

Egypt from an insider's perspective

By Sara ElShafie
TECHNEWS WRITER



TechNews Opinion Editor Vlada Gaisina writes:

Sara ElShafie, a Paleontology student at the University of Chicago and a personal friend was in Cairo with a study abroad program when the demonstrations began. Being of Egyptian descent, she could identify closely with the cause and events that transpired there in the last month. I am excited to share with you excerpts from a blog she started <http://asandstorminbas-tille.blogspot.com/>, describing her experience.

I experienced the revolution both as an Egyptian citizen and as an American visitor.

When demonstrations against the Egyptian government began on Tuesday, January 25, everyone was excited and impassioned. These sentiments grew as demonstrations continued throughout the week, but as rumors spread and the warning signs began (e.g. periodic blockage of Twitter and Facebook), everyone braced themselves for the anticipated escalation of Friday, January 28.

Thursday, January 27

At first I wasn't very concerned at all. Tuesday I slept through the initial action (finally catching up on sleep after an exhausting week), and I shared in the general excitement of the group and reveled in the sense that we are witnessing history. I sat reading the news on Al-Jazeera, eating my 'aesh baladi* and marveling that demonstrations of this magnitude have not occurred since the Bread Riots 33 years ago (*"bread of my country," the whole grain pita bread that is subsidized by the government and which all Egyptians, including myself, love to eat. In 1977, the government suspended subsidy of bread, bringing the cost to 1 LE a piece – way too expensive, especially at that time – which launched several days of bloody revolts in Egypt).

My state of mind switched yesterday when I read on Al-Jazeera that the government is really cracking down on protestors, and I decided to remove my post from the previous day about the demonstrations. I left the student apartments in Dokki in central Cairo to stay with my uncle's family in a neighborhood farther from the downtown area.

I am excited to be here and proud to be living through these events. But it also seems that I am more worried about the situation than the rest of my peers. I have heard much more

about the Egyptian government's dysfunction and irrationality over the years. Ibrahim's (my cousin's) warnings were a wake-up call. He cautioned that things could get ugly tomorrow, that the police might shoot people, that the government might start cutting off resources like internet, mobile service, electricity, or water. That was when I realized the severity of the situation. Perhaps he was being slightly overdramatic, but also judging from what I know of the government and Egypt's history, I know that he wasn't being unreasonable.

Sara (one of our program coordinators) shared the Egyptian activist perspective on this week's events with me in the car (she personally escorted me to and from Arabic class today, for safety). She made me fully realize the amount of pent up anger and frustration that is igniting this week. I cannot even comprehend the amount of suffering and oppression that Egyptians have been living with for the last 30 years. She told me about Khalid Said, an average middle class Egyptian who, because of an unwarranted skirmish with the police, was brutally beaten and murdered. Apparently this incident made activists out of many who had been frustrated but reluctant to get involved, including Sara. She kept saying, "It could have been me! It could have been one of my cousins! There was no sense in it at all! It was pure injustice! It made us all SO outraged, and we all decided to say, 'We will not be treated this way! We cannot live like this!'" That was about a year ago. Now, with the Tunisian revolts coinciding with Eid al-Shorta*, everything is finally igniting into the protest that everyone has been waiting for. I don't know if anyone anticipated the extent to which it would continue. As apprehensive as I am about tomorrow's demonstrations, I am truly praying that the protestors will continue and prevail until they force Mubarak to step down for good. Egyptians are finally breaking the crust of malaise and despair and showing the world their true colors.

* Eid al-Shorta ("Holiday of the Police") is a national day off in honor of the police, whom everyone detests. Thus, it has become a day of protest against the government – though never before to this extent.

To be continued...

5 health tips to feel more energetic

By Alpesh Modi
TECHNEWS WRITER

Life nowadays is really busy, and most people don't care much about their health. Last Saturday, while I was shopping at a downtown Walgreens, I saw a gentleman (dressed like a doctor) buying some candy with a brief glance at the nutrition facts on it. That sparked a thought: "Do I ever consider my health before eating or drinking anything?" Then I decided to write an article sharing health tips that can help everyone.

1) Stay hydrated, especially before you exercise. We've all heard the eight glasses of water a day recommendation. Most health experts now recommend dividing your weight in half to determine the number of ounces you should drink each day. For example, if you weigh 180 pounds, you should be drinking 90 ounces of water a day. Sports drinks may give you a little more energy but are not the right choice if you are looking to lose weight, so be careful what you are drinking. Try to make sure you drink plenty of fluids at least 30 to 60 minutes before you exercise.

It's like filling up your gas tank before a big car trip – this way you won't run out of energy in the middle of your workout.

2) Eat smaller meals more frequently. Eat smaller, more frequent nutritious meals (4-6 a day) to keep your metabolism running at full capacity and give you a steady source of energy. Eating a huge meal all at once can cause your energy levels to crash dramatically. That's why most of us spend the hours after Thanksgiving dinner dozing on the couch.

Think about it like a coal furnace – while it's burning, adding small amounts of coal will keep the fire going strong, while piling it full with coal will smother the fire out. Of course, no coal will mean no fire at all.

3) Eat more fruit (and throw away the candy). Replace any and all candy or other sweets with fresh fruit. No, it doesn't com-

pare at first, but avoiding the blood sugar crash that comes with candy makes the whole idea worth it! If you're dying for something sweeter, add a (level) teaspoon of sugar to your fruit for only 16 extra calories.

4) Get rid of the sugary soda. One 12-oz can of soda on average contains a whopping 35-40 grams of sugar, guaranteed to leave your overworked, terrorized pancreas begging for mercy. By all means, this stuff must go. To make the transition easier (since most soda is caffeinated as well), replace it with some unsweetened or very lightly sweetened coffee or tea. Both tea (especially green) and coffee are loaded with antioxidants, and not having to deal with caffeine withdrawal should make the break from soda much easier to manage.

5) Don't Sleep In on the Weekends. Let's say, you get up every day at 6:30 AM but on weekends you like to sleep in, sometimes till noon. This is a really bad idea, as you're going against two factors: the circadian rhythm of your body and sleep inertia. From the time we were cavemen, our bodies adjusted to patterns of day and night and temperature changes, waking when the sun came up and falling asleep when the sun went down. This was observed by French scientist Jean-Jacques d'Ortous de Mairan in the 1700s. It's a real phenomenon that has been documented in single-cell organisms, plants, and many members of animal kingdom. Once you find a rhythm that works for you, stick to it and don't change.

Sleep inertia is usually felt when you sleep in well past your normal waking time. You'll wake up feeling sluggish and tired and feel like you can't get in gear for several hours. If you're traveling or need to catch up on sleep for one reason or another, a better solution is to take short naps of 30 to 60 minutes over the next few days whenever possible.

These five changes can have a major impact on your body's ability to work efficiently (which can mean more energy in a matter of days), and act as a stepping stone to better health in the long run. Try them out for thirty days and see how effective they are for you!

What's your angle?

An ethical discussion on current topics

By Annie Hutches & Phil Thiesen
TECHNEWS WRITERS

"Tom, how was the Auto Show this year?"

"It was great, as usual. There were so many awesome new concepts! I took a bunch of pictures. The Toyota Prius especially got my attention."

"Oh, really? What was so special about it?"

"Well, you know I've always been fond of hybrid cars. Toyota just announced an even smaller version of Prius and a plug-in model that will improve the gas mileage even further. Anything that can help us lessen our negative impact on the environment is a great thing, I think."

"I agree about the benefits of reducing our oil consumption, but I heard that there are some negative things about hybrids, too. The special batteries required for these vehicles use materials that are extremely toxic to the environment. In places where they are manufactured, disposal of the waste material is a huge problem, and even here in the US all those batteries will have to be accounted for, once their lifecycles end. Wouldn't this be like trading one pollution issue for another?"

"That can definitely be the case if we aren't careful. I read about these issues too,

and it seems that Toyota and other companies are making efforts to collect and recycle all of the materials in the batteries, as well as researching new and better battery technologies.

There's another advantage to owning hybrid vehicles. Even though the technology does cost a bit more up front, the owners will see a financial benefit over the life of the car, thanks to the money they'll save on fuel. The

rising gas prices today make this even more attractive."

"Yeah, but guess where all of the rare earth metals in the batteries come from? China is the biggest source of these materials,

so the more we rely on the hybrid and electric vehicle technology, the less money we get to keep in our own country, not to mention that the Prius is made by a Japanese company."

"Actually we do have large reserves of that material in the US, too. They just haven't tapped into the resource yet. Further, many of the hybrids on the road today were manufactured in American plants."

"I see. I'm glad to hear that at least some effort is being made to address all of these issues. In any case, I think the whole "green" movement is a good philosophy."

What's your angle? Send your thoughts to peds.uit@gmail.com

This week: How green are hybrids?