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AL wants to give peace talks a chance

CERNOBBIO, Italy (News Agencies) – The Arab League's Secretary General Amr Moussa said yesterday negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians should be given a chance, but wondered whether Israel was ready for "real peace".

"We see the negotiations start, let us give them a chance," Moussa told AFP at the Forum Ambrosetti, an annual political and economic summit in Cernobbio, on the Lake of Como in northern Italy.

"I don't want to be pessimistic on the first day of negotiations," he added.

"Let us see what kind of compromise (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu is offering, we have never heard from the Israeli side any initiative or any concrete position," Moussa said.

Moussa wondered whether Israel was ready to accept "a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital".

Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have vowed to meet twice a month in a bid to hammer out an

accord after Thursday's launching of the first direct negotiations in 20 months in Washington.

US President Barack Obama can, Moussa said. "This is his motto, 'yes we can' and this has to cover the Arab-Israeli conflict too," Moussa added.

In Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who hosted the first session of talks between Netanyahu and Abbas, expressed confidence that this effort could succeed where so many others have failed.

President Barack Obama, aiming to resolve one of the world's most intractable disputes, has set a goal of striking a deal within 12 months to create an independent Palestinian state that exists peacefully, side-by-side with the Jewish state.

"This will not be easy," Netanyahu told Reuters. "A true peace, a lasting peace, would be achieved only with mutual and painful concessions from both sides."

'Wheat reserve to last until Jan'

WHEAT reserves held by Egypt will last until the end of January, a local newspaper quoted an official as saying yesterday.

"The safe strategic reserve of wheat will now last until the last week of next January instead of December, the date previously announced in August," *Al-Masry Al-Youn* said, citing Ahmed el-Rakaiby, the head of Egypt's wheat committee.

Egypt consumes around 14 million tonnes of wheat annually and relies on foreign supplies for about half of that amount. It said last month it aimed for 70 per cent self-sufficiency in wheat by 2020 as it plants new strains with higher yields.

Egyptians traditionally increase consumption of bread during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which started in mid-August, according to Reuters.

Hefty State subsidies keep bread affordable in Egypt, where one fifth of the population lives on less than \$1 per day, according to UN figures. A decision by Russia, the largest supplier of wheat to Egypt last year, to ban wheat exports following a drought sent world prices soaring last month.

Egypt's Trade Ministry has said the higher prices will cost the State between 2.5 billion and 4 billion Egyptian pounds (\$451-722 million) in the current fiscal year.



Relief goods: Trucks transporting relief goods are blocked yesterday on the road by Pakistani farmers who demand the government to irrigate their lands in Shikarpur. Fresh floods in southern Pakistan are snaring at least a million people displaced by earlier flooding, adding to the huge problems faced by the underfunded relief effort, UN aid agencies warned.



Photo by Suliman el-Otefi

Islam promotes dialogue, peace: Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif (3rd from left), on behalf of President Hosni Mubarak, attended the last Friday prayers of the holy month of Ramadan in the Cairo Mosque of el-Nur yesterday. Before the prayers, el-Nur Mosque imam Sheikh Ahmed Turk delivered a speech in which he said that Islam promotes dialogue among nations and calls for understanding and respect for diverse religions and cultures. "Islam, which promotes peace, highlights the need for dialogue to resolve disputes and conflicts among nations and cultures," Sheikh Turk said. He pointed out that Islam calls on the people to live in peace and resolve their disputes through peaceful dialogue. Sheikh Turk also said that Islam rejects acts of terrorism and violence. The holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from dawn to dusk, is expected to end on September 9 or 10, depending on the sighting of the new moon.

Gov't mulls funding 1st nuclear plant

Tamer Mohamed

THE ministries of electricity and finance as well as other ministries concerned will soon meet to consider options for financing the construction of Egypt's first nuclear plant for peaceful purposes, according to officials.

"Financing such projects is very difficult, given that it takes a long time to conduct studies, carry out construction works and launch them into operation," said Magdi Radi, the spokesman for the Egyptian Cabinet.

He added that an ad-hoc ministerial committee would examine all options and take into account "all possible scenarios".

Late last month Egypt announced it would build its planned nuclear power plant on the Mediterranean coast of el-Dabaa which it hopes will start production in 2019.

Egypt has already used several foreign companies as consultants, including Areva and Westinghouse Electric Co. This plant is expected to be followed by three other reactors, tentatively scheduled to start production in 2025 to meet the nation's growing energy needs.

This would be the fourth country in the region to build nuclear reactors. Meanwhile, the country is also willing to develop renewable energies such as wind and solar.

Egypt wants 20 per cent of its electricity to come from renewable energy by 2020. Wind energy alone would account for 12 per cent.

Dissidents trade accusations over succession

Staff report

OPPOSITION leader Ayman Nour has accused a vocal critic of the Egyptian regime of weakening the opposition by signing a petition for the son of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to run for president in next year's elections.

Nour, the founder of the liberal al-Ghad (Tomorrow) Party and a former

presidential candidate, said Saad Eddin Ibrahim, an Egyptian-American rights activist, had sabotaged the work of Egypt's liberalists by adding his signature to a petition asking Gamal Mubarak to run for president.

"Ibrahim was a major opponent to political succession," Nour told a rally in the coastal city of Alexandria. "But the strange thing is that he had become one of the signatories of the petition,"

he added. Ibrahim had filed his colleagues in the opposition by signing the petition presented to him by a group of Gamal Mubarak supporters who started a campaign to put pressure on the son of the President to rule Egypt following the end of his father's tenure next year. Mubarak, 82, has yet to say if he will seek a sixth term in office.

Some of his colleagues in the opposition had even pointed to a deal between

him and the regime in return for an end to a series of lawsuits launched against him by a group of the ruling National Democratic Party loyalists.

"There're no deals with the Government whatsoever," Ibrahim said. "My principle is to encourage political plurality," he added in an interview with the talk show Cairo today on the private satellite channel Orbit.

Opinion poll

VOTE NOW

The Gazette Online
Egypt's opposition
weakness is due to:

- Official restrictions.
- Internal squabbling.

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ElBaradei to sue newspapers

Ashraf Sadek

THE family of former UN nuclear agency head, Mohamed ElBaradei, will seek libel damages from some Egyptian newspapers for publishing "steamy photos" of ElBaradei's daughter Laila with her husband during their honeymoon.

The papers claimed that they obtained the photos from Laila's personal page on the Facebook, social networking site.

However, ElBaradei, the chairman of the National Coalition for Change, regarded these photos as offensive because they showed Laila in her swimming suit. He decided to sue the papers for the "distress, hurt and embarrassment" the photos had caused to ElBaradei's family.

ElBaradei claimed that the papers decided to publish his daughter's photos to tarnish his image in Egypt before the presidential elections in 2011.

Weather

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----|
| Cairo | 32 | 24 |
| Alexandria | 30 | 24 |
| Port Said | 30 | 26 |
| Aswan | 38 | 27 |
| Luxor | 38 | 25 |
| Siwa | 36 | 22 |
| Sharm El-Sheikh | .. 37 | 28 |
| Hurgada | ... 36 | 27 |
| Taba | 39 | 26 |

(World weather Page 3)

The Egyptian Gazette autumn course

Building on success of previous training courses, **The Egyptian Gazette**, the Middle East's oldest English-language daily, plans a month-long training course for undergraduates and other people who are interested in English-language journalism. The course, due to begin in September, focuses on the intricacies of translation and aims to enable trainees to acquire skills needed for launching a career in English-language journalism.

For more information and registration, please contact: 25783333, ext:1080 daily except for Fridays and Saturdays or e-mail to gazette-editor@hotmail.com

TV show stirs debate over Muslim Brotherhood

Salah Nasrawi

THE bearded young cleric yells at a young woman for lifting her traditional veil from her face while speaking to him on the street, and rants against Egyptians who adopt Western lifestyles and values. His followers beat up an opponent.

That is the image of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood depicted in an Egyptian TV mini-series that casts light on the country's largest opposition movement just three months before a crucial parliamentary elections.

Supporters accuse the Government of using the show as a propaganda tool to demonise the group by portraying it as

a collection of fanatics battling secular-minded and Western-oriented Egyptians and trying to turn Egypt into an Islamic society.

Political scientist Ashraf el-Sherif, however, said the show has had the opposite effect.

"What the series has done is turning a dinosaur into a living political phenomenon," said el-Sherif, who lectures at the American University in Cairo (AUC).

"Now, the Brothers are no longer a banned group, as the Government insists. They have entered every house, street and coffee house in Egypt," he told AP.

The Muslim Brotherhood has gained a measure of popular support with its

network of social services. It is the largest and most organised political opposition movement.

The TV drama, titled *Al-Gamaa* (The Group), has become one of the most popular of this year's Ramadan series. The plot centres on a recent court case in which the Brotherhood was accused of setting up a student militia, then uses flashbacks to tell the story of its foundation.

Critics say the show is historically inaccurate, and leading Brotherhood members allege that the script expresses the views and policies of the Government, which regards the group as a breeding ground for extremists.

"What was meant to be a work of

drama has turned into flagrant political propaganda," said Abdel-Gelil el-Sharnouby, editor of the Brotherhood's website.

The show's creator, renowned scriptwriter Wahid Hamid, acknowledged he took some liberties with the facts for production purposes. But he has insisted the show was mainly based on the group's own documents, including a memoir and other writings by its founder Hassan al-Banna.

"Those who know the Brothers will know the lies of the Government and its media and will make sure those people who haven't met the Brothers are eager to know them and probably join them," the group's

supreme leader Mohamed Badie said.

The group has stepped up efforts to improve its image with videos and its own Facebook-style social networking site known as Ikhwanbook, which advertises a goal to "spread awareness of moderate Islamic values."

Pro-Government writers say the Muslim Brotherhood's history cannot be whitewashed.

"Egyptians know that the Brotherhood intends to set up an Islamic state that will suppress its opponents," wrote Abdel Moneim Saeed, a senior ruling party member and chairman of the board of the State-owned *Al-Ahram* newspaper. "It is hostile to all and wants to push the nation back to the Middle Ages."

