



Library's new chapter

The selection of Mustafa Al-Feki as the new head of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was welcomed by men of letters

Professor and former diplomat Mustafa Al-Feki says he sees his appointment as the head of the Library of Alexandria, or Bibliotheca Alexandrina, as "a difficult and huge mission" but noted to the media this week that the library will be a centre for enlightenment and combating terrorism.

"Culture is not a luxury anymore. It is an important factor in our war against terrorism. It is the most expensive good that Egypt exports to the world," Al-Feki said.

Al-Feki was selected last week during the Bibliotheca's board of trustees' annual meeting. He succeeds Ismail Serageddin, the library's founding director and its head since its inauguration in 2002.

President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi approved his nomination.

At the meeting Serageddin was named a Librarian Emeritus and a board member.

Al-Feki, 73, graduated from the Faculty of Economics and Political Science in Cairo University in 1966 and received a PhD from the University of London in 1977.

He was a political science professor who served as president of the British University in Egypt (BUE) from 2005 to 2008. He also taught at the American University in Cairo.

He worked as secretary of information to former president Hosni Mubarak from 1985 to 1992.

Al-Feki was head of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Shura Council in the 1990s. In the early 2000s, he was a member of the Supreme Council for Policies of the National Democratic Party (NDP), Mubarak's ruling party that was dissolved after the 2011 Revolution. Al-Feki resigned from the NDP before Mubarak stepped down and before the party was dissolved.

He is a frequent opinion writer in the daily Al-Ahram, Al-Masry Al-Youm and the London-based Al-Hayat. He also wrote for Al-Ahram Weekly.

Al-Feki wrote several books, including *The Absent Vision: Revival of Arab Nationalist Thought*.

The new head of the Bibliotheca held several diplomatic posts, including Egypt's envoy to Austria in the 1990s. He also worked in Egypt's embassies in the UK and India. He was Egypt's representative at the International Atomic Energy Agency in the 1990s.

He headed the Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Studies Institute and was a member of the National Council for Human Rights, the National Council for Women and the Supreme Council of Culture. Al-Feki received orders of merit from several European states; as well as Egypt's Nile Award in social studies in 2010 and the State Appreciation Award in 2003.

He was in the running as secretary-general of the Arab League last year but some member states opposed his nomination.

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina was rebuilt in the same place as its predecessor, reopening in October 2002 to reclaim the mantle of its ancient namesake. It is not just a stylish building with a curving façade but a vast complex where arts, history, philosophy and science come together. It also offers activities including cultural seminars, talks and fairs, making it a venue for open discussion, dialogue and understanding.

This week, the library's Antiquities Museum celebrated International Museum Day on 18 May by holding a workshop for visitors eight to 15 years old. Art activities during the workshop will explore the various historical periods of Egypt.