



Philological Tips

Sami El-Shahed

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Frank Abate is Editor in Chief of the US Dictionaries Programme for Oxford University Press. He has compiled or edited more than 30 dictionaries and a wide variety of other language and general reference works.

Dear Egyptian Mail readers, Your comments and/or contributions are welcome. We promise to publish whatever is deemed publishable at the end of each series of articles. sami.elshahed@yahoo.com



The 23rd Cairo Climate Talks brought together public and private sector stakeholders, who debated local options for collecting, recycling and reusing solid waste.

Debunking rubbish myths

By Sarah Mohamed

MANAGEMENT of Egypt's problematic solid waste, estimated at around 20 million tonnes per year, was at the centre of a discussion panel held in Cairo last week.

The 23rd Cairo Climate Talks brought together public and private sector stakeholders, who debated local options for collecting, recycling and reusing solid waste.

"Waste is a human concept, there is no such thing as waste in nature," said Kai Boeckmann, the charge d'affaires at the German Embassy in Cairo, in opening remarks. "If waste products are created by nature they quickly become raw products used by other processes. So nature is very good in recycling. Humanity unfortunately isn't, and as the Earth isn't getting any bigger, we can't continue producing waste at this speed for ever."

Egyptian Minister of State for Environmental Affairs Laila Iskander said that dignity, safe working conditions and financial compensation should be afforded to garbage collectors, a sector that has long been informal, stigmatised and undervalued. "There was a myth among politicians that garbage collection services did not have to be paid for, that there were people who were willing to do it almost without cost," she said.

"In fact there was a myth in government that we needed to sell garbage to the collector. Another myth was that anyone in that field had to be exposed to occupational hazards."

Iskander and fellow panelist Ezzat Naiem, the director of the Manshiyet Nasr based NGO Spirit of Youth Association, highlighted their pro-

grammes that are formalising small companies of collectors and helping them sign contracts with Giza Governorate to provide services.

Programmes in Dokki, Agouza and Imbaba - districts in Giza - are also educating residents and providing them with bags to dispose of organic and inorganic waste separately to facilitate recycling and create a more sanitary system.

Chemonics Egypt Chairman Ahmed Gaber agreed that governorate - specific solutions are necessary, as well as a complete cultural shift in the way the public thinks of trash. He also pointed to the lack of collection and recycling services in rural areas. His organisation has done extensive studies on waste-to-energy conversion methods.

Gaber said that while the most sophisticated systems may be too costly or not appropriate for Egypt at the moment, there is a huge range of processes to extract value from waste - from merely shredding and reselling recyclables to creating synthetic fibers to make clothes as they do in Asia - that could create new industry, income and jobs.

However, Naiem said his NGO and others are still facing bureaucratic obstacles in legalising recycling workshops, despite agreement from several ministries. According to him, the collection and recycling industry is responsible for employing nearly 1 million and creates an additional 2-3 million related jobs, and could have a positive impact on the national economy if formalised and assisted.

Guenter Wehenpohl, the programme co-ordinator of the Participatory Development Programme at the GIZ Egypt, said creating and enforcing strong laws with penalties to force producers and citizens to reduce waste and promote good disposal behaviors would be more effective than persuading them to

protect the environment.

"The contribution of solid waste to climate change is estimated at 2.8 per cent. Integrated solid waste management can actually create a carbon positive balance."

Less than 65 per cent of waste in Egypt is collected by the public or private sector, and a mere 20 per cent is recycled or responsibly dealt with.

The negative impact on public health and the environment is significant. From refuse in the streets to blocked channels and polluted waterways, waste is visible everywhere. The cost of environmental degradation caused by inadequate waste management reaches 0.2 per cent of Egypt's GDP, according to a World Bank study.

Since waste is an important source of greenhouse gases, promoting recycling, composting and biogas activities would significantly reduce emissions. Waste can also be used as a clean energy source. In this solid waste management crisis, Egypt is facing institutional, technical and economic challenges, including the absence of an integrated solid waste management framework, according to experts.

The Cairo Climate Talks are a series of events meant to provide a platform to exchange experiences, raise awareness and foster co-operation between policymakers, business, the scientific community and civil society.

They are conceived, organised and hosted as a co-operation between the German Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs, the German Science Centre (DWZ), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Egyptian-German High Level Joint Committee for Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Environmental Protection.

Fatal attraction for a song

By Maryam Raafat

HE woke up, had his breakfast and got ready to start his working day. Before leaving home, Ramadan Galal, a 30-year-old microbus driver, remembered what he heard in the TV news that it would be a sweltering day.

He rushed back to his room and used small perfume packets to dispel the sweat odour expected to be caused by high temperatures while being behind the wheel. Galal usually spends nine hours driving everyday. So he uses cheap perfume copycats available among merchandise sold on Egypt's streets.

But on that day, something changed in Galal's daily routine. Instead of going to his work, he was taken to hospital after suffering sudden fainting.

When the doctor asked him what he had done on that day, said: "Nothing different. I woke up, put on my clothes and used three perfume packets, which sells for 25 piasters apiece."

"How can you trust a perfume of only 25 piasters?" asked the doctor with a sarcastic smile. "It seems you smelled something like a poison, which caused you a severe inflammation."

The use of the cheap perfume was found to be the cause of Galal's sudden health problem. Despite the fact that such perfumes fail to meet quality and safety criteria, they are available everywhere across Egypt, starting from street corner kiosks to big-name pharmacies and hyper markets.

"There are many ways of copying perfumes, but what makes them very cheap is the alcohol used in making them. There are two kinds of alcohol. The first is ethanol, which is permitted to be used in the industry of cosmetics and perfumes. The second is the methanol, which is considered a poison and is not approved to be used in such products," Omar Moustafa, a professor of biochemistry at Cairo University's Faculty of Agriculture, told the Arabic-language newspaper of Al-Watan.



Despite the fact that such perfumes fail to meet quality and safety criteria, they are available everywhere across Egypt, starting from street corner kiosks to big-name pharmacies and hyper markets.

"There isn't any product of good quality with its price being only few piasters. In addition, these perfume packets have an attractive look.

Trading in these dangerous products and promoting them in TV advertisements reflect market chaos in Egypt at the expense of citizens' health," said Sameeh Mansour, the head of the Poisons Commission at the state-run Scientific Research Academy.

"We name the methanol as the poor's alcohol because it is very cheap, but it is catastrophic as well. It may cause blindness and also has severe effects on the nervous system. It may cause deformations for babies if a pregnant woman smells it," Mansour added.

These perfumes containers usually have three centimetres of the scent without detailed labels.

Only written on the bottles are distorted names of world-famous brands.

"We always warn our patients against using such products that are available in the market without any clear information. Many patients came to me complaining about severe inflammations that appeared following the use of unregistered perfume products after watching their advertisements on television," said Dr Mohsen Soliman, a professor of dermatology.

"There must be deterrent laws including heavy fines and closing the unlicensed factories that produce these perfumes," Soliman told the Egyptian Mail.

Atef Yacoub, the head of the governmental Consumer Protection Agency, said such manufacturers claim that their products have been licensed. "This is not true. They use such claims in promoting their products."

Yacoub disclosed that a relevant law will be amended to increase the fine on commercial fraud to LE500,000 (71,428 dollars) instead of LE5,000.

Translation Corner

The following is a translation of two hard news stories that were published yesterday in this column, whose purpose is to teach and upgrade the skills of readers and students in translation from English into Arabic and vice versa.

Gunmen abducted two Turkish Airlines pilots in Beirut, forcing them from an airport bus in the early hours of the morning and prompting Turkey to urge its citizens to leave Lebanon.

Lebanese media said that a group claimed responsibility for the abduction in the name of nine Lebanese Shi'ite Muslims kidnapped near the Turkish-Syrian border last year, saying the two Turks would be freed if the Lebanese captives were released.

Turkey's foreign ministry and the airline said they were in close contact with Lebanese authorities but had no immediate information on the condition of the two airline staff.

"We announce that the Turkish captain Murat Akpinar and his co-pilot Murat Agca are our guests until our brothers ... who were abducted in Azaz are released," said a statement from the group, according to a Lebanese television station and the National News Agency.

It said it held Turkey responsible for the fate of the Lebanese Shi'ites, who were among a group of 11 men abducted in May last year by Syrian Sunni Muslim rebels in the northern town of Azaz, close to Turkey.

They were seized on their return from a pilgrimage to Shi'ite religious sites in Iran, their families said. Two were later released.

Turkey warned its citizens against non-essential travel to Lebanon and called on those already in the country to return home. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said he had spoken with the Lebanese prime minister about the abductions.

"As in previous such cases we are making every effort to reunite the pilots with their families safely," Davutoglu said on his Twitter account.

Vocabulary:

Abduct: to take someone away by force.

Prompt: to make people say or do something as a reaction.

Kidnapped: to take someone somewhere illegally by force, often in order to get money for returning them.

Captives: someone who is kept as a prisoner, especially in a war.

Immediate: happening or done at once and without delay.

Seized: to take hold of something suddenly and violently.

Reunite: to come together again or to bring people.

قال وزير الخارجية الأمريكي جون كيري إنه يتعين على الولايات المتحدة وروسيا إيجاد سبل للتغلب على خلافتهما الحادة والاتفاق على منح عمل تجاه سوريا وغيرها من بؤر التوتر العالمية. وبدأ البلدان اليوم محادثات رفيعة المستوى.

وقال كيري في واشنطن إن العلاقات الأمريكية الروسية - التي توترت بشدة بسبب قرار موسكو منح اللجوء للمتعاقد السابق مع وكالة الأمن القومي الأمريكية إدوارد سنوون - "تسعت بالمصالح المشتركة وبالمصالح المتصاعدة والمتعاضدة أحياناً".

وتابع قائلاً "سنبحث هذه الخلافات اليوم بالتاكيد لكن هذا الاجتماع لا يزال مهماً بما يتجاوز الصدامات ولحظات الاختلاف".

ويستضيف كيري ووزير الدفاع تشاك هاجل وزير الخارجية الروسي سيرجي لافروف ووزير الدفاع سيرجي شويجو في محادثات تستمر خمس ساعات في إطار ما يعرف بمحادثات "2+2" الاستراتيجية والأمنية.

وقال كيري إن من الضروري أن يكون البلدان والضخمين بشأن خلافتهما لكن عليهما أيضاً المعنى لإحراز تقدم بشأن الدفاع الصاروخي وأفغانستان والخلافات النووية مع إيران وكوريا الشمالية والحرب الأهلية المستمرة منذ عامين في سوريا.

وقال إنه بينما توجد خلافات بين واشنطن وموسكو حول جوانب رئيسية في الأزمة السورية إلا أننا "ابلدنا متفقون على تقادي تهبز المؤسسات والاتلاق إلى القوضي وعلى أن الحل النهائي هو حل سياسي من خلال التفاوض".

ولم تشر تصريحات لافروف الافتتاحية إلى جميع بؤر الصراع في العالم لكنها أكدت تصريحات كيري فيما يتعلق بضرورة دفع الحكومة والمعارضة السوريين إلى التوجه للمحادثات في جنيف.

Two new stories will appear tomorrow in this column.