

Flying taxi and setting priorities

By Nader Riad

Undoubtedly, the State's policy of launching a comprehensive reform plan on different axes, especially tax, economic, legislative, State cadres' structural reforms, and providing a suitable atmosphere for industrial and investment development, will definitely improve the economic performance in general.

There has been much talk about a flying taxi project with a view to avoiding traffic congestions. The project uses helicopters between main cities as well as industrial areas to facilitate movements of Egyptian, Arab and foreign investors to accomplish their business.

This project, albeit important, is prioritized by other projects, such as flying ambulance and, perhaps, fire extinguishing aircraft, which should be put on top of priorities for its strategic importance.

Although we heard about flying ambulance first in 1999 when Presidential Decree 68 of 1999 was issued to provide ambulance integrated services for patients and the injured, but it has not done its job as required.

It is no secret that providing ambulance service for road and critical accidents in Egypt is still poor. Reports rank Egypt on the bottom among the first and second world countries.

So it is inevitable to complete and revitalize the flying ambulance service through introducing new mechanisms to rescue critical heart attacks and cases needing urgent surgeries, taking into account the fact that time is the most influential factor in critical cases when a human life is determined by just moments to stop bleeding or organize breathing.

The flying taxi comes next, in terms of importance, to link cities and industrial zones. It is important for the Egyptian industry in particular, provided that it should be overseen by the State. It is no secret that overcoming waste of material, energy and time is the coming challenge that Egyptian industry should face in the future.

Studies, conducted before the launching of the flying taxi company by the Ministry of Civil Aviation under Minister Ahmed Shafiq, pointed out the market's need to such a kind of transportation to serve certain categories due to the nature of their job, as time is vital for whoever owns money but does not have time.

There is no doubt that the flying taxi project in Egypt is promising if it is properly planned. It will be a breakthrough, pushing investments forward, especially as this experiment has succeeded in a number of Arab and foreign countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Cyprus and Switzerland.

In this respect, this mechanism can be organized within the State plan by seeking the help of the armed forces, as the project is linked with military and navigational concepts that are deeply established in the air forces, which are expert in air navigation, space control and time management on the one hand and plane management system of taking off and landing (guiding, piloting, supplying services, maintenance, runway management, workshops, qualification and training of pilots and ground crew and air guiding on the other hand. This leads to regular and controlled operation of flights, hence the success of any project.

To this may probably be added fire extinguishing by plane. Although Egypt does not have vast forests, the presence of which requires such kind of extinguishing system, there are necessities need such kind of air extinguishing and rescuing. This mainly depends on helicopters, which do not need runways or high-tech airports.

A fire extinguishing helicopter requires a 5-50 sq m container filled with water to be thrown on fire directly and then the plane flies to the nearest body of water to fill in the container and return to fire.

Flying ambulance is used in disasters and fires. It picks up the people who could escape from fire, usually from building roots to secure places to provide care for them.

It is worth mentioning that in addition to the substantive importance of this flying ambulance and extinguisher, there is additional importance prompting us to accelerate efforts to set up a mechanism to regulate this kind of activity under oversight and participation of the Armed Forces, which is the most capable of efficiently managing it.

This activity represents a tool of a modern country in the face of disasters and crises. Any respectable State should have a modern fire extinguishing system.

However, there may be pros and cons regarding this issue on the grounds that there are laws allowing the launching of such activities. However, we rely here on another rule – the availability of this service and providing it to the people. Not in laws alone does man live.