With the Egyptian children around him, when he gave go ahead to implement the East Port Said project

President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi

On November 27, 2015, President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi inaugurated the initial phase of the East Port Said project. This was part of a strategy initiated by the digging of the New Suez Canal (NSC), already completed within one year on August 6, 2015. This was followed by steps to dig out a 9-km-long branch channel East of Port-Said from among dozens of projects for the development of the Suez Canal zone.

This project is the main pillar of investment, on which Egypt pins hopes to yield returns to address public budget deficit, reduce unemployment and increase growth rate. This would positively reflect on the improvement of the standard of living for various social groups in Egypt. Above all, this would foster Egyptians’ will to successfully address the challenges of careful planning and speedy implementation of massive investment projects, in spite of the state of instability and turmoil imposed on the Middle East and North Africa and the unrelenting attempts by certain international and regional powers to destabilize Egypt.

In a suggestive gesture by President el-Sissi, as he was giving a go-ahead to launch the new phase of the East Port Said project, he insisted to have around him on the podium a galaxy of Egypt’s children, including siblings of martyrs, signifying Egypt’s recognition of the role of young generations in building its future.

East Port Said Development Project:
The industrial estate will house iron and steel and complimentary industries serving the port as well as maritime industries.

The one million- population city, which serves mainly as an urban extension to Port Said governorate, will comprise areas for urban real-estate development, as well as maritime, eco-tourism facilities. The zone infrastructure has the potential for a thriving urban community in the East Port Said zone.

Many roads and highways lead to the location, including el-Arish-al-Qantara road, al-Qantara Sharq at-Tafri’a road and Port Fuad ferry.

Main Component of the project

Port Said Zone

Currently underway, this project comprises the construction of an extension to Port-Said city east of the Suez Canal (port-city), linking it with a road and tunnel network, a major logistics, residential and trade zone, by building a sea port with 5-km.-long and 500-m.-wide docks. These include miscellaneous 5-km.-long and 400-500m.-wide docks as a first phase a 950m.-diameter turnaround area and a 3 km.-long and 500-m.-wide and 18.5 m.-deep navigation channel. This would allow ships to enter directly the East Port Said port without having to wait for ships transiting the Suez Canal to pass by. The project also comprises a 9 km.-long and 250m.-wide approach channel, a 40 million-sq m.-industrial area, including 16 million sq.m. as a first priority, in addition to a factory zone, an industrial estate management that contains a service area, a conference center, management premises, a sales center and a hotel. Included will be also a residential area covering 4 million sq. m. with total 10,000 units as a first phase to accommodate 50,000 engineers, techni-
cians and workers. Upon completion, the area is expected to house 150,000 dwellers. In addition, the site will comprise a 30 million sq. m. logistics area dedicated to port and industrial estate services and an 80 million sq.m- aqua culture area that is expected to yield 55,000 tons of fish a day, providing employment for 7,000 citizens.

To serve this project, plans are underway to upgrade Port Said- Sharm el-Sheikh road, with a length of 500 km and to Ismailia-Port Said road, with a length of 104 km. In addition, the June 30 Corridor will be built, to start from the international coastal road up to km 90 on Ismailia-Cairo desert road with a length of 102 km.

Al-Galala town will be built on top of Mount al-Galala al-Bahariyya at a height of 700 m from sea level. The town, stretching over 17,000 feddans, comprises a housing, tourist and service area, including a world-class tourist resort called al-Galala. Moreover, a number of tunnels are being built underneath the Suez Canal in south Port Said area at km 19 milestone. These include three 4km-long and 1, 5 m.-wide vehicular and one 7km-long and 11.5 m.-wide railway tunnel.

Ismailia-al-Qantara Corridor

This project comprises the construction of the new city of Ismailia (already initiated) that would have a total of 55,000 residential units on an area of 5,800 feddans, fully equipped with utilities, services and administrative facilities. This will be the first Egyptian city that is sensitive to people with special needs. In addition, the project will include an industrial estate in al-Qantara west and technology part east of Ismailia.

Currently, the Ismailia-al-Oaja road is being upgraded at a length of 210 km, while a number of tunnels are being dug out north of Ismailia at km 73 milestone under the Suez Canal Authority scale, thus creating a traffic corridor starting from the heart of Cairo up to Sinai seaport. Additionally, a culvert will be dug out underneath the Suez Canal in Serabium area to provide irrigation water necessary for agricultural development in the area east of the Canal. Another culvert will be built to pass waste water from al-Mahsama waste water canal that was previously wasted away into at-Timssah lagoon in large quantities reaching to 1.25 million c.m. a day.

As-Sokhna Port Development Project

Recently, articles of association have been signed both chairmen of the Suez Canal Authority and the Red Sea Ports Authority to incorporate a joint stock company between the Public Authority for the Development of the Suez Canal Zone on the one hand and Dubai Ports international and Soenker Bunkering on the other. This is the starting-point for upgrading as-Sokhna Port as part of the Suez Canal Zone Development master plan. The agreement included a settlement of all outstanding problems among all parties concerned. The company plans to build a new dock similar to the existing liquid bulk one, in order to facilitate the handling of all kinds of oil, gas and petrochemical products. The new dock is scheduled to be completed within one year. According to the articles of association, the Public Authority for the Development of the Suez Canal Zone will hold 60 per cent of the new company’s equity, while the other two companies will hold 20 per cent each. The agreement involves settlement and full repayment, before signing, of all dues owed to the Government of Egypt by both companies. This
would ensure the settlement of all outstanding problem in both East Port-Said and as-Sokhna ports and Egypt’s needs of oil and gas product are made available.

Presidential messages in the inaugural ceremony:

The speedy implementation of this, together with a large number of similar major projects across Egypt is indeed a new window of hope for Egyptians, refuting all calls of despair propagated by narrow-minded cynics that aim to discourage all attempts at progress and remedy. It goes without saying that Egypt is actively forging its way forward in spite of difficulties of financing and black propaganda pressures. And other hurdles.

In his inaugural speech at the ceremony, President Sissi was, as usual, keen to send a number of messages. Salient of these was the tone of confidence based on a full conviction that the project, which would normally take 10-15 years to complete, will be completed within a single year.

Based on the past successful experience of the New Suez Canal, this reflects the President’s trust in the capacity and resolve of the implementing agencies, together with a firm will to make use rather than lose opportunity.

One message the President was keen to convey was that all projects will be initiated only after in-depth and exhaustive studies have made and all necessary equipment, plant and staff put in place.

Moreover, the President pointed out a number of challenges facing the progress of building, development and stability:

- Economically, such projects need huge financing that should be made available in advance. Of these, the President cited the one million and one half feddan project, through which the state plans to introduce a new model of modern Egyptian countryside. This includes reclaimed land, drilled water wells, irrigation channels and facilities and housing units. As a pilot, the Farafra Oasis has been already implemented, with 1,500 residential units.

- Phase I of the national road network covering 5,000 km has been completed and Phase II was initiated, thus better connecting Egypt’s cities and governorates, apart from linking industrial estates, airports and sea-ports. More than three airports have been completed but not yet publicized,

- The challenge of combating corruption.

- The challenge of creating an enabling investment climate and activating law, through plans to overcome energy crisis for factories.

- The challenge of combating terrorism that is trying to obstruct our progress.

- The challenge of countering foreign conspiracies against Egypt.

In the same vein, the President called on the media to “implant hope into the hearts of people.” In spite of all hardships, the state of Egypt has managed this year to repay its foreign debt liabilities, including US Dollar 2.4 billion to Paris Club, in addition to down payments of US Dollar 2.7 billion for the contracted power stations. Meanwhile, a contract was signed with Russia to build a nuclear power plant in ad-Dhab’a and mobilizing the construction site. Also work is on full swing in building modern grain silos, starting agricultural expansion. This is supported by a monetary policy that ensures stabilization of the Egyptian pound exchange rate against other currencies and a clear-cut investment law.

These are some features of the efforts that led the World Bank to anticipate a growth rate of five per cent for Egypt in 2016.
The city was founded in the early 20th century. Until a few years ago, it was a small fishing village but since the 1980s has been continually enlarged by Egyptian and foreign investors to become the leading coastal resort on the Red Sea. Holiday villages and hotels provide aquatic sport facilities for sailboarders, yachtsmen, scuba divers and snorkelers. Hurghada is known for its water sports activities, nightlife and warm weather. Daily temperature hovers round 30 °C (86 °F) most of the year. Numerous Europeans spend their Christmas and New Year holidays in the city, mainly Germans, Russians and Italians.

Hurghada stretches for about 36 km along the seashore and it does not reach far into the surrounding desert. Hurghada is divided into three parts:

- Downtown (El Dahhar) is the old part;
- Saqqala is the city center.
- El Mamsha (the Walkway) is the modern part.

Saqqala is the relatively modest hotel quar-
Dahhar is where the town's largest bazaar, the post office and the long-distance bus station are situated.

The city is served by the Hurghada International Airport with scheduled passenger traffic connecting to Cairo and directly with several cities in Europe. The airport has undergone renovations to accommodate rising traffic.

Tourism

Although a town in its own right Hurghada’s current major industry is foreign and domestic tourism, owing to its dramatic landscape, year-round dry and temperate climate and long stretches of natural beaches. Its waters are clear and calm for most of the year and have become popular for various water sports, particularly recreational scuba diving and snorkeling.

Dive sites around Abu Ramada Island, Giftun Kebir and Giftun Soraya are popular. Tourists also visit shipwrecks such as El-Mina or the Rosalie Moller.

Hurghada has a subtropical-desert climate (Köppen climate classification: BWh), with mild-warm winters and hot to very hot summers. Temperatures in the period December–January–February are warm, while November, March and April are comfortably warm. May and October are hot and the period from June to September is very hot. The average annual temperature of the sea is 24 °C (75 °F), ranging from 21 °C (70 °F) in February and March to 28 °C (82 °F) in August.

Hurghada: The best Arab tourist destination. 2015:
Due to its unparalleled tourist advantages, Hurghada was granted the prize of the Best Arab Tourist Destination, 2015 in a poll conducted by the Arab Tourist Media Center. Due to its clear distinction, in terms of tourist infrastructure and projects and availability of services needed by tourists, the city was selected for this prize from among nominated 15 tourist destinations. After fierce competition in the final stage of the competition that started in November 2014, the city won the prize. It is worthy of note that Dubai won this prize in 2012, followed by Sharja in 2013 and Salala in 2014.

Natural landmarks and resorts:
Hurghada houses a variety of natural, environmental landmarks sites as well as several Islamic and Coptic sites.

Natural landmarks:
Souma Bay:
A tourist resort lying 6 km away from the northern edge of Hurghada. The resort covers an area of 13 million m² and contains a variety of hotels, villas and sporting, therapeutic and recreational facilities with an urban planning and architectural design that integrate with the nature of the surrounding area with a European touch. Hotels include Palm Royale Soma Bay, La Residence des Cascades, Robinson Club, Sheraton (Kempinski) and Caribbean World Resort Soma Bay. There is a golf course. The resort won the Ministry of Tourism’s certificate of merit for its role in enriching Egypt’s tourist sector. The recognition was given on the sidelines of the International Tourism Day under the slogan “One billion tourists: One billion job opportunities”.

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Makadi Bay
The Tourist Resort is located 35 km south of Hurghada. With its year-round shining sun and vast beach of white sand, Makadi Bay is a perfect resort for vacationing, especially sea voyages as it contains a select group of luxury hotels, rest-houses and restaurants that offer top-level services, including Asian, French and Italian dishes.

Coral Reef:
This diving site contains dense coral reef jungles and a variety of fishes, including rare hammer shark, jack fish, tuna, and barracuda. Reefs in this area make up two coral towers that decorate the water surface. The wadi (valley) between both towers is about 16 m deep, making it a favorite site for both amateur and seasoned divers.

Abu Ramada:
It is called the aquarium. This site is distinct for its relatively shallow and much flat waters. The site abounds in wonderful aquatic life, including jack fish, barracuda, and coral reef shark small tuna.

Al-Fanadeer:
Narrow and quiet reefs, accessible from al-Gouna. It is ideal practicing for both deep diving and amateur diving. The eastern part of al-Fanadeer is the preference for divers as it is protected by thin arcade of coral reefs that abound in a variety of fish, including pipefish, stone-fish, and sea scorpion fish, hammer fish, frog-fish, tuna, and jack fish.

Sahl Hasheesh resort
Run by the Egyptian Tourist Resort Company, this resort covers an area of 32 million m², and contains 1530 hotel rooms, 679 residential units with more 6,000 rooms and 6,000 units expected to be completed in future. The resort also contains an open-air theater, where musical concerts by top singers are performed and attended by thousands of fans.

Sand dunes
A centerpiece of art created in March 1997 on an area of about 55,000 m², in el-Gouna desert, consisting of 89 sand dunes and 89 dual low-lying spiraling pits of varying sizes with a 30m. diameter lake.

Magaweesh resort
It is located 7.5 km south of Hurghada, Magaweesh island is known for its fine sand beaches and quiet virgin waters. Covering an area of 850,000 m², Magaweesh tourist village is the oldest in Hurghada and offers several tourist and recreational activities such as diving, surfing and horse-riding.

El-Giftun
It is located 11 km away from Hurghada with an area of more than 16 km², El-Giftun is the most thriving tourist site in Hurghada and a major site for deep and surface diving. It is also a principal source of income for Red Sea natural reserves and the only reserve, where tourists are allowed access. It contains distinct eco-systems, diverse plant and a high variety of coral reefs. It is habitat for large numbers of rare sea animals and birds liable to extinction. On the northern and southern areas, turtles, especially eagle-eyed, nestle.

Abu-Minqar Island
This island dates back to the pre-historic Eocene era or at least 33 million years. The island is characteristic for its thick rocks and rare geological formations. The island takes its name, which means in Arabic “peck-shaped”, from its general form, as its eastern edge is sand headland extending into the sea, almost similar to a bird’s peck. Although the island is relatively small in size, it is one of the most ecologically significant islands in north Red Sea due to abundance of coral reefs there. Many parts of the island are used for diving, swimming and fishing. In addition, the island serves as a rest area for several species of mi-
gratory birds such as sea-gulls and herons. The island, which lies within Elba North nature reserve that comprises also Mount Elba, 3 km east of Hurghada. The island is the richest in mangroves and other dense saline plants that cover about one quarter of its size of 30 hectares. In some parts, each hectare has at least 400 full-grown trees, with some rising more than 5 m.

**Shadwan Island**

It is known also as Shaker Island, Shadwan has a coral reef island that abounds in many kinds of fish, including white and grey-fin reef sharks and eagle-pecked turtles, in addition to groups of fine dolphins.

**Wadi al-Hammamat (valley of baths)**

It is located 35 km from Hurghada. It is the bed of an ancient dried river, which is now a winding road running across the Eastern Desert. It was used as a trade route in medieval times. Remains of these times can be still seen in the quarries on the north side of the road and ruins of laborers’ cottages. On the south side, there still remain hundreds of hieroglyphics panels, indicative of the missions sent by Pharoahs.

**The Aquarium: Marine Life Station**

The National Institute of Museum Marine Life (The Grand Aquarium) was built in 1927 and officially inaugurated the next year. The Institute is one of the oldest institutes specialized in oceanology in the Middle East. North Hurghada was selected as the seat of the Institute due to its detachment from urban areas and abundance of coral reefs and model marine environment. The museum contains several collections of embalmed fish from the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, including mermaids, dolphins, sharks and turtles. It also contains glass aquaria for live fish. The institute houses 12 research laboratories for oceanology specializations, in addition to a research boat named after the renowned Egyptian - international oceanologist Hamed Gohar. The Institute’s library is the oldest specialized in marine environment and fisheries in the Middle East and contains treasures of references and science maps of high value. The institute is dedicated to solving problems of surrounding marine environment. It also provides environmental impact reports for tourist projects implemented on the Red Sea shore and settles disputes over marine environment problems arising between the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Authority and tourist facility owners. In 2015, the museum was renovated.

**Islamic landmarks**

**The Sea-port Mosque**

Built on an area of 7000 m², this mosque was inaugurated in January 2013. It is the largest mosque in the Red Sea governorate and has a unique design that makes a tourist destination worthy of visit.

**Coptic landmarks**

**Anba Antonius Monastery**

This monastery was named after Archbishop Antonius, who lived in the 14th Century AD and is considered by Egyptian Copts as the first monk in the world and father of all monks. It contains a collection of the rarest and most exquisite Coptic murals as well as a large library containing 143 manuscripts and hundreds of books in many branches of knowledge.

**Urban development**

Hurghada has undergone a major scheme of urban development. Main themes of such development include the conservation of historical heritage of the old city during the process of upgrading and renovation. Soft landscaping is to be made by a specialized company. All building fronts are to be painted in a uniform color. The city hinterland is to be incorporated into current urban mass, thus ensuring proper urban zoning, sustainable development and preservation of the tourist nature of the city of Hurghada.