

DAILY NEWS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2013

ISSUE NO. 2133

NEWSTAND PRICE LE 4.00

EGYPT

www.thedailynewsegypt.com

Egypt's Only Daily Independent Newspaper In English



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A policeman escorting CBE head Ramez was shot and killed by assailants

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Mohamed Saeed's final products resemble oil paintings rather than rough caricature sketches

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National dialogue to be resumed amid boycotts

PRESIDENCY CALLS ALL POLITICAL FORCES TO ATTEND NEXT DIALOGUE SESSION, STRONG EGYPT REFUSES, NSF UNDECIDED

By Fady Salah

The presidency has called on all political forces to attend an upcoming dialogue session. In a statement issued on Wednesday, the presidency said it would announce the date of the next session soon.

The Strong Egypt Party decided to boycott all the upcoming national dialogue sessions, describing President

Mohamed Morsi's attitude towards initiatives proposed at the sessions as "neglectful".

Abdel Moneim Abul Fotouh, party head and former presidential candidate, attended the previous dialogue session where he proposed his party's initiative.

The initiative called for forming a committee that would include Aboul Fotouh, Freedom and Justice Party

(FJP) head Saad Al-Katatni, vice-chair of the Muslim Brotherhood Khairat El-Shater, in addition to leading figures at the National Salvation Front (NSF) Mohamed ElBaradei and Hamdeen Sabahi.

According to the Strong Egypt Party, the committee should tackle three main issues, namely discussing the formation of a new national government, investigating the violent

clashes that took place across Egypt after 25 January, and establishing a mechanism for implementing the results of the dialogue sessions.

Mohamed El-Mohandes, a spokesperson for the Strong Egypt party, accused the presidency of ignoring his party's initiative as well as initiatives proposed by other political groups.

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Calls for independent asset recovery committee

EIPR: Independent committee would help ease the process of recovering Egyptian funds smuggled abroad



Valentin Zellweger, head of the international law division at the Swiss foreign ministry

By Joel Gulhane

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) issued a statement on Tuesday calling for a new independent asset recovery committee in order to ease the process of regaining Egyptian funds smuggled abroad by former regime members.

The call came as the Ministry of Justice proposed a new draft law requesting a new committee to be formed. In its statement the EIPR said that previously appointed committees have been dependent on the ministry and the executive branch of the state. EIPR believes that the committee's lack of independence is hindering the process of recovering the funds.

Osama Diab, a researcher for EIPR, believes that the committee is affected by the ongoing political turmoil in Egypt due to this dependency.

Diab observed that this new committee would be at least the third of its kind since efforts began to recover the frozen assets. He reported that the Swiss court has complained about the frequent changes to their Egyptian point-of-contact.

Diab also reported that the court had made comparisons between Egypt and Tunisia. As a result Egypt appeared less stable than Tunisia, explaining the lagging process of recovering the funds.

"An independent committee would be more stable and would make the Egyptian side more credible," said Diab.

The Ministry of Justice was not available for comment.

In December the Federal Criminal Court of Switzerland denied Egypt's representatives access to the file on the criminal case against several former regime members, due to concerns over human rights violations in Egypt reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW).

The EIPR said in its statement that it was contacted by Valentin Zellweger, the head of the international law division at the Swiss foreign ministry. He told EIPR the decision to block access to the file "may slow down Egyptian-Swiss cooperation in determining the source of funds frozen in Switzerland".

Zellweger did assert that Switzerland is committed to returning these funds as soon as possible.

In January the same Swiss court delayed the repatriation of the smuggled funds, said to be \$767m. Political instability was cited as one of the reasons for the decision.

At the beginning of February a request by Egypt to release the funds was also rejected. However, the head of the Swiss foreign ministry, Didier Burkhalter, agreed to begin drafting a legal text to allow Egypt to regain the funds.

Police kill child

The boy, 12, was selling sweet potatoes when police shot him

By Ahmed Aboul Enein

A street vendor accidentally shot dead by police earlier this month was a child.

On 3 February, Omar Salah Omran, 12, was selling sweet potatoes in a street near Downtown Cairo when a policeman shot him in the chest, killing him.

An interview of Omran recorded last year matches the picture of the child's dead body that doctors in the Zeinohom morgue showed activists as they were looking for missing activist Mohamed El-Shafie.

In the recorded interview with local charity Lifemakers, Omar said he had been selling sweet potatoes on



Omar Salah Omran, 12, was selling sweet potatoes in a street near Downtown Cairo when a policeman shot him in the chest, killing him

the street for five years and that his father had died one year earlier. When asked by the charity what his wishes were, Omar said he wanted to quit his job and learn to read and write.

No to Military Trials for Civilians (NoMilTrials) movement member Maha Maamoun told Daily News Egypt that Omar's body arrived at Zeinohom morgue on 3 February and that his family picked it up the next day.

The Ministry of Interior had announced the same day that a Central Security Forces (CSF) conscript accidentally shot a street vendor near the American embassy in Cairo but did not mention the street vendor's age.

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YouTube ban: 'A setback for freedom of expression'

The YouTube ban opens the door for further censorship, Amnesty International says

Amnesty International issued a statement on their official website on Tuesday condemning the temporary YouTube ban in Egypt, calling it "a setback for freedom of expression".

According to the statement, this 30-day block has been issued in response to the controversial video of the *Innocence of Muslims* film posted last September, which sparked waves of violence across Egypt and the Muslim world. The court ruling on Saturday said that freedom of expression should not "provoke the feelings and resentment of believers of other religions, particularly heavenly religions".

The reasons given for the ban are in direct contradiction with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Egypt is a signatory, said Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International's representative in Cairo.

"These laws allow certain limitations to be placed on the freedom of expression on the grounds of danger to security," said Eltahawy. "But not on the grounds of offensive content."

However, Egypt's new constitution does allow certain limitations to

be placed on freedom of expression, Eltahawy said. It calls for the media to protect and uphold Egyptian family values, and Amnesty International has been concerned about what this might imply.

"This ban certainly opens the door for further censorship," Eltahawy said.

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) released a statement on 9 February saying that they would be taking all necessary steps to uphold the court's decision. No one from NTRA could be reached for comment.

In response to the ban, Google stated that they work to create a community that fosters freedom of expression but they will restrict access to a video if it violates their community guidelines. However, the video in question does not break these guidelines, Google said.

"We are aware of the court order requiring the government to block YouTube and are reviewing it," Google said.

While the likelihood of the government successfully banning YouTube is not high, it is the principle of the matter that

bothers Eltahawy. The Association for the Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE) is equally bothered by this ban and labelled it an attack on multiple freedoms. They are preparing an appeal against the ruling to be submitted to the High Administrative Court this week.

"The YouTube ban is not only an attack on the freedom of expression," said Nada Kabbary, media spokesperson for the AFTE. "It is also an attack on the freedom of information and the freedom of religion."

Such attacks were a frequent worry for Amnesty International during the days of Mubarak, but they hoped this would not be an issue under Morsi.

"The newly elected president has been given an opportunity to fix past ills," said Eltahawy. "We certainly hope the same mistakes are not repeated."

However, Kabbary feels that freedom of expression in Egypt is now in even greater peril.

"Freedom of expression and freedom of the media are worse off than before," Kabbary said. "Nothing has changed since the Mubarak regime."

Diesel supply restricted

Ministry of Petroleum tries to solve diesel shortage in Egypt

By Lamia Nabil

The Ministry of Petroleum has developed several initiatives to ameliorate the diesel shortage in Egypt. Currently the ministry provides 35,000 litres of diesel, worth \$35m, to the market each day. Minister of Petroleum Osama Kamal said that he expected the government to provide increased financial support for petroleum products in the 2012/2013 fiscal year, at a cost of EGP 120bn.

Kamal said that the ministry is monitoring diesel distribution to fuel stations to control diesel smuggling. He added that the Ministry will end supplies of diesel to all stations found manipulating sale prices or smuggling diesel, and will distribute their share of petrol to neighbouring stations.

He added that Ministry diesel distribution will focus on Wataniya, Misr, and COOP stations. The ministry owns 1800 fuel stations, totaling 10% of all stations in Egypt.

Mahmoud Nazim, undersecretary of the Ministry of Petroleum, said that the ministry aims to convert cars and vehicles from diesel to natural gas in order to reduce consumption of gasoline and diesel fuel and reduce petroleum imports.

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Turkish Airlines adds Red Sea resorts to their destinations



The Red Sea attracts many visitors from abroad

In the past two years news related to the tourism industry in Egypt has not been optimistic. Tourist resorts have been struggling to survive and keep their employees and all-time touristic favourites like Luxor attract fewer visitors than in the past.

But there is good news too, and a good example of faith in Egypt as a destination is Turkish Airlines's recent addition of Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh as destinations.

Daily News Egypt spoke to Mohamed Durmaz, the general manager of Turkish Airlines in Hurghada.

Currencies	Buy	Sell	Egyptian Stock Exchange		
			Closing	Daily Change	
CHF	7.2245	7.6252	EGX 30	5,732.14	-0.41%
USD	6.7287	6.7588	EGX 70	487.65	-1.17%
EUR	8.9769	9.4032	EGX 100	822.60	-0.53%
GBP	10.4695	10.9666	EGX 20	6,683.07	-0.52%
SAR	1.785	1.806			

أخبار مصر

Strong Egypt Party boycotts dialogue

Continued from page 1

The Salafi Al-Nour Party also proposed an initiative, while several political figures signed an Al-Azhar document renouncing violence. El-Mohandes claimed that the presidency ignored the initiatives, adding that his party will not participate in any upcoming dialogue session unless Morsi employs a means for implementing dialogue results.

"We are afraid that the dialogue sessions might continue until parliamentary elections are held without reaching a tangible result," explained El-Mohandes.

On the upcoming parliamentary elections, El-Mohandes said that his party is considering boycotting them, believing that a boycott is the most important peaceful method of applying political pressure.

The party spokesperson also mentioned that his party did not accept the way Morsi appointed General Prosecutor Tala'at Abdallah, adding that they would like Abdallah to resign and not to be sacked by the president. "Morsi does not have the legal power to sack Abdallah now. We want him to resign to avoid going through a legal crisis."



President Mohamed Morsi has called on all political forces to attend an upcoming dialogue session

In preparation for the upcoming dialogue session, the Al-Nour's parliamentary coordinator, Hossam Ragab, mentioned that his party was supposed to hold a meeting with the NSF to discuss the possibility of the

opposition group attending the next dialogue session. However, he said the meeting was postponed, claiming he does not know when it will take place.

Two weeks ago, Al-Nour and the NSF announced they had reached a

unified vision for resolving the current crisis. The vision included forming a new government, appointing a new prosecutor general and forming a constitutional amendments committee.

Culture minister retracts resignation

Minister said he will stay until parliamentary elections are held or consensus on national dialogue is achieved

By Luiz Sanchez

Minister of Culture Mohamed Saber Arab retracted his resignation on Tuesday, explaining that he did so in order to "preserve the unity and integrity of the ministry," the state-run Al-Ahram newspaper reported.

Saber Arab said he would remain in his post until parliamentary elections are concluded or until there is a consensus on the ongoing national dialogue.

"I have accepted the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture during this historical period," Saber Arab said, adding that the current situation "is one of the toughest periods experienced by Egypt during its modern history".

Saber Arab said the enormous challenges he and his colleagues face, and the lack of financial resources available, forced him to consider returning to his previous employment as a professor of modern history. "But the feelings expressed by my

colleagues and friends emphasising the importance of this stage and the gravity of our situation necessitated my return to the post in order to preserve the institutions and the ministry," Saber Arab explained.

Saber Arab announced he would resign in a press statement on 4 February, but gave no official reason for his decision. Media outlets speculated that his resignation came as a result of the televised beating of Hamada Saber.

The former undersecretary for the culture ministry, Hossam Nassar, claimed that Saber Arab cooperated with the Muslim Brotherhood in order to help them extend their influence within the ministry, but decided to leave after recognising the government was failing. The former minister had praised Saber Arab's decision to leave on a show aired on the Sada El-balad TV channel, saying his resignation was a decision any patriotic person would have made during such a critical period.

Policeman dies in attack on Central Bank governor

Central Bank Governor Hisham Ramez's car was stolen in an ambush that killed one policeman



Central Bank of Egypt Governor Hisham Ramez and his escort were attacked on Wednesday morning (File photo)

The Central Bank of Egypt governor's car was attacked on Wednesday morning, leaving one guard dead.

Three masked gunmen exchanged fire with police before stealing Governor Hisham Ramez's car. The incident occurred on the highway overpass in Saft Al-Laban when the governor was being driven from his home in 6th of October City to the Central Bank in Downtown Cairo.

A security source told state-owned news agency MENA that preliminary investigations into the incident confirmed that the incident was purely criminal, in which the car was targeted, and denied the attack

was politically motivated.

Policeman Raafat Al-Sayyed Nabil, who was Ramez's security escort, was killed in the attack. Public prosecutors were notified to begin investigations into the killing and theft.

Ramez was appointed as the new head of Egypt's Central Bank in January following the resignation of Farouk Al-Oqda. The appointment of Ramez, who was previously Oqda's deputy, came during the middle of the country's economic crisis.

Nabil's body was transferred to the Mahmoud Hospital in Mohandeseen, according to state-owned Al-Ahram.

Student's trial for assaulting policeman postponed

British University in Egypt (BUE) Student Union President Omar El-Alfy was arrested on Tuesday following an altercation with police after he refused to move his car. He appeared in court on Wednesday accused of assaulting a policeman.

Yousra El-Klefly, a friend of El-Alfy, explained that after he parked his car, a policeman and parking attendant told him to move it. El-Alfy believed that he had parked legally and did not want to move his car.

El-Klefly claims that after El-Alfy questioned the policeman's orders, he was accused of trying to start a fight. She said that the policeman went away and then returned with 10 other policemen who "attacked him verbally and physically".

She reported that El-Alfy sustained injuries to his mouth, back and legs and was held in a police station overnight. The police also seized his car.

It was later revealed that El-Alfy was not allowed to park his car there be-

cause President Mohamed Morsi's convoy was due to drive through the area.

El-Alfy appeared in court on Wednesday in Heliopolis, accused of assaulting a policeman, which El-Klefly claimed was not true. She believes that this is an attempt by the police to exert their power over people arbitrarily.

The judge postponed the case and El-Alfy was released and allowed to regain possession of his car. El-Klefly said: "Cases like this don't usually start again."

The Ministry of Interior was not available for comment.

El-Alfy is an activist and student at the BUE and has in the past led student protests against the university administration.

In September 2012 he was involved in representing the BUE students during a two-week sit-in calling for compensation for students who missed the chance to earn the dual Egyptian/British degrees normally offered by the BUE. The negotiations were successful and the university administration met students' demands.

Popular Current denounces El-Gendy forensic report

The movement said in a statement that the report was fabricated to suit the needs of the government

By Luiz Sanchez

The Popular Current denounced the report issued by the justice ministry's Forensic Medical Authority (FMA) regarding the death of activist Mohamed El-Gendy. The FMA concluded on Tuesday that his death was a result of a car accident, and not torture at the hands of police.

The movement said in a statement the report was false, and that forensic specialists' job was to uncover injuries a body has sustained without assuming a cause of death, which they say is the job of the prosecutor.

The movement also said they had called in their own specialists to examine El-Gendy before he died, con-

firmed in a detailed report that he was subjected to various forms of torture. The torture included in the report includes hanging and electrocution of the tongue, and eyewitness statements confirming his incarceration at the Central Security Forces (CSF) camp Al-Gabar Al-Asfar.

Statements made by the minister of justice two days before the report was issued claiming El-Gendy had died after a car accident without making mention of any investigation are proof that the state forensics report was prepared in advance, according to the movement.

The Popular Current also pointed to the statements released by Hamada Saber, the man who was beaten by

several security officers whilst naked, as further proof of the government covering up the truth.

Saber's beating was caught on camera and in response the government issued a series of contradictory statements denying police had beaten him. Saber also had said he was not beaten by police, despite evidence to the contrary.

The Popular Current said this is proof that repressive police policies are still the norm and that government investigations are still geared towards protecting the state.

The movement also said the FMA and prosecution have worked together in this criminal act, accusing President Mohamed Morsi and the

minister of interior of being complicit. The Popular Current said it would appeal the report.

The movement also said they would not allow those who violated El-Gendy's rights to deprive his family, friends and colleagues of knowing the real perpetrators. The current announced it would pursue two avenues to achieve justice; the first would be through the law and the second through popular awareness and support.

The Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) also called for investigations into El-Gendy's death, saying torture is a practice which should not be a part of post-revolutionary Egypt.

Six activists detained in Alexandria, 19 released in Cairo

By Basil El-Dabh

Six activists were arrested by police on Tuesday evening in a cafe at Raml Station in Alexandria. Journalist Ahmed Mohamed Refaat was detained, along with Islam Mahmoud Saleh, Yousry Al-Nagar, Al-Sayyed Ali, Gamil Al-Shaar, and Atef Al-Asmar.

The six were politically active and members of various opposition groups and movements, according to Islam Qotb, an Alexandrian photographer and activist.

Saleh had filed a lawsuit against President Mohamed Morsi for awarding himself medals that he did not deserve and misusing public funds.

Meanwhile, the Heliopolis Court rejected an appeal against the release of 19 detainees on Wednesday. The detainees were arrested during protests at the presidential palace last Friday. The 19 included student union member at Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science Abdel Moneim Amin, and Abdel Moheim Ahmed, who sustained a leg injury as a result of birdshot.

Two minors, Sayed Hassan, 17, and Ahmed Gaber, 15, were also among those who were arrested and then released on Wednesday.

Nermeen Hussein was the only female detainee out of the 19. She is an activist and the administrator of the Facebook page, "Then we revolted".

Additional reporting by Rana Muhammad Taha

Grand Mufti meets with US State Department official

Gomaa and Posner discuss democratic transition and the importance of Egyptian youth



Outgoing Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa meets Assistant US Secretary of State Michael Posner

Grand Mufti Ali Gomaa met with United States Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour Michael Posner on Tuesday to discuss the current political situation in Egypt and the transition to democracy.

During their meeting Gomaa emphasised "that Egypt now faces many important challenges", according to a statement released by Al-Azhar on Wednesday. He called for unity "to pass this critical stage in the history of the nation".

Gomaa added that for democracy to be applied in Egypt the country must first "clarify the concepts of democracy" and that people must be trained on the workings of a democracy. He also "rejected the use of violence in all its forms and manifestations".

The Grand Mufti also stressed the

importance of establishing a dialogue with the youth in Egypt. He pointed out that "this requires a degree of courage and creativity in communicating with a new generation".

According to the Al-Azhar statement, Posner expressed his appreciation for the Grand Mufti's "role in the enrichment of human civilisation, his vision and his global influence on spreading the culture of dialogue, rapprochement and tolerance among world religions". The statement added that Posner would share his views with the US administration.

Inter-religious dialogue has been an important role for Al-Azhar, both in Egypt and abroad. Relations between the Islamic authority and the Vatican soured in 2006 when Pope Benedict XVI described the Prophet Muhammad as a warmonger spread-

ing evil lessons using a sword, according to AFP.

Many in Al-Azhar view the recent resignation of Pope Benedict XVI as an opportunity to improve relations between the Church and Al-Azhar, reported AFP.

Posner left Cairo on Tuesday after a visit lasting four days. In addition to meeting Gomaa, Posner also met with a number of high-level government officials, members of civil society, activists, journalists, lawyers, religious figures, and political groups.

In a press conference on Tuesday Posner said: "Sustainable democracy is more than just elections. There needs to be rule of law, official accountability and transparency, rights of women, freedom of the press, and many other things."

Additional reporting by Basil El-Dabh

Police kill child



Eyewitnesses claim Omran was killed by army soldiers and not the police

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The conscript was "joking around with the child" when his gun accidentally went off. The conscript has since been arrested, the ministry statement said.

No Military members Rasha Azab and Nazly Hussein spoke to doctors at the Mounira Hospital where Omran's body was first brought.

Azab said doctors told them the child was dead when he arrived and

that the accompanying police officers had orders not to register him with the hospital if he died.

She added that army soldiers, not police, brought the body to the morgue. Azab also said she spoke to eyewitnesses who also claimed that an army conscript, and not the police, had shot the boy.

The Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) released a statement condemning the incident.

"The shooting [of the child] proves

that contrary to its claims, the Ministry of Interior does indeed provide its men with live ammunition and real bullets," the statement read.

EOHR President Hafez Abu Seada called the incident a "heinous crime" that violates "one of the basic human rights, which is the right to life".

The organisation called on the Ministry of Interior to open an investigation immediately and bring the culprit to justice.

Egypt expresses 'concern' for Palestinian hunger strikers

(AFP) - Egypt on Wednesday expressed "concern" for the well-being of Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli prisons and warned that endangering their lives could inflame tensions in Palestinian territories.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel Amr "expressed his concern over reports about the deteriorating health of Palestinian hunger strikers in Israeli jails, especially Samer Assawi and Ayman Sharawneh", a ministry statement said.

"Amr warned that endangering their lives could lead to an increase

in prevailing tensions, with consequences in Palestinian lands," he added, demanding the international community intervene.

Last year, between 1,600 and 2,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israel took part in a collective hunger strike which ended with an agreement with prison administrators on 14 May.

One of their main demands was the release of prisoners being held in "administrative detention" under which suspects can be imprisoned without trial for six months, which

is renewable indefinitely.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, Tuesday, called on the international community to intervene urgently in support of the hunger-striking prisoners, singling out four detainees in need of special attention—Assawi, Sharawneh, Jaafar Ezzedine and Tareq Qaadan.

The Palestinian leader also sent an urgent letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to condemn the health and living conditions for the hunger strikers, as well as to demand their release.

Zakaria Azmy released

Appeals court releases former regime figure after the maximum period of remand was exceeded

By Fady Salah

The Cairo Court of Appeals released Zakaria Azmy, former president Hosni Mubarak's chief of staff, on Wednesday, after accepting the appeal filed by his lawyer against the seven-year prison sentence he received for illicit gains.

Amr Saeed, Azmy's lawyer, demanded his release based on Article 143 of the criminal procedures law, which states that a prisoner cannot be held in custody for more than 18

months while investigations are carried out.

Azmy spent around 21 months in custody after being imprisoned on 27 May 2011.

However, investigations into the accusations of illicit gains will continue. Until they are concluded, Azmy will not be allowed to leave Egypt.

Azmy is accused of illicitly gaining EGP 598m during his tenure as Mubarak's chief of staff and as a member of the People's Assembly.

Amr Emam, a human rights lawyer,

explained that the prosecutor general and the public prosecution authority have the right to release prisoners being investigated with or without a bail charge. "The prosecutor general keeps on releasing former regime figures for free, but at the same time he puts high financial constraints on revolutionary figures held in custody to release them," Emam stated.

Emam predicted that Azmy will be sentenced to a period of imprisonment shorter than the original seven-year sentence.

Mekki appointed new ambassador to Vatican

By Emily Crane

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has received approval for its nomination of former Vice President Mahmoud Mekki as the new ambassador to the Vatican, according to state-run news agency MENA.

Mekki received the appointment as ambassador in January, one month after his resignation from the position of vice president, a post which was abolished as part of the newly adopted constitution. Since his resignation, Mekki has worked as the chairman of a national dialogue forum sponsored by President Mohamed Morsi.

There has not been an Egyptian ambassador to the Vatican since the end of Lamia Mukhaimar's term in September 2012. Morsi had initially offered the position to Abdel Meguid Mahmoud, the prosecutor general at the time, effectively removing him from his position. Mahmoud declined the appointment, saying that he had not been consulted and the president could not remove him from his post.

As a result, Morsi granted himself immunity from judicial oversight,



Former Vice President Mahmoud Mekki originally received the appointment in January, one month after his resignation as vice president

changed the retirement age for those working in the judiciary and effectively forced Mahmoud from office. Morsi then appointed Tala'at Abdallah as the new prosecutor general as part of his November constitutional declaration and offered the ambassador position to Mekki one month later.

Additional reporting by Luiz Sanchez

Tunisia's Ennahda says may quit in boost for PM

By Antoine Lambroschini

Tunis (AFP) — Tunisia's ruling Ennahda party said Tuesday it could leave power, throwing Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali a lifeline in his quest to form a government of technocrats and steer the country out of its crisis.

"Ennahda could quit power if Jebali maintains his proposal. Everything is possible. It is not inevitable for Ennahda to stay in the government," Foreign Minister Rafik Abdesslem said.

"Dialogue continues. The doors are not closed," Abdesslem, a son-in-law of Ennahda party chief Rachid Ghannouchi, said on the pan-Arab news channel Al-Arabiya.

Abdesslem's remarks were the first by a key Ennahda official suggesting that the Islamist party, which controls 89 of the 217 seats in the National Constituent Assembly after an October 2011 election, could back down.

Jebali has been seeking political support for his plan to form a non-partisan cabinet of technocrats, after the assassination last week of a leftist opposition figure threw Tunisia into turmoil.

But Jebali has been facing stiff resistance from Ennahda, which has been blamed for the cold-blooded murder of Chokri Belaid, who was a staunch critic of the government.

Jebali was warned of chaos and threatened to quit if he is unable to form a new government by the middle of the week.



People walk past a national flag through the covered alleyways of the medina of Tunis

Assembly speaker Mustapha Ben Jaafar earlier said that he would "strongly support" Jebali, adding that the country was in a "critical situation" following Belaid's murder.

Ben Jaafar, the leader of the secular Ettakatol, an ally of Ennahda, said he was ready to hand over all ministerial positions controlled by his party, including finance, tourism and education.

"It's make or break, but we don't want to break it," he said, adding he hoped Ennahda would put "national interests above partisan interests".

Ghannouchi had also opened the door for a possible compromise on the future government.

"The government that can save the situation in the country... is a government of national coalition," he said,

bly demanding the government's resignation, among them Belaid's widow, Besma Khalfoufi, who called for the resignation of the Islamist-led government.

"This government must resign today, not tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. It must not wait," she told AFP.

"Those are the rules of the political game: when a government fails, it must take responsibility."

Both the powerful General Union of Tunisian Workers and the union of employers UTICA have expressed support for Jebali's initiative, seeing in it a way to emerge from the crisis.

Ennahda hardliners refuse to give up key portfolios and have warned they will take to the streets of the capital, as they did on Saturday, to insist on the party's right to govern following its October 2011 election triumph.

The 6 February killing of Belaid has inflamed tensions between liberals and Islamists over the direction of the once proudly secular Muslim nation, with opposition protesters engaging in street clashes with police.

Tunisia is also witnessing a deadlock over the drafting of the constitution, 15 months after the election of the assembly, and the country has been further destabilised by the rise of Salafis, accused of deadly attacks.

Poverty and unemployment, two key factors that led to the revolution, continue to grip the country.

Muslim Brotherhood announce 'symbolic' participation in Friday demos

By Basil El-Dabh

The Muslim Brotherhood has announced that it will "symbolically" participate in demonstrations renouncing violence on 15 February.

"The Muslim Brotherhood appreciates the invitation from Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya and the Building and Development Party (BDP) for peaceful demonstrations in front of Cairo University on Friday 15 February under the banner 'Together Against Violence', to denounce all means of thuggery, including the killing of citizens, attacks on the police, the damaging of institutions, and the disruption of production and people's interests," the Brotherhood statement said.

"Therefore the Muslim Brotherhood has decided to symbolically participate in this event," said the statement, which also highlighted the Brotherhood's "Together we build Egypt" initiative.

The Brotherhood blamed various political groups and figures, as well as the Egyptian media, for the current instability.

The BDP, Al-Jamaa Al-Islamiya's po-

litical wing, announced several marches that will head towards Cairo University for a mass protest scheduled to take place there on Friday.

The marches will begin from the Al-Rahma Mosque in Haram, the Esteqama Mosque in Giza, the Salah El-Din Mosque in Manial, the Assad Ibn Furat Mosque in Dokki, the Mostafa Mahmoud Mosque in Mohandessin, and also from several mosques in the Boulaq and Bein El-Sarayat districts.

The BDP said the protests would call for respecting judicial verdicts and issuing legislation supporting the poor, and would ask political groups such as the National Salvation Front (NSF) to engage in unconditional dialogue.

The NSF has boycotted the ongoing national dialogue initiated by President Mohamed Morsi.

The Muslim Brotherhood previously announced its "symbolic" participation in September demonstrations against the film Innocence of Muslims. The September protests saw lower turnouts and mobilisation than usually seen in Islamist-initiated demonstrations.

Additional reporting by Fady Salah

ANHRI condemns attack on journalists

Journalist sit-in at the Press Syndicate violently dispersed by syndicate security, Arab Network for Human Rights said

By Luiz Sanchez

The Arab Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) condemned last Sunday's attack on journalists by the state-run Al-Ahram newspaper's security personnel on Wednesday. The journalists held a meeting with the chairman of Al-Ahram's board of directors Mamdouh Al-Wali to discuss a solution surrounding the current newspaper crisis in Egypt last Saturday.

The ANHRI said the protesters were originally there to discuss how to deal with the problems that arose from the closure of newspapers and the loss in salaries, as well as the promised allowances by the Press Syndicate for those who had lost their jobs and relocation of employment to other state-run newspapers. Al-Wali previously

agreed to several of their demands but had continuously stalled on signing an agreement. As a result, those attending the meetings called for a sit-in to pressure him.

According to the ANHRI, Al-Wali informed the Bulaq Abul Ela police station of the sit-in, and added that the protesters had attempted to storm his office. Al-Ahram security personnel reportedly threatened to use force on the protesters and at one point they were beaten after security guards turned off the lights. The police, the ANHRI said, did not respond to the protesters' calls for help and the protesters were subsequently removed by force.

The protesters filed a police report on the assault and the police's failure to protect them. A complaint was also filed to the prosecutor general, accus-

ing Al-Wali and the security guards of incitement to murder, harassment of journalists, and endangering the lives of protesters through physical assault, including kicking, hitting and lynching. The Bulaq sheriff is also accused of disregarding his duties and being complicit in endangering the lives of the journalists by failing to provide security.

"The Press Syndicate's resort to violence to break up a sit-in by a group of colleagues who did their job to defend their interests and protect their rights is a very dangerous precedent," the ANHRI said. Such acts by people tasked with defending freedom of expression and peaceful protests in all forms constitutes "a double crime" with legal consequences.

The ANHRI praised the prosecutor general for opening an investigation

into the matter and demanding the syndicate also launch an investigation. ANHRI also praised the prosecutor general for urging the Supreme Press Council to reconsider the composition of the committee due to the lack of neutrality by its chairman. An investigation into the actions of the Bulaq police chief has also been opened.

Al-Wali also serves as the head of the syndicate, and has attracted much ire from syndicate members after voting as a member of the Constituent Assembly last December, despite the syndicate's decision to boycott the vote due to the heavy Islamist presence.

Al-Wali promised last week he would not be participating in the next board member elections, set to take place 1 March, citing his current position at Al-Ahram as the main reason.



Sharm El-Sheikh

Turkish Airlines adds Red Sea resorts to their destinations

Many reports have been written about the decline of tourism in Egypt since the January 2011 uprising. Stories about empty resorts and struggling hotels and restaurants abound, and even classic tourist attractions like the pyramids see only a fraction of the visitors they would normally welcome on a typical day. Local inhabitants of tourist destinations struggle to make ends meet and the general impression is that Egypt's tourism sector is facing a long struggle for survival.

But it is not all doom and gloom and a good example of faith in Egypt as a destination is Turkish Airlines' recent addition of Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh as destinations. Daily News Egypt spoke to Mohamed Durmaz, the general manager of Turkish Airlines in Hurghada.

The first Turkish Airlines flight landed in Hurghada in October 2012. "I previously worked in Kuwait where the market is very competitive and the demographic structure of the local market has a large proportion of Egyptians. I can say I am quite familiar with Egyptian culture," Durmaz said. "I started working in Hurghada on 1 February."

Egypt as a country is not a new destination for Turkish Airlines. "We have been flying to Cairo since 1980," Durmaz said. The first expansion in destinations happened in 2012 when Alexandria was added, followed by Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada on 9 and 17 October 2012 respectively, according to Durmaz.

Durmaz said Turkish Airlines' ambitions extend beyond the Red Sea resort cities. "We will be opening in Aswan and Luxor sometime this year, a testament to the potential we see in the Egyptian market," he said.

Visiting Hurghada, one might find empty streets that seem to confirm numerous stories of decline in the amount of tourists choosing the destination for their holiday. When Durmaz explained why the airline chose to open Hurghada as a destination during such a tumultuous time, he pointed out that this impression may not be correct.

"Actually, the statistics of the Egyptian authorities show that the number of tourists in 2012 has slightly surpassed 2010 levels," he said. "I think the rea-

son the improvement is not being felt is primarily because the demographic segmentation of the tourists coming to Hurghada has changed; the number of tourists from some countries has increased swiftly and has passed 2010 levels while the numbers from other countries are also increasing but they are still behind those of 2010."

Durmaz explained this phenomenon with an example. "In 2009, the total number of Russian tourists in Hurghada was 1,009,712 while in 2012 it was 1,323,081, which is an increase of 32.04%. The total number of tourists from the UK in 2009 was 135,943 but in 2012 that number was 116,141, which is a drop of 14.57% but still an increase compared to the total number of 95,890 UK visitors in 2011." Based on these numbers

it seems that Hurghada is slowly recovering and Durmaz agreed. "In sum, Western European tourists are returning to Hurghada but at a slower rate than those from Eastern Europe," he said. To Durmaz, the future looks bright though: "We expect 2013 to surpass the prior years on all demographic segments."

Durmaz's optimistic outlook on growth potential in Egypt in general and Hurghada in particular was refreshing. "In terms of growth I can say that Egypt in general is undervalued as a touristic destination. There are great opportunities for companies in the tourism sector and it is because of this untapped potential that I believe the market only has one way to go: up!" he said. "As for Hurghada, I think this beautiful city is going to be the driving



The Nile and temples in Luxor

force of tourism in the Egyptian market. With our strong presence we will be connecting Hurghada to 219 cities around the world."

One major reason for the decline in Egypt's tourism is blamed on tourists' perception that Egypt is not safe at this time. When asked if he felt that there is anything the government can do to assure travellers that Egypt is safe, Durmaz said: "I represent the private sector so I can tell you what the private sector can do. We can try and get more press coverage to balance out what I call the negative sensationalism that scares people away from Egypt."

While charter flights to Hurghada are common, only a few national carriers have included the Red Sea town in their destinations. When asked why Turkish Airlines decided to start flying to Hurghada, Durmaz explained the company's strategy. "We fly to more than 90 cities in Europe alone and this is where most of the tourists to Egypt and Hurghada come from."

"Unlike charter companies we have the advantage of having many

sales channels; passengers can purchase their tickets online, through our offices, through their travel agents or through tour operators who we deal with," Durmaz said.

At the moment the airline operates three flights per week to Hurghada, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but for all current and future destinations in Egypt, expansion is possible. "Increasing capacity by increasing the number of flights is and always will be on the table for us," Durmaz said.

Durmaz said he felt that the presence of Turkish Airlines and its many destinations will help the tourism sector in Hurghada. "I have the absolute conviction that having 219 cities connecting to Hurghada, and most importantly connecting the rising Turkish market to here, will add value to the tourism sector," he said.

When asked about specific plans Turkish Airlines has to increase the influx of tourists to Hurghada, Durmaz said: "Unfortunately I cannot share specifics with you. However, I think it is sufficient to say that we are a network carrier which means that

each destination relies on the other destinations present on the network of the carrier."

Turkish Airlines' new operations in the Red Sea cities are expected to have a significant impact on attracting a more diverse array of tourists from different areas around the world. "With 96 countries we are currently number one in the world in terms of the number of countries we fly to," Durmaz said.

In the past the number of Turkish tourists has been limited, but with Hurghada as a new destination Durmaz expects this to change. "With our presence we have begun to see an increase in the number of Turkish tourists," he said.

Durmaz expects the same to happen to the amount of Egyptians visiting Turkey. "With travel the key is accessibility. Travelling via transit routes and long waiting hours in the airport is a hassle many would want to avoid but connecting six cities in Egypt directly to Istanbul and vice versa is going to alleviate that problem," he said.

Durmaz believes the airline will also benefit the expatriate communities in these cities as well: "The demographic nature of the foreign community here is perfect, both for us and for them. Not only will they be able to fly home with us, they will also get to their homes much faster than before."

Overall Durmaz is excited with the expansion of his company in Hurghada. "I would like to underline something; we are a private company driven to make profits in all the markets we operate in. We would not be present in Egypt if we did not see tremendous potential here. Egyptian tourism is going to make history in this decade and we are here to help make it," he concluded.



Sea turtles are plentiful in the Red Sea



The pyramids still attract tourists

Columns attack Brotherhood's electronic militias and Morsi's slow decision-making process

Writers explored an assortment of political topics in Egyptian newspapers. Some have debated the issue of the electronic militias of the Muslim Brotherhood, and others have denounced Morsi's slow pace in making urgent decisions.

The failure of the electronic militias
Mohamed Salmawi
Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper



Salmawi speaks about the groups belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood who are assigned to electronically attack a number of intellectuals and writers against Morsi and the Islamist group. Referring to this group as the "electronic militias", the writer narrates his experience with a BBC producer who asked him to share his experience with these groups. Salmawi says he has always been targeted by these electronic militias who use unacceptable phrases while attacking his article.

He condemns how they blindly obey the instructions of the Brotherhood without mastering the minimal skills of negotiating or combating thoughts with thinking. According to Salmawi, these groups exchange shifts inside an apartment in Maspero. They receive a list of writers everyday and are assigned to attack them viciously online. Salmawi notes that these militias stop writing offensive comments under his articles during religious holidays. The writer says he presented a number of websites in which these groups always leave their unpleasant comments or remarks to the BBC producer. He concludes his column stat-

ing that some regular readers respond to his articles in a logical way. There is always a vast difference between the responses of the electronic militias, who aim at nothing but meaningless attacks, and the comments of actual readers whom many times have a point to make in their arguments.

Hold Morsi accountable first, not Qandil
Emad Al-Din Hussein
Al-Shorouk newspaper



Hussein says Egyptians calling for President Morsi to replace Prime Minister Hesham Qandil with Hamdeen Sabahi, Mohamed ElBaradie or Amr Moussa is a mistake. Egypt's plight lies in the policies, not the politicians, he argues. He defends Qandil saying that his authorities are limited and all violence erupting in the country is Morsi's responsibility. Egypt is still living in a situation where the president of the republic is the main controller of everything. Why are many Egyptians and politicians pinpointing at Qandil as primarily responsible for the chaos? If Qandil decided to announce a cabinet reshuffle, then Morsi is also to be blamed because his choice of the new ministers was not wise.

The new officials lack the sufficient

experience that qualify them to manage a country in a critical stage, says Hussein. He believes that Qandil is a scapegoat to Morsi's failing policies and poor administration skills. People will never feel the change even if Morsi keeps on altering the cabinet several times. He needs to change the policies through which this country is functioning. If Egyptians had a better sense of judgment, they would have questioned Morsi himself because he is the one who appointed Qandil. Hussein repeatedly emphasises his viewpoint that Qandil is not the person to be blamed here.

A play
Ahdaf Soweif
Al-Shorouk newspaper



Soweif starts her column denouncing the deteriorating security situation in Egypt since the 25 January Revolution. During the 18-day uprising, Egyptians used to feel a high sense of security when youths formed local committees to protect their neighbourhoods. Women felt safe in Tahrir Square as they protested against the dark 30 years of Mubarak. Today, two years after the Revolution, girls are being sexually harassed in demonstrations and blamed for participating in politics. The writer chides the recent statements issued by the human rights committee of the Shura Council, in which many members blamed the women for engaging in protests. Members belonging to the Muslim

Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party asked why females would go to demonstrations where thugs are around. Some other members condemned the female participation in politics stating that many girls contribute to their own sexual harassment. Soweif chides the officials' repeated attacks on women and denounces the common incidents of group sexual harassment recorded in several marches. Women in Egypt have been organising several marches calling against sexual harassment and their fundamental right to demonstrate peacefully without facing harassment or intimidation. Soweif praises the move and encourages females to continue fighting for their right to participate in politics, have their voice heard in the streets and combat sexual harassment in all its forms.

The slow pace
Amro Khafagy
Al-Shorouk newspaper



Khafagy blames the slow pace of the current regime to the unprecedented

state of violence that has been spreading across the country in the past few weeks. He says that Morsi's late decision-making has been one of the major characteristics of his failing administration. Dissecting the dangers of this sluggish attitude, Khafagy argues that it does not solve the situation, especially amid public demands and demonstrations. Another problem lies in a state of confusion regarding the presidency as an institution. In times when news spreads that a cabinet reshuffle is soon to take place, we find the presidency denying the reports. A few days later the news spreads again.

In Khafagy's opinion, this means that the presidency intends to create a perplexed atmosphere with regards to what people want, which is a cabinet reshuffle. The writer concludes his column stating that Egyptians cannot understand the reasons behind the lethargic reactions of Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood, simply because they enjoy being slow in making decisions, even if it is at the expense of the entire country.

Have the "dialogue" first
Emad Al-Din Adeeb
Al-Watan newspaper

As the presidency has called to resume the sessions of the national dialogue, Adeeb argues that there must be some main features for these meetings to end successfully. One of the important variables in making the



presidential dialogue sessions fruitful is to have major opposition figures such as Hamdeen Sabahi, Amr Moussa and Mohamed ElBaradie take part in the dialogue with the Islamists.

Adeeb says that so far all the sessions that were hosted by the presidency and aim at reaching consensus are more of a gathering for friends or a public relations meeting between the Islamist parties. What dialogue is achieved when the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party meets with the Salafi Al-Nour party and Al-Wasat party without hard line opposition parties? For a dialogue to be successful, the writer says all conflicting parties need to be present around one table. Adeeb also urges President Morsi to personally call opposition figures and invite them for genuine talks to solve the crisis and end the current polarised status. Adeeb reminds Morsi that US President Barack Obama has done that before to engage all parties in fruitful meetings. Morsi would probably garner more support if he took this approach.

EDITOR'S LETTER

On the interior and stability nonsense

A few months before the Revolution's spark, I had two Palestinian friends working in the media visiting me in Cairo. The last time I had seen them before this was in an Arab summit in 2007, while we worked together back then. So, the three of us met at a fancy Mohandiseen flat they rented, we had a long pleasant conversation and then decided to leave.

While we were in the Arab League Street and before we split, one of them took out a very big piece of hash and decided to divide it in half for our other friend, as it seemed like there was an agreement between them to do that before I arrived. A few minutes later, the police came out of nowhere, stopped the three of us, searched us and found the hash in my friend's pockets.

Cutting the story short, my friends confidently offered the three policemen (one officer and two administrative policemen) EGP 100 as a bribe. The officer quietly left the scene, leaving his two assistants to bargain a higher amount of money arguing that it is not enough, especially that we have a high-ranking officer with us. Towards the end they settled with 200 and let us go. I was actually very surprised by my two friends' courage to quickly offer the police a bribe openly in one of Cairo's most main streets and how the police looked very much used to this. It was the last time I saw those two "friends" anyway, given the embarrassing situation they put us all in.

This police bribery story is one of thousands that we always hear about, before and after the Revolution. Other stories with documented evidences concerning police corruption are also always there. Maybe we were lucky that we were not taken

to the police station, beaten up and threatened with higher charges in order to pay a much higher bribe. We were also lucky that we looked "upper class", although we are not, as the way they dealt with us was pretty negotiable and no usual dirty words were said to us.

In other circumstances with other poor-looking people in other unfortunate neighbourhoods or villages, reality is much more miserable and occasionally violent.

Following the fall of Mubarak on 11 February, 2011, a complete cleanup of such a department drowning in corruption and ignorance to the neck was expected. So far, nothing has happened, except for a few cosmetic changes here and there. It was like conducting nose job surgery on a patient with bone cancer. The Supreme Council for Armed Forces (SCAF) did not want it; nor did the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).

In post-Mubarak Egypt the security mentality and poor skills are the same; a dirty tool in the hands of whoever is in power that has enough secrets to keep it functioning the same way without real change. Whether it was the SCAF or MB, they both wanted, and still want, to spread their powers over the new Egypt, and a proper clean up of the interior is not the wisest thing to do.

The past few months have clearly shown us evidences that nothing has changed. Random arrests and torture in the Delta town of Meet Ghamr, kidnapping and torturing activists to death on the second anniversary of the Revolution, and the unbelievable scene of Hamada Saber being stripped naked and brutally assaulted in front of cameras and then



MAHER HAMOUD

attempting to deny the incident. This is the same as Mubarak's police with all its symptoms of dysfunction and poor authoritarian practices.

Nobody with common sense would disagree that stability is essential to rebuild the country both economically and politically. However, it is considered completely irrational to think that this stability can ever happen before transitional justice is met, or at least having serious steps taken towards its fulfilment. Proper trials for those who murdered protesters during the first 18 days of the Revolution, and those who are still killing them until today, are an essential condition for attaining aspirations for stability. However, this is not even enough for the average citizen believing that a policeman is one of two; either one to buy or a one that will just tortures her/him to satisfy those in power. Talks of stability are actually nothing but nonsense before having a complete makeover of the whole sector. But the question is: Does it make any sense that today's MB government does not already know that? Happy Mubarak's fall anniversary, everyone!

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Will Morsi face Mubarak's fate?

By Sherif Elhelwa

As Egyptians celebrated the second anniversary of former president Hosni Mubarak's ousting, protests organised by opposition groups continued against the rule of Mubarak's successor President Mohamed Morsi, who some believe will meet Mubarak's fate. Others believe he remains firmly in control.

Although promoted as "peaceful", marches toward government institutions and the presidential palace have frequently turned violent as demonstrators hurl Molotov cocktails, inventing the inevitable response from Egyptian riot police who use water cannons, teargas, birdshot, and batons to deter protesters from attacking the palace.

Slogans heard during the early days of the 25 January Revolution that ousted Mubarak are being heard once more, this time calling for the fall of the Morsi regime and the ruling Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite almost daily protests, the government doesn't seem to be shaken. "All Islamists in Egypt support Morsi," Baher Ghorab, a Muslim Brotherhood member who works as a journalist, told The Media Line. "[Morsi] was democratically elected and he has many supporters from all sectors of Egyptian society."

Waleed Al-Badry, a media spokesman for the FJP, told The Media Line in an exclusive interview that the group is supported by other Islamist groups such as the Salafis who do not necessarily share the same ideology, but have similar political motives: to turn Egypt into a state ruled by Islamic (Shari'a) law. "Salafis and the Muslim Brothers are political conservatives and they are suffering from a lack of experience," Al-Badry said. He lauded what he called "the wisdom" of President Morsi in watching and observing the current situation. In his assessment, "Morsi is a very wise and smart person. I think the problem lies behind the people surrounding him".

As protests escalate throughout Egyptian cities, some believe the Muslim Brotherhood-backed regime will fall because of the appearance of incompetence in running the state. According to journalist Karim Al-Serafy, who writes

for Egyptian independent newspaper Al-Youm Al-Sabe': "The Salafis will take over, maybe by popular support, since they're the next-best alternative for the majority of Egypt's poor and conservative Egyptians. They have more presence and good credit in the street." Al-Serafy predicted that "power will change hands from a moderate Islamic Muslim Brotherhood to the extremist Salafis, which will take years to end".

Early on during the period leading up to Mubarak's ousting, the slogan of the Salafi Al-Nour Party, "Islamiya, Islamiya!" ("Islamic, Islamic!"), was countered by liberals and subdued by the more moderate Muslim Brotherhood.

Egyptian opposition groups, which include the National Salvation Front (NSF), leftist parties, youth movements, liberal factions and revolutionary movements, still do not represent the majority of the Egyptian population, most of whom did not vote. Out of approximately 50 million Egyptians who are eligible to vote, only about 26 million voted in the recent presidential election.

According to Ghorab, "the [more experienced] opposition groups are taking advantage of the lack of political experience of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis, and Egyptians".

For many, the most important question is how long Morsi is in control of the military.

Waheed Abdel Mageed, Assistant Director of Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, told The Media Line that "President Morsi seems to be in control of the overall strategic decisions of the military where he swiftly removed the head of Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi back in August 2012, and brought in the new defence minister, General Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi. There are a lot of deals that happened since then".

Al-Sisi is considered a new breed for the Egyptian Armed Forces, appearing to be a practicing Muslim due to the presence of a prayer mark (rug burn) on his forehead, and his wife wearing a Niqab [head covering]. "This isn't the norm in the military institution, where its old generation members are known

to moderate Muslims such as former President Sadat, who was assassinated at the hands of extreme Islamists in 1981, and former President Mubarak," Mai Assal, a liberal business executive and once political activist, explained to The Media Line.

It appears from press statements that because the military does not want to lose support among Egyptians, appearing to be the last resort for their protection, it would like to maintain a neutral position. "The military institution is still in control of its own elements and investments, and I doubt that the Muslim Brotherhood will take over the steering wheel of the Armed Forces," Sameh Al-Yazal, a retired general and expert on the Egyptian military, said in an interview on Egyptian television. "The armed forces are still the final resort for the Egyptians, and Egyptians believe that the armed forces will protect them at all costs. But I believe the armed forces will not go back to take control unless there is a popular demand [to do so]."

According to Abdallah Mash-hoor, grandson of the Muslim Brotherhood's Grand Mufti Moustafa Mash-hoor, and a prominent figure in the FJP-run Egyptian Business Development Association (EBDA), "Morsi is a very smart politician. He is allowing this criticism so the opposition can be real and realistic. He is allowing all kinds of criticism. Many are criticising him and even attacking the presidential palace, and this has nothing to do with democracy".

One might believe that a civil war could break out after all the protests and clashes between supporters of the regime and opposition group, but according to Sobhy Saleh, former secretary-general of the Muslim Brotherhood and member of the constituent assembly charged with drafting Egypt's constitution, things are different. He told The Media Line: "We have the complete conviction that there is a conspiracy against the Muslim Brotherhood [based on] media reports against them. The Egyptian people want change and I think that the nature of the Egyptian people is to avoid aggression. The proof of that is what happened during the 18 days of the revolution."

Article first appeared on www.themedialine.org

Debt swap on hold

DEAL INCLUDES PROJECTS IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

By Mohamed SalahEldin

Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Ashraf El-Araby denied reports that the German government cancelled the debt swap agreement

with Egypt, worth € 240m, that was pledged by Germany in 2011.

The minister was referring to an article published last week in the German magazine Der Spiegel saying that President Mohamed Morsi failed

to convince German Chancellor Angela Merkel of the benefit of cutting Egypt's debts to Germany through the swap deal.

The agreement is planned to be executed over 3 tranches of equal value.

"The deal is on hold," said Hans Hamman, development cooperation referent at the German embassy in Cairo. "The first tranche is actually in work while negotiations on the remaining amount were postponed in December because € 30m of the first tranche was not yet spent."

Hamman added that the deal will cover a school food project in cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Ministry of Education and a cooperative project between Egypt and Germany for building schools.

The projects covered by the second and third tranches are yet to be defined, according to Haman, though previous discussions state they will focus on the areas of education and employment.

"We are hopeful," said Hamman, who expressed his wishes that the negotiations will be resumed very quickly after deciding on the remaining € 30m.

Under a debt swap programme, creditor countries may agree to cancel a portion of the debt owed to them, on the condition that the debtor countries invest an agreed-upon amount in local development projects.



Despite meeting German Chancellor Angela Merkel during his visit to Berlin in January, President Morsi was reported as being unable to convince her of the benefit of an Egyptian-German debt swap

Diesel supply restricted

Continued from page 1

Kamal added that it could be possible to allocate some of the financial support for petroleum products to covering the costs of converting cars from diesel to natural gas. He stressed that natural gas receives approximately a sixth of the financial support allocated to diesel.

Factories will be encouraged to make contracts with the Ministry specifying the quantities of diesel they require in advance. Kamal pointed out that if they do not make such contracts, factories will have to pay market prices for diesel.

Hosam Arafat, Chairman of the Petroleum Division in the Chamber of Commerce, said that today the division agreed to introduce a proposal to the ministry to increase the daily amount to 40,000 litres.

He added that Egypt's 400 private sector fuel stations will suffer from the ministry's policies. Egyptian petrol stations are currently struggling with the year's third fuel shortage, with motorists across the country forced to wait in long lines to fill their tanks.



Supply efforts will concentrate deliveries of diesel to Ministry of Petroleum pumps and Watanya stations, owned by the military

Tax receipts reach EGP 116bn

By Lamia Nabil

Chairman of the Egyptian Tax Authority Mamdouh Omar said that the volume of taxes paid reached EGP 116bn yesterday. He stated that the total amount is predicted to reach EGP 123bn by the end of February, an increase of EGP 21bn on the same period last year, when the total tax receipt volume for February 2012 reached EGP 102bn. By the end of January 2013, the total tax receipts volume reached EGP 108.5bn.

Omar said that 70% of tax receipts have been collected electronically. Sovereign entities such as Suez Canal and Petroleum owe EGP 43bn in binding taxes, and the Tax Authority has collected EGP 40bn so far. Omar added that the deterioration of the economy is behind the lower tax receipts from sovereigns.

Omar stated that the issue of taxes owed by national newspapers is progressing towards a solution, and the Tax Authority will prepare a committee to handle this case due to their serious financial losses. He also mentioned that he will hold off on collect-

ing taxes owed by press organisations from before 2006 until they are able to sell off assets, including tracts of land, to pay off their debt. National press organisations currently owe EGP 10bn in back taxes.

The Minister of Finance held a meeting with the boards of directors of national newspapers last week to discuss a proposal regarding paying the assets of delinquent amounts only and the possibility of an exemption from benefits, which make up 50% of arrears.

In December, President Mohamed Morsi announced sweeping increases in sales taxes and stamp duties on a wide range of consumer goods and services, and amendments to Egypt's income and property tax laws.

The tax law states that the maximum debt to equity ratio is 4:1. In the event that the debt exceeds this ratio, the excess interest is not accepted by the Tax Authority as a deductible expense. The law allows a transition period of five years to give companies that do not comply with the capitalisation ratio set by the law the opportunity to fall in line with this ratio.

OCI NV offer accepted

By Mohamed SalahEldin

Orascom Construction Industries (OCI) announced the results of its ordinary and extraordinary General Meetings on Wednesday.

In the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) the shareholders approved the purchase offer made by the Dutch unit OCI NV.

The shareholders accepted the financial and technical information provided during the meeting to explain the GDR Exchange Offer, the Share Exchange Offer, and the Cash Alternative launched by OCI NV as detailed by the company.

The EGM deliberated the financial and technical details of OCI NV's offer to purchase 100% of the stocks listed in the stock market. They discussed the effects of the acquisition on the rights of minority shareholders if they refuse the offer, and the financial status of the two companies if the deal takes place.

The meeting also discussed the effect of the deal on OCI's capacity to generate revenues and the structure of the subsidiary companies indicating the ownership before and after the acquisition.

The shareholders debated the relationship between OCI and OCI NV before and after the transaction, and OCI's commitments towards the sovereign bodies and debtors.

The EGM exposed the legal situ-

ation of the Global Depository Receipt (GDR) and the workers' rights according to the contracts.

Shareholders who hold 83.07% of the company's shares attended the meeting. Among the attendees were the Sawiris family and the Abraj Group, who between them hold 59.7% of shares.

Omar Darwazah, Investor Relations Manager at OCI, said that at the request of the Egyptian Financial Supervisory Authority (EFGSA), the Sawiris family, the Abraj Group and shareholders who have agreed to swap into OCI NV have agreed to abstain from voting on resolutions relating to the share exchange offer by OCI NV and the planned mandatory tender offer to holders of ordinary shares.

Minority shareholders in attendance approved all resolutions for both the ordinary and extraordinary general meetings with 99.99% voting favorably and 100 shares voting against, according to the press release issued by the company.

EFGSA said on Sunday that it has addressed OCI's failure to present documents or requests for approval on the deal, adding that the offer did not include the totality of the company's shares and did not mention the monetary compensation option for shareholders.

Darwazah stated that "the formal application will be submitted next week, along with all the details pertaining to the deal".

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	35.10	-1.68%	1.53%	46.37%	35.66	34.70	45.33	1,291,266	21,321.02
NSGB	NSGB	Banks	37.80	37.75	0.08%	7.21%	33.91%	37.80	37.70	2.536	67,180	16,730.17
Ezz Steel	ESRS	Basic Resources	10.62	10.77	-0.92%	8.46%	57.23%	10.93	10.62	7.73	717,924	5,905.29
ELSWEDY ELECTRIC	SWDY	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	22.02	22.19	-1.38%	-3.14%	-13.12%	22.50	22.02	0.407	18,363	5,026.91
MRRIDIVE	MOIL	Industrial Goods and Services and Automobiles	1.14	1.15	0.00%	-0.86%	-24.20%	1.16	1.14	3.19	411,475	412.16
AIC Contracting	AIND	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.50	0.51	-1.92%	8.51%	-17.74%	0.52	0.50	3.721	7,293,970	278.00
Amer Group Holding	AMER	Financial Services excluding Banks	0.64	0.64	0.00%	0.00%	-11.11%	0.65	0.63	1.99	3,110,983	1,945.41
EK Holding	EKHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	1.29	1.29	0.00%	0.78%	10.26%	1.29	1.28	1.574	182,176	1,082.69
FG-Hermes	HRHO	Financial Services excluding Banks	11.69	11.74	-0.51%	6.63%	-8.92%	11.86	11.64	13.45	1,146,013	5,643.88
Pioneers Holding	PIOH	Financial Services excluding Banks	4.64	4.68	-1.27%	-3.70%	20.62%	4.75	4.64	2.867	612,354	2,370.00
Citadel Capital	CCAP	Financial Services excluding Banks	3.95	3.97	-1.24%	5.03%	14.74%	4.03	3.93	12.49	3,143,734	2,627.95
Raya Holding	RAYA	Technology	5.55	5.59	-0.89%	-1.24%	22.05%	5.65	5.54	0.745	133,273	362.22
Telecom Egypt	ETEL	Telecommunications	14.7	14.70	-0.41%	3.89%	-13.38%	14.73	14.62	14.08	957,780	25,196.38
Orascom Telecom Media And Technology	OTMT	Telecommunications	0.64	0.65	1.56%	18.18%	49.13%	0.67	0.58	24.748	37,945,290	3,357.24
Orascom Telecom	ORTE	Telecommunications	4.37	4.40	-2.00%	10.83%	4.76%	4.49	4.36	11.52	2,615,329	23,553.15
Sidi Kerir Petrochemicals	SKPC	Chemicals	13.01	13.05	-0.61%	-1.51%	-4.81%	13.17	13.00	2.229	170,761	6,893.25
Egyptian Financial and Industrial	EFIC	Chemicals	10.2	10.24	0.49%	3.23%	-16.34%	10.38	10.13	4.11	401,323	706.18
AMOC	AMOC	Oil and Gas	69.00	68.96	-0.27%	-5.78%	-13.61%	69.25	68.52	0.777	11,273	5,953.82
Juhayna Food Industries	JUFO	Food and Beverage	8.59	8.51	-2.41%	10.66%	71.23%	8.60	8.44	0.86	101,610	6,156.79
Orascom Construction Industries (OCI)	OCIC	Construction and Materials	266.00	267.86	1.65%	6.14%	3.89%	270.01	266.00	12.770	47,676	55,059.45
Delta Construction & Rebuilding	DCRC	Construction and Materials	6.6	6.65	-2.06%	6.57%	-12.84%	6.82	6.58	1.32	198,198	156.89
Modern Co. For Water Proofing	WATP	Construction and Materials	2.14	2.15	0.00%	20.11%	-33.44%	2.18	2.12	6.085	2,834,204	219.30
Palm Hills	PHDC	Real Estate	2.49	2.51	-1.18%	2.87%	44.25%	2.55	2.48	36.94	14,703,427	2,662.73
TMG Holding	TMGH	Real Estate	4.18	4.23	-1.40%	-4.51%	-7.44%	4.32	4.16	16.496	3,902,607	8,852.68
National Real Estate Bank	NRPD	Real Estate	19.42	19.66	-1.45%	-1.40%	-23.68%	19.95	19.41	1.98	100,624	77.86
Six of October	OCDI	Real Estate	21.94	22.17	-0.36%	9.05%	74.43%	22.50	21.94	4.851	218,814	2,017.55
El Kahera Housing & Development	ELKA	Real Estate	6.49	6.49	-0.61%	-1.22%	36.06%	6.58	6.45	0.68	104,745	612.19
Arab Cotton Ginning	ACGC	Personal and Household Products	4.29	4.32	-1.17%	-1.82%	49.48%	4.38	4.25	20.117	4,656,474	1,130.76
Oriental Weavers	ORWE	Personal and Household Products	23	22.99	-1.75%	-1.33%	-14.97%	23.01	22.87	0.09	3,875	2,106.00
Egyptian Tourism Resorts	EGTS	Travel & Leisure	1.10	1.10	-1.79%	4.76%	-3.51%	1.12	1.09	2.289	2,082,148	1,176.00

Market indices performance

Index	Value	Daily Ch.	YTD Ch.
EGX 30	5,732.14	-0.41%	4.94%
EGX 70	487.65	-1.17%	2.22%
EGX 100	822.60	-0.53%	2.78%
EGX 20 Capped	6,683.07	-0.52%	5.38%

Market Brief

Markets	No.	Volume	Value(LE)	Trades
Listed	178	116,864,613	606,790,525	22,905
Stocks	174	116,643,534	380,351,382	22,900
PDBonds	3	220,120	226,343,051	3
Bonds	1	959	96,092	2
Nilex	8	454,750	731,113	109
OTC	16	4,340,311	21,971,968	129
Deals	12	3,725,519	21,434,941	32
Orders	4	614,792	537,027	97
Total	202	121,659,674	629,493,605	23,143

Direction	No.	Volume (000's)	Value (LE 000's)	No. of Trades
Listed stocks	174	116,444	376,547	22,639
Gainers	42	48,418	103,698	5,993
Decliners	106	58,453	256,035	15,532
Unchanged	26	9,574	16,814	1,114

Hani Sari Al-Din interview

'The Guidance Office, rather than the president, rules Egypt'

By Mohamed Aiyad

Egypt has found itself at a critical crossroads. Consumed by political squabbling, we find ourselves as a country unable to engage in serious national dialogue. Death and injury plague our streets two years after the outbreak of the Revolution, with clashes and acts of violence between protesters and security forces taking place all over Egypt, leading to the death of our citizens and destruction of government facilities. All of this has put increased strain on Egypt's economy and its ability, or inability, to provide for its citizens.

Amidst all this, we have asked that Dr. Hani Sari Al-Din analyse our current political state, discuss what is required to pass legislation, and identify what factors in particular have caused Egypt's economy to disintegrate.

The value of Sari Al-Din's input stems from his extensive legal experience. Before the Revolution he was known for providing legal consultation to a number of local and international companies working in the country. Recently, he has served as a member of the Free Egyptians party's political office, but currently works as the president of the Al-Doustour party's Economic Committee, one of the country's most prominent opposition parties that founded the umbrella organisation known as the National Salvation Front (NSF). He is also president of the Department of Business Law at the University of Cairo.

The Muslim Brotherhood

According to Sari Al-Din the Muslim Brotherhood are currently an organisation that is more concerned with securing the placement of officials loyal to them within state institutions, than they are with the well-being of the state itself. Until now, we have not seen the rise of anyone within their ranks that is capable of stabilising the country, or exerting the type of political will needed to realise the simplest dreams of the people. This includes a good education, the ability of recent graduates to find a place in Egypt's job market, and above all, a clean cup of water and enough food to feed a family.

The Brotherhood has not only been inefficient in governing, but also complicit in helping to administer our current crisis. The reasons for this are hidden in the organisation's structure, as it is not the President who rules Egypt, but rather the Brotherhood's Guidance Office, which in reality yields more power than President Mohamed Morsi, his party, and the entire Egyptian state apparatus. So far, most decisions implemented by the Brotherhood's political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), have been agreed upon behind closed doors. This has weakened state institutions and their ability to implement change, leading to confusion in both the halls of the Shura Council and on the streets.

What Morsi must do is serve as a president for all Egyptians; however this is not merely an empty political statement. With the rapid deterioration of Egypt's economy, we find ourselves in a race against time to quickly enact decisions that will foster political dialogue and national unity and help work towards the public good.

Unfortunately, the Brotherhood's number one concern so far has been to put its supporters in positions of power, based on the assumption that this will bring about stability, which will allow the government to pursue reform. They firmly believe in the process of Al-Tamkin, or overcoming adversity, which in their mind has come to mean replacing the country's old leadership with their own. Despite this, what we have seen is a system that has remained corrupt and barely changed until now.

The Brotherhood first began its process of Al-Tamkin during the first parliamentary elections, and continuing with the passing of the constitution, which as we know was not met with popular approval. What they



Hani Sari Al-Din currently works as president of the Al-Doustour party's Economic Committee and is also president of the Department of Business at Cairo University

seek now to do is push through the next round of parliamentary elections, and then turn to reform.

However in their pursuance of Al-Tamkin, the Brotherhood has trampled on Egypt's judiciary and ignored the legitimate demands of the country's various political parties. Instead of providing solutions to the country's economic problems and bringing about a clear policy of reform, this process has only helped to chip away at the people's confidence in their government. It appears that Hosni Mubarak and Mohamed Morsi have become two sides of the same coin.

What first must be done, according to Sari Al-Din, is postpone the country's upcoming parliamentary elections, revamp the country's election laws, and create a legal committee responsible for proposing and overseeing amendments to be made to Egypt's constitution.

Despite Sari Al-Din's opposition to the president, he has also expressed his opposition to removing him from office, as there are presently no plausible alternatives, and because such a decision may elicit a violent reaction from the Brotherhood and Egypt's Salafis. He added that what is needed now is a strong opposition that can pressure the president into pursuing the country's strategic interests.

National salvation government

Sari Al-Din went on to say that he and other members of the NSF are currently working on the creation of a new economic programme aimed at helping to get the country back on track. He would not go into detail regarding the programme, as it is still in the works.

That being said, what is required now is the establishment of a new temporary government to serve as an alternative to Prime Minister Hesham Qandil in order to address the country's short term economic problems that grow worse every day. The longer Egypt waits, the more factories close, unemployment rises, more workers go on strike, and security continues to deteriorate. This exacts a high social and political cost that prevents Egypt from exercising its role in the region and in the world, preventing it from pursuing its strategic interests. According to Sari Al-Din, one cannot rely on the ballot box to yield the best results. What must be done is to destroy the old regime in its entirety, not simply replace select individuals within it.

What Egypt needs now is a new national salvation government that will work to improve security and limit the clashes seen in our streets. He said this could be done by rebuilding Egypt's security forces anew from

the ground up. He acknowledged that although restructuring the Ministry of Interior could take up to five years, it was necessary to begin doing so now.

In the event of the creation of a national salvation government, President Morsi would be asked to help to limit the influence of the Ministry of Interior in domestic politics. The government needs to re-establish the people's trust in the state's security forces. This requires that they be adequately equipped to go after both corruption in politics and thugs in the streets.

The idea to create a national salvation government was born during a recent meeting held between Sari Al-Din and Mohamed Mahsub, former state minister for legal affairs and former member of parliament. Other ideas such as the creation of a permanent economic affairs committee tasked with revising legislation were also floated during the meeting, but died with the resignation of Mahsub from his position as state minister.

The state of Egypt's economy and investment

During the presidential campaign, Sari Al-Din was offered the position of minister of industry and commerce in former presidential candidate Ahmed Shafiq's government, which he refused because he did not feel that the time was right. Despite rumours that falsify the claim, Sari Al-Din was also offered the position of president of Egypt's Central Auditing Agency. He went on to criticise the country's current economic ministers for focusing exclusively on long-term development, while ignoring efforts at short-term reform. It was necessary, he said, to address the day to day struggles of average Egyptians, particularly those employed in tourism, which has come to a halt since the outbreak of the Revolution in 2011. Other issues, such as the closing down of factories and drying up of foreign currency reserves, have also been the focus of Sari Al-Din's criticism. The latter in particular has had a devastating impact on the economy, with Egypt's reserves losing half their value since the start of the Revolution, putting pressure on local currency. This has led to mass inflation and forced many Egyptians who rely on imports for food and fuel to descend into poverty.

He emphasised the need to provide a clear legal framework for investors to operate within, and do what is necessary to encourage the signing of long-term contracts. This, he said, was necessary to combat the policy of what he referred to as "trembling hands", which has led Egypt to lose large amounts of foreign investment

because of political and economic instability. Addressing these problems, he said, would require real national dialogue, not merely in order to provide political cover for the government during negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but to prevent the all-out failure and destruction of the country's national institutions.

He went on to say that the government should never intervene in the country's civil, criminal and commercial courts, regardless of their orientation, and it is important to preserve the independence of the judiciary. He pointed to information recently discovered by the public prosecutor that granted the government the right to move and transfer judges from one precinct to another for a period of up to one year. This, he said, was an example of the violation of the concept of checks and balances.

The need for legislation

New laws needed to be passed to address these problems, he said, pointing to his own experience working on legislation. During his time as the president of the Capital Market Authority from 2005 to 2007 he proposed a number of laws related to securities and consumer protection. In 2003, he helped draft bank law 88, in addition to public-private sector cooperation legislation which materialised into law in 2009.

According to Sari Al-Din, these laws were drafted after having consulted with all concerned parties to take their interests into account. The worst thing the executive branch of government could do was "take it upon itself to force into law a piece of legislation that is not supported by those that it affects the most".

Bank law 88, for example, was created after discussions were undertaken with members of Egypt's Central Bank in addition to a number of smaller banks. This law, he said, particularly Article 51 which discussed bank mergers and conflicts of interest, was discussed over a period of five days and ultimately helped insulate Egypt from the 2008 global economic crisis.

Between 2001 and 2003 Sari Al-Din also provided economic and legal consultation to the economics committee of the National Democratic party for a number of legislative laws. This included consumer protection, financial market, and competition protection laws.

When asked about policies related to market monopolies, he said that such a system was not bad in itself, but rather that specific practices undertaken became problematic when they continued unregulated. He pointed to

Microsoft as an example of a company that once behaved like a monopoly, but did not raise prices for consumers in a way that negatively affected the economy.

When discussing healthcare, Sari Al-Din stated that before passing any new laws it would be necessary to pose a series of questions that identify what goals such a law is looking to accomplish. Will this law increase the number of people who are covered? Will healthcare services improve at a lower cost to the state? If these questions cannot be answered then such a law has no value. The same mindset can be applied to tax laws, he said. Will such a law increase the total number of government tax receipts? Will it improve the general business environment in Egypt and create new opportunities for investment? Or will it work to block the influx of foreign capital? Unfortunately, in Sari Al-Din's opinion, laws today have been passed haphazardly by people who are not experts in the field. This has caused the Egyptian people to further lose faith in their government.

Previous precedents

The conversation turned to reviewing and discussing economic problems faced by previous governments before the outbreak of the Revolution, particularly those of the Nazif government which in 2004 began to institute a programme entitled "Reaping the Fruits of Growth". This programme sought to implement economic and financial reform that would extend to the poorest sectors of Egyptian society by establishing a complementary service industry funded by national government initiatives.

The programme failed, he said, because it failed to tackle the need for serious institutional and bureaucratic reform. Less than 3% of Egypt's population was expected to have benefited from the programme, while the country's lower class actually grew larger. Those overseeing the project had not been qualified, as the programme's board of advisors lacked university professors, judges, government employees and technicians.

Attempting to undergo such a programme now would not be appropriate, said Sari Al-Din, considering that the country's middle class is too weak and its lower class too large. Government institutions are also not currently strong enough to adequately combat poverty or work to turn economic theory into reality.

He did point out that the country's economic ministers working under the Nazif government had little political experience, which, in Sari Al-Din's mind, made them good candidates to

work towards the kind of reform that the country's politicians had so far not been able to accomplish. This included Yousef Ghali as finance minister, Mahmoud Mahya Al-Din as investment minister and Rashid Mohamed Rashid as commerce minister. However again, the failure of these ministers to address the country's problems was rooted in their inability to tackle the need for real institutional reform.

Contracts, bonds and monetary policy

With regards to the stock market, many Egyptians, according to Sari Al-Din, had reaped millions of Egyptian pounds worth of profits before the Revolution, not as a result of corruption, but rather because the amount of money being traded exceeded EGP 2bn each day. This however did not translate into benefits for the government or Egypt's production sector.

Since the Revolution, Sari Al-Din has been working to settle a number of disputes related to investment contracts with Arab companies. The government is currently embroiled in three disputes with the Emirati company DAMAC regarding land in Jamsa on the Red Sea, Hyde Park in New Cairo, and land in the city of Sheikh Zuweid. Disputes arose after the New Urban Communities Authority attempted to increase the value of DAMAC's contract from EGP 140m to EGP 180m as a fine for late payment of previous fees, a move DAMAC refused. Similar disputes have occurred with Al-Futtaim, the Emirati real estate and construction company.

Sari Al-Din has said that government officials working on contract disputes should be given impunity to conduct negotiations in order to quickly reach a settlement.

Regarding Hisham Ramez replacing Farouk Al-Qqda as the head of Egypt's Central Bank, Sari Al-Din said that Ramez was a prominent expert who was qualified to determine monetary policy. He added, however, that Ramez would need to move fast in order to balance Egypt's exchange market and reduce inflation.

He added that recent government decisions against the sale of Egyptian companies to foreigners were bad and would chase off investment. Contracts, he said, need to guarantee both the rights of the state and of the investors, and that decisions to unilaterally void contracts, as opposed to terminating them with the consent of both parties, would hurt the government.

The problem, he said had to do with the inability of the government to pass laws regulating the transfer of ownership of companies from the public to private sector. This would require that the government enlist the help of international arbiters, at a high cost to the state. That being said, Egypt also had a need to introduce laws aimed at reviving public sector companies. According to Sari Al-Din, acceptance of Egypt's pending \$4.8bn IMF loan was inevitable, due to the sorry state of Egypt's economy.

Morsi's abrupt freezing of recently proposed tax amendments, just a day after their details had been distributed throughout Egyptian media, was a testament to the haphazard nature in which the president's economic policy had been determined. He added that the freezing of these amendments was unconstitutional and illegal, saying that it should require that Parliament pass a law.

The details surrounding Islamic bonds were also unclear and needed to be reviewed. Using religion as a cover to impose unfair legislation, he added, threatened the interests of the state. Many aspects of the Islamic bonds law were still unclear, but personal ownership of state assets, he continued, was illegal and would be a line in the sand. Sari Al-Din called on lawmakers to review similar debates surrounding bond laws in other countries, saying that Egypt was not "the first country to reinvent the wheel".

Translated by Jeremy Hodge

ART & CULTURE

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

EVENTS

MUSIC

Harfoush at Saigon Lounge
Celebrate Valentine's Day with Ahmed Harfoush's jazzy tunes at Fairmont Nile City. Reservations required.
Fairmont Nile City
Nile City Towers
2005 B Corniche El Nil,
Ramllet Boulac, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2461 9494
14 February 9pm

George Kazazian
Oud player George Kazazian entertains crowds with a variety of genres ranging from jazz to classical Egyptian to Armenian and Indian music.
El Sawy Culture Wheel
End of 26th of July Street
Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2736 6178
14 February 8pm

Baheya
Photopia hosts the band Baheya, which performs Egyptian classics by Sheikh Imam and Sayed Darwish
Photopia
15 El Somal Sreet
Heliopolis, Cairo
Tel: 012 1133 8991
14 February 7pm

FILM

Qabila Short Film Festival
Qabila TV screens the winning short films of its Festival. The films were made by aspiring filmmakers in the MENA region. The jury is composed by Ahmed Khaled Tawfeek, Amr Salama, Mohamed Helzy, Muhammad Bayazid, and Sandra Nashaat.
Bikya Maadi
40 El Hadaek Street
Maadi, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2358 5822
14 February 8pm

EXHIBITION

Alienation
Sami Aboul Azam showcases a collection of artwork based on the feelings of alienation as a result of events in Modern Egypt.
Al Masar Gallery
157 B 26th of July Street
Zamalek, Cairo
Tel: (02) 2736 8537
14 February 11am

A Bride and a Horse
Al Kahila Art Gallery is hosting the exhibition of artist Assem Abdel Fatah, whose experiments with different techniques to achieve layers of lustrous colours and vibrant hues.
Al Kahila Art Gallery
15 El Batal Ahmed Abdel Aziz Street
Mohandiseen, Cairo
Tel: 0122 864 7511
14 February 11am

Weather

Thursday, February 14

Alexandria	19°C / 9°C
Aswan	27°C / 14°C
Cairo	24°C / 12°C
Hurghada	26°C / 13°C
Luxor	26°C / 13°C
Sharm El-Sheikh	27°C / 18°C
Suez	18°C / 9°C

Reviving the art of caricatures



Bab El-Khale'

By Thoraia Abou Bakr

Caricatures have been a staple of Egyptian culture since Mostafa Hussein's brilliant creations in the Al-Akhar newspaper. These days, many newspapers in Egypt boasts one or two caricaturists to translate daily events into visual statements. We have grown accustomed to the squiggly lines of artists, representing famous political figures, who are often in hot water. However, Mohamed Saeed is taking a more artistic approach.

Saeed said he has always been attracted to art. "I was interested in art since I was a little kid; my mother used to give me some paper, a pencil and a magazine, and I would imitate things from my own point of view," he recalled. Without any formal training, Saeed proves that art can be about mere talent. He is self-taught and credits his early interest in sketching for the development of his talent. "Sketching every day and anywhere

helped me sharpen my talent and learn how to turn things into lines and shapes on paper," he said.

His interest in caricatures was purely accidental however. "[I stumbled upon] a Facebook group that conducts a contest every week featuring a celebrity, and members are asked to create a caricature of that celebrity in different styles." Saeed benefited from the exposure to a variety of styles, helping him develop his own. He also started to communicate with other artists via the group, "asking them for advice and critique".

When asked how he picks his projects, Saeed simply answered: "I draw what I like...they say it comes from the heart." It is obvious that Saeed is passionate about his work, and it shows in his artwork. In his Bab El-Khale' piece Saeed pays meticulous attention to the details. The facial expressions of both characters are very animated, making the painting seem

alive. The quirkiness of the caricature adds a unique and intriguing touch that invites one to take a deeper look. The shading of the artwork seems very simple, but a few well-placed lines can make or break a painting, something Saeed knows well. The final product resembles more of an oil painting than a rough caricature sketch.

Even though to the viewer the painting seems complicated, Saeed says it is very "simple". He explains: "People think what I do is complicated, but it is not. I usually start with a very rough sketch to study the shape of the face; sometimes I do plenty of sketches, sometimes I just block in with colours." Saeed's final artwork is made by using his sketches along with a graphic pen tablet and Photoshop.

Saeed currently does freelance work in his hometown Zaqaizq, but he hopes to open up a gallery in the future and would like to teach people how to draw caricatures in similar styles.

Moqattam's hidden treasure: Saint Samaan church

By Abdel-Rahman Sherief

Hidden in the small streets of the Zabaleen, or the garbage collectors area, at the foot of Moqattam, the Saint Samaan church stands as a testament to the faith of many Egyptians.

In 1969 when 15,000 Christian Egyptians collectively left their home villages in Assiut for Cairo to seek work and a better standard of living, the families were given permission by then-president Gamal Abdul-Nasser to live in a deserted area by Moqattam hill. The ramshackle houses turned into the busy area now known as Mansheyet Nasser, or Zabaleen.

The families made their living as garbage collectors and made recycling into a profession. To this day every morning piles of trash are dumped in the area by dozens of garbage trucks from all around Cairo and families collect garbage themselves using small donkey carts in the different neighbourhoods of Cairo. Once the garbage is collected it is sorted and recycled.

Deep inside the neighbourhood, the Saint Samaan church is carved in the side of the mountain, and is the spiritual heart of the community.

Construction of the church started in 1974 by the Egyptian cleric Samaan Ibrahim, going through many phases until reaching its current shape. The first church was built with steel and iron sheets. Two years later a brick building was added to celebrate religious holidays. The unexpected growth of the church's congregation inspired its founders, Samaan Ibrahim and his companions, to expand the church to its current magnificent form and it has become one of the most sig-



The amphitheatre of the church

nificant churches in Egypt.

The church bears the name Samaan Al-Kharaz, or Samaan the Tanner, who lived during the rule of the first Fatimid Caliph El-Moez. El-Moez intended to expand Cairo; hoping to make the city the capital of his kingdom. However, his intentions were hampered by a large hill blocking an area where he wanted to build. The pope of the Egyptian church at that time, Abram, was challenged by the caliph's Jewish grand vizier to apply the biblical verse that states that whoever has a tiny amount of faith inside his heart can move a mountain. He asked him to move the hill and three days later the pope, assisted by a tanner called Samaan, succeeded in moving the hill to its current place, naming it Moqattam, which in Arabic means 'the chopped'. A large mosaic hanging above the church's entrance displays the tale of the movement of the hill.

Many Egyptians believe in Samaan's miracle and the story was preserved

by the Egyptian historian Al-Maqrizi, who lived during the Fatimid era and mentioned the establishment of the church, its name and location in his chronicles.

The hill behind the church is adorned by many colourful carved figures, displaying the passion of the Christ, Christ's journey to Egypt, biblical verses and the Egyptian pope Shenouda. All carvings were done by a Polish artist called Mario, who settled in Egypt in 1995 and was commissioned by the church's founder and current cleric Samaan Ibrahim to carry out these artworks.

The style of the church exploits the hill's caves and the church's largest hall is an amphitheatre which seats around 10,000 people. The area includes playgrounds for kids, a cafeteria, a library, the administration office and the monastery. The church is open for visitors and tourists and its spectacular location, unique structure and style and the wonderful carvings adorning the hill make it well worth a visit.

ON THE TOWN

Fairmont Heliopolis & Towers hosted the 12th summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation



Fairmont Heliopolis & Towers hosted the 12th summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) from 3 February until 7 February, the first OIC summit hosted by Egypt since the establishment of the organisation in 1969. The hotel hosted 27 heads of Islamic states and delegations of 57 countries participating in the summit, among them Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the first Iranian president to visit Egypt since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Painting the town red

In the past few weeks a lot of blood has been spilt in the country, painting the streets red. Funerals of young people seem to have become a daily occurrence; some of them went missing for days, only to be found in hospitals in dire conditions, their bodies showing signs of having been tortured and abused, before they passed away while a small child, making a living for himself and his family by selling roasted sweet potatoes was shot and killed.

As I was on my way to work, thinking of all this sadness, I noticed large red splashes in the dusty city landscape and for a moment I thought someone had actually taken it upon himself to literally paint the streets red in some form of protest. A closer look proved me wrong though; it was leading up to 14 February and gift shops had started to display their annual, veritable feast of garishness of pink and red hearts, teddy bears clutching hearts in their paws, heart-shaped chairs and anything that professed profound love. The little flower kiosks that normally display a few bunches of chrysanthemums and a stray rose or two were filled to the rafters with pre-made bouquets featuring glittering hearts, their wares spilling over on the pavement.

Valentine's Day is upon us and the American holiday seems to have taken a firm foothold here. The women in town are serious about this day from what I can gather from my friends and colleagues; woe betide the man who does not splurge on heart shaped cupcakes, chocolates, furry, synthetic animals or anything red and tasteless really. It is the day to declare undying devotion and it seems that a cheesy present is the accepted way to do so.

Cheesy is one thing, stupid is something very different. A few years ago I entered one of the wildly decorated shops in search of some wrapping paper and watched a puppy in a basket being wrapped in red gauzy fabric, sprayed with hairspray and covered in red glitter. When I concernedly asked the proud present-giver when he intended to hand over the puppy to his beloved he told me: Tomorrow of course, on Valentine's Day. It took some doing to convince him that the object of his affection would probably not be pleased to receive a starving puppy in a soiled basket.

It is nice there is a day dedi-



ADEL HEINE

cated to telling the person you are with that you love them, but all the rules and regulations that come with Valentine's Day make it seem a bit contrived to me. I have to be careful to voice this though, a casual aside in the office saw me accused of being bitter before I could say stuffed animal.

The truth is I am completely indifferent. I grew up in a country where Valentine's Day did not exist, it was something I would see in movies and it always seemed to involve a lot of pressure and tension for everyone involved, while those who were not pressuring each other into sexy lingerie or present hunting did not take the lack of partner very well. Numerous websites host sad singles from all over the world where they commiserate their singleness. They offer solace and advice on how to get through the festival of love, ranging from sending yourself flowers to calling in sick and eating lots of ice cream or dispatching a Happy Singles Day card. Yes, with over 50% of the western population living alone, Hallmark was quick to pick up on that trend.

Do not get me wrong, I am all for celebrate and let celebrate and far be it from me to heap scorn on a holiday that is obviously a big deal for many. Valentine's Day originated as a day to remember Saint Valentine and I could not help but grin a little as I passed two fully veiled girls hovering over a display of pink plastic frames adorned with little red hearts. Would they be as excited if they realised they were keeping a Christian tradition alive?

As the world shrinks we adapt customs from other countries as our own and with all the death and sadness that has been happening around us lately there are some other traditions I think we should import. Justice might be a nice one and human rights would not be so bad either; maybe not so commercially viable but a lot more valuable.