

Egypt TM investigates 34 Railway Authority officials

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Egypt's Transportation Minister Mohamed Mansour

Egyptian Transportation Minister Mohamed Mansour referred 34 officials from the Egyptian Railways Authority to an investigative committee looking into the tragic collision of two passenger trains on Saturday.

Independent MP Moustafa Bakry asked the Cabinet to step down in an interview with BBC Arabic news channel on Monday.

"This government failed to secure one of the most important services in the country and the poor Egyptian citizens as usual paid the price," Bakry told the BBC.

"It's time for the big officials to pay the price and not the small employees," he added.

Chairman of the Transportation Committee at the PA Hamdy Al-Tahan, told BBC Arabic on the same show that the National Railway System is in dire need of fundamental changes.

"This accident shows that there are faults in the system that have not been dealt with until now," Al-Tahan said.

Minister Mansour told "Al-Beit Beita" daily talk show on Sunday that he does not intend to resign.

"I am responsible for the transportation system in Egypt and I will not step down from my position and relinquish my responsibility," he said.

Mansour added that the accident was because of "human error" and is not the responsibility of the entire transport system.

On Monday Prosecutor General Abdel Meguid Mahmoud announced the start of the investigations in the crash accident.

Although the ministry of health had previously stated that 30 people were killed in the crash, it has since then said that 18 people have died.

By press time, those injured numbered 36, among them 17 are receiving treatment in hospitals where two are in critical condition, according to the health ministry's statement.

In another official statement, the Ministry of Transportation said that it will pay compensation to the victims' families "instantly, allocating LE 20,000 to the families of those who died and LE 5,000 to those injured."

The Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Sixth of October city council have pledged to pay an additional LE 10,000 to the families of the dead and LE 1,500 to those injured.

At around 6:45 pm last Saturday two trains crashed into each other near the village of Girzah, in the area of Al-Ayyat about 40 km south of Cairo, when one train stopped unexpectedly. The second train, heading from Cairo to Assiut, crashed into it from the rear.

Al-Ayyat witnessed the deadliest of a series of railway accidents in 2002, when a train heading to southern Egypt caught fire, killing no less than 363 people.

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