



Press Review City, Mobility, Environment – January/February 2024

Urban Development

New Cities

The Prime Minister and the Housing Minister attended the inauguration of the first 3 towers of the New Administrative Capital's Central Business District alongside investors from the China State Construction Engineering Corporation. The Housing Minister said construction would [continue throughout 2024](#). Mustafa Madbouly mentioned the [importance of a business district](#) in any global city, and added that [the costs](#) of the New Administrative Capital were not borne by the State, but by a partnership with the private sector. He said that the new cities were [a project for the future](#), for the nation's children and grandchildren, and questioned the short-sighted planning policies of the last 30 or 40 years. He also said that the government [had not forgotten Old Cairo](#) and added that [50,000 civil servants](#) currently worked in the government district. He required construction of the [R3 residential district](#) to move ahead rapidly.

The Administrative Capital for Urban Development announced that planning for the [4th phase](#) was about to begin. The consulting firm in charge of the project is due to be selected in the first quarter of 2024. Lebanese company [Dar Al-Handasah](#) won the tender to manage the planning of the second, third, and fourth phases of the New Administrative Capital.

Private investors wishing to purchase land in the MU-23 district, which is mainly dedicated to shopping centers, will have to pay [20% of the amount in US dollars](#).

On the occasion of this year's African Cup of Nations in Côte d'Ivoire, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi visited the national football team in the [New Administrative Capital's Olympic City](#). Begun in 2018, the sports complex covers 468 feddans and has cost EGP 2.8 billion to date. Among other things, it includes two Olympic swimming pools, several gymnasiums, three athletics stadiums, and four football stadiums.

The government is planning new facilities and incentives to encourage the establishment of [industrial activities in new cities](#). It identified 11 sites in the country's new cities for the creation of [industrial free-zones](#). Numerous public services were also inaugurated in [New Minya](#).

Ras al-Hikma Deal

Late February, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates [signed an agreement](#) for the UAE to invest \$35 billion [to develop Ras al-Hikma](#) on the North Coast. Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly said the project was "the largest foreign direct investment deal" in Egyptian history. The UAE's sovereign fund Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company (ADQ) will create a new city with residential areas, hotels, services, an international marina for yachts and cruise ships, and an international airport. [Talaat Moustafa Group](#) will also be involved. The deal was enabled by the [property transfer](#) of a 170.8 km² plot of land located in Marsa Matrouh from the Egyptian Armed Forces to the New Urban Community Authority. The Egyptian government will retain [a 35% stake in the project](#).

Egypt is supposed to receive \$15 billion within a week while the remaining \$20 billion will follow within 2 months. On Wednesday 28, President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi announced that [part of the payment already arrived](#) to the Central Bank. [This project](#) comes at a time of economic crisis and foreign currency deficit. According to [Goldman Sachs](#), it should help bridge this gap, especially as a new loan is being negotiated with the International Monetary Fund. [IMF](#) actually stated that the deal was a “very positive sign”.

The project will be part of the [North Coast Urban Development Plan for 2052](#). [Cairo24](#) reveals that the goal is to create a series of huge urban, agricultural, industrial and tourist communities to maximize the benefits of the enormous potential of the region’s new cities. Similar projects are considered by the [Red Sea](#), including [Ras Gamila](#) in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Housing

Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly announced that the goal of building [one million housing units](#) for low-income families was about to be achieved. He said that [EGP 500 billion](#) had been spent on solving the problem of unsafe areas and rehousing inhabitants. The Housing Ministry said that it built [tens of thousands of homes](#) by 2023. As part of the “Housing All Egyptians” initiative for low-income earners, housing is being built in [Capital Gardens City](#).

[Al-Manassa](#) reports that the Housing Ministry converted social housing into housing for middle-income households, enabling it to sell them at a higher price, by repainting the facades in Obour City. In [October Gardens](#), housing originally intended for informal settlers is now targeted at the middle and upper-middle classes, with apartments costing up to EGP 1.5 million.

The [fight against irregular housing](#) continues, particularly in New Cairo and New Damietta. In relocation areas, a program has been set up to [train relocated workers from the informal sector](#).

Power Cuts

Power cuts continue in 2024; the official reason is heavy pressure on the power grid, particularly because of [urban expansion](#). However, during the [Coptic Christmas period](#), all churches have been excluded from the cut-off schedule to not disrupt celebrations. The government also accepted the request of MPs and citizens to [modify the cut-off schedules during the exam period](#) (January 9 to 25). From now on, power cuts will no longer take place after sunset, but only between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Power cuts should be suspended during [Ramadan](#).

At the same time, the [increase in electricity prices](#), which had been postponed in August (see the [August 2023 Press Review](#)), comes into effect in January as a result of the energy subsidy system reform. In 2023, [electricity subsidies](#) cost the Egyptian budget EGP 90 billion; the price increase should bring this cost down to EGP 75 billion this year. [Masrawy](#) reveals the new tariffs and compares them with the old prices.

The Minister for Electricity and Renewable Energies also said that his ministry aims to increase the share of [renewable energies](#) to 42% by 2030.

Cultural spaces

[Giza Zoo and Orman Garden](#) are scheduled to reopen before the end of 2024, a little earlier than originally planned (see the [July 2023 Press Review](#)).

New cultural facilities are due to open in [Aswan](#) in the coming months, including a public library and a summer theater on the corniche.

In [a tweet](#), Mada Masr reports that the Darb1718 cultural center in Fustat was demolished in early January (see the [August 2023 Press Review](#)) during the absence of the center's employees. The information is confirmed on [Darb1718's Facebook page](#). The center had been granted a moratorium until after the presidential elections to decide on its future.

Other

In Alexandria, the [Abu Al-Abbas Mosque](#) is currently being restored. However, the company in charge of the work has heavily damaged the dome's interior decorations, causing concern and discontent among heritage conservationists.

A MP proposes the creation of a third district in the city of [Shubra el-Kheima](#) to better serve its 3 million inhabitants with administrative services.

The Housing Minister and UN-Habitat prepare to host the [World Urban Forum](#) in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Transportation

Prices hike

The railway authority decided to [increase train ticket prices](#) by between 10% and 25% from January 1st. [Metro tickets](#) have also risen by 12 to 33%. [A new ticket](#) for passengers using more than 23 stations has been introduced, costing EGP 15.

[The Transport Minister justified his decision](#) by explaining that General Transport Authority employees had not received a pay rise since 2019, unlike other civil servants.

These increases affect other sectors, such as electricity (see above), [Internet](#), and cell phone packages.

Metro

The [passenger test phase](#) of the Cairo Metro Line 3 begins between Kit-Kat and Rod el-Farag stations.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi approved the third installment of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) loan of 100 billion yen, or EGP 20.6 billion, to develop the [4th line](#) of the Cairo metro.

In [Alexandria](#), the first phase of the metro will extend from Mahatat Masr to Sidi Gaber. Eventually, the metro will extend as far as Abu Qir.

Other

The Transport Minister announces plans to develop [river shuttles](#).

In a bid to limit public spending and focus it on projects with a quick return on investment, the government put the [monorail extension](#), as well as the construction of new bridges and roads, on hold.

[Ghada Wali](#)'s trial for plagiarism begins this month (see the [Summer 2022 Press Review](#)). The artist is accused of plagiarizing the work of Russian artist Georgy Kurasov to decorate the Koleyat al-Banat metro station on line 3. The case reopens the debate on intellectual property in Egypt. Eventually, Ghada Wali was [sentenced](#) to 6 months' imprisonment and ordered to pay 100,000 Egyptian pounds in damages to her Russian counterpart.

Tourism

While a senator questions the ability of Egypt's [tourism infrastructure](#) to support large numbers of tourists, a Senate committee is working to [improve tourist attractions](#) throughout the country.

In Luxor, the first [self-service ticket machine](#) is about to open in the Valley of the Kings. Eventually, more than 40 machines will be installed at 20 archaeological sites. Also in Luxor, 95% of the restoration work on the [columns of the Karnak temple](#) has been completed.

The [pyramids of Giza](#) are at the heart of a controversy. At the end of January, a video of restoration work on the Menkaure Pyramid was posted on social media. An Egyptian-Japanese mission begun work on restoring the granite covering at the base of the pyramid. While the Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities sees this as a "gift from Egypt to the world in the 21st century", there has been widespread criticism among Egyptologists and on social media. The Tourism and Antiquity Ministry decided to [put the project on hold](#) pending the decision of a committee of experts [led by Zahi Hawass](#).

Several senators call for the tourism potential of the [Holy Family Path](#) in Egypt to be developed.

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities inaugurated the Ramla and Al-Haddad Towers at [Cairo Citadel](#) following the completion of restoration operations.

In an attempt to get more foreign currencies, the government is selling [historic state-owned hotels](#). Seven of them were bought by the [Talaat Moustafa Group](#), including the Sofitel Legend Old Cataract Aswan, Mövenpick Resort Aswan, Sofitel Winter Palace Luxor, Steigenberger Hotel Tahrir, Steigenberger Cecil Hotel Alexandria, Marriott Mena House Cairo, and Marriott Omar Khayyam Zamalek.

The 55th edition of the [Cairo International Book Fair](#) took place from January 25 to February 5 at the Egypt International Exhibition Center in New Cairo.

Florian Bonnefoi