

## Egypt Pioneers eyes stake in Beltone

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The Egyptian stock exchange reported Wednesday that Egypt's Pioneers Holding is in talks to buy a stake in investment bank Beltone Financial

"Pioneers Holding said there was contact between the company and Beltone for acquiring a percentage of the capital (of Beltone)," the exchange statement said, adding that the firms had not reached an agreement.

Beltone declined to comment immediately but said a statement regarding the talks would be issued early next week.

Pioneers, which specialises in brokerage services, also offers market research and investment banking for retail and institutional clients.

The firm was ranked second by value of executed trades in Egypt in the third quarter of this year, according to stock exchange data. Beltone was ranked sixth.

Pioneers, which was listed on the Egyptian stock market in June, saw its shares jump 9 percent to close at 6.96 Egyptian pounds (\$1.27) on Wednesday.

The firm operates in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Syria, and has a total market capitalisation of \$583 million.

"Pioneers is mainly a retail brokerage house ... and is number two in the market in terms of turnover," said one market participant who asked not to be named. "On the other hand, Beltone is strong on the institutional side, so they complement each other in a way."

Beltone, which oversees some \$5 billion in assets, is based in Egypt and has offices in New York, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Emirates.

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