

Israelis to build Egypt border

Israel's government has approved plans for the construction of a barrier along its border with Egypt in a bid to keep out illegal migrants and militants.

It will be built along two parts of the border - near the Red Sea city of Eilat and on the edge of the Gaza Strip.

PM Benjamin Netanyahu said the decision was taken to secure Israel's Jewish and democratic character, but that refugees would still be allowed to seek entry.

In recent years, thousands of migrants have crossed into Israel via Egypt.

At least 17 migrants, mostly African, have been killed since May by Egyptian police, who say they are trying to stop people trafficking.

According to Israeli police estimates between 100-200 illegal immigrants cross into Israel from Egypt every week.

Eritrea is the most common country of origin for people trying to cross illegally from Egypt to Israel, followed by Ethiopia and Sudan.

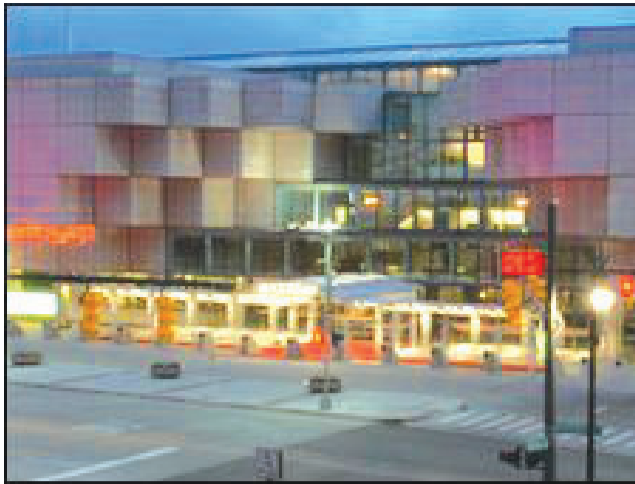
'Illegal aliens'

On Sunday, Mr Netanyahu said he had approved the construction of sections of barrier that would block the main infiltration routes along the 266 km (166-mile) frontier, and the installation of advanced surveillance equipment.

To cover 112km (70 miles) of the 266km (166 mile) frontier 100-200 illegal immigrants cross each week 17 migrants killed by Egyptian police since May Estimated \$270m to build

The project is set to cost \$270m and take several years to complete.

"I took the decision to close Israel's southern border to infiltrators and terrorists."



The Cobo Center will be spruced up to the tune of \$288m



Governor Granholm is fighting hard for Motor City's survival.

Electric cars for 'new' Detroit?

The Cobo Center which hosts the annual Detroit motor show is in dire need of investment.

The ageing building on the bank of the Detroit river is losing ground to rival venues in other US cities, so a plan to inject \$288m (£180m) to spruce up the place was recently given the go-ahead by the city council.

Deciding to spend money on a convention centre that depends so heavily on the revival of the automotive industry was obviously a tough call, given that two of the US car companies that used to be known as the Big Three filed for - then emerged from - bankruptcy last year.

"In 2009, the unimaginable happened with the bankruptcies of General Motors (GM) and Chrysler," Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm said in her year-end radio address.

"The subsequent restructuring of the auto industry has made one thing crystal clear; the old Michigan economy is gone and it's not coming back."

Investment needed

With the 2010 Detroit motor show starting at the Cobo Center on Monday, the three US carmakers are still in business, though Ford is deemed to be in much better shape than the other two.

The "Blue Oval" gained market share in the US last year for the first time since 1995.

Electric future

But one bit of news is expected from the Chrysler/Fiat alliance: the unveiling of an electric version of the Fiat 500.

In fact, a slew of electric concepts are being displayed this year, including plug-in versions of the BMW 1-series and Volvo's C30.

In a peculiar way, such cars may well point to a brighter future, where the home of the "gas guzzler" is saved by massive investment in electric motoring. On Friday, Ms Granholm joined executives from GM at the opening of the company's automotive lithium-ion battery factory in

Brownstown Township.

And early last month, she helped GM announce a \$336m investment in a production line at the Detroit Hamtramck Assembly Plant for its new Chevrolet Volt extended range petrol-electric car.

Analysts see this as a sign of hope for Detroit.

"This is truly the start of the electrification of the American auto industry, and should finally put to rest any claims that GM is not serious about building the Volt or electrifying its lineup," according to Aaron Bragman, automotive analyst with IHS Global Insight.

"Given the investment GM is making in the technology, it seems only logical that many variants will be produced from the plant."



Car sales: China beats US

China has said it overtook the United States to become the world's biggest car and van market in 2009.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said 13.6 million vehicles were sold within the country last year. That compares with just over 10 million vehicles in the US, which was previously the world's largest market.

Unlike the US, China's figures include heavy trucks, but they added just 650,000 to the total.

That meant China was still comfortably ahead in terms of private car sales, which were 53% higher than in 2008. The top three companies in terms of sales are all joint ventures with the Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation.

SAIC-GM-Wuling sold just short of one million vehicles, Shanghai Volkswagen sold 728,200.

Rustenburg Belastingbetalers Vereeniging (RBBV)

www.rbbv.co.za - registrasie@rbbv.co.za

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Alle Belasting Betalers welkom, nooi almal wat u ken.

Aansoek Vorm beskikbaar by die vergadering.

As jy 'n verskil wil maak in ons dorp dan moet jy die vergadering bywoon.

Gas Sprekers:

Mnr. Jaap Kelder (Voorsitter - Nasionale Belasting Betalers Unie <http://www.nabuntu.org/>)

Mev. Carin Visser (Voorsitter - Sannieshof Belasting Betalers Vereeniging)

Rustenburg Rate Payers Association (RRPA)

www.rrpa.co.za - registration@rrpa.co.za

Public Meeting

Venue: Old Town Hall, Cnr Plein & Burger Street

Date: Monday, 18th January 2010

Time: 18H00 (Meeting will start promptly at 18H00)

All Rate Payers welcome, invite everyone you know.

Application Form will be available at the meeting.

If you want to make a difference to our town then you have to attend the meeting.

Guests Speakers:

Mr. Jaap Kelder (Chairman - National Rate Payers Union <http://www.nabuntu.org/>)

Mrs. Carin Visser (Chairman - Sannieshof Rate Payers Association)

Zimbabwe mine abuses continue

A human rights group says it is concerned about "continuing abuses" at diamond mines in Zimbabwe.

This follows a last-minute decision by Zimbabwean authorities to halt a three-day sale of about 300,000 carats of rough diamonds.

Global Witness says some mines remain in the hands of the military despite an agreement with international monitors.

Insiders have told the BBC that the sale was only halted after "blood diamond" trade monitors intervened.

"We're obviously pleased that this auction has been cancelled but overall we're still concerned about the situation in the diamond fields in Marange," Global Witness' Anne Dunnebacke told the BBC Network Africa programme.

Senior Zimbabwe's mines ministry official Thankful Musukutwa on Thursday told a news conference in Harare that the auction had been stopped because it had not been approved by the Kimberley Process (KP), set up to regulate the trade in "blood diamonds" - those mined in

conflict zones.

"No export will take place prior to certification by the KP monitor," he told reporters.

Some 80% of sales from the planned three-day auction would have gone to the Zimbabwe government, according to reports.

'Violations continue'

Ms Dunnebacke said that while other diamond fields had been taken over by companies, she believed a "large proportion" of the Marange diamond fields remained under military control.

"The remainder of the diamond fields appear to still be under military control with the military still taking part in exploitation, the trading, the smuggling and of course the associated human rights abuses."

Zimbabwe went into partnership with two South African-owned firms to extract diamonds in October.

Last November Zimbabwe narrowly missed being suspended from the Kimberly Process and so banned from selling diamonds.

It promised to allow monitors to examine all shipments that come from the Marange mines and was given until June to clean up its dia-

mond trade.

But Global Witness says those monitors are still not in place.

Investigators have found evidence of killings and forced evictions at the Marange field after soldiers moved in, saying they were acting against illegal miners.

Activists have accused the military of carrying out widespread atrocities in the mines and say the profits from the stones go to President Robert Mugabe and his allies.

The government has always denied these allegations.



Part of the border between Israel and Egypt, which is at present being constructed at great cost by Israel. (See store above, top left).