturewheel in Cairo

cluded in the concert. When I sing the chants of Imam Al-Bokhary, the dervishes add great spiritual ambiance."

Not only dervishes joined her performance, but also Cairokee singer Amir Eid joined her on stage. "The song with Amir was not planned," Aida explains. "He was in the audience and decided to be a guest singer." Together, they mixed traditional and contemporary music. In the revolutionary song El Midan El-Ayoubi's crystalline voice harmoniously complemented with

Eid's Cairokee rock style.

"There's positive reception to the music I perform, and people nowadays like to listen to all types of music," she comments. "Things are different now because there are more outlets for singers like me and for young people. In the past, most singers were restricted to performing at weddings or night clubs. Now, something like El Sawy Culturewheel is a great place for young musicians, and it is also a non-traditional stage."

Backstage, when the concert was over, El-Ayoubi's eyes sparkled with excitement. "It was my first big concert in Cairo. I had another one in Alexandria last week, but it's the first one in Cairo since I retired," she added. With a large bunch of flowers in her arms and a constant smile on her face, once more, Aida El-Ayoubi left the stage. However, it is not for long this time. "We, Cairokee and I, are planning a concert together during the summer," El-Ayoubi said with a grin.

Film discusses issues of mortality and incest

By Fatma Ibrahim

The Netherlands-Flemish Institute screened two-time award winning film *The Last Days of Emma Blank* on Sunday, directed by one of the most favoured Dutch directors, Alex van Warmerdam. Originally released in 2009, the film is drenched with dark and absurd satire, which requires an open-minded audience to extract the film's intended meaning.

Emma Blank (played by Marlies Heuer) is dying of cancer and has a few days to live. She lives in an isolated seaside villa along with her servants. She is demanding, cold and pushes her servants beyond indignation. Not one of them actually bothers with the fact that she will die in a few days.

It is confusing at the beginning, because you do not know why they would put up with such a devilish attitude. Emma never smiles; she shouts all the time and throws abuse at everyone. As the plot slowly reveals itself though, we come to know that they are not really her servants; Emma has forced her own family to take on the roles of her servants and family pet. Her husband is the butler, Haneveld. Her daughter is the house cleaner, Gonnie. Her sister is the cook, Bella and the nephew is the gardener. And Theo, the man-dog? He is her older brother.

It does not take a lot to realise that they are all just in it for the potential inheritance, so when Emma reveals that all the money was lost in the stock crisis, their ugly sides start to emerge and they swear revenge for the way she treated them.

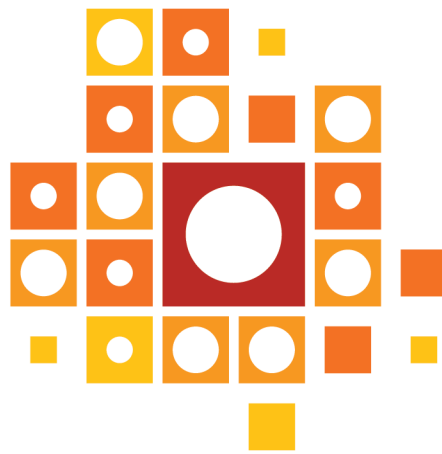


Screen grab of the dark and absurd movie *The Last Days of Emma Blank*

The director was successful in shocking the audience with his dark comic scenes, portraying the atrocities that people can commit for the sake of money. The relationships between characters in the film are also a bit shocking and somehow off the norm. Haneveld is still married to Emma, but has a love relationship with the cook Bella, who is also her sister. Gonnie, Emma's daughter and the house cleaner has an intermittent relationship with her cousin, Meier, although she does not really love him. The most absurd of all is Theo, the man-dog, who is Gonnie's uncle, but wants her for himself.

The Last Days of Emma Blank won the Golden Calf award for Best Screenplay of a Feature Film and Label Europa Cinemas award, both received by Van Warmerdam in 2009. It was also nominated for Best Actor (Gene Bervoets) for the role of Haneveld, the butler, Best Production Design (Geert Paredis) and Best Supporting Actor (Alex Van Warmerdam) for the role of Theo, the man-dog.

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