

Updating railway...Egypt's anticipated national project

By Nader Riad

There is no doubt that the transportation sector is one of the basic fundamentals of any country. It plays a positive and effective role in economies. Egypt's industry has always been facing challenges, requiring us to set priorities to face them. In this respect we concentrate on one of these fundamentals – the transportation sector.

Transportation is vital, positive and important to industry. Modernization of the railway, as an important transportation means, backs up industry, especially as there are many national ambitions pinned to this critical facility to solve many industry-related problems. That is why updating Egyptian railway network should be the coming national project.

It is no secret that many of our current problems can be solved through this important sector, which provides many services and projects, such as: the future of Toshka on the short and medium run, transporting Lake Nasser fish cooled to provide low-cost food, development in Upper Egypt through streamlined means of transporting industrial and agricultural products by train, in addition to other ambitious prioritized matters.

Egypt railway is an important facility; rich in property, poor in revenues. Linking both sides is possible by providing modernization instruments – financing and available foreign aid from the EU, Japan and the USA.

The project can:

- 1- Provide services of transported cooled products, which has many advantages in the importation and exportation process. There should be cooling containers that can be stored in yards belonging to the railway authority, thus providing continuing storage to meet the needs of Upper Egyptian villages and districts.
- 2- Set up new lines and provide cargo clearance services for both exports and imports. This will provide veins for internal trade through railway stations spread over hundreds of districts and villages.
- 3- Establish 3-star hotels within the railway property under the BOT system, so that they can be overseen and followed up by the railway authority. This will provide considerable income to the authority, taking into account that it will not participate in the actual cost, as it will only provide land.
- 4- Provide services for transporting bulk containers. This means is the most efficient and fastest means of supplying factories with iron, coal, cement, phosphate, magnesium and other vital materials. These substances can be uploaded and downloaded as bulk cargo within minutes without the need to stevedoring means.
- 5- Set up a company to provide taxi and light transportation services at train stops. This depends on the exploitation of vacant spaces within the train stops to provide such services, especially as this service is not available in almost all districts and villages.
- 6- Provide express mail service. There is no doubt that the railway can provide many services to other facilities. But this requires the railway authority to do it

itself, because it owns the essentials of this service, including regularity of trains, spread of railway lines and available storage yards.

- 7- Set up banking mechanism for the railway authority, be it the 'railway bank'. This bank aims at providing services of transporting cargo, collecting their prices and putting money on the supplier's account. This will be very good in case there is a cooling transportation service, which serves retailers and foodstuff distributors.
- 8- Set up railway lines to Toshka and Red Sea ports. This will integrate with Toshka project, which is suffering from lack of transportation to transport agricultural products in a proper way. This will definitely allow horizontal expansion in Toshka to achieve its plans.
- 9- Establish a cargo and individual insurance company through a mechanism to be identified by the railway authority or by taking over a small insurance company.