

SUPPLEMENT

SPECIAL COVERAGE ON PAKISTAN RESOLUTION DAY

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OPINION

EGYPT'S STRUGGLE TO STOP THE THREATS COMING ACROSS ITS BORDERS

By Abdellatif El-Menawy
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WEEKEND

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ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

CHORUS OF OUTRAGE

Trump's Golan move draws strong regional condemnation

US 'preparing document on recognizing Israeli sovereignty of occupied Heights'

AP, Reuters Dubai

President Donald Trump's abrupt declaration that Washington will recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights drew strong condemnation on Friday.

Expressing regret over the announcement, the Gulf Cooperation Council said Trump's statement "will not change the reality that the Arab Golan Heights is Syrian land occupied by Israel by military force in 1967."

"The statements by the American president undermine the chances of achieving a just and comprehensive peace," said Abdul Latif Al-Zayani, the bloc's secretary-general.

The Arab League said Trump's comments were "completely outside international law."

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said lasting peace in the region requires Israel to withdraw from all Arab territories it occupies, including the Golan.

Egypt urged "respect (for) legitimate international resolutions and the UN Charter on the unacceptability of land appropriation by force."

The Syrian government called it "irresponsible" and a threat to international peace and stability, while Iran's Foreign Ministry said it plunges the region into a new crisis.

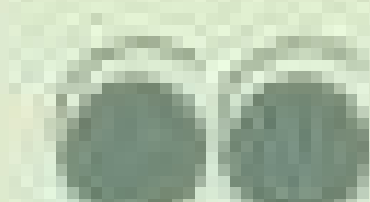
Israel unilaterally annexed the Golan Heights in 1981 UN Security Council Resolution 497, issued after the annexation, refers to Israel as "the occupying power" and says Israel's attempt to "impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without inter-

national legal effect."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Trump's "unfortunate" declaration has brought the region "to the brink of a new crisis and new tensions."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Trump's comments "can destabilize the already fragile situation in the Middle East."

In Germany, government spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer said there was no change to Berlin's position on the Golan Heights, pointing to the 1981 UN resolution. She said Germany opposes "unilateral steps," but is well aware of the territory's significance to Israel.



The statements by the American president undermine the chances of achieving a just and comprehensive peace.

Abdul Latif Al-Zayani
GCC secretary-general

France said the Golan had been "occupied by Israel since 1967" and it did not recognize Israel's annexation.

US officials are preparing an official document to codify the US recognition of Israeli sovereignty of the Golan and Trump might sign it next week, a senior administration official said.

The UN Human Rights Council criticized Israeli settlement expansion in the Golan Heights. The UN rights forum adopted an annual resolution on the Syrian Golan, brought by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, with 26 states in favor, 16 against and 5 abstentions.

Broken-hearted, but not broken



Dubai's Burj Khalifa displays a photo of New Zealand's Premier Jacinda Ardern hugging a mourner following the Christchurch terror attacks. New Zealanders observed the Muslim call to prayer on Friday in reflecting on the moment when 50 worshippers were slain — an act that an imam said had left the country 'broken-hearted, but not broken.' Ardern joined thousands of people in Hagley Park opposite Al-Noor Mosque. 'New Zealand mourns with you. We are one,' she said.

@HSHKMohd
— Twitter handle of Dubai's Ruler

Report P12

IRANIAN DESIGNS

Pompeo blasts Hezbollah from Beirut

Najia Housseini Beirut

On the last leg of his Middle East tour, in Beirut, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has blasted Hezbollah and Iran and said: "What did Hezbollah and Iran offer Lebanon but coffins and weapons? Qassem Soleimani (senior Iranian military commander) continues to undermine the legitimate institutions and the Lebanese people."

He added: "How can storing thousands of missiles on Lebanese territory strengthen this country?"

Pompeo believes that Iran does not want the situation in Lebanon to change because change is a threat to Iran's ambitions to dominate the country. He spoke of Iran's criminal networks of drugs and money laundering that place Lebanon under international monitoring, and he said: "The Lebanese people should not be

The US provided \$100 million to Lebanon — what did Hezbollah and Iran provide? They provided coffins for the returning youth and more weapons.

Mike Pompeo
US secretary of state

forced to suffer because of an illegal and terrorist group."

Pompeo also spoke of Hezbollah's direct intimidation of voters in Lebanon and pointed out that "Hezbollah pretends to support the Lebanese state when it is defying it."

"We will carry on with our methods to tighten the screws on Hezbollah and Iran, and we will not hesitate to reveal the parties supporting their activities," he added.

He said: "The US provided \$100 million to Lebanon — what did Hezbollah and Iran provide? They provided coffins for the returning youth and more weapons." Pompeo supported the return of Syrian refugees to their country as soon as possible.

US President Donald Trump said that US-backed forces had dislodged Daesh from its last holdout in Syria. "Here's ISIS on election day. And here's ISIS right now," Trump said, as he displayed a before-and-after map to reporters.

The Brief

ISLAMOPHOBIA

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, at its meeting in Istanbul, has called for tough international action to combat Islamophobia **P7**

DRUGS IN EGYPT

Ten percent of Egypt's over 100 million inhabitants use drugs. An increase in drug-related incidents has prompted the president to introduce a law requiring employers to fire drug users. **P9**

PALESTINIAN CRISIS

The US has cut more than \$500 million in Palestinian aid in the past year. The Palestinian Authority has halved the salaries of many civil servants. **P15**

SHARQIAH SEASON

Pitbull wows sold-out crowd at Dammam music festival

Hala Tashkandi, Essam Al-Ghailb
Dammam

US musician Pitbull performed in front of a sold-out crowd on Friday afternoon at the Asharqiah Music Festival in Dammam's Life Park.

It was one of many big events on the second weekend of the 17-day Sharqiah Season, which has brought a host of entertainment and sporting spectacles to the Eastern Province for the first time.

Wearing a black suit and aviator sunglasses, the energy-filled rapper arrived onstage at 4 p.m., and performed his most famous songs, including "Taxi," "Timber," "On The Floor" and others.

Interacting with the crowd



FAST FACT

Wearing a black suit and aviator sunglasses, the energy-filled rapper arrived onstage at 4 p.m., and performed his most famous songs, including 'Taxi,' 'Timber,' 'On The Floor' and others.

between songs, he told them: "I want you to be able to tell people, 'I went to a Pitbull concert and I had the time of my life, Saudi Arabia!'"

Arab News caught up with Pitbull backstage after the show. When asked if he had something to say to his fans, he said: "To everyone in Saudi I wanna say thank you for the love, I appreciate the opportunity. Great crowd, great energy."

Earlier in the afternoon, on the Dammam Corniche, over 2,000 people arrived for the Red Bull Air Race Demo. Planes soared over the waters, thrilling the crowd below. The demonstration did not disappoint, with pilots pulling their planes through barrel rolls and high G-force turns along a floating obstacle course.

"It's been a nice day," said Mohammed Saleh Al-Ghamdi, 33, who came to watch with his family. "We come here every weekend, and every weekend there is a surprise. This time it is these air races, which my son, Hussam, found really exciting."

Related report Page 8

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIV
No. 108 • 16 pages



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Violence driven by Islamophobia requires "genuine, comprehensive and systematic measures to address this affliction."
Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Radar




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KSA today




Alkhubar Entertainment

Take your family and friends to this lively carnival featuring artistic interactive performances in theater, acrobatics, folklore and children's shows. Today is the last day of the carnival at the seafront from 4-11 p.m.



Dammam Spring day out

Enjoy a musical night with family and friends, and sing along to some Frank Sinatra until March 30 at Al-Sha'bi District Plaza from 4-11 p.m.



Riyadh Book fair

This book fair, with 900 national and international publishing houses and 200 cultural events, is taking place at the Riyadh International Exhibition and Convention Center until March 23 from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.



Jubail Multimedia fun

This is a unique seaside event with live interactive visual performances, dancing fountains and beautiful music. The event is underway at Fanateer Beach until March 30 daily from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.



Saudi Culture Minister Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan meets UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay in Paris. SPA

The Saudi Culture Ministry and UNESCO, the international cultural and scientific agency, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Paris on Friday aimed at promoting cooperation in culture and preserving heritage.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Saudi Minister of Culture Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan and UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay.

The cooperation will focus on preserving and repairing heritage sites, as well as on developing the arts, festivals and literature including libraries, arts performance, and initiatives and conferences related to children's culture and arts.

This collaboration will provide educational and training opportunities for Saudis in the field of culture, as part of the ministry's steps toward developing Saudi talents.

Today's Number

79

Saudi Arabia is one of the world's pioneering countries in the humanitarian field, where its work has reached more than 79 countries. Since its establishment in 2015, KSRelief has been able to reach people in need in 44 countries.

FaceOf



Mariam Al-Ghamdi

Mariam Al-Ghamdi is a Saudi actress, radio host, director and writer. She was one of the first women to feature on live radio in the Kingdom, reading the newscast in 1962.

She began scriptwriting for TV in 1984, which paved the way for a career as a producer from 1993. She subsequently forged a successful career as an actress, appearing in shows including "Selfie," "Sayf Barid," "Harat Al-Shaykh" and "Hawameer El-Sahraa, as well as in the movie "Wadja."

Al-Ghamdi earned a bachelor's degree in English Literature from King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah in 1989, and has written many story collections, such as "Ahobak wa Lakin" and "Asmaa wa Nisaa."

Al-Ghamdi appeared on the red carpet at the fifth Saudi Film Festival at the King Abdul Aziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) in Dhahran on Thursday.

She praised Ithra for organizing the festival and supporting young filmmakers in Saudi Arabia, saying: "In the past Saudi filmmakers were on their own, but thanks to Ithra, they now have the support they need."

She was particularly excited at the progress of women in Saudi cinema: "I am truly proud of what they have achieved, and I hope to have played a part in bringing it about."

What's Trending Today's hot topics explained by Ameera Abid



LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND #WorldWaterDay

World Water Day was trending on Twitter on Friday. For those living in developed countries, it's easy to forget that this precious and vital resource is not readily available to people in many parts of the world.

World Water Day is an annual UN observance day. Its main goal is to promote ways of sustaining freshwater resources. This year it fell on March 22, and the theme was "Leaving no one behind."

@UN Women tweeted: "Whoever you are, wherever you are, water is your human right. Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households with water off-premises. This #WorldWaterDay, we must leave no one behind."

DEMISE Justin Carter

American country singer Justin Carter was trending on Google on Friday. Carter died while filming a music video in his Houston apartment on Sunday, March 16. A gun he was using as a prop accidentally discharged, shooting the 36-year-old musician in the head, according to reports.

Earlier that same week, Carter — described as a "rising star" — had released an independent single and signed a management deal.

Carter's mother, Cindy McClellan, told Fox News that the gun had been in his pocket and "went off and caught my son in the corner of his eye."

She said: "He was a wonderful person, very loving and he loved our God very much."

A message on Carter's Instagram account informed fans of the sad news. "Please Keep Justin's Family In Your Prayers & Give Them Privacy In This Hard Time," the message began.

"Justin Is No Longer With Us, He Has Passed Away. He Will Be Missed By Us All, He Was Always Full Of Joy, Laughter, And Loved On So Many People In His Life. Justin Appreciated All His Fans And Their Support."



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Dubai

- British girl band Little Mix, as well as Rita Ora and Liam Payne, are taking to the stage of the Dubai Media City Amphitheater tonight, as organized by the Global Teacher Prize as a tribute to the invaluable contribution of teachers around the world.
- Japan is hosting the Women 20, one of the G20's engagement groups that focus on women's issues, where Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai is set to address the influential group of attendees. The high-level meeting explores issues like migration and labor.
- Pakistanis around the world, including the large group of Pakistani expats in the Middle East, are celebrating Pakistan Day today. The important occasion remembers the "Lahore Resolution" that eventually led to the creation of an independent state.
- Today is World Meteorological Day, which commemorates the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization. This year's theme is "The Sun, the Earth and the Weather," which recognizes the power of the sun, and its impact on earth and society.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

	March 23	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah		5:06	6:22	12:28	3:53	6:33	8:03
Madinah		5:05	6:23	12:29	3:55	6:34	8:04
Riyadh		4:36	5:54	12:00	3:27	6:06	7:36
Abha		4:57	6:12	12:17	3:40	6:22	7:52
Dammam		4:21	5:40	11:47	3:14	5:53	7:23

Spotlight



Saudi Arabia hosted 179,210 Pakistani Hajjis last year, including the model-actor Fawad Khan.



PAKISTAN RESOLUTION DAY

A special relationship

In commemoration of their national day, Pakistanis join with Saudis in reflecting on their historic relations

Anna Eltesham Dubai

Thirty-five-year-old Mushtaq Ahmed prepares a sweet rice dish called kheer in his camp on March 23 every year.

He then goes around his compound distributing it to his coworkers. That is how he has been celebrating Pakistan Day in Jeddah for more than eight years now.

"I live and work in Jeddah as an electrician. Every year on March 23 I used to miss Pakistan Day festivities in my home town," said Ahmed, who asked not to use his real name.

When the feeling became acute, he called up his mother and asked her for the recipe of this dish.

"I decided to treat all my friends and colleagues regardless of their nationality. This is my way of celebrating my home country in an adopted country," said Ahmed who comes from a village near Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan.

What he misses most, however, is going for Friday prayers at the Shah Faisal Mosque in Islamabad.

"That mosque is the pride of Pakistan. It was named after the late Saudi King Faisal, who loved our country," he explained.

"I have been visiting this mosque since I was a teenager. I often prayed to Allah to get me a job in Saudi Arabia so that I can take care of my family members financially," said Ahmed.

Working in Saudi Arabia has been a dream come true for him. "Earning a living for your family is the ultimate objective for any Pakistani here, whether it is an illiterate worker like me or a Western-educated CEO," he said.

Ahmed is one of the 2.7 million Pakistanis who live in Saudi Arabia. In his own way, Ahmed maintains the relationship between the two countries.

He is not alone — Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are indeed connected

in many ways. So to mark Pakistan Day, Arab News gathered views of experts in both the countries and asked them what the two countries mean to each other.

"Some of Pakistan's celebrities — model-actor Fawad Khan, politician Marvi Memon and former prime minister Shaukat Aziz — have connections with Saudi Arabia," said Ahmed Quraishi, an Islamabad-based journalist and senior research fellow at Project for Pakistan in the 21st Century. Fawad Khan spent his childhood in Riyadh, while Marvi Memon's father and Shaukat Aziz both worked in KSA.

Success stories of Pakistanis and Saudis connected through marriage could itself be the subject of a book as millions in Pakistan are linked to life in the Kingdom.

For Quraishi, Faisalabad (the Pakistani city named after King Faisal) is a permanent reminder of the connection, as is the Faisal Mosque.

He said that for Pakistan, Riyadh represents a force for positive change, the market economy, and peace in the Middle East.

"Riyadh is bringing in a lot of positivity to the region by promoting religious moderation, region-wide conflict resolution, and encouraging younger

generations in the region to become active participants in the global economy."

Senator Lt. Gen. Abdul Qayum was based in Saudi Arabia alongside 20,000 Pakistani army troops in 1985-87.

"I was a senior officer and as a lieutenant colonel in Khamis Mushayt I headed a 1,000-strong force that included pilots, engineers, artillery and defense units," he said.

Lt. Gen. Qayum remembered those two years as among the best of his career and his personal life. "Since then, like millions of other Pakistanis, Saudi Arabia has been my second home."

Qayum, who now heads Pakistan's Senate Standing Committee on Defense Production, quoted Pew research to say that the most positive perception in the world of Saudi Arabia is in Pakistan. He said that faith is the main reason that connects both the countries very strongly.

"Millions of Pakistanis visit Makkah and Madinah for Hajj and Umrah. Our Hajj quota is the second largest in the world," he said.

Qayum noted that millions of Pakistanis living in the Kingdom further the strong connection that exists between the two countries.

"These expatriates, whether

FACTS

2.7m

Pakistani expatriates in KSA.

\$2.97bn

Remittance transfer to Pakistan from KSA in the current fiscal year of Pakistan.

179,210

Pakistanis went for Hajj in 2018.

blue-collar or white-collar, send millions worth of remittances to our country, which gives strength to our economy. And it is not just about the nation's economy, this money also tremendously improves their personal financial conditions," said Qayum.

It is because of income earned in Saudi Arabia that they have been able to provide quality living to their families.

Pakistan recorded a 12.2 percent increase in the inflow of remittances in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, according to official data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Saudi Arabia continues to be the largest source of remittances to Pakistan, the SBP report released on Monday said, with \$2.97 billion recorded during the seven months of the current fiscal year.

Quraishi chooses to look at it from the prism of peace and security, and it works both ways.

"For Riyadh, Pakistan is an anchor for peace and stability in a region extending from West Asia to South Asia and Afghanistan," Quraishi said.

On the other hand, according to Quraishi, the largest Pakistani diaspora resides in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, and Islamabad has important political, economic and strategic interests tied up to this region.

"The stability and security of the Arabian Sea and Arabian Gulf and the GCC states is an intrinsic Pakistani interest," he noted.

Omar Farooqui, a Jeddah-based Saudi educator and entrepreneur, believes that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are two forever-intertwined countries. He has his own reasons to draw that analogy.

"Saudi Arabia sees Pakistan as a country with major geographical advantages, and by investing heavily in Pakistan it has further entrenched itself strategically," said Farooqui.

"For Saudi Arabia, having a strong, prosperous and thriving Pakistan is good for business and stability in the Muslim world and beyond," said Farooqui, whose father migrated from Pakistan to Jeddah during the 1960s.

"From the oil boom of the 1960s, during the leadership of King Faisal, up to today under the leadership of King Salman and HRH Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia has always come to the aid of Pakistan during difficult economic times," he said.

On the other hand, Pakistan has always provided Saudi Arabia with both tactical military services and a

huge labor force for the Kingdom's real estate and construction projects.

Omar also has numerous Pakistani friends in Saudi Arabia who have been living in the country for decades.

"They live a fabulous lifestyle and would never want to change it for any place on earth. For them, Saudi Arabia is a second home due to the fact that the treatment they get from their gracious hosts is incredibly generous," he added.

Quraishi said that beyond people and economy the relationship is also about strategic partnership, and Riyadh and Islamabad have key roles to play to end the spread of extremism and extremist violence.

"Riyadh enjoys a spiritual power as the home to Islam's two holiest places, and Pakistan is one of the largest Muslim nations, a military power, and a country with a long experience in countering the destructive role of groups that espouse extremism and militancy," he said.

This is why both countries are cooperating with 38 other nations from the Muslim world in a joint effort under the banner of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC).

"The objective is to curb and to end the malign influence of extremist, sectarian and violent groups that hurt the interests of Muslim peoples everywhere, and unite all Muslims in all of their schools of thought in a spirit of tolerance and acceptance," said Quraishi.

He explained that both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are forward-looking progressive nations that draw support and inspiration from each other and have the best interests of Muslim countries, the region, and the global community at heart.

"This is a significantly important relationship and one that many are watching closely."



Main picture: Faisal Mosque, Islamabad, Pakistan, named after the Saudi King Faisal; left, Pakistanis fast at Riyadh's Imam Turki bin Abdullah Mosque. Getty Images/ Reuters

Pakistan

RESOLUTION DAY SPECIAL



MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER

Imran Khan: 'Our desire for peace should not be considered as our weakness'

Imran Khan
Prime Minister of Pakistan

March 23 is an eminent day in our national history when the Muslims of the subcontinent set their goal of an independent country, following the ideals of Allama Iqbal.

On this day, under the leadership of the Father of the Nation Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslims of India decided to throw away the chains of slavery and establish a sovereign Muslim state to gain independence from the oppression of the Hindu majority.

Thus, on Aug. 14, 1947, Pakistan emerged on the map of the world as an independent Muslim state.

In Pakistan, people found their economic and social rights and religious freedom, of which they were

deprived in the United India, and prevented the attempts being made to eliminate their cultural identity.

The vision of the March 23 resolution was to create a country where all citizens have equal rights and opportunities without any discrimination of caste and creed, and where they can practice their own culture and traditions and play a constructive role in the development of their country.

Today's Pakistan is a new Pakistan. We are committed to making Pakistan a real Islamic welfare state and to establish a society which is based on empathy and compassion and where every citizen, without any discrimination, participates in the development of the country.

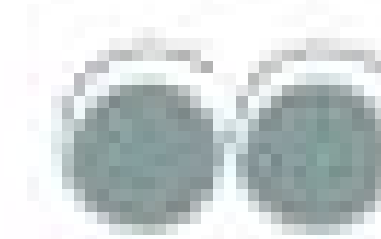
We look forward to having friendly and peaceful relations, based on equality, with our neighbors and wish to work together with them to alleviate poverty in South Asia and



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan

raise millions of people living in the region through development and prosperity.

But we also want to make it clear that our desire for peace should



Today's Pakistan is a new Pakistan. We are committed to making Pakistan a real Islamic welfare state and to establish a society which is based on empathy and compassion and where every citizen, without any discrimination, participates in the development of the country.

Imran Khan
Prime Minister of Pakistan

not be considered as our weakness. Pakistan reserves the right to take every step for its defense.

Thanks to Allah, the defense of Pakistan has become impregnable. We are proud of our brave armed forces.

Due to our courageous armed forces, the unmatched capabilities of national security institutions and their extraordinary sacrifices, the enemies of Pakistan have been defeated on every front.

Its practical demonstration was seen by the whole world during recent Indian aggression, and we have emerged stronger than ever.

On this auspicious day, we should not forget our Kashmiri brethren, who are facing the state terrorism of India and are forced to live under aggression.

We express solidarity with the people of occupied Kashmir for their bravery and sacrifices and reiterate our commitment of political, diplomatic and moral support for the Kashmiri right of self-determination, at every forum in the world.

At this critical juncture of our history, we have to struggle hard to eliminate corruption from our society and achieve economic stability. We are facing difficult times but I want to assure you that our spirit is unwavering. What else do we need?

Pakistan Zindabad!

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

Pakistanis are committed to democracy, justice and peace

Dr. Arif Alvi
President of Pakistan

March 23 marks the historic day when the Muslims of subcontinent decided to unite in their democratic demand for a separate homeland, where they could establish and practice their lives in accordance with their values and traditions, especially justice, equality, and freedom.

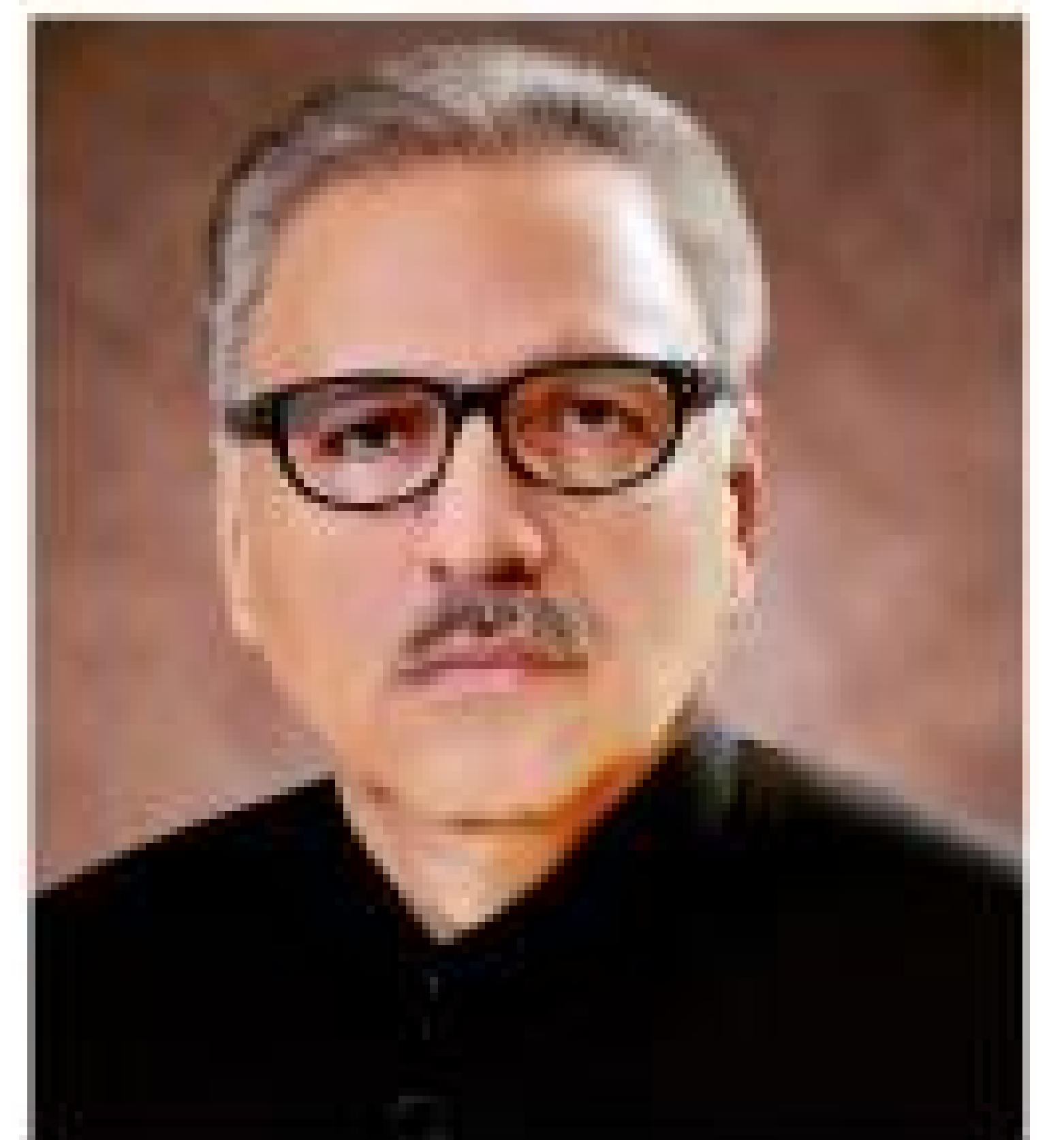
Today, therefore, is an occasion to pay tribute to the struggle and sacrifices of our founding fathers, and pledge once more to live up to the ideals that form the foundation of the idea of Pakistan.

Pakistan has surmounted unprecedented challenges and demonstrated resilience in the face of extraordinary circumstances.

It has accomplished exemplary successes in the fight against terrorism and extremism.

However, there still remains the challenge of socioeconomic development.

We need to work even more for national progress and prosperity.



Dr. Arif Alvi, president of Pakistan

Pakistanis are committed to democracy, justice and peace.

Given our human talent and natural resources, our potential is immense. We are destined to achieve the status of a model democratic state, as envisioned by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Let us have faith and remain united, and let us commit to work hard with discipline to make Pakistan strong and prosperous.

May Allah's blessings be with us all.

AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE

Pakistan is making steady progress in all spheres of life

Raja Ali Ejaz
Ambassador of Pakistan

Pakistan is celebrating the 79th anniversary of the Pakistan Resolution, which was adopted on March 23, 1940. It laid the foundation for the creation of Pakistan. Through this resolution, the dynamic and visionary leaders of the Pakistan Movement gave hope to the Muslims of the subcontinent that they would have a separate homeland, a land in which they would be free to practice their religion, express their views, get justice and lead their lives as per their wishes.

Today, by the grace of Allah, Pakistan is making steady progress in all spheres of life. Our country has been through many challenges over the past 70 years, but with the strong support and resilience of our people, Pakistan has been put on the upward and irreversible trajectory of progress and development.

The Pakistani community in Saudi Arabia has played a valuable role in



Raja Ali Ejaz, ambassador of Pakistan

the development of the Kingdom as well as their home country. They feel proud to be part of the development of the Kingdom, a place that is close to their hearts and which is home to the two holiest places for Muslims of the world.

Our relations with Saudi Arabia are moving toward new horizons. Recently we have seen a number of high-level bilateral visits that have further cemented the bonds of friendship.

CONSUL GENERAL'S MESSAGE

Pakistan building valuable partnership with KSA

Shahryar Akbar Khan
Consul General of Pakistan

I wish to convey my heartfelt felicitations to fellow Pakistanis, specifically those residing in Saudi Arabia.

March 23, 1940, signifies a milestone in our national history: The day when the Muslims of the subcontinent decided to focus all their energies on the realization of the dream of Allama Iqbal for a separate homeland.

Seven years of struggle by Muslims, under the relentless leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah ended with the founding of Pakistan on Aug. 14, 1947.

The historic feat of establishing Pakistan through democratic means, however, was just the beginning. With the hard work and sincerity of its people, Pakistan has emerged as a prominent member in the comity of nations.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have deep-rooted brotherly relations, encompassing a wide range of common strategic, political and economic objectives.

The recent visit of Saudi Crown



Shahryar Akbar Khan, consul general of Pakistan in Jeddah

Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan harbors hopes for a further deepening of cooperation between the two countries.

With the support of King Salman and the crown prince, Pakistan wishes to build a valuable partnership with Saudi Arabia for the realization of shared developmental goals.




I would like to acknowledge as well the valuable contribution of the vibrant and dynamic Pakistani community in Saudi Arabia.

CITYLINK FREIGHT

Extend its Joyous Greetings
and Congratulations
to all Pakistani Nationals
on the occasion of

Pakistan Day

March 23, 2019

CITYLINK CARGO (AIR & SEA) - DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE
CITYLINK FREIGHT FORWARDING DIVISION
CITYLINK WAREHOUSING & CONTAINER STORAGE
CITYLINK TRAVEL & TOURISM SERVICES

Pakistan Resolution Day

ETERNAL FRIENDSHIP

Pakistani professionals playing a vital role in Saudi development

Raja Ali Ejaz
Ambassador of Pakistan

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to congratulate the Pakistani community in Saudi Arabia on the occasion of the National Day of Pakistan.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy historic and fraternal relations that are deeply rooted in our shared religious and cultural beliefs.

Our bilateral ties, based on mutual respect, understanding and cooperation at regional and international forums, have entered a new era of friendship after recent bilateral, high-level visits, especially those of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

I must credit the visionary leadership of King Salman for taking a

personal interest in steering our bilateral relations to new heights.

The status of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the Saudi leadership in the hearts of Pakistanis have always been revered.

Pakistan has always lauded the efforts of the Saudi leadership in spreading peace and stability across the world in general and the region in particular.

Saudi Arabia has been quick to render political and material support to alleviate the suffering of Muslims whenever the opportunity arises.

To this end, Pakistan has also been assuring the leadership of the Kingdom and its people of its full support and help.

The bilateral relations between our two countries cover a wide spectrum of cooperation.

Both nations have an abiding,

genuine interest in further augmenting this mutually beneficial relationship.

After the recent high-level visits, the two countries are especially focused on improving their economic and trade ties. In this regard, a high-powered Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Supreme Coordination Council has been constituted, which will be chaired by the prime minister of Pakistan and the Saudi crown prince.

Investment in Pakistan is also an area that has gained significance in recent times, especially after the announcement that Saudi Arabia will invest \$20 billion, including a project to build an oil refinery in the coastal city of Gwadar.

We appreciate the Vision of the Kingdom to transform and diversify its economy to lessen its dependence on oil.

The vigor and the resolve



Saudi-Pakistan ties have entered a new era of friendship after the recent visit of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan. Photo/Supplied

NUMBER

2.5m

The number of people who are part of the Pakistani diaspora in the Kingdom.

with which Saudi government is pursuing the transformation agenda is laudable.

Saudi Arabia is set to become a modern and progressive economic powerhouse once this Vision is realized by 2030.

Pakistan has also embarked on a strategic development program, under the ambit of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), envisioning investment of more than \$60 billion.

Apart from mega infrastructural

development projects, Pakistan is set to become a regional economic hub through enhanced connectivity.

I foresee Vision 2030 and CPEC as common platforms furthering economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The two governments are steadily making efforts to bring about an enabling, secure and conducive environment for bilateral investments, the exchange of business delegations, trade facilitation and coordination/collaboration between counterpart organizations.

The number of people who are part of the Pakistani diaspora in the Kingdom is about 2.5 million.

The bulk of expatriates are engaged in blue-collar jobs but quite a few are highly skilled professionals.

Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia are known to be extremely industrious, exceptionally dedicated and trustworthy.

Pakistani professionals, especially chartered accountants, doctors, engineers and IT professionals, have earned great respect for playing a vital role in the development of Saudi Arabia.

As the Kingdom looks to diversify its economy and implement its Vision 2030, we expect even more professionals from Pakistan to play a valuable role in the realization of this goal.

I consider these workers as a strategic asset for both countries, helping to further cement our bonds of brotherhood.

I am confident that in the days to come the Pakistani-Saudi relationship will be further strengthened and will bring an era of prosperity for the people of the two countries.

MARCH 23rd
Youm-e-Pakistan

the day of resolution for one nation

Today we relive the moment to rejoice the reward of history's greatest struggle & sacrifice.

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Pakistan International School Jeddah - English Section

23^{MARCH}
Pakistan Day

Pakistan Resolution Day

The Revival of our Pledge to Peace

*Fastened with eternal peace and harmony, they bestowed the gift of sovereignty
With humility and gratitude, we revive our resolve for its success and dignity.
O Motherland; sown in thy existence are many wrecked dreams to true one dream
Committed are we to preserve thy exclusive insignia of grandeur and sanctity.*

On this auspicious day, Pakistan International School Jeddah (English Section) expresses its heartfelt felicitation to the entire nation and extends its cordial gratitude to the custodian of the two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdul Aziz al Saud and the Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Salman.

We revive our commitment to work untiringly for the progress and prosperity of both the countries by extending the highest standards of KNOWLEDGE and EDUCATION

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Pakistan Resolution Day

STRATEGIC CONNECTIVITY

Saudi Vision 2030 and CPEC: Heralding regional prosperity

Economic corridor will considerably reduce the distance of current sea routes to East Asia

Muhammad Arshad Munir Jeddah

The development of infrastructure — such as better roads, ports, highways and airports, along with elements such as power, water and human capital — are important factors that help define the economic prosperity of a nation.

It is a universally recognized fact that countries cannot fully take their place in the league of developed nations unless they invest in all aspects of infrastructure.

A key factor in the modern economic world is linkage or connectivity, within a country and with its neighbors.

This increases the flow of goods, information and people across regions. Regional connectivity and progress are related to each other as visions of shared development. This is the perspective behind the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Gwadar Port, which is the apex of the CPEC project, is strategically located in the Arabian Sea.

It occupies a key position between South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, and lies close to



Gwadar Port, which is the apex of the CPEC project, is strategically located in the Arabian Sea. Photo/Supplied

the Strait of Hormuz, which is the gateway for the supply of about 20 percent of the world's oil.

The corridor aims to transform the region and act as a catalyst for economic change by integrating South, Central and Western Asia. Afghanistan, a landlocked country, can be a major beneficiary of the project.

Pakistan has pledged to construct a 265-kilometer motorway between Peshawar and Kabul to link Afghanistan with CPEC. This will connect Afghanistan with other regions and also allow the country to start conducting commercial activities through the Indian Ocean. CPEC also offers opportunities to landlocked Central

Asian republics to diversify their energy channels.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are making common efforts to develop their economies and increase trade volumes.

The Vision 2030 project of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is a package of social and economic policies designed to free

the Kingdom from its dependence on oil exports and to build a prosperous and sustainable economic future by focusing on country's strengths and policies.

Pakistan is also following an ambitious development plan, Pakistan Vision 2025, designed to help the country to develop and take its place among the world's leading economies.

An important aspect of the Saudi Vision 2030 is diversification of the economy to increase non-oil revenue by gradually shifting its economic base.

This diversification plan needs new markets and trade routes. CPEC offers a host of opportunities for trade with Central Asia, East Asia and the Far East.

CPEC will considerably reduce the distance of current sea routes from the Middle East and Africa to East Asia, and the cost will be significantly reduced.

Currently, oil imported by Beijing from Gulf countries reaches China after a journey of 16,000 km. After the completion of Gwadar Port project, the distance will be reduced to about 3,000 km, making it safer, more efficient and more feasible.

Muhammad Arshad Munir is press counselor at the Pakistan Consulate in Jeddah.



Adnan Nasir

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

A day to renew the pledge for peace

Adnan Nasir Jeddah

Eight decades down the line, March 23, 1940, remains a date of great significance and importance to the people of Pakistan, not only because it changed the course of their history but for that unity, faith and discipline which was delineated by the thousands of Muslims of the subcontinent in the large steppe of Minto Park, Lahore.

The glory of Minar-e-Pakistan still echoes to the sound of our ancestors' unyielding unity behind one conviction, one dream and one resolution of sovereignty for posterity to cherish.

Under the inspirational leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the unwavering resolve of this inordinate congregation proved to be the successful culmination of a long struggle by the Muslims of South Asia, and sowed the seeds of sanguinity from which grew the real quest for an independent homeland: The first Muslim state, Pakistan.

Today is a day to reiterate our national resolve and channel our endeavors to sustain a more peaceful, prosperous and strong country in keeping with its merits, religious beliefs, moral values and social conscience.

This is a day to renew our pledge to pursue peace and work in our individual capacities with full honesty, sincerity and dedication to forever cherish this impeccable blessing of independence with national integrity and pride.

Accentuating the timeless ideologies of our ancestors, my advice to our youth is to focus their untiring attention toward acquiring an education so that they are able to stand guard over our nationalistic goals and face the ever-changing world's dynamism as proud, confident and responsible citizens of the world.

Adnan Nasir is principal of Pakistan International School-Jeddah, English Section.

STRONG NATION

Heartfelt felicitation to all Pakistanis

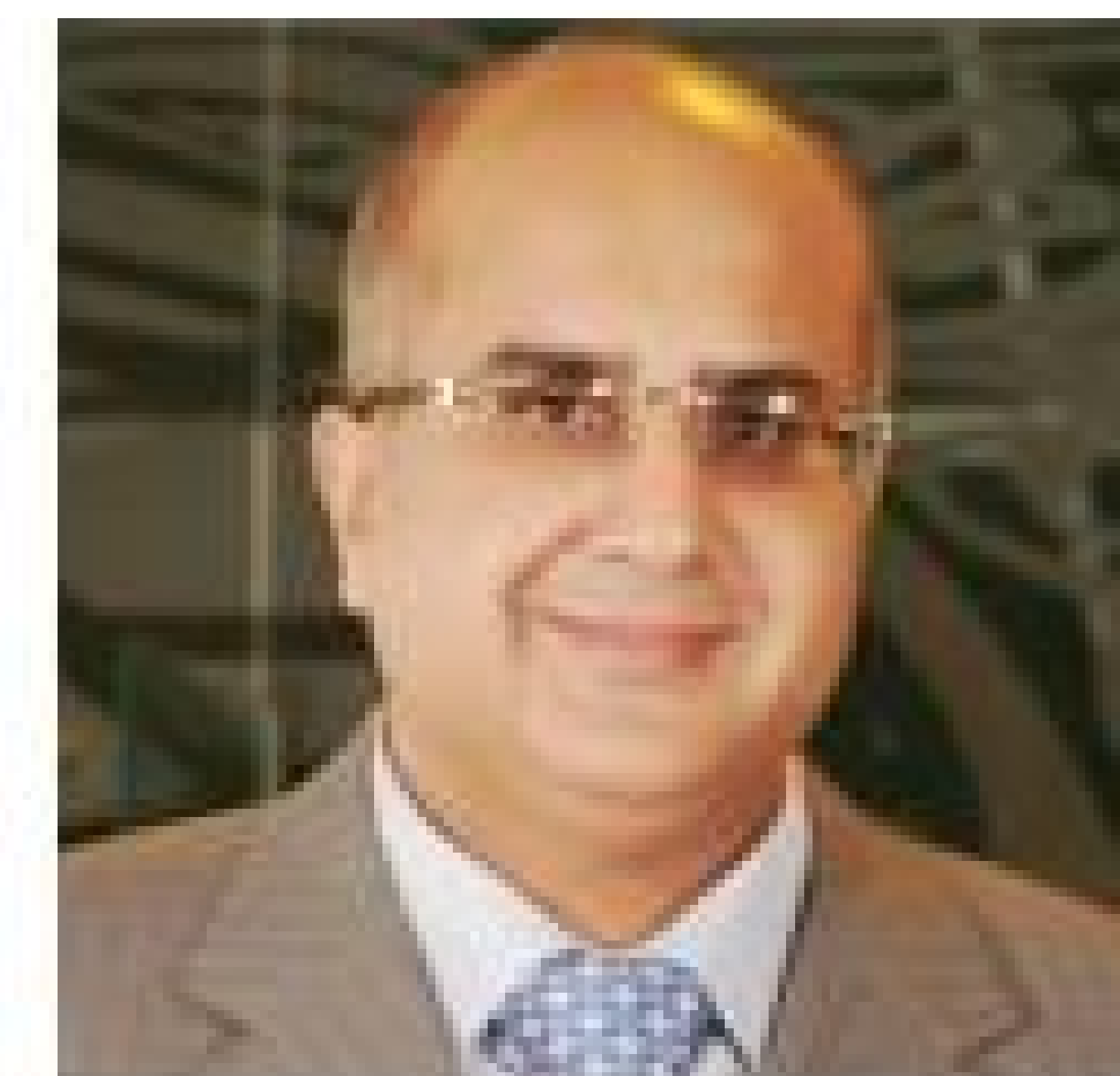
Akhtar Hussain Malik Jeddah

March 23 is a day to remember the tireless endeavors of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his team who overcame all the treacherous and deceitful conspiracies against the Muslims of India to attain an independent piece of land on which they could live and practice their religion freely.

Pakistan came into being for a specific divine cause and we, the Pakistani people, will fight against any calamity or wicked intention to keep our flag soaring high.

Around the globe, the people of Pakistan are celebrating the anniversary of Pakistan Resolution Day, March 23, 1940, which came about under the inspirational leadership of the father of the nation.

While Resolution Day stands as a landmark amid many distinguished events in the creation



Akhtar Hussain Malik

of our country, it is also a day to reiterate our national resolve and pledge our endeavors to ensure a peaceful, prosperous and strong country.

This day demands of us that we renew our convictions and act upon the timeless ideologies of our forefathers to cherish this blessing.

Akhtar Hussain Malik is CEO of Contraco.

CONGRATULATIONS & Happy Celebrations!

to all Pakistani Nationals

on the occasion of

Pakistan Day

March 23, 2019



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Congratulations to All Pakistani Nationals on the Auspicious Occasion of

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News Saudi Arabia

PORTRAITS OF THE KINGDOM

The Place

INSPIRATIONAL FACES AND PLACES FROM AROUND SAUDI ARABIA



Al-Dhabab Walkway is situated in Abha — one of Saudi Arabia's most beautiful places to visit, offering magnificent mountain views. It is a 14-meter-wide suspended walkway that extends for seven kilometers and includes seating areas and playgrounds for children.

Its name, Al-Dhabab, means "fog," reflecting the fact that, for much of the year, fog covers parts of the area, making for some stunning, Instagram-ready mountainside vistas.

Photo/Saudi Tourism

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Muslim nations urge for measures against Islamophobia

UN must clamp down on extremism in wake of Christchurch terror attack on mosque worshippers: OIC foreign ministers

SPA Jeddah

Muslim nations on Friday called for tough international action to combat Islamophobia following the terror attack on two New Zealand mosques.

The executive committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), meeting in Istanbul, expressed its outrage at last week's Christchurch massacre, and deep concern over the resurgence of racist movements and terrorist activities around the world.

Foreign ministers attending the emergency session, issued a raft of demands aimed at tackling the scourge of hate-related violence toward Muslims and other minority groups. They said raids on mosques and the killing of Muslims highlighted the "brutal and inhumane consequences" of hatred of Islam.

Members called on all governments to review their legal frameworks regarding terrorism and urged the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to establish an observatory to monitor extremist acts against Muslims.

The OIC committee also suggested that the UN and other regional and international organizations should declare March 15 (the day of the Christchurch attack) an international day of solidarity against Islamophobia.

It said the UN should convene a session of its General Assembly to debate the issue of racism and appoint a special representative on combating Islamophobia. The UN was also requested to expand the scope of its existing sanctions on terror groups to cover individuals and entities associated with extremist ethnic organizations.

Fifty worshippers died and many



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, center, poses for a group photo alongside New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters, right, OIC Secretary-General Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimen, left, and other delegates during an emergency meeting in Istanbul on Friday. AFP

others were seriously injured during last Friday's shootings at the Al-Noor and Linwood mosques in New Zealand's South Island city.

The OIC reiterated that terrorism had no religion or justification and was a crime regardless of

Adhering to international policies on safeguarding the rights, dignity, religious and cultural identity of Muslim communities and minorities in non-member states was key to tackling the issue, the ministers declared.

They noted resolutions of previous Islamic summit conferences and meetings which expressed concerns over attacks on mosques and other Muslim properties.

The OIC foreign ministers thanked the government of New Zealand for its unequivocal condemnation of the terrorist attacks and the firm stance of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and offered their full support to a comprehensive and transparent investigation into the outrage.

The committee also extended its sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

The meeting stressed the need for the OIC to maintain close contacts with UN and EU governments of countries with Muslim populations and minorities to identify ways of promoting cultural harmony, understanding, respect, and tolerance.

Communicating with social

media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to remove and prohibit content inciting violence and hatred toward Muslims was also important, the OIC ministers stated.

Members requested the OIC Contact Group on Peace and Dialogue to prioritize efforts to combat religious discrimination, Islamophobia, intolerance, and hatred against Muslims and to hold regular interfaith meetings. They added that all the necessary human and financial resources should be given to the OIC's work in communicating with centers around the world concerned with Islamophobia.

Meanwhile, Ridwan Jadwat, Australia's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said: "Australians share their deepest sympathies with those affected by the devastating terrorist attack by a right-wing extremist in Christchurch and share the grief of New Zealanders and Muslim communities the world over."

"The day after the attack, the prime minister and foreign minister reached out to the Muslim community to convey deep condolences and show solidarity, visiting a mosque and meeting Muslim leaders including the grand mufti and the Australian National Imams Council."

"We will always protect and defend our Muslim community in Australia and our people's right to practice peacefully their religion without fear. Everyone has a right to feel safe in their places of worship."

The envoy said his government was extending community safety grants to protect religious schools, places of worship and assembly.

"This is the time for unity and inclusion. We must all work together against extremism and take care to ensure our public debates about this horrific incident do not encourage the very divisions between faiths and cultures that extremists seek to create."

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Research & innovation

Digital Library stages excellence award ceremony

The Saudi Digital Library (SDL) will host an excellence award ceremony for the scientific output of Saudi universities next Saturday.

Based on the keenness of the SDL to acquire and provide for the productivity of faculty members, researchers and students, SDL has established the "Excellence Award for the Scientific Production of Saudi Universities in the International Databases."

It is an annual award designed for Saudi universities, faculty members and postgraduate students to support excellence in Saudi scientific production published in international scientific journals. **SPA Riyadh**

Initiatives

KSRelief highlights humanitarian work at Chile conference

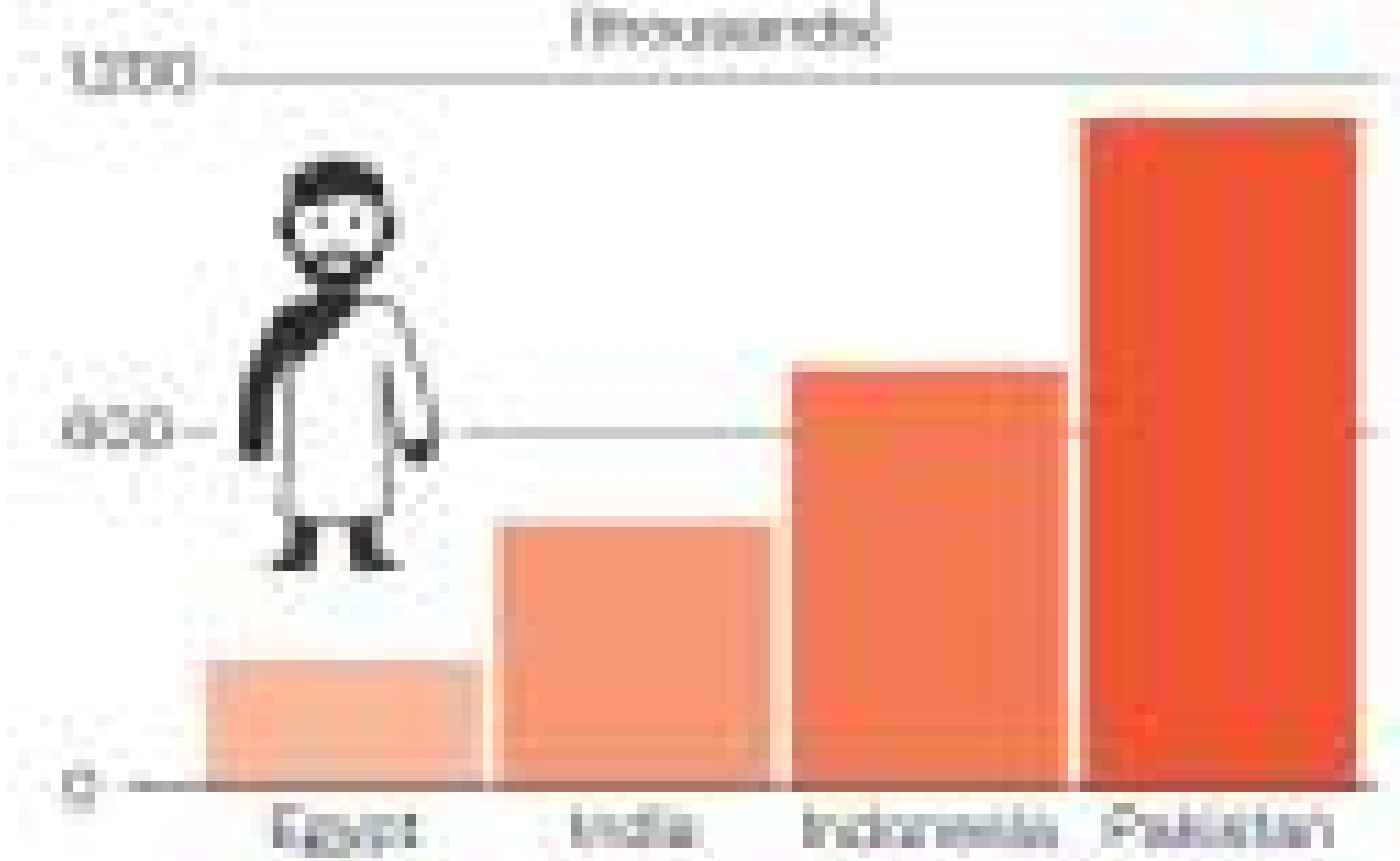
The general supervisor of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief), Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, has highlighted the work of his organization at a symposium during the Medical International Conference held in Santiago.

More than 650 senior doctors and medical practitioners from 57 countries were invited to take part in the conference.

Al-Rabeeah talked about the pioneering work done by the center and its staff as part of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 program, and how medical advancement and humanitarian aid provision was at the forefront of the government's plan to diversify Saudi Arabia. **SPA Riyadh**

The Day's FIGURES

NUMBER OF UMRAH PILGRIMS (Thousands)



Source: Saudi Press Agency

Where We Are Going Today

FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

Al-Hakawati Restaurant & Cafe

DEEMA AL-KHUDAIR



Al-Hakawati in Arab culture is a person known for their captivating storytelling abilities.

Diners can create their own tales and memories at this charming Levantine-decorated restaurant in El-Khayyat center, in Jeddah's Al-Rawdah district.

An Arabian atmosphere is created to encourage

customers to return again and again with the restaurant hosting live performances of traditional Arabic music every Thursday and Friday (and occasionally on Tuesdays).

Staff are polite and attentive to customer needs and the Levantine cuisine is a treat not to be missed.

Opportunities

CSC holds Saudi-Bulgarian business forum

The Saudi-Bulgarian Businessmen Forum at the headquarters of the Council of Saudi Chambers in Riyadh on Friday discussed the development of trade and the signing of investment agreements between the two countries.

Vice Chairman of the Council of Saudi Chambers Munir bin Saad met Bulgarian Minister of Economy Emil Karanikolov, Bulgaria's first ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dimitar Abadjiev, and a Bulgarian business delegation.

Saad stressed that Saudi Arabia needed effective means to enable Bulgarian and Saudi companies to open new channels of investment in health care, tourism and leisure, renewable energy and information technology. **SPA Riyadh**

World Poetry Day

UNESCO honors Saudi Prince Badr bin Abdul Mohsin

On the occasion of the World Poetry Day, the director general of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Audrey Azoulay, honored the poet Prince Badr bin Abdul Mohsin for the artistic contributions he has made over the past 40 years.

The event took place at the opening of the poetry evening held at the organization's headquarters in Paris, France. It was accompanied by an art exhibit displaying 36 of Abdul Mohsin's paintings.

Among the attendees were the Saudi minister of culture, Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan, the Kingdom's ambassador to France, Khalid bin Mohammed Al-Angari, and the president of Misk Initiatives Center, Badr Al-Asaker. **SPA Paris**

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Akon told Arab News backstage that he will be headed straight to Makkah to perform Umrah.



News Saudi Arabia

CULTURAL GATHERING

Thousands flock to Riyadh book fair this weekend

Key conference highlights international relations, economic benefits of protecting historic sites

Rashid Hassan Riyadh

The Riyadh International Book Fair, the region's largest cultural event held in the capital every year, is swirling with activities for the buying and selling of books, with publishers expecting high sales during its final weekend.

The event is hosted at the Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center (RICEC) between March 13 and March 23.

Speaking to Arab News on Friday, Sultan Al-Thubaiti, a supervisor with the Ministry of Education who has been stationed at the book fair for the 10-day event, said: "It has been very fulfilling and hugely successful with a variety of books, workshops, plays, Saudi films and cultural events attracting huge numbers of people."

The fair offers a variety of cultural events to promote the publishing industry in Saudi Arabia. More than 200 events were sponsored by the King Abdul Aziz Center for World Culture-ITHIRA (developed by Saudi Aramco).

Megaprojects were in the spotlight for visitors as they entered through four main gates bearing the names of Saudi Vision 2030's megaprojects: Neom, Qiddiyah, Red Sea and Amaala. The aim was to introduce visitors to the Kingdom's hopes, ambitions and future plans.

The annual book fair also celebrated Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, a Saudi politician, former minister, diplomat, poet and novelist who died in August 2010. Earlier, an agreement was reached between Arab culture ministers who celebrate one cultural figure every year. This year it was announced through the Riyadh book fair — and the first person chosen by consensus was Al-Gosaibi.

The book fair, which started more than a decade ago, displays a large collection of books on children, Islam, Arab culture, history, medicine, law, science, technology, mass media and communication, as well as biographical accounts, fiction and novels in popular languages



The book fair has attracted thousands of visitors daily, among them a large turnout of women and children. AN photo by Iqbal Hossain

including Arabic, English, French, Turkish, Urdu and Spanish.

Dialogue of civilizations

Experts in international relations hailed the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain as a "model of historical relations that reflect eternal and decisive relations." Their claims were made during a symposium titled "International Relations: Dialogue of

Civilizations," which was part of the fair.

The symposium was hosted by presenter Iman Bahaidara and featured Dr. Abdullah Al-Madani, a Bahraini academic specializing in international relations, and Dr. Naif Al-Hadari, a Saudi Arabian writer and media adviser specializing in politics.

Al-Madani highlighted the deep bonds between Bahrain and

HIGHLIGHTS

• The biggest platform for publishers, writers, scholars and academic institutions in the region, the event, which opened with Bahrain as the guest of honor country, is one of the most important book fairs in the Middle East.

• It witnessed the participation of more than 900 local, Arab and world publishing houses representing more than 30 countries.

Saudi Arabia in all fields, pointing out that his country has enjoyed security and stability since it was founded.

Protecting historic sites

The economic and cultural importance of preserving archaeological and historical sites in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain was highlighted at a high-profile conference.

Sheikh Ibrahim bin Hamood Al-Khalifa, assistant director of the

Arab Regional Center for World Heritage, and King Saud University professors Saeed Al-Saeed and Badr Al-Faqeer, addressed the symposium being staged as part of the fair.

Titled "Archaeological Value of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain," the event looked at the challenges facing the Arab world, and the need to protect heritage sites which offered economic and cultural benefits to the kingdoms.

The symposium began with a speech by Al-Faqeer who talked about the many human civilizations down the ages that had contributed to the rich archaeological value of Saudi Arabia.

Al-Khalifa explained similar patterns relating to Bahrain and spoke about the cultural, historical and civilizational depth to the two nations.

He also pointed to international efforts aimed at protecting the cultural and natural heritage of the Arab world and spreading knowledge in the conservation of archaeological and natural sites.

SHARQIAH SEASON

A day of planes and concerts at Dammam Corniche



Hala Tashkandi, Eesam Al-Ghalib Dammam

Week two of Sharqiah Season started with a bang as US rapper Pitbull performed at Dammam's Life Park as part of the Asharqiah Music Festival on Friday afternoon.

Although his Thursday night concert was canceled, fans were certainly not disappointed when he took the stage at 4 p.m. An energy-filled Pitbull hyped-up the crowd in minutes, and soon enough everyone was singing along to some of his most famous songs, including "Taxi," "Timber," "On The Floor" and more.

The rapper even teased a short sample of his newest song, "Cinco de Mayo," leading the crowd in the opening chant before launching into

the song's intro.

He thanked his fans multiple times for their understanding over the delay of the concert, telling them how happy he was to have made it.

"I want you to be able to tell people, 'I went to a Pitbull concert, and I had the time of my life, Saudi Arabia!'" he shouted, before launching into a rendition of "Time of Our Lives."

Fireworks, confetti and a wildly enthusiastic audience made for a memorable experience.

Arab News caught up with Pitbull backstage after the show. When asked if he had something to say to his fans, he replied: "To everyone in Saudi I wanna say thank you for the love, I appreciate the opportunity. Great crowd, great energy."

The performance was hastily rescheduled due to the rapper's delay in Iceland on his way to Saudi Arabia for the festival.

Due to technical difficulties, his plane was grounded and unable to fly until a spare part was delivered from the US, causing him to miss the initial date.

Pitbull posted an apology video on Twitter, in which he promised fans an unforgettable experience at the



Planes raced over the waters of the Dammam Corniche, thrilling the crowd who had gathered to see the Red Bull Race. Photo/Supplied

rescheduled show. "Make sure you keep your tickets," he told his fans.

Safa Hukroh, from Dammam, said she would have preferred to experience the concert at night, but had no complaints. "I think it was amazing. I have been to other concerts outside of Saudi Arabia, but this is the first time inside."

The festivities at Life Park continue today as Akon, French Montana and Amr Diab all take the stage for the second evening of the Asharqiah Music Festival. It is one of 83 events planned for the Sharqiah Season,

the first of 11 Saudi Seasons taking place across the country in 2019.

Akon went on stage thanking the crowd as he wanted to visit the Kingdom for years. He told Arab News backstage that he will be headed straight to Makkah to perform Umrah.

Earlier on Friday, planes raced over the waters of the Dammam Corniche, thrilling the crowd who had gathered to see the Red Bull Race. Although not the actual championship itself, the demonstration

did not disappoint, with pilots pulling their planes through barrel rolls and high G-force turns along a floating obstacle course.

"It's been a nice day for the family," said Mohammed Saleh Al-Ghamdi, 33, who had come out with his wife, his mother-in-law and his three children. "We come here every weekend, and every weekend there is a new surprise waiting."

"This time it is these air races, which my son, Hussam, found really exciting. We all had our photos taken with the planes and ate hamburgers, and now we are going to have some ice cream before the next plane comes out to perform."

Sharqiah Season is the first of 11 Saudi Seasons organized by the

General Entertainment Authority, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, The General Sports Authority and General Culture Authority.

The initiative falls in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 program, which aims to improve the quality of life in the Kingdom by providing enriching cultural pursuits and events. The 83 activities planned for the festival, which takes place across 9 different cities, feature entertainment, educational activities, sports events and cultural events.

Sharqiah Season continues until March 30, with the weekends ahead also featuring the Formula 1 H20 boat race, as well as concerts in Dammam featuring Deadmau5 among others.

HERITAGE

Saudi Arabia to head world's first camel organization

SPA Riyadh

The Saudi capital has been named as the international headquarters for the world's first camel organization.

Representatives of 96 countries gathered on Thursday in Riyadh for the inaugural constitutional assembly meeting of the newly established International Camel Organization (ICO).

Saudi Camel Club supreme Fahd bin Falah bin Hithlin has been chosen to lead the ICO as its first

president for a term of five years.

During the assembled gathering, members issued the organization's Riyadh Charter, which highlights the historic and cultural importance of camels to the international community.

The new president said the ICO aimed to maintain international rules and standards relating to camels and noted that its Saudi launch reflected the Kingdom's key role in developing and promoting the cultural aspect of the animals around the world.

He added that the organization would be working to nurture mutual understanding and friendship between nations and peoples and establish a global family of camel-loving communities.

Mikhdled bin Omar Al-Otaibi, a member of the Saudi Heritage Preservation Society, said the decision to headquarter the ICO in Saudi Arabia was recognition of the Kingdom's efforts, led by King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to care for camels and promote their heritage

on an international stage.

Al-Otaibi said: "The Kingdom has always sought to preserve its cultural and natural heritage which is of great value to mankind." He added that the first international camel charter represented a major step toward obtaining international protection for the animals.

The Riyadh historical society official also gave his approval to the choice of ICO president, a figure who he said had made great achievements in his role as chairman of the Saudi Camel Club,

including the organization of the prestigious King Abdul Aziz Camel Festival.

The work of the ICO will involve underlining the role that camels, and activities associated with them, play in developing a mutual understanding and friendship that can contribute to building communities and caring for their members.

It will also promote skills training and technical advances relating to camels and the industry sector linked to them.

News Middle East



Smoke rises from the last besieged neighborhood in the village of Baghouz, Syria, after US-led airstrikes pounded the area. File/Reuters

SYRIAN WAR

Renewed US-led airstrikes pound Daesh holdouts

In Baghouz, militants 'preventing others from surrendering'

AFP Sousse, Syria

US-led warplanes bombed the north bank of the Euphrates River in eastern Syria on Friday to flush out holdout militants from the last sliver of their crumbling "caliphate."

Friday's bombardment ended two days of relative calm on the front line in the remote village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) had paused its advance while it combed a makeshift militant encampment, which it overran on Tuesday.

An SDF official said warplanes of the US-led coalition resumed strikes on suspected militant positions before dawn on Friday.

Top SDF commander Ja Furat said his forces were engaging with the Daesh fighters on several fronts while the coalition warplanes provided air support.

The coalition said the "operation to complete the liberation of Baghouz is ongoing."

"It remains a hard fight, and Daesh is showing that they intend to keep fighting for as long as possible," it said. The SDF launched what it called its "final assault" against the rebels' last redoubt in the village of Baghouz on Feb. 9.

Finally on Tuesday, they cornered diehard fighters into a few acres of farmland along the Euphrates River, after forcing them out of their rag-tag encampment of tents and battered vehicles.

The six-month-old operation to wipe out the last vestige of Daesh's once-sprawling proto-state is close to reaching its inevitable outcome, but the SDF has said a declaration of victory will be made only after they have completed flushing out the last tunnels and hideouts.

According to SDF spokesman Kino Gabriel, hundreds of Daesh fighters, including some women, still remain on the outskirts of the encampment. They are hiding along the bank of the Euphrates River as well as at the base of a hill overlooking Baghouz, he told AFP.

FASTFACTS

- Warplanes of the US-led coalition resumed strikes on suspected militant positions before dawn on Friday.

- Latest bombardment ends two days of relative calm on the front line in the remote village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border.

- More than 66,000 people, mostly civilians, have quit the last Daesh redoubt since Jan. 9.

"In around one or two days, we will conclude military operations if there are no surprise developments," he said.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Daesh holdouts were hiding in underground tunnels and caves in Baghouz.

SDF official Jaaker Amed said several militants want to surrender but are being prevented from doing so by other fighters.

"We are trying our best to wrap up the operation without fighting,

but some of them are refusing to surrender," he said.

More than 66,000 people, mostly civilians, have quit the last Daesh redoubt since Jan. 9, according to the SDF.

They comprise 5,000 militants and 24,000 of their relatives as well as 37,000 other civilians.

The thousands who have streamed out have been housed in cramped camps and prisons run by Kurdish forces further north.

On Wednesday night, around 2,000 women and children from Baghouz arrived at the largest camp, Al-Hol, which is struggling to cope with the influx of tens of thousands of people, many in poor health.

Since December, at least 138 people, mostly children, have died en route to Al-Hol or shortly after arrival, according to the International Rescue Committee.

Daesh declared a "caliphate" in June 2014 after seizing a vast swathe of territory larger than Britain straddling Iraq and Syria.

The loss of the Baghouz enclave would signal the demise of the "caliphate" in Syria, after its defeat in Iraq in 2017.

NARCOTICS

Drug-related crimes wreak havoc on Egyptian streets

Mohamed El-Shamma Cairo

Last week, a drug addict in northern Giza killed four people and injured others following a domestic dispute.

Earlier this month, it was revealed that the conductor who left his railcar without switching off its engine to fight with a colleague whose truck was blocking the way, ultimately causing the crash that left more than 25 dead at Cairo's Ramses Station on Feb. 27, had previously been suspended for drug use.

These are just two examples of an increase in drug-related incidents in Egypt that has prompted President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to introduce a law requiring employers to fire drug users.

The most recent statistics from Egypt's Fund for Drug Control and Treatment of Addiction revealed that 10 percent of Egypt's over 100 million inhabitants use drugs — twice the global average. Those statistics also revealed that 24 percent of drug users are drivers and 20 percent are manual workers, and that drug use is most prevalent among those in their twenties.

Talking to Arab News, psychiatrist and doctor Salmi Al-Saeed said: "Most of the recent criminal incidents in Egypt, whose causes at first appear to be strange and unnatural, are found to be caused by drug addicts."

Al-Saeed claimed that criminals addicted to drugs often "do not know what they are doing," particularly if, at the time of the crime, their body "needs the drug."

Rifaat Abdel Hamid, a security expert, said that drugs — whether synthetic or natural — can make

a person "consider everything is permissible."

Abdel Hamid said: "People who take drugs commit crimes, (regardless of) whether they are educated or illiterate, rich or poor."

A spokesman for the Council of Ministers, Nader Saad, said in a press statement on Wednesday that the new law to combat drug use would treat people anonymously, and that they could avoid dismissal from their jobs by seeking help.

Psychiatrist Ahmed Wael said in a statement that treating addiction is "easy" and that it helps the person, and society, "avoid significant damage."

He said the Egyptian government had taken a positive step, but that further efforts were required, particularly from the ministries of interior and social solidarity, to reduce both supply and demand.

"The Ministry of Social Solidarity needs to reduce demand for drugs by carrying out campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers of addiction. There is a need for more rehabilitation centers to manage the crisis," said Wael, adding that measures also needed to be taken to reduce the amount of drugs entering Egypt.

Sociologist Magda Mustafa said, "Addiction hits all economic classes, rich or poor. The heinous crimes that are caused by addiction are not linked to a specific social category, and this is confirmed by the news of daily crimes."

Mustafa added that it was incorrect to claim that drug addiction is caused solely by economic and social problems, pointing out that negligence and lack of awareness campaigns from officials, as well as the Al-Azhar Foundation, should also be taken into consideration.



A youth holds a narcotic cigarette in Cairo. File/Reuters

NUCLEAR THREAT

US sanctions Iranian researchers, warns of future work

AFP Washington

The US on Friday imposed sanctions on Iranian nuclear researchers, saying it wanted to warn young scientists to steer clear of any future effort to build a bomb.

Sanctioning 14 individuals and 17 entities, US officials acknowledged that the nuclear work was in the past but said Washington wanted to make the targeted figures "radioactive."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Twitter called the sanctions part of the "maximum pressure campaign" on Iran as the US tries to roll back the regime's regional influence.

"We'll be relentless in denying Iran the ability to engage in WMD



Iran's Javad Zarif during a conference in Istanbul. AP

proliferation and all its outlaw activities," said Pompeo.

President Donald Trump last year pulled out of an international accord negotiated under his predecessor

Barack Obama, under which Iran drastically scaled back its nuclear program, and instead imposed sweeping sanctions.

But European nations still back

SPEEDREAD

- The sanctioned individuals include people who work with the Shahid Karimi Group, and the Shahid Chamran Group.

- President Donald Trump last year pulled out of an international accord negotiated under his predecessor Barack Obama, under which Iran drastically scaled back its nuclear program, and instead imposed sweeping sanctions.

- Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Twitter called the sanctions part of the maximum pressure campaign on Iran.

the accord and the International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly said that Iran remains in compliance.

But the US Treasury Department said it was alarmed over the continued existence of the Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research, whose Farsi acronym is SPND, saying that it could get back to work — including after some prohibitions under the nuclear deal start running out in 2025.

A senior US official, speaking to reporters on condition of anonymity, said that the US wanted to "continue to stigmatize SPND and the reconstitution program-in-waiting that it represents."

The sanctions aim to "make it as unattractive as possible to be a part

of that organization, make it hard to recruit the next generation of illicit nuclear weapons scientists and to make it all more clear that this is an option that is not and cannot be allowed to be made available to Iran," he said.

The sanctioned individuals include people who work with the Shahid Karimi Group, which the Treasury Department said focused on missile and explosives projects for SPND, and the Shahid Chamran Group, which researches electromagnetics and wave generation.

The US official said that the SPND was still in place and headed by Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, a physicist identified by US and Israeli intelligence as the aspiring father of Iran's nuclear bomb.

News Middle East

TRAGEDY

Anger sweeps Mosul as ferry disaster toll rises

Victims' relatives accuse officials of failing to enforce safety standards

AFP Mosul

The capsizing of a Tigris River ferry packed with families celebrating Kurdish New Year in Mosul left at least 100 people dead, mostly women and children, the Iraqi Interior Ministry said on Friday, as grief and anger swept the city.

Residents of Iraq's second city, scarred by years of militant rule, demanded justice as Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi decreed three days of national mourning following Thursday's accident.

Mosulites had resumed the annual festivities this year for the first time since Iraqi forces ousted Daesh following years of brutal militant rule.

But the celebrations turned to tragedy when the overcrowded vessel ran into trouble as it headed to a popular picnic site across the Tigris River.

Mosul security officials blamed the accident on high water levels and overcrowding on the boat.

Hundreds of relatives of victims and residents gathered Friday at the scene of the accident, where prayers were held for the dead.

Many said the disaster could have been avoided and chanted "corruption is killing us!"

"We want those responsible to be brought to justice," said Mohammed Adel, 27, whose father was among those who died. He accused officials of failing to enforce safety standards.

Abu Salem, who lost his wife and two children in the accident which also coincided with Mother's Day in Iraq, pinned blame for the tragedy on profit motives and the corruption that is endemic in Iraq.

The managers of the picnic site were "criminals... I want them to pay up and I won't leave here until they do," the 50-year-old Iraqi said.

Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, spiritual leader of Iraq's Shiite Muslim majority, in his Friday sermon accused "the authorities in charge of



Relatives of victims of a ferry that sank in the Tigris River cry outside a morgue in Mosul. As it capsized, the ferry trapped dozens of people under its hull. Reuters

supervision of not doing their job."

Transparency International ranks Iraq in 12th place in its list of the world's most corrupt countries.

Video footage from cameras at the picnic site, posted online, showed a severely overcrowded vessel beginning to list as water comes aboard.

As it capsizes completely, it traps dozens of people under its hull.

Authorities had warned people to be cautious after several days of heavy rains led to water being released through the Mosul dam, causing the river to rise.

Videos showed a fast-flowing,

SPEEDREAD

● Hundreds of relatives of victims and residents gathered Friday at the scene of the accident, where prayers were held for the dead.

● Many said the disaster could have been avoided and chanted 'corruption is killing us!'.

● While war and militant attacks have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in Iraq in recent years, such accidents are relatively rare.

bloated river and dozens of people floating in the water or trying to swim around the partly submerged boat.

Abdel Mahdi said the justice system "must do its job and the investigation must produce results on the reasons for this shipwreck."

He and President Barham Saleh visited the site of the accident as the search continued for bodies, some of which were carried far downstream by the strong current.

While war and militant attacks have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives in Iraq in recent years, such accidents are relatively rare.

But corruption and the dismal state of public services in Iraq were triggers for widespread protests last year.

Daesh turned Mosul into its de facto capital after sweeping across much of the country's north in 2014.

The city spent three years under the group's iron-fisted rule until it was recaptured by Iraqi troops backed by a US-led coalition in 2017.

Survivors of Thursday's disaster were treated in hospitals heavily damaged by the months-long military campaign against the militants.

REACTION

Israel envoy summoned over 'intrusion' at French cultural center

AFP Paris

France's Foreign Ministry said Friday that it had summoned the Israeli government's representative in Paris over what it called an "intrusion" by Israeli forces at its cultural center in Jerusalem.

In a rare move, police entered the building Thursday to cancel an event with a women's group which Israel claims is sponsored or financed by the Palestinian Authority.

A diplomatic source said France's consul general had immediately protested the police's entry to the center in East Jerusalem, which Israel has annexed in a move not recognised by the international community.

"Such actions are a serious and unacceptable infringement to the functioning of our cultural network in Jerusalem," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It said the Israeli charge d'affaires had been called to meet with French officials for "necessary clarifications."

"France intends to maintain and develop its deep and longstanding relations with Palestinian civil society," it added.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Friday that the charge d'affaires had "protested" at the meeting "about the holding of an event funded and supported by the Palestinian Authority at the French Institute in Jerusalem".

It said that under accords with the Palestinians "any activity of a diplomatic or governmental nature by the PA is prohibited" in areas where the authority has not been assigned control.

"The Israeli representative made it clear that we would not agree to the holding of PA events in Jerusalem and that we also expect our friends to respect the rules," it added.

Israel considers all of Jerusalem to be its sovereign capital.

The French Consulate in Jerusalem could not confirm Thursday if the women's association was indeed financed by the Palestinian Authority.

REVIVAL OF LANDMARK TRADE

The scent of soap making returns to Aleppo

AFP Aleppo

After years of war, the scent of laurel oil once again wafts from a small soap workshop in Aleppo, signaling the revival of a landmark trade in the battered northern city.

Surrounding soap workshops in the Al-Nayrab district still lie in ruins, badly damaged in the four-year battle for the former opposition stronghold. But for Ali Shami, hanging up his apron was not an option.

"I never stopped making soap throughout the war — even if it was just a little," says the 44-year-old, who fled his home city during the fighting.

"But this workshop is special," he tells AFP. "It was here that I started more than 30 years ago."

Shami reopened his soap workshop last month after shutting it down in 2012, when Syria's second city became a main front in the eight-year-long conflict.

The scars of war are still visible on the building, its walls punctured with holes caused by shelling. Rushes of wind gust through the gaps.

Shami carried out limited



Syrian businessman Ali Shami arranges olive soap bars in a factory on the outskirts of Aleppo. AFP

renovations — just enough to produce more than half of his pre-war output of around 800 tons a year.

He installed a new metal door and refurbished the main rooms where the soap mixture is heated

and then poured out to dry.

He watches as five workers stir a thick mixture of olive and laurel oil in a large vat.

Beside them, another five workers slice cooled and hardened green paste into cubes

and stack them in staggered racks.

Shami says he was able to resume operations quickly because Aleppo soap is handmade.

Its production "relies on manual labor, a successful mixture, the passion of Aleppo's residents, and

their love of the profession," he says.

After closing down in 2012, Shami tried to continue his work in other major Syrian cities. "My existence is tied to the existence" of soap, he says.

He moved to the capital, Damascus, and the regime-held coastal city of Tartous, but Shami says the soap was not as good.

"Aleppo's climate is very suitable for soap production and the people of Aleppo know the secret of the trade and how to endure the hardship of the many stages of its production," he says.

Shami, who inherited the soap business from his father and grandfather, boasts about the superior qualities of Aleppo soap, the oldest of its kind in the world.

"Aleppo soap distinguishes itself from other soaps around the world as it is made almost entirely of olive oil," he says.

"European soap, on the other hand, includes animal fats, while soaps made in Asia are mixed with vegetal oils but not olive oil," he says.

The Aleppo region is well-known for its olive oil and sweet bay oil, or laurel.

Shami says the Aleppo soap

industry was hit hard by the fierce clashes that rocked his home city, before ending in late 2016 when the army took back opposition districts with Russian military support.

While conditions are less dangerous today, soap producers still grapple with shortages of raw material and skilled labor, he says.

"We are struggling with the aftermath of the battles," he says.

Dozens of soap producers are still waiting to complete renovations before reopening their workshops. Hisham Gebeily is one of them.

His soap-making center in the Old City of Aleppo, named after the family, has survived for generations, dating back to the 18th century.

The three-story stone workshop covers a space of around 9,000 square meters, and is considered among the largest in the city.

But the 60-year-old man was forced to close it in 2012.

The structure still stands, although damaged by the fighting. Parts of it have been charred by shelling and wooden beams supporting the roof are starting to fall apart.

"Before the conflict, the city of Aleppo housed around 100 soap factories," he says.

News International



Demonstrators wave national flags in Algiers on Friday during a mass protest calling on President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to resign. The ruling National Liberation Front party has also sided with the protesters. Reuters

ALGERIAN CRISIS

Demonstrators stage new mass protests against Bouteflika

President vows to stay on until a new constitution is adopted, extending his present term

Reuters Algiers

Thousands of Algerians rallied again on Friday to demand the immediate resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who is fighting for his political survival in the face of relentless protests and the desertion of long-time allies.

Defying heavy rain, the protesters brandished Algerian flags and pamphlets as they gathered in the same spot in the capital where a wave of demonstrations first erupted a month ago against Bouteflika's 20-year rule.

"Rain will not prevent us from continuing pressure," said student

Ahmed Khoudja, 23, in a square in central Algiers.

"We stay here until the whole system goes," said Mahmoud Timar, a 37-year-old teacher.

Bouteflika, 82, rarely seen in public since suffering a stroke five years ago, bowed to the protesters last week by reversing plans to stand for a fifth term and promising an inclusive politics in Algeria, a major oil and gas producer.

But he stopped short of quitting and said he would stay on until a new constitution is adopted, effectively extending his present term. The move further enraged Algerians, and many of Bouteflika's allies, from ruling party members to trade union leaders to tycoons, turned against him.

"We are close to victory. The

HIGHLIGHTS

● Defying heavy rain, the protesters brandished Algerian flags and pamphlets as they gathered at a key spot in the capital.

● Even if Bouteflika quits, it is not clear if the swelling protest movement can bring down 'the deep state.'

● Some key figures may be happy to see Bouteflika go but are likely to resist any major political changes.

system is divided," said restaurant owner Rachid Zemmair, 55, at Friday's rally.

In the most significant development in a month of demonstrations, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Ahmed Gaed Salah on Wednesday threw the army's weight behind the protesters, saying they had expressed "noble aims."

Soldiers have stayed in their barracks through the unrest but the army has traditionally deeply influenced politics.

The generals have intervened in the past at momentous times, including canceling an election which Islamists were poised to win in 1992, triggering a civil war in which an estimated 200,000 people were killed.

The ruling National Liberation

Front party, known by its French acronym FLN, has also sided with the protesters.

In the past, Bouteflika and his inner circle of fellow veterans of the 1954-1962 war of independence against France, FLN officials and the military skillfully managed crises.

Bouteflika used oil revenues to secure loyalty — offering better salaries for state workers, housing and low-interest loans.

But the price of crude oil has dropped over the years and the young are desperate for jobs, an end to corruption and nepotism and a say in how the North African country is run.

Algerians who credited Bouteflika with negotiating an end to the civil war in the 1990s were

eager for stability, even though they shared many of the frustrations which triggered revolts elsewhere.

While Bouteflika was adept at manipulating the opposition in the past, he now faces Algerians of all social classes and ages staging the biggest protests in decades.

Even if Bouteflika quits, it is not clear if the swelling protest movement can bring down the deep state — a secretive network of ruling party leaders, business tycoons and army generals long regarded as invincible.

These figures, who long managed politics in behind-the-scenes negotiations, may be happy to see Bouteflika go but are likely to resist any major political changes, as they have done in the past.

DISPUTED REGION

Second round of talks on Western Sahara ends

AFP Geneva

A second round of talks on the disputed Western Sahara region ended Friday with the sides agreeing to meet again, but with the UN acknowledging many positions remained far apart.

Morocco and the Polisario Front liberation movement appeared to have come no closer on the thorny issue of an independence referendum to decide Western Sahara's fate.

The Polisario has demanded a vote — a proposal categorically rejected by Rabat.

"This is not and will not be easy," United Nations envoy and former German President Horst Kohler told reporters in Geneva. "There is still a



Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita speaks to the media during a conference in Geneva on Friday. AFP

lot of work ahead," he said.

"Nobody should expect a quick outcome, because many positions are still fundamentally diverging."

Foreign ministers from Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania along with the Polisario's chief negotiator

spent the past two days meeting in a secret location "near Geneva."

Kohler read a joint communique hailing the delegations for engaging in "courteously and openly in an atmosphere of mutual respect."

The talks focused on finding

"a mutually acceptable political solution ... that is realistic, practicable, enduring, based on compromise, just, lasting, (and) which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara," the communique said.

The parties had agreed to "continue the discussion," it added.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita told journalists the sides agreed to meet before the summer.

The international community has long advocated that a referendum be held to decide the status of Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony on the western edge of the vast eponymous desert, stretching around 1,000 km along the Atlantic coastline.

UNICEF REPORT

Dirty water 'more dangerous to children than violence'

Reuters New York

Children under age 15 are almost three times more likely to die from diseases due to lack of clean water and sanitation than from violence in countries in conflict, the United Nations' children's agency reported on Friday.

Most vulnerable are young children under age five, who are 20 times more likely to die from diseases than violence, said the report by UNICEF, released to coincide with World Water Day.

Specifically, children die of diarrhea-related illness, such as cholera, when conflict restricts access to clean water, it said.

The research looked at the health consequences of unsafe water

and sanitation for children in 16 countries undergoing conflict, including Myanmar, Afghanistan and Yemen.

"In these conflicts — and other emergencies — providing rapid, comprehensive and safe water and sanitation is a matter of life and death," said the report.

UNICEF reported 85,000 diarrheal deaths due to poor water, sanitation and hygiene in children from 2014 to 2016, compared with just under 31,000 deaths due to violence, citing World Health Organization (WHO) data.

"It isn't surprising," Tomas Jensen, adviser for tropical medicine at the medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel gives a press conference in Brussels at the end of an EU summit focused on Brexit.



News International



FAST FACT

New Zealand Premier Jacinda Ardern led a vigil of around 5,000 people in front of Al-Noor Mosque where most of the victims died.

A Muslim man stands with a Maori man on Friday as people gather for prayers and to observe a two-minute silence for victims of the terror attack on two mosques in Christchurch. AFP

SOLIDARITY

New Zealand attacks 'will not stop Bangladesh cricket tours'

However, security issues will be handled more carefully for our players: BCB official

Shehab Sumon Dhaka

Bangladeshi cricketers will continue to tour New Zealand in the future, an official from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) told Arab News on Friday.

His comments follow the attack on two mosques in Christchurch last Friday, during which a number of Bangladeshi cricketers narrowly escaped becoming involved in the atrocity.

The gun attack by a white supremacist resulted in the deaths of 50 people, with hundreds more injured. Five Bangladeshis were among the dead.

"We have a very good relationship with New Zealand, but from now

on, security issues will be taken care of more carefully for our cricketers during any tour," Habibul Bashar, a member of the BCB team selection committee, said.

"For every team now, security will be a big concern, and we can't compromise with this issue anymore. If we are not satisfied with the security preparations when visiting a country, the BCB will have its own security team to travel with the cricketers."

The team is scheduled to travel to Ireland in May to compete in a tri-nation, one-day series with the hosts and the West Indies. Bangladesh will then join the International Cricket Council's (ICC) World Cup competition, scheduled to begin May 30 in England and Wales.

The players had been scheduled

HIGHLIGHT

The gun attack by a white supremacist resulted in the deaths of 50 people, with hundreds more injured. Five Bangladeshis were among the dead.

to be at the mosque when the attack happened, but were delayed en route after a press conference overrun.

Tamim Iqbal, the Bangladeshi opening batsman, tweeted: "Entire team got saved from active shooters!! Frightening experience and please keep us in your prayers."

"It's a haunting and unprecedented experience for our players which has shaken our team. We were saved only by a stroke of

luck," Raqibul Hasan, Bangladesh's former captain, told Arab news.

"I have talked with most of our players and they are now coming out of this haunting experience slowly. I think this incident will not hamper their performance in the upcoming Ireland tri-nation series."

Thanking New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Hasan added: "There is nothing above the cause of humanity."

On Friday Ardern led a vigil of around 5,000 people in Hagley Park, in front of Al-Noor Mosque in Christchurch, where most of the victims died.

To express solidarity with the Muslim community in New Zealand, meanwhile, state TV and radio stations also broadcast the call to prayer throughout the week.

NATURAL CALAMITY

Cyclone deaths could exceed 1,000

AP Beira, Mozambique

As flood waters began to recede in parts of Mozambique on Friday, fears rose that the death toll could soar as bodies are revealed.

The number of deaths could be beyond the 1,000 predicted by the country's president earlier this week, said Elhadj As Sy, the secretary-general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

In addition to worries about the number of dead, As Sy told The Associated Press that the humanitarian needs are great.

"They are nowhere near the scale and magnitude of the problem," As Sy said. "And I fear we will be seeing more in the weeks and months ahead, and we should brace ourselves."

Thousands of people were making a grim voyage toward the city of Beira, which although 90 percent destroyed has become a center for frantic rescue efforts throughout the region.

Some walked along roads carved away by the raging waters a week ago. Others, hundreds of them, were ferried in an extraordinary makeshift effort by local fishermen who plucked stranded people from small islands.

SETBACK TO PEACE

Pyongyang withdraws from inter-Korean liaison office

Jeff Sung Seoul

North Korea pulled out of a liaison office with South Korea on Friday, dealing a blow to Seoul's hope of resuming inter-Korean economic projects.

The move came after the US imposed new sanctions on two Chinese shipping companies for allegedly helping the North evade international sanctions.

According to the South's Ministry of Unification, Pyongyang conveyed the decision during a weekly meeting in the border city of Gaeseong, north of the Demilitarized Zone.

"We're very concerned to hear about the decision, but we hope the North will return and the liaison contact office will return to normal as soon as possible," Chun Hae-sung, vice minister of unification, told reporters.

Chun added that 25 Southern staff would remain at the office.

"We will take action while watching the situation for the time being," he said, stating that other communication channels remained open.

He admitted, however, that consultations on inter-Korean exchanges — such as video



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un casts his ballot for the Supreme People's Assembly elections in Pyongyang recently. AFP

reunions between separated families — would be difficult.

The South's National Security Council (NSC) was convened to discuss Pyongyang's move, chaired by Chung Eui-yong, top security adviser to South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

"The standing members of

the NSC discussed the North's withdrawal from the joint liaison office and related measures," the Blue House said in a statement.

Pundits see the pullout from the liaison office as an expression of Pyongyang's dissatisfaction with Washington.

On Thursday, President Donald Trump slapped new sanctions on two Chinese shipping firms the US believes have been helping the North circumvent economic sanctions imposed by the UN.

The US Treasury Department penalized Dalian Haibo International Freight Co. Ltd. and Liaoning Danxing International Forwarding Co. Ltd. for providing shipping services to a North Korean company selling metal and coal, and helping officials in Europe to purchase goods.

The department also released a list of 95 ships suspected of engaging in illicit trade activities with Pyongyang. A South Korean oil tanker named LUNIS is among them.

In 2018, the Treasury Department said North Korean ports received at least 263 tanker deliveries of refined petroleum procured from ship-to-ship transfers prohibited by the UN.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Price of war

Two US soldiers killed in Afghanistan

Two US service members were killed during an operation in Afghanistan on Friday, the US and NATO forces said, providing no other details.

The fatalities, which bring to four the number of US soldiers killed so far this year in Afghanistan, underscore the difficulties in bringing peace to the war-wrecked country even as Washington has stepped up efforts to find a way to end the 17-year war.

A Taliban statement said insurgents engaged in heavy fighting with Afghan and US forces overnight in Kunduz. It claimed the insurgents had killed as many as three Americans and nine Afghan commandos. AP

Security challenge

Gunmen target Pakistan cleric, kill two guards

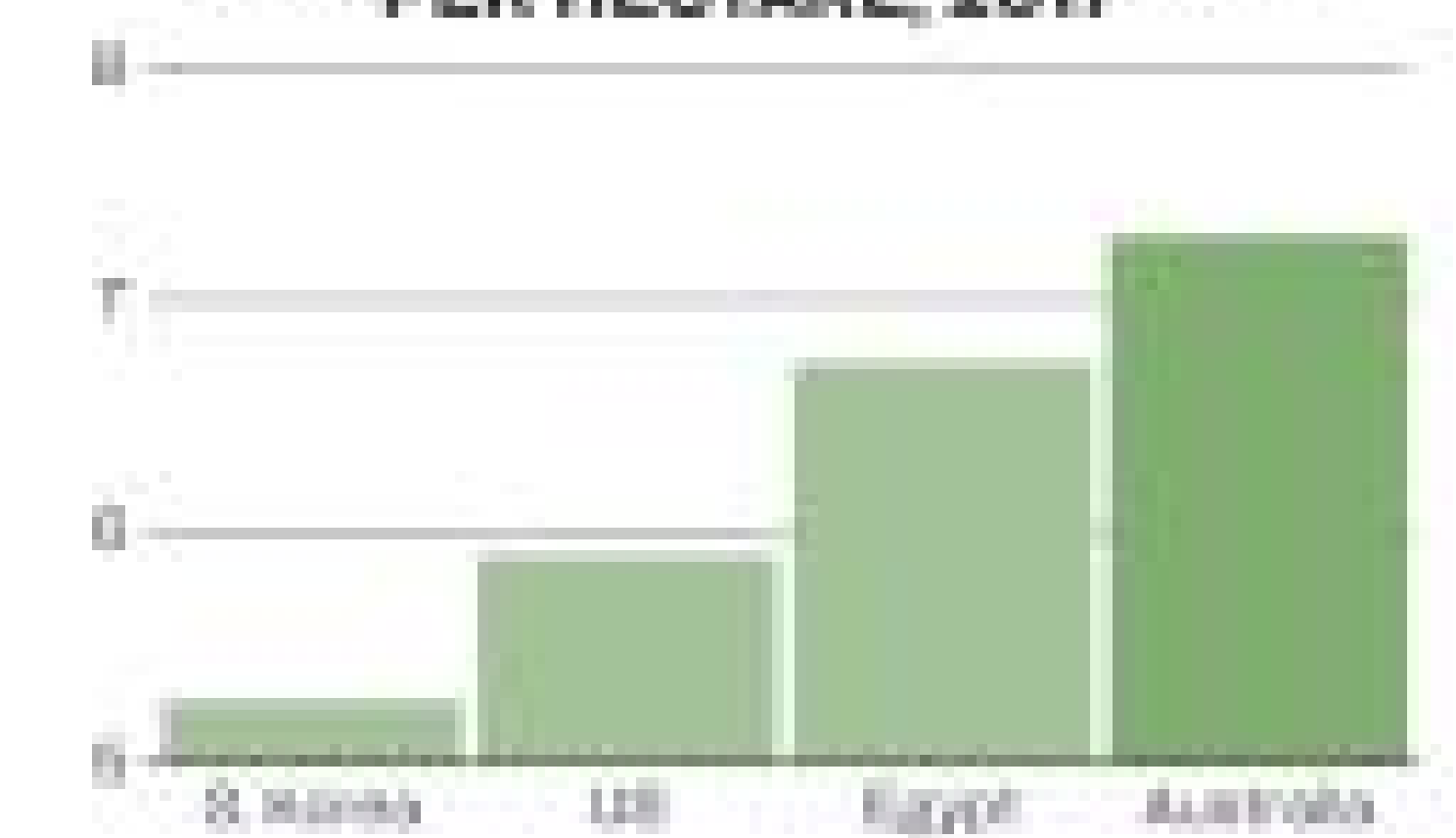
Police in Pakistan say gunmen on motorcycles opened fire on a convoy carrying a prominent religious scholar and his associates in the southern port city of Karachi, killing the cleric's two guards and seriously wounding his driver.

Karachi police chief Ameer Shaikh said Maulana Taqi Usmani and his associates came under attack on Friday in an eastern neighborhood of the city.

He said Usmani and his two grandsons who were in the convoy were unharmed, but his private guard and an official police escort were killed. The police chief says there were four attackers and that they fired over a dozen shots before fleeing the scene on two motorbikes. AP

The Day's FIGURES

TONS OF RICE PRODUCTION PER HECTARE, 2017



Source: AN research

What We Are Reading Today

FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

The Fate of Rome

KYLE HARPER

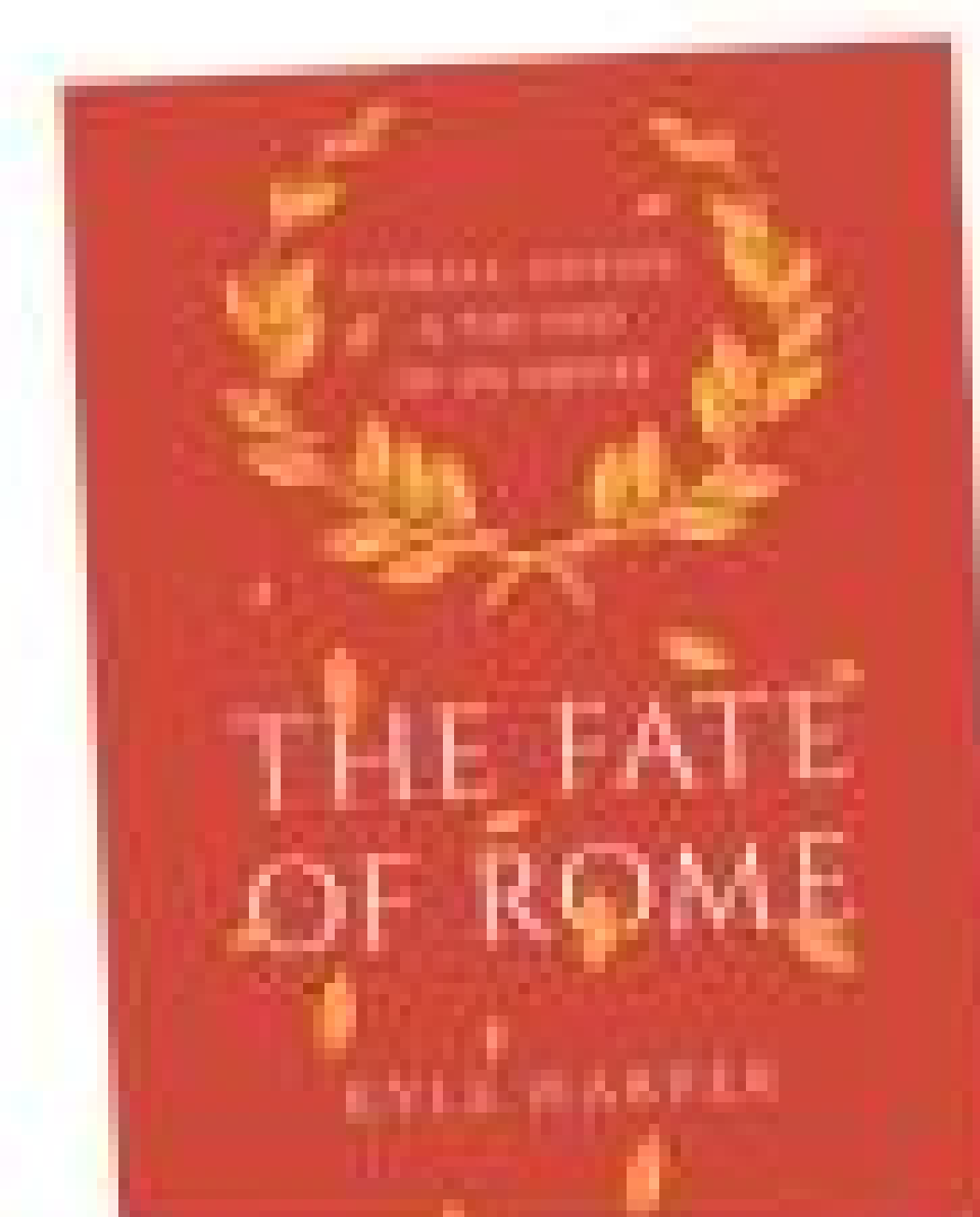
Here is the monumental retelling of one of the most consequential chapters of human history: The fall of the Roman Empire. The Fate of Rome is the first book to examine the catastrophic role that climate change and infectious diseases played in the collapse of Rome's power — a story of nature's triumph over human ambition.

Interweaving a grand historical narrative with cutting-edge climate science and genetic discoveries, Kyle Harper traces how the fate of Rome was decided not just by emperors, soldiers, and barbarians but also by volcanic eruptions, solar

cycles, climate instability, and devastating viruses and bacteria.

He takes readers from Rome's pinnacle in the second century, when the empire seemed an invincible superpower, to its unraveling by the 7th century, when Rome was politically fragmented and materially depleted, says a review on the Princeton University Press website. Harper describes how the Romans were resilient in the

face of enormous environmental stress, until the besieged empire could no longer withstand the combined challenges of a "little ice age" and recurrent outbreaks of bubonic plague.



Unrest

Indian forces kill 7 militants in Kashmir

Indian security forces on Friday killed seven militants who they said belonged to Pakistan-based groups during four gunbattles in Kashmir — the highest number of clashes in a single day in recent years.

Police said the militants belonged to Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). JeM claimed a suicide attack last month that killed 40 Indian paramilitary troopers in Kashmir and brought the arch rivals to the brink of their fourth war.

India has since stepped up an offensive against separatist militants in the mountainous region that both countries claim in full but rule it in part. Pakistan denies giving material support to militants in Kashmir but says it provides moral and diplomatic backing for the self-determination of Kashmiri people. Reuters

Road horror

Six dead as car hits crowd in China, police kill driver

A car rammed into a crowd in central China Friday, killing six people and injuring seven others, and the driver was fatally shot by police, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The injured were taken to hospital following the early morning incident in Zaoyang City in Hubei Province, CCTV said.

A video, published by Shanghai-based news outlet The Paper, shows a body covered in a blanket left on the roadside and a group trying to lift someone onto a stretcher.

China has suffered a spate of similar incidents in recent months.

Last September, 11 people died and dozens were injured when a car struck a crowd in a public square in the central Hunan province city of Hengdong. AFP

يتناقص الأصدقاء عاماً بعد عام،
بعينهم سقط من قطار الوقت،
والخزون سقطوا من القلب. لا وقت لي لأنتشل أحداً.
أحلام مستغنى

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

The number of friends diminishes year by year; some fall off the time-train, others fall from the heart. I have no time to retrieve anyone.

Ahlam Mostaghanemi

(A contemporary Algerian writer and novelist)

Opinion

Egypt's struggle to stop the threats coming across its borders

DR. ABDELLATIF EL-MENAWY



Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy is a critically acclaimed multimedia journalist, writer and columnist who has covered war zones and conflicts worldwide.
Twitter: @ALMenawy

Egypt's four borders are a source of constant concern for the Cairo government, as the flaming conditions to the north, south, east and west have not abated in recent years, especially with the outbreak of the so-called "Arab Spring."

The danger of terrorism comes from all sides, while there are other risks associated with illegal immigration and smuggling contraband and drugs, all of which threaten the state and its stability, especially as Egypt is engaged in a fierce war with extremism while also facing countless economic challenges.

In Gaza, there have been widespread protests against Hamas, which controls the Strip. The popular "We Want to Live" movement in Gaza has called for a comprehensive strike in response to Hamas' crackdowns and policies that have caused deteriorations in the living and humanitarian conditions.

A vengeful hunger for revolution is looming in Gaza, while Hamas is trying to abort it by carrying out a campaign of arrests of activists, protesters and the employees of human rights organizations. Several areas in the Gaza Strip, including Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah, have witnessed demonstrations, and a young man even set fire to himself in protest against the deteriorating living conditions.

Gaza's two million residents complain of poor economic conditions and social services in the territory, which has been controlled by Hamas since 2007. The volatile situation,

caused by the policies of Hamas on the one hand and the suffocating blockade imposed by the Israeli occupation forces on the other, is a harbinger of a new crisis for Egypt, which has recently suffered from an influx of armed militias through the tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Sinai.

The Egyptian army has been trying to clear the Sinai Peninsula from Daesh terrorists. Among the measures taken by the army in recent years include the filling in of tunnels, which were a major inconvenience to the Egyptian authorities because they were usually the main channel for the influx of militants into the Sinai.

Egypt has succeeded in filling in a large number of tunnels, the latest of which was announced by the army this month. Counter-terrorism forces in North Sinai, in cooperation with military engineers, discovered and destroyed nine tunnel openings that were up to 2 meters by 2 meters in size. They led to three main tunnels on the Gaza border, with depths of up to 30 meters and lengths of up to 3 km. The tunnels were used by terrorist elements for infiltration and the smuggling of arms, ammunition and explosive materials.

Pulling motors, electrical cables, lighting materials, headsets and fuel were found inside the tunnels. Two vehicles were discovered and destroyed, and 40 bombs, as well as materials used in the manufacture of improvised explosive devices, were also found.

Egypt's western border with Libya extends for 1,115 km, which means that it is difficult to

achieve full control over. Libya has become one of the key focal points for extremist groups after the fall of the Qaddafi regime. As a result, a number of forces there are fighting for power, including some illegal armed groups.

The Egyptian army's battle on the western border is difficult, and the armed forces are constantly announcing the destruction of terrorist vehicles or strongholds close to the border. However, on March 1, Libyan National Army spokesman Brig. Gen. Ahmed Al-Mesmari announced full control of the Libyan border, while the Libyan army, led by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, has launched an extensive campaign against terrorist groups.

Col. Miloud Jawad, the undersecretary general of the Interior Ministry of the Libyan Interim Government based in Tobruk, said in January that the ministry had begun building a wall at its eastern border crossing with Egypt to help prevent the infiltration of militants and to combat smuggling across the border. However, many security experts in Egypt have questioned the effectiveness of the wall in preventing the infiltration of terrorists.

To the south, Sudan has never been a secure border because of its mountainous nature. Smuggling at the Sudanese border has seen weapons and drugs cross into Egypt, as well as the infiltration of dangerous individuals who use Egypt as a gateway to Israel. Although the western border has been used more than the southern border for arms smuggling over the years, Egyptian border guards' attempts to

thwart smuggling attempts are continuing.

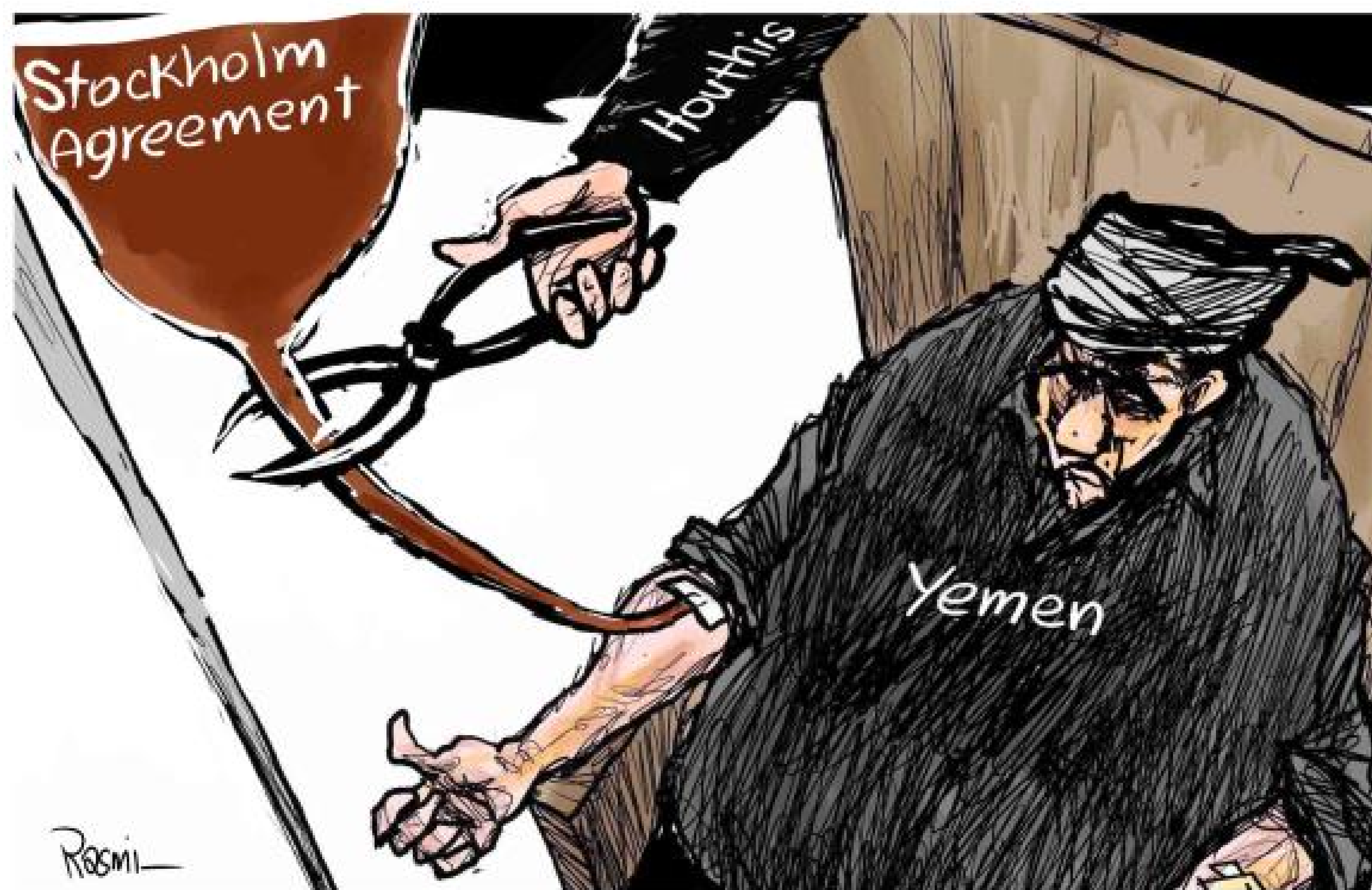
The political situation in Sudan also does not bode well, following the protests that swept many parts of the country. The protests have been ongoing for four months due to high inflation. The Sudanese people have been suffering for years because of the economic problems that put pressure on the country. President Omar Al-Bashir announced last month a state of emergency throughout the country, while an official toll says that 31 people have been killed since the start of the protests. However, independent human rights organizations have reported the deaths of 51 people.

Finally, the northern coast of Egypt extends for about 1,050 km along the Mediterranean Sea. This has also been a source of concern due to the phenomenon of illegal migration occurring in Egyptian waters, along with associated outbreaks of criminality, namely human and organ trafficking.

Several international organizations have considered Egypt, being close to Europe, as a center for the secondary displacement of illegal immigrants. The biggest dilemma lies with Africans and immigrants from countries with conflicts, such as Libya, Yemen and Syria, who come to Egypt to board illegal immigration boats to Europe.

History shows that Egypt has always faced threats from across its borders, probably because it is an important civilization, or maybe because it is a central state in the Middle East and its role transcends its four borders.

Egypt has always faced threats from across its borders, probably because it is an important civilization



Given Trump's eagerness for a withdrawal from Afghanistan, excluding Kabul from talks actually makes good sense for America

A US-Afghanistan spat with troubling implications

MICHAEL KUGELMAN



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Before assuming his current position as Afghanistan's national security adviser, Hamdullah Mohib was his country's ambassador to the US. On March 14, while speaking to reporters in the city where he previously served as Afghanistan's top diplomat in America, he made some decidedly undiplomatic remarks.

Mohib's comments — and the spat that immediately ensued between Kabul and Washington — underscore the anger harbored by Afghan officials about the direction of US policy in Afghanistan. And they raise troubling questions for Washington as it pursues a deal with the Taliban that would enable America to extricate itself from a long, endless war.

Mohib excoriated the US government for pursuing talks with the Taliban that have excluded the administration in Kabul. He accused Zalmay Khalilzad, the lead US negotiator, of "delegitimizing" the Afghan government. But that was not the worst of it. Mohib also alleged that Khalilzad wants to seize power in Afghanistan, saying: "People in government think that perhaps all this talk is to create a caretaker government of which he will then become the viceroy."

Washington was not pleased. David Hale, the undersecretary of state for political affairs and

the third-highest ranking official at the State Department, summoned Mohib and told him that because Khalilzad represents Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, "attacks on Ambassador Khalilzad are attacks on the department and only serve to hinder the bilateral relationship and the peace process."

This is not the first time in recent years that US policy in Afghanistan has sparked anger within the Afghan government. During the latter years of Hamid Karzai's term, which ended in 2014, there was frequent friction between Kabul and the Obama administration. There were even reports of shouting matches between Karzai and senior US officials. These tensions had various triggers, from personality disputes to unhappiness about the actions of US troops.

In the waning days of his term, Karzai even refused to sign a bilateral security agreement that was required to maintain the US military presence in Afghanistan (his successor, Ashraf Ghani, signed it soon after he took office). Still, the current crisis is serious business — less because of what Mohib said, and more because of the policy implications of his tirade. Above all, his comments crystallize the understandable frustration of Kabul about being shut out of its own peace process.

Given US President Donald Trump's eagerness to get a deal that gives him cover for a withdrawal

from Afghanistan, excluding Kabul from talks actually makes good sense for US policy. This is because the insurgents have repeatedly insisted that a peace process can only move forward after they reach an agreement with Washington on a troop-withdrawal plan, which is a discussion, Taliban officials say, that cannot include Afghan officials. Because of Washington's limited leverage — the Taliban's strong battlefield performance means that, unlike America, it is in no hurry to negotiate, much less conclude, a deal — there is little US officials can do to change the Taliban's mind. Consequently, Kabul has literally been left on the outside looking in. On several occasions in recent weeks, senior Afghan officials, including Mohib, have come to the hotels where the US-Taliban talks have been taking place, only to not be allowed into the rooms where negotiations were happening.

One cannot blame Kabul for being so unhappy about getting written out of the script of its own reconciliation process. This unhappiness, one can assume, will intensify the longer the US-Taliban talks continue, potentially putting US-Afghanistan relations on a collision course at a very delicate moment.

Indeed, Afghanistan is looking at a perfect storm. Even amid the US-Taliban talks, the insurgents continue to fight — and the spring fighting season, which means intensified Taliban

violence, is fast approaching. Meanwhile, divisions between Ghani and his political rivals, both inside and outside the national unity government (one that is united only in name), continue to deepen. And a critical presidential election, already postponed, has just been delayed again, this time until September. This is the worst time for Kabul's relations with its critical US partner to go south.

Ironically, one of the best possible outcomes for Washington — an agreement with the Taliban — could provoke a major political crisis in Afghanistan. In the event that a deal is agreed that involves the departure of US troops, which is something with enormous implications for Afghanistan's stability, an incensed Kabul might well refuse to participate in subsequent efforts to craft a political settlement. The Taliban has always said it would agree to negotiate a post-war political arrangement with the government.

This is not to say that America should stop talking to the Taliban unless Kabul is brought on board. Washington, which wants out of Afghanistan, has no choice but to stay the course and keep talking.

Still, Mohib's angry critique hints at a sobering reality: Washington's best policy option in Afghanistan risks exacerbating the very instability that the US has unsuccessfully sought to reduce for nearly two decades.

Opinion

Brazil, Venezuela and strategic space

DR. THEODORE KARASIK

In the shadow of the Venezuela crisis, the US and Brazil are improving bilateral relations in several areas in terms of strategic space and its use.

The idea is to improve bilateral relations that will bring strategic benefits to America at a time of change in Latin America's northern cone region, which includes Colombia, Guyana, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro met US President Donald Trump, and although the Brazilian delegation did not get all that they asked for, the White House and Bolsonaro moved their personality-driven relationship closer with a few deals, and with more to come later. The presidents condemned Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and sought to cooperate on public security and military development.

The US gave Brazil immediate concessions in trade matters in return for granting a unilateral visa waiver for US visitors, a tariff-free quota for wheat imports and easier access for American space launches from Brazil. Future negotiations are to focus on America selling Brazil nuclear reactors, investing in Brazil's now-halted Angra 3 nuclear power plant, and also entering Brazil's emerging uranium mining market.

There is more. In terms of energy, the US is going to participate in the next rounds of oil bloc auctions in the pre-salt area off the coast of Brazil known as the transfer-of-rights zone. The pre-salt area, where billions of barrels of oil and natural gas are trapped beneath a layer of salt under the ocean floor, is one of the world's largest oil finds of recent decades. The



US is also interested in investing in Brazil's natural gas sector, which is being opened to private investment. The country's gas market is currently

dominated by Petroleo Brasileiro SA and state distribution companies.

That is not all. The US and Brazil signed a deal that opens Brazil's Alcantara Launch Center space port to satellite launches. The deal being worked out is to salvage Brazil's once-promising space program, which is also in disrepair. US representatives from Boeing and Lockheed Martin are visiting the site, and with the entrance into the market of small launch companies, the space port may attract more investment by an equatorial spin that produces 30 percent fuel savings. That type of advertising helps Brazil to project its image as a forward-looking country.

The above is indicative of strategic space in Latin America as the transfer of power continues in Venezuela.

With President Juan Guaidó's Chief of Staff Robert Marrero detained by Maduro's forces, the stakes have gone up considerably. For Brazil, the contingency of contending with America's next act in Venezuela is to hold the border and assist in the transition while maintaining Brazil's traditional values under a president who has an affinity for the US president in the hope of future lucrative deals from the US.

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Mideast needs its own soft power institution like the British Council

JONATHAN GORNALL

Supporters and promoters of the Arabic language should take note of some enduring developments from the early 20th century. For out of the cauldron of imperialism and war came the seeds of world-culture formation.

Start with Britain. By 1934, a worldwide financial depression had undermined trade and living standards. Competing ideologies were on the rise, with communism flourishing in Russia and fascism emerging in Germany, Italy and Spain. Another world war was only five years away but even as it set about rearming, the British government created what would become the archetypal weapon of soft power. The British Committee for Relations With Other Countries was created to build "friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries ... creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust." Eighty-five years on, we know it as the British Council.

It is not alone. Germany has its Goethe-Institut, forging "partnerships ... in over 90 countries (to) create enduring trust in Germany." Italy's Dante Alighieri Society works to "promote ... Italian language and culture throughout the world" and the Institut Français "promotes French culture internationally." Joining these in 2004 was the Confucius Institute, whose aim is to promote the Chinese language and China's culture. Plans are to have up to 1,000 Confucius Institutes by next year.

Together, these government-funded organizations reach tens of millions of people each year, pursuing the central mission of strengthening their national economies by reinforcing the importance of their respective languages.

So where in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century is the voice of Arabia?

The British Council and others were born in a world defined by European colonialism. Today, the influence of those once great powers is waning and in this new world, the growing influence of the Gulf states is undeniable.

Oil wealth has been intelligently exploited to begin diversification away from reliance on fossil fuels. Today, countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE are engaged and invested around the world.

Their influence is advancing on all fronts. This month thousands of athletes from 190 countries descended on Abu Dhabi for the Special Olympics World Games, the first held



in the region. Next year, the ranks of millions of tourists who already throng to Dubai annually will be swollen by some 25 million visitors to Expo 2020, the first in the Arab world.

In the UK, Arabic is now being promoted as one of the most important languages needed to plug a national skills gap estimated by a parliamentary review to be costing 3.5 percent of GDP. A report from the British Council itself lists Arabic as one of five languages the UK needs most. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, meanwhile, regards Arabic as one of a handful of essential languages for its diplomats.

Arabic is on the cusp of becoming a global language. What better time, then, for it to find its voice in world affairs and carry the educational, cultural and linguistic beacon to the West?

The Arab world needs its own "British Council" to promote the language and reinforce its growing importance. The days have gone — or should have — when English-speaking businesspeople could visit the region and expect the locals to speak their language. But this is not about pride. Instead, it is a pragmatic reinforcing of the importance of the Arab world, and word, in the modern era.

To be sure, institutions such as the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan Center for Arabic Language and Islamic Studies, established in 1994 in Beijing, do exist. Since its founding, the Sheikh Zayed Center has trained over 1,000 students in Arabic. But to maximize its impact, any future globally dispersed "Arabic Council" should be broadly based. The nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council would make obvious founding partners, but a pan-Arab council would also gain much from the inclusion of nations such as Egypt and Iraq, responsible for many cultural and social developments that have enriched the world.

Modern Arabia lacks a true and coherent voice and image in the West, and the West in turn lacks true understanding of the Arab world, which is portrayed frequently in the Western media in only negative ways.

This must stop. Misunderstandings about Arabia and Islam have plagued relations between the region and the wider world for decades with catastrophic consequences. As the Arab world moves front and center, it is no longer enough simply to shrug. Arabia must make its case and what better way to do so than by taking a leaf out of the playbook of the British Council?

Jonathan Gornall is a British journalist, formerly with The Times, who has lived and worked in the Middle East and is now based in the UK. ©Project Syndicate

France's superficial treatments for a deep-rooted malaise

RANVIR NAYAR

After a few weeks of sustained decline in the number of protesters gathering for the weekly demonstrations by the "gilets jaunes" (yellow vests) in key cities, notably Paris, the French government had perhaps begun to breathe easy. The general feel, in the government as well as the media, was that the movement was fizzling out and dying a natural death after holding the attention of not just the entire country, but making an impact around the world as well.

However, the surge in numbers, as well as violence, last weekend must have been enough to shake off the government's complacency. President Emmanuel Macron had to rush back to work from his skiing holiday as the Champs Elysees, the avenue barely 100 meters from his official residence, bore the brunt of the attack, with smashed shop windows and fires, including at the renowned Fouquet's, a restaurant that has been a favorite haunt of the French political and art worlds for decades.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe has subsequently sacked the Paris police chief for allowing the violence to get out of hand and not dealing with the violent protesters firmly enough. He has also announced some more measures, including a conditional ban on protests on the Champs Elysees.

The harsh measures may go some way toward treating the symptoms of the problem that France faces today. However, they are likely to infuriate the protesters and their sympathizers, as these measures will be seen as a clear curtailment of their democratic right to demonstrate and protest. They are unlikely to work unless the government declares a



curfew in select places and stops weekend train services to Paris and other large cities where the demonstrations take place.

Even if the government succeeds in suffocating the high-visibility protests, the issue is hardly likely to disappear. A recent poll suggested that, despite the violence, 53 percent of the French public sympathized with the yellow vests' cause. And therein lies the crux.

There are many who say that the state has abandoned them and their communities, with severe underinvestment in public services and infrastructure. Thus, most of them are obliged to drive to work, and this is where the "eco-friendly" taxes on fuel have been biting them the hardest. While people living in the wider Paris area or any of the country's other major cities still have the option to use public transport, which has seen significant investment, the countryside remains bereft of these services, making the development unbalanced.

In addition, the benefits of industrial and economic innovation have remained limited to a very small part of the population, as has been the case practically everywhere else, increasing the inequality in society. To add insult to injury, the decisions of Macron to cut taxes on the rich, while simultaneously reducing benefits to the poorer sections of society, including pensioners, have definitely touched a raw nerve. The yellow vests have come to symbolize the battle between the few haves and a large majority of have-nots in the country.

This is the main message they wish to convey and, while the French public seems to have received it fairly loud and clear, the government still seems to be ignoring it, or is unable to understand.

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ARAB NEWS

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“Israel has caused ‘a crippling economic crisis in the Palestinian Authority.’”
Mahmud Abbas
Palestinian President



Business

ECONOMY

Palestinians in financial crisis after aid and tax transfer curbs

Monthly shortfall of \$190 million, finance minister forced to adopt an emergency budget

AFP Ramallah

The authority, headed by President Mahmud Abbas, announced a package of emergency measures on March 10, including halving the salaries of many civil servants.

The US has cut more than \$500 million in Palestinian aid in the past year, though only a fraction of that went directly to the PA.

The PA has decided to refuse what little US aid remains on offer for fear of civil suits under new legislation passed by Congress.

Israel has also announced it intends to deduct about \$10 million a month in taxes it collects for the PA in a dispute over payments to the families of prisoners in Israeli jails.

In response, Abbas has refused to receive any funds at all, labelling the Israeli reductions theft.

That will leave his government with a monthly shortfall of about \$190 million for the length of the crisis.

The money makes up more than 50 percent of the PA's monthly revenues, with other funds coming from local taxes and foreign aid.

While the impact of the cuts is still being assessed, analysts fear it could affect the stability of the occupied West Bank.

“If the economic situation remains so difficult and the PA is unable to pay salaries and provide services, in addition to continuing (Israeli) settlement expansion it will lead to an explosion,” political analyst Jihad Harb said.

Abbas cut off relations with the US administration after President Donald Trump declared the disputed city of Jerusalem Israel's capital in December 2017.

The right-wing Israeli government, strongly backed by the US, has since sought to squeeze Abbas.

After a deadly anti-Israeli attack last month, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would withhold \$138 million in Palestinian revenues over the course of a year.

Israel collects about \$190 million a month in customs duties levied on goods destined for Palestinian markets that transit through its ports, and then transfers the money to the PA.

Israel said that the amount it intended to withhold was equal to what is paid by the PA to the families of prisoners, or prisoners themselves, jailed for attacks on Israelis last year.

Many Palestinians view

If the PA is unable to provide services, in addition to continuing (Israeli) settlement it will lead to an explosion.

prisoners and those killed while carrying out attacks as heroes of the fight against Israeli occupation.

Israel says the payments encourage further violence. Abbas recently accused Netanyahu's government of causing a “crippling economic crisis in the Palestinian Authority.”

The PA also said in January that it would refuse all further US government aid for fear of lawsuits under new US legislation targeting alleged support for “terrorism.”

Finance Minister Shukri Bishara announced earlier this month he had been forced to “adopt an emergency budget that includes restricted austerity measures.”

Government employees paid more than 2,000 shekels (\$555) will receive only half their salaries until further notice.

Prisoner payments would continue in full, Bishara added.



A Palestinian boy in the poor neighborhood of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. AFP

Nasser Abdel Karim, a Ramallah-based economics professor, told AFP the PA, and the Palestinian economy more generally, remained totally controlled by and reliant on Israel.

The PA undertook similar financial measures in 2012 when Israel withheld taxes over Palestinian efforts to gain international recognition at the UN.

Abdel Karim said such crises are “repeated and disappear according to the development of the relationship between the Palestinian Authority and Israel or the countries that support (the PA).”

Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including now annexed east Jerusalem in the

FAST FACT

The Palestinian Authority faces a suffocating financial crisis after deep US aid cuts and an Israeli move to withhold tax transfers, sparking fears for the stability of the West Bank.

Six-Day War of 1967 and Abbas's government has only limited autonomy in West Bank towns and cities.

“The problem is the lack of cash,” economic journalist Jafar Sadaqa told AFP.

He said that while the PA had faced financial crises before, “this time is different because it comes as a cumulative result of political decisions taken by the United States.”

Abbas appointed longtime ally Mohammad Shtayyeh as prime minister on March 10 to head a new government to oversee the crisis.

Abdel Karim believes the crisis could worsen after an Israeli general election next month “if a more right-wing Israeli government wins.”

CRYPTOCURRENCIES

‘Gulf will lead digital currency world’

Ben Flanagan London

The Gulf is overtaking Asia as the global leader in cryptocurrencies, as countries such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE embrace blockchain technology despite the crash in coin prices, according to the cofounders of a new digital-currency exchange.

Bitcoin prices have plummeted by more than 50 percent in the last year, from a high of \$9,683.54 on May 4, 2018 to under \$4,000 on Thursday afternoon. Ethereum, another prominent digital currency, lost 83 percent of its value over the same period.

That has not deterred the founders of the Abu Dhabi-based Hayvn, who believe digital currencies are still in their infancy and are yet to benefit from big bucks being pumped in by institutional investors. A move by Saudi Arabia and the UAE to pilot a shared digital currency for cross-border bank transactions also points to the longer-term potential of cryptocurrencies, said Hayvn cofounders Ahmed Ismail and Christopher Flinos.

“We see the Gulf leading digital



Saudi Arabia and UAE embrace blockchain despite a crash in coin prices. AFP

currencies going forward, globally,” said Flinos. “It started in Asia, and we now see the GCC taking over from Asia as the global leader in digital currencies and their integration into the financial system.”

Flinos said there was an appetite for cryptocurrencies among big regional investors, but that they lack a safe and secure platform on which to trade.

“Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest cryptocurrency markets, potentially, within the region,” he said. “Middle Eastern high-net-worth

individuals generally have a higher risk tolerance ... they like equities, they are used to volatility. They're not afraid of new things, they're not afraid of chasing yield.”

Flinos and business partner Ismail, who met while working at Merrill Lynch in the mid 2000s, plan to launch Hayvn soon and have had discussions with the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) authority about regulating the platform. The executives say that regulation, along with cryptographic security provided by a company called

nCipher, will make Hayvn stand out from other global exchanges, some of which have been hit by high-profile cyberattacks. The Tokyo-based Mt. Gox exchange, notably, filed for bankruptcy in 2014 after losing some 850,000 bitcoins — then worth about \$500 million — and \$28 million in cash from its bank accounts.

The Hayvn exchange will be aimed at institutional investors with more than \$500,000 of investable funds, such as hedge funds, private banks and high-net-worth individuals. Its founders have not yet disclosed which cryptocurrencies it will trade, but confirmed the majors will be there. They have also held initial discussions about being an exchange for “intra-GCC trading coins” of the sort being piloted by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Despite the roller-coaster ride in crypto prices, Hayvn cofounder Ismail said that there is a gap in the market for a well-regulated and secure exchange.

“Cryptocurrency exchanges

right now, globally, are effectively just casinos,” he said. “We saw that (in) a lot of the exchanges around the world, it was pretty much the Wild West ... there was a lot of price manipulation, there was a lot of money laundering, institutional money was still not convinced.”

“We saw what was going on in the digital currency market. And we saw this massive gaping hole.”



FAST FACT

Bitcoin prices have lost about half their value over the past year.

Ismail described the ADGM's regulatory framework as “rigorous” and said the planned security on the trading platform means it is “completely unhackable.”

“We're not simply an exchange — retail exchanges are a dime a dozen, it's very easy to set one up,” he said, pointing to the research the company plans to conduct

with a London-based university.

Ismail acknowledged the crash in prices of bitcoin and ethereum, but said that it was still early days for cryptocurrencies, which until now have been traded mainly by small individual investors.

“The reason there has been massive amounts of volatility in (bitcoin) or ethereum or any of the large coins is the fact that it's been pretty much retail (investors),” he said. “Institutional money is still waiting on the sidelines to get into cryptocurrency. It's moving. There are paradigm shifts that are happening right now in the whole cryptocurrency world. But it's still not there yet. We're still at the very very beginning of the digital currency revolution.”

So will cryptocurrency prices recover in the short term?

“Who knows? It may be overvalued, it may be undervalued,” said Ismail.

“We ultimately don't care. We're looking at this as a real asset class that has long-term probability. It might not be bitcoin, it might be another cryptocurrency that's going to emerge in the short to medium term.”

Business News



Confidence in Hong Kong's ability to operate independently of Beijing could hamper business opportunities. Reuters

ECONOMY

US warns China meddling in Hong Kong hurting business confidence

Washington fears interference and a gradual aligning of island and mainland policy could damage trade

Reuters Hong Kong

The US warned in a report on Friday that increased meddling from China in Hong Kong had adversely impacted the city, straining international business confidence in the Asian financial hub.

The US State Department report cited incidents such as the expulsion of Financial Times editor Victor Mallet, the banning of a pro-independence political party, the jailing of young democracy activists and barring people from

local elections.

The city is also seeking to amend laws banning extradition to mainland China, despite human rights concerns.

"The tempo of intervention in Hong Kong's affairs — and actions by Hong Kong consistent with mainland direction — increased, accelerating negative trends," the US State Department said in its 2019 report on the Hong Kong Policy Act.

"Growing political restrictions in Hong Kong may be straining the confidence of the international business community."

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign

Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said foreign governments had no right to interfere.

"The report issued by the US government ignores the facts and makes thoughtless remarks about Hong Kong's affairs," Geng said. "China is strongly dissatisfied with this and is strongly opposed to it."

The 1992 US-Hong Kong policy act allows Washington to engage with Hong Kong as a non-sovereign entity on matters of trade and economics.

The areas of special treatment for Hong Kong now include visas, law enforcement, extraditions, and investment.

BACKGROUND

The 1992 US-Hong Kong policy act allows Washington to engage with Hong Kong as a non-sovereign entity distinct from China on matters of trade and economics.

"Policies and practices of the mainland central government adversely impacted Hong Kong in multiple areas, and mainland pressure resulted in new constraints on Hong Kong's political space," the report adds.

"In some particularly concerning

instances, Hong Kong authorities took actions aligned with mainland priorities at the expense of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

The continuation of the US Congress enacted policy is predicated upon China and Hong Kong maintaining a so-called "one country, two systems" arrangement.

This mode of governance, that came into effect after Hong Kong reverted from British rule in 1997, grants the city a high degree of autonomy, the rule of law and freedoms not allowed on the mainland.

Some critics, including

pro-independence activist Andy Chan, have called on the US to review the viability of the act.

The US Consul General in Hong Kong Kurt Tong expressed concerns in February, noting erosions to the "one-country, two systems" formula. Hong Kong, which has long acted as a leading hub for US-Chinese trade, has largely escaped the brunt of current US-China trade tensions, given its special status as a separate customs entity.

In 2018, the United States' largest worldwide bilateral trade-in-goods surplus was with Hong Kong, at \$25.9 billion.

FINANCE

Shadow margin loans make sly return to China

Reuters Singapore

On a cloudy March morning in Shanghai's glitzy financial district of Lujiazui, Ye Lixia was knocking on doors, offering loans to bet on the stock market.

"We provide money to investors who need quick funds," Ye told Reuters.

Ye, in her 30s and a general director at Bo Ying Asset Management, is one of thousands of grey market lenders operating in the shadows of China's colossal capital markets.

A stock market that shot up 25 percent in the last three months has revived the undercover margin lending business notoriously responsible for China's 2015 market volatility.

In defiance of warnings from the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), shadow lenders pitch their business via cold calls and social media.

"In China, speculators adopt very aggressive trading strategies," said Stephen Huang, vice president of Shanghai See



Though China's stock market has risen 25 percent in three months, fears abound that regulators will not turn a blind eye to grey market lenders for ever. Reuters

Truth Investment Management Co.

The Shanghai index's swift recovery from last year's losses has been driven by signs of an end to the Sino-US trade war.

Beijing's efforts to lower lending costs, and foreign investment inflows after the inclusion of Chinese A-shares in global equity benchmarks, encouraged the rally.

Shenzhen's start-up board ChiNext, traditionally a hotbed for speculation, has surged more than 30 percent this year.

In the official margin financing

market, outstanding loans have jumped nearly 30 percent since the end of January to 911.6 billion yuan (\$136.08 billion). But unofficial margin financing, in which small investors borrow from grey market lenders, is thriving.

Hui Ju Ying, a margin lending platform, lures clients with suggestions of "returns of 100 percent." The CSRC said in late February that it was closely monitoring the situation, but regulators have taken a soft approach. "Last year, the government was talking about

reducing leverage. Now, it's all about steady leverage," said Ye. Managers at five margin lenders said they began aggressively marketing loans over the past few weeks to investors eager to make outsized stock market bets.

Such lending helped the Shanghai stock index double between 2014 and mid-2015, forcing authorities to crack down on shadow lending and causing a 40 percent decline in stocks over six months.

Some of the lenders this time around are newcomers. Others are survivors of the crackdown, emboldened by the belief that regulators, focused on enabling funding for struggling private firms, will look the other way.

Individual investors account for about 80 percent of total stock market turnover.

Regular broker financing is regulated and limited at 1:1 leverage — the maximum amount they can borrow is equal to their principal. Shadow margin loans allow for a leverage of up to 10 times the capital the investor

provides, and lenders do not dictate what stocks investors can buy.

"No qualification is needed," said an executive who used to work for Beijing-based Yueda Investment, a grey-market lender. "Investors just come to our office to take a look and then we sign loan contracts."

Operating in the shadows carries risks, he said, notably that they cannot use the courts to

FASTFACT

80%

of total stock market turnover in China today can be attributed to individual investors.

recover losses.

Two of the grey-market margin financiers interviewed by Reuters said their initial funding came from banks. Banks are prohibited from directly financing stock

market investment but use complex product structures to bypass regulations.

Both declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter. The names of banks lending to trust companies are never revealed on shadow margin loan contracts.

On March 15, the Taizhou branch of China's banking watchdog fined two lenders for allowing bank money to flow illegally into the stock market. The Guangdong branch of the CSRC has banned brokerages from cooperating with shadow lenders.

Domestic brokerage Shenwan Hongyuan Securities estimated there were about 10,000 grey market lenders running 1-1.5 trillion yuan in margin financing in 2015. Volumes are much lower now, which is why regulators may look away for longer.

"I think regulators want to see more active trading ... Investors or speculators are all welcome," said a senior manager at domestic brokerage Industrial Securities.

Business News

ENERGY

Energy giants 'spent \$1bn on climate lobbying since Paris deal'

Firms under pressure to explain how greener laws will hit business models

AFP Paris

The five largest publicly listed oil and gas majors have spent \$1 billion since the 2015 Paris climate deal on public relations or lobbying that is "overwhelmingly in conflict" with the landmark accord's goals, a watchdog said Friday.

Despite outwardly committing to support the Paris agreement and its aim to limit global temperature rises, ExxonMobil, Shell, Chevron, BP and Total spend a total of \$200 million a year on efforts "to operate and expand fossil fuel operations," according to InfluenceMap, a pro-transparency monitor.

"The fossil fuel sector has ramped up a quite strategic programme of influencing the climate agenda," InfluenceMap Executive Director Dylan Tanner told AFP.

"It's a continuum of activity from their lobby trade groups attacking the details of regulations, controlling them all the way up, to controlling the way the media thinks about the oil majors and climate."

The report comes as oil and gas giants, which recorded total profits of \$55 billion in 2018, are under increasing pressure from shareholders to come clean over how greener lawmaking will impact their business models.

InfluenceMap looked at accounts, lobbying registers and communications releases since 2015, and alleged a large gap between the climate commitments companies make and the action they take.

It said all five engaged in lobbying and "narrative capture" through direct contact with lawmakers and officials, spending millions on climate branding, and by employing trade associations to represent the sector's interests in policy discussions.

It added that of the more than \$110 billion the five had earmarked for capital investment in 2019, only \$3.6 billion was given over to low-carbon schemes.

The report came one day after the European Parliament was urged to strip ExxonMobil lobbyists of their access, after the US giant failed to attend a hearing where expert witnesses said the oil giant has knowingly misled the public over climate change.

The report said Exxon spent



BP and other oil and gas giants are being challenged over their spending on lobbying and climate branding. Supplied

\$56 million a year on "climate branding" and \$41 million annually on lobbying efforts.

With the exception of France's Total, each oil major had largely focused climate lobbying expenditure in the US, the report said.

Chevron alone has spent more than \$28 million in US political donations since 1990, according to the report.

A spokeswoman for Shell — which the report said spends

FASTFACT

\$28m

Chevron alone has spent more than \$28 million in US political donations since 1990, according to the report.

\$49 million annually on climate lobbying — said it "firmly rejected" the findings.

"We disagree with the assertion that Chevron has engaged in 'climate-related branding and lobbying' that is 'overwhelmingly in conflict' with the Paris Agreement," said a Chevron spokesman.

BP, ExxonMobil and Total did not provide comment to AFP.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Aviation

WOW Air in talks with Icelandair after Indigo goes

US private equity firm Indigo Partners has withdrawn its offer to buy a stake in Iceland's loss-making carrier WOW Air, and Icelandair is now back in talks to buy the no-frills airline, the carriers said.

Icelandair had previously agreed to buy WOW Air but ditched those plans on Nov. 29.

A day later, Indigo Partners, a private equity group that owns stakes in several low-cost airlines including Frontier Airlines in the US, said it had reached a preliminary deal to acquire 49 percent of WOW Air.

"The proposed investment of Indigo Partners in WOW Air has been canceled by Indigo Partners ... Subsequently WOW Air has started discussions with Icelandair Group," WOW said.

WOW Air exploited Iceland's location to offer a low-cost service between Europe and North America. **AFP**

Industry

Britain's Smiths to list struggling health care unit

Smiths Group said on Friday it would separate its struggling health care business and list it in the UK, months after the company failed to merge the unit with US-based ICU Medical.

Smiths' medical business was valued between £2.3 billion and £2.8 billion by some analysts in September, when the two companies failed to agree on deal terms.

Smiths Medical, a maker of respiratory devices and catheters, has been hit by delays in product launches, stricter regulations and two contract losses in the US. The unit's underlying revenue in the first half of the year fell 3 percent, while operating profit fell 12 percent.

Smiths said it expects to complete the process to divest the unit during the first half of 2020. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

Value shares are trading at their lowest book-to-value ratios relative to growth stocks since at least 2005.

Source: Bloomberg



Gadget Watch

TECH TIPS FOR THE SHORT OF TIME

Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500

This is an all-in-one Skype Room system which Lenovo says is the key to more efficient meetings. It's not particularly cheap, at more than \$2,300, but is a useful tool for scattered teams.



Banking

Swedbank board backs CEO over money-laundering

Swedbank's board backed its chief executive on Friday after seeing the results of an external report into the Swedish bank's alleged involvement in money-laundering in the Baltics.

Several banks have been dragged into a scandal at Danske Bank, whose Estonian branch was used for €200 billion (\$227 billion) of suspicious payments, knocking their shares and fueling investor fears.

Forensic Risk Alliance (FRA) was hired last month to investigate allegations that 40 billion Swedish crowns (\$4.3 billion) of suspicious payments moved between accounts held at its Baltic branches and Danske Bank accounts.

"The board confirms its continued confidence in the CEO," Swedbank chairman Lars Idermark said. **Reuters**

Economy

French business recovery runs out of steam — PMI

French business activity slowed unexpectedly in March as a recent rebound ran out of steam in the face of deteriorating demand, a monthly survey showed on Friday.

Data compiler IHS Markit said its preliminary composite purchasing managers index fell to 48.7 from 50.4 in February, short of economists' expectations for a reading of 50.7.

The flow of new orders deteriorated especially for the export market, where client orders slowed the most since nearly three years. As a result, job creation growth slowed to a near standstill.

"There is definitely a heightened risk of renewed downturn in France," said IHS Markit chief business economist Chris Williamson. **Reuters**

AVIATION

Boeing to make 737 safety feature standard

AFP New York

Boeing's 737 MAX aircraft will be fitted with a warning light for malfunctions in its anti-stall system, an industry source said on Thursday, standardizing what was previously an optional extra.

This comes as the manufacturer struggles with the fallout from crashes in Indonesia in October and in Ethiopia this month which have cast a spotlight on the safety certification process and shaken confidence in a plane that is crucial to its future plans.

This safety feature is among the modifications the company is presenting to US authorities and clients, the source said. Neither of planes which crashed had the feature, the source said.

American Airlines, which operates 24 737 MAX 8, had bought the option, anticipating potential malfunctions, a source close to the matter told AFP.



Boeing is hoping its changes will win regulatory approval. Reuters

So had Southwest Airlines, the plane's biggest customer, which had bought an additional "Primary Flight Display" option, according to a spokesperson.

Modifications are in the final stages but Boeing wants to be certain this meets the expectations of regulators and customers, the industry source said.

Neither Boeing nor the Federal Aviation Agency offered comment when contacted by AFP.

An industry expert, Scott Hamilton, from Leeham Company,

said the system should have already been included.

"Instrument disagree warnings should be standard and they are important for pilots to know when instruments disagree with each other," he said. "Boeing made this an option because it could, and make money by selling it. Simple as that."

The warning light will be activated if sensors transmit incorrect data to the plane's Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS), which is intended to detect and correct stalls by reducing the aircraft's pitch.

BACKGROUND

US and Ethiopian authorities have said this month's crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight ET302 near Addis Ababa bore "similarities" to last year's Lion Air crash.

Preliminary results in the investigation into October's Lion Air crash in Indonesia indicate an "angle of attack" sensor, which feeds data to the MCAS, had malfunctioned.

But despite malfunctioning, the sensor continued transmitting data to the plane's onboard electronics, including the MCAS.

That system takes control of the aircraft, pointing its nose downward, even if the pilot resists, so long as the system is not deactivated, something the Lion Air crew did not know.

US and Ethiopian authorities have said this month's crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight ET302 near Addis Ababa bore "similarities" to last year's Lion Air crash.

A criminal investigation is currently underway in the United States, with authorities reportedly scrutinizing how the plane received safety certification from US aviation regulators.

CRICKET — THE INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Sun set to shine on Hyderabad

Cash-rich IPL is cricket at its most brash and loud, here we preview the 12th edition starting today

Arab News London

The 12th edition of the Indian Premier League gets underway today with the usual razzmatazz, stacks of cash — in cricketer terms at least, pure conspicuous consumption — on display. This is the form of leather on willow that is as close to pure Americana as you are going to find.

As much as \$15 million was shelled out at this year's auction on 60 players. You only have to look at the riches the players are now earning to realize why every big-hitting batsman or wily bowler wants a piece of the IPL. Varun Chakravarty went for \$1.2 million, a millionaire overnight having not even played for his country.

Once again the Chennai Super Kings are the team to beat. Under MS Dhoni the powerhouses have won three titles — a record they share with the Mumbai Indians.

Here we give you the lowdown on cricket's brash format and take a peek into our crystal ball to tell you what we think is going to happen.

DELHI CAPITALS (8th last year) Have only made the last four three times, finished rock bottom last year and decided something had to change. So they changed their name from the Daredevils to the Capitals, the new name as prosaic as their past cricket. They have added Shikhar Dhawan for power at the top of the order and to compliment the decent bowling attack of Trent Boult and Kagiso Rabada.

ARAB NEWS SAYS: The only way is up but will finish outside the top four.

RAJASTHAN ROYALS (4th) The winners of the first IPL they have made the last four three times since. A look at their batting line-up — Steve Smith, Jos Buttler, Ben Stokes and Ajinkya Rahane — will always trouble the opposition bowlers and with Jofra Archer and Jaydev Unadkat in the attack will always take wickets. Can they back up their impressive team sheet with equally impressive results?

ARAB NEWS SAYS: Will reach the

last four but will miss the departing Stokes and Buttler who leave for a pre-World Cup training camp.

KINGS PUNJAB (7th)

An impressive spin attack of Ravichandran Ashwin, Muzeeb Ur Rahman and Chakravarty will once again prove that T20, once thought to be the graveyard for slow bowlers, is a game built just for them. They will look for West Indies legend Chris Gayle to find his big-hitting range early on to give them the totals to defend.

ARAB NEWS SAYS: Could prove to be the surprise package if, and it is a big if, their big names fire. We think they will just miss out on the last four.

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE (6th)

One look at their batting line-up is enough to give any bowler the dreaded yips. Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers could have their very own "who is the greatest short-form batsman of all-time" competition. The addition of Marcus Stoinis will give the side more balance and a chance of winning their first title.

ARAB NEWS SAYS: A side with Kohli and De Villiers cannot go three years without a top-four finish.

MUMBAI INDIANS (5th)

The Manchester United of the IPL, they have won three titles and with Rohit Sharma as captain, and a settled side — Kieron Pollard, Lasith Malinga and Jasprit Bumrah just three of the retained stars — will always be a danger. But they finished outside the top four last year and perhaps miss a bit of fire power in the batting department.

ARAB NEWS SAYS: Another year outside the top four.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS (3rd)

Last year's top-four finish was a surprise and there is the sense they will struggle to match that this time around. With Windies stars Carlos Brathwaite and Andre Russell in the side and spin king Sunil Narine they will always have a chance but it is perhaps expecting too much to repeat last season's surge to the semis.

ARAB NEWS SAYS: They will not be able to repeat last year's heroics and will finish in sixth.



Hyderabad Sunrisers captain Kane Williamson (above) will be looking to lead his side to a second IPL title, replacing the Chennai Super Kings (below) as champions. AFP



CHENNAI SUPER KINGS (Champions)

The team to beat, they have kept most of their title-winning side from last year and still have MS Dhoni — will he ever retire? — at the helm. It is hard to make a case for them not reaching the final, harder still not making the last

four. If there is one possible worry it is that they have not strengthened much over the winter.

ARAB NEWS SAYS: In the last four.

SUNRISERS HYDERABAD (2nd)

Will still be smarting from their heavy defeat in the final at the hands of Chennai last year. They

look to have the strongest batting line-up with Kane Williamson, Martin Gupthil, Jonny Bairstow and David Warner to share the big-hitting responsibilities and with spinner of the moment Rashid Khan they will always be able to take wickets.

ARAB NEWS SAYS: Champions

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Football

Courtois claims Spanish media 'want to kill him'

Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois claims he is receiving unfair treatment in Spain for a difficult first season at the club and defended his abilities after making an embarrassing error in Belgium's clash with Russia.

The mistake completed a difficult week for the keeper, who was dropped by Zinedine Zidane in his first game back in charge of Real Madrid. And Courtois said: "I still consider myself one of the best in the world, even though the Spanish press want to kill me. I feel strong, I'm calm, playing well and training well."

Reuters



Football

Neymar in the dock for rude comments

Neymar has been charged by UEFA for making "insulting" comments about the match officials following Paris Saint-Germain's shock Champions League loss to Manchester United.

The Brazilian star missed the 3-1 second-leg defeat in the last 16 earlier this month through injury, but the used offensive language to the match officials on social media after watching on from the sidelines at the Parc des Princes.

The 27-year-old was angry with the award of a decisive injury-time penalty which Marcus Rashford scored to send United through.

UEFA said he had been charged, with the date of his hearing yet to be confirmed.

The defeat came as a shock to the Qatar-owned club who led 2-0 from the first-leg. AFP

Football

Solskjaer must be given United job, says Berbatov

Manchester United must provide clarity on caretaker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's future and reward him with a permanent role at the club for turning their season around and providing a measure of stability, former striker Dimitar Berbatov said.

The Norwegian has 14 wins in 19 games in all competitions since his appointment, leading the club to the Champions League quarterfinals and to within two points of the Premier League's top four.

"With all the work he has done I don't think it would be fair to him or the players if they don't announce that he is going to stay in charge," Berbatov said. Reuters

FOOTBALL

Racist abuse fans in police custody

AFP Wolfsburg

Three men who shouted racist abuse at Germany's Leroy Sane and Ilkay Gundogan during the friendly with Serbia turned themselves in after another fan posted a video on Facebook, police have said.

After the images, taken during Germany's 1-1 draw with Serbia in Wolfsburg on Wednesday, appeared online, "they presented themselves and confessed they were the three alleged perpetrators," confirmed local police spokesman Thomas Figge.

"They gave a preliminary statement presenting their version of events."

Another supporter, identified by German tabloid Bild as Andre Voigt,

a journalist who had gone to the match as a fan, filmed the trio insulting Manchester City players Sane, whose father is from Senegal, and Gundogan, the son of Turkish immigrants.

The German Football Association condemned the verbal attacks in the "strongest terms" and said it would ban from matches any perpetrators confirmed to have made the chants.

Voigt said the men had chanted "Heil Hitler" and shouted "we need another small Austrian."

"Every time Sane touched the ball, they insulted his color. Gundogan

was insulted as a Turk. They spoke in pseudo-Turkish accents every time he had the ball. And then they'd start again with 'black, black, black!'"

Midfielder Leon Goretzka said those responsible for the chants must be dealt with accordingly.

"The video shocked me and decisive action has to be taken against it," said the 24-year-old Bayern Munich player.

"We stand for diversity, integration should be a matter of course, I can only call on everyone to act with a lot of courage and put people like that in their place."



Hundred for Harris Pakistan set Australia 281 to win in the ODI in Sharjah thanks to Haris Sohail's 101 not out. For the result go to ArabNews.com/sport

AFP

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

Lana Condor stars in comic-book adaptation "Deadly Class," now on OSN First.



Weekend Lifestyle, Art & Culture



EAT, PLAY, LOVE

A world of wellness

From beachside lounging and watersports to whale-watching, nature walks and spa treatments, the Sri Lankan luxury resort of Cape Weligama offers everyone an escape to remember

Sudeehna Ghosh Dubai

In the four-plus years since it first opened, the luxury resort of Cape Weligama has raked in numerous international awards and prestigious accolades. It's not hard to see why — take the unparalleled location, perched at the edge of a headland right on the tip of the southern coast of Sri Lanka, to start with. Cape Weligama's spectacular design, courtesy of renowned Thai architect Lek Bunnag, makes the most of the cliff-top location to offer panoramic views from practically everywhere across the property.

It's easy to slip into the island way of life here, albeit with a good measure of luxury cossetting thrown in. Meandering from lazy breakfast to pool to spa (the Sanctuary spa treatments, which incorporate local spices and Ceylon tea, can be enjoyed both in the soothing spa villa or in the luxury of your own accommodation) to dinner, with perhaps a nap and some beach time in between, is a perfectly acceptable way to pass the time, but there are plenty of activities if you want to keep busy too.

Snorkeling, surfing and diving lessons are available from the wa-



tersports center on the beach just steps from the resort (beaches in Sri Lanka are all public, but in this unspoiled corner of the island the beaches are not crowded). This is also a prime spot for some whale-watching, with very good chances of spotting the rare blue and humpback whales between November to April, when their journey across the oceans brings them closer to the shore. Indeed, a whale-watching tour in the hotel's own luxury catamaran is not to be missed. On land, cycling trips into local villages are a great option, as is a day trip to nearby Galle Fort to take in all of its historic charm.

With the waves of the Indian Ocean crashing at the foot of the cliff, and the sea and skies conjuring up an ever-changing palette

Cape Weligama's stunning views (top) are just one of the reasons to visit this island resort. The delicious fresh food — using local produce whenever possible — is another. Images supplied

THE LOWDOWN

Where: Cape Weligama, Weligama, Sri Lanka

Price: From \$508

Contact: +94 412 253 000

Website: www.resplendentceylon.com/capeweligama

of colors and moods, the colonial-meets-Thai-style Ocean Terrace is the perfect spot to take all your meals. Whether it's freshly-caught local fish with curry sauce, regional specialties such as Jaffna-style goat curry or Far Eastern- and European-inspired dishes, the use of local produce gives everything on the menu a freshness of flavor and sense of place.

Al fresco breakfasts of traditional Sri Lankan delicacies — including the quintessential egg hoppers of course — are equally enjoyable whether taken on the expansive terrace, or on your own private garden deck.

The location is non-negotiable, however, when it comes to afternoon tea or cocktails. For these, you must visit the Cape Colony Club, where vintage décor, with

the ceiling fans lazily whirring overhead barely competing with the balmy breezes, transports you back in time.

Spread across 12 acres, this Relais & Chateaux resort is home to just 39 suites and villas, making them some of the most spacious properties on the island. The ocean view villas, which go up to more than 300 square meters, are large enough to comfortably accommodate a family, with a roomy outdoor deck, apartment-sized bathrooms, and generous, luxuriously appointed bedrooms that are decorated to subtly pay homage to both an island-appropriate nautical theme, and incorporate hints of Thai design.

The terracotta-roofed villas are clustered in threes and fours in "wattas" (gardens) around private infinity pools in lush landscaped grounds, with each watta named after iconic personalities with a Ceylon connection (including Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta).

With 15 pools spread across the property, including the child-friendly Cove Pool, retreating from the day's exertions into a refreshing dip couldn't be easier. But for the ultimate Instagram bragging rights, the Moon Pool (yes, that's the one you've seen pictures of...) situated at the very edge of the promontory — making its infinity edge appear to blend seamlessly into the ocean — is truly breathtaking.

Screen Scene

WHAT TO WATCH AT HOME

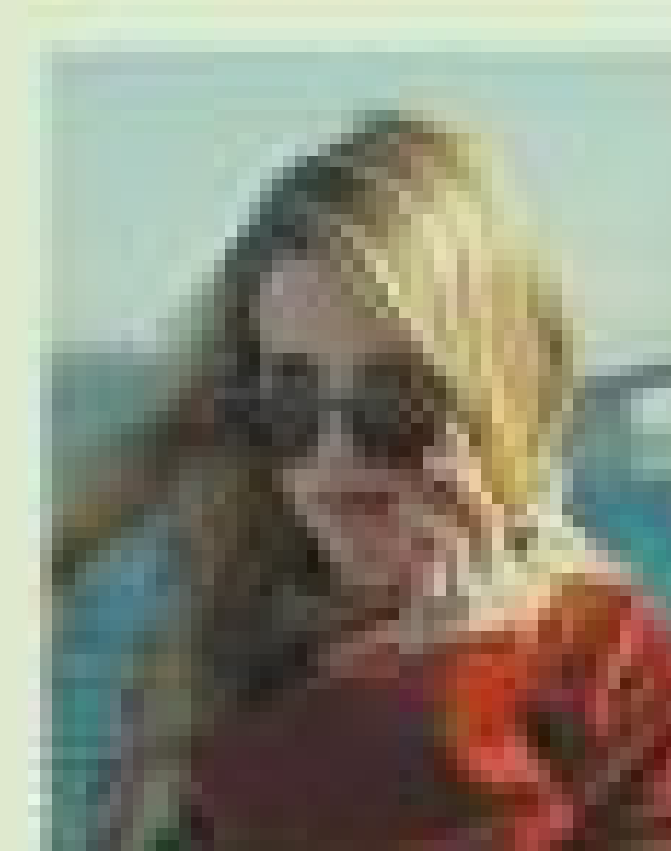


Delhi Crime

Starring: Shefali Shah, Rasika Dugal, Adil Hussain

Where: Netflix
Seven-part true-crime

dramatization focusing on the aftermath of the 2012 Delhi gang rape that resulted in the death of 23-year-old Jyoti Singh Pandey, and led to the creation of new laws and a huge increase in awareness of women's rights in India.



The OA

Starring: Brit Marling, Emory Cohen, Scott Wilson, Phyllis Smith

Where: Netflix

The popular supernatural sci-fi series returns for a second season. Prairie Johnson — who, since reappearing seven years on from her disappearance having regained her sight, now calls herself The OA — continues her quest to save those who, like she was, are trapped in another dimension that she can access.



Growing

Starring: Amy Schumer

Where: Netflix

The acclaimed and painfully honest US comedian — star of "Trainwreck" and "I Feel Pretty" — recorded her latest stand-up special in Chicago, where she regaled the audience with often-graphic tales of marital bliss, pregnancy, personal growth, and the joys of womanhood in general.



Deadly Class

Starring: Benedict Wong, Lana Condor

Where: OSN First, Mondays, 21:05

In this comic-book adaptation, homeless, disillusioned teen Marcus Lopez Arguello is recruited into the elite private school King's Dominion — the establishment of choice for the children of the world's most-powerful organized-crime families.



F1: Drive to Survive

Starring: F1 drivers and team owners

Where: Netflix

Ten-part docuseries co-produced by Netflix and Formula One. Get a behind-the-scenes look at the Grand Prix circus as it travels the world — with exclusive access to the pit lanes, the cockpits, and "the lives of the key players in Formula 1."

The Roundup Regional pop-culture highlights



"Bel Sodfa" Anthony Touma and The Recipe

This new video series from Red Bull in

collaboration with Careem sees two regional artists get together in the studio for one day to create a song from scratch.

In the first episode, Dubai-based hip-hop act The Recipe team up with Lebanese pop singer-songwriter Anthony Touma.

"Mirrors of Babel" El Seed

El Seed

The Tunisian artist has released a video about his installation for last year's Nuit Blanche Toronto, constructed from an Arabic translation of a 1903 Mohawk poem as "a tribute to the pluralist community of Toronto" and proof that "the Arabic language can unite us through its aesthetic beauty."



"Other Lovers" Safar

The Lebanese trio have built a reputation for anthemic songs of

love and loss. "Other Lovers," the opening track of their dream-pop EP "Studies of an Unknown Lover," is a perfect example, and

the recently released video, directed by Dania Bdeir, complements the haunting harmonies quite beautifully.

Saudi Arabian artist Ayman Zedani, whose work 'Becoming With (Blue/Red)' was on show at Art Dubai.



Weekend

Creation

Abdulhalim Radwi, Saudi Arabia

Radwi is regarded as one of the most significant artists in Saudi Arabian history, and one of the pioneers of modern art in the Kingdom. Much of his work referenced the historical architecture, folklore and lifestyle of his homeland. His 1989 painting, "Creation," was exhibited at Art Dubai this week by Jeddah's Hafez Gallery.



Confession and Confusion

Gözde İlkin, Turkey

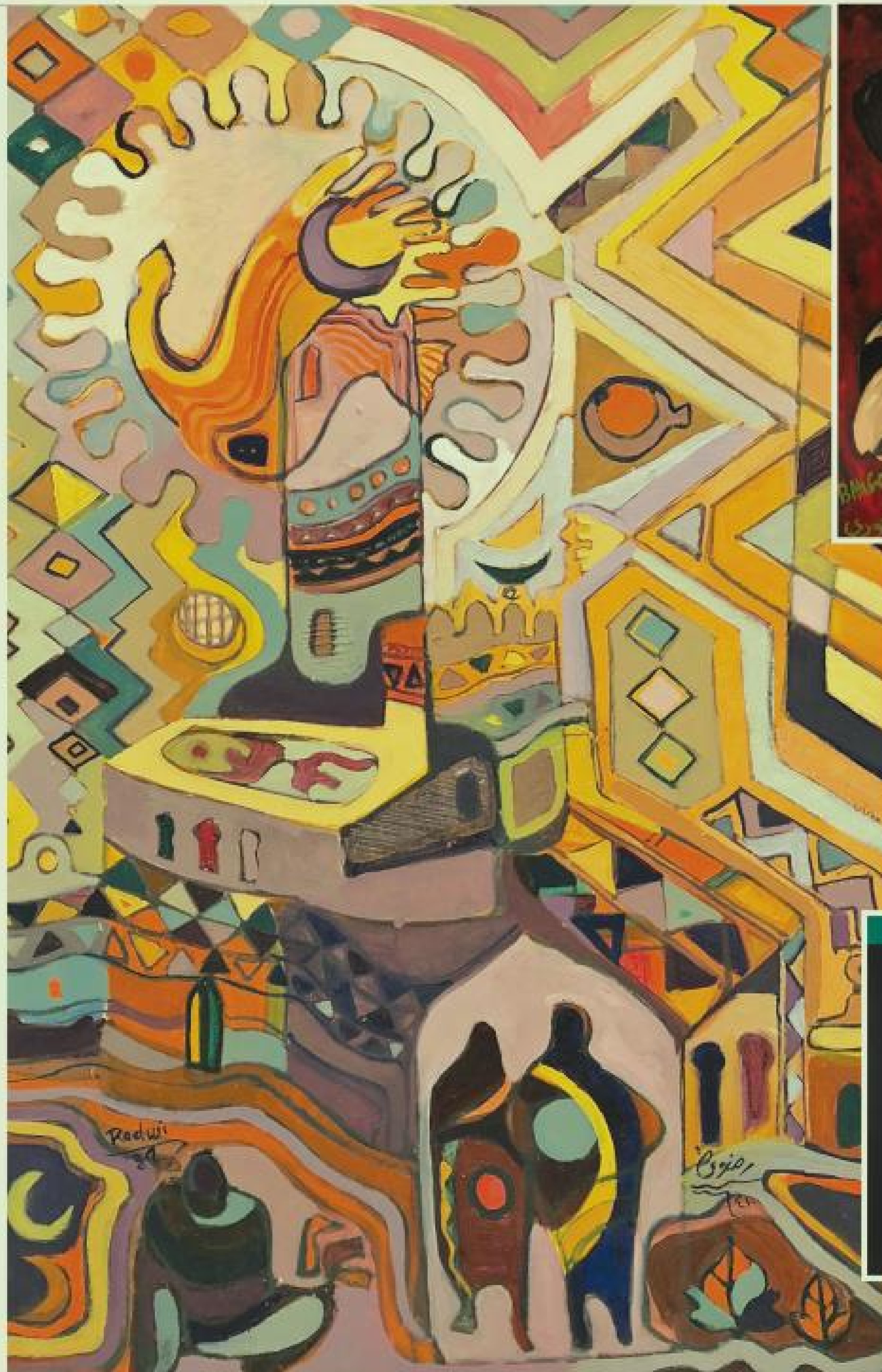
İlkin works with repurposed fabrics she has collected over the years to create "confrontational interactions that tend to manipulate borders, gender dynamics and ferocious urban transformations." Her abstract images, which are constructed from reworked table cloths, curtains and duvets, among other things, and "enact political relationships, feelings and promises that are failing to reach a solution, remaining in limbo," were displayed by Cairo-based Gypsum Gallery at Art Dubai.



Battlefield

Manaf Halbouni, Syria

Dresden-based multimedia artist Halbouni had three sculptural works made from steel and concrete on display in Zilberman Gallery's booth at Art Dubai. In his statement on 2013's "Battlefield," Halbouni explained: "Chess looks harmless like every other board game. But if you think longer about it, you see ... how complicated it is. Chess is another way to play war. 'Battlefield' shows you a destroyed landscape with hiding trenches and walls so that the field looks like a destroyed city."



ART

Regional revelations

Selected highlights from Middle Eastern artists at Art Dubai 2019



Untitled

George Baghory, Egypt

Baghory started out as a political cartoonist before training as a painter and sculptor, and his beginnings as a caricaturist remain evident in the stylized figures and exaggerated facial features in his later work, such as this oil painting from the 2000s. Baghory "creates work relevant to Egyptian pop culture, heritage and identity," explained UBUNTU Art Gallery in its promo material. Although the painting is untitled, it may — like many of Baghory's works — be influenced by the legendary Egyptian vocalist Umm Kulthum.



Sumerian Sculpture

Dia Azzawi, Iraq

Dubai's Meem Gallery displayed a selection of recent pieces from the acclaimed Iraqi artist Dia Azzawi, which, the gallery said, "reflect his abiding fascination with his country's long and storied past." Azzawi is a trained archaeologist, and he regularly references Mesopotamian and Sumerian culture in his work. The figure in this image is based on "seated Sumerian sculptures found in the archaeological collections of museums ... recognizable by its clasped arms and use of vivid color, with the left leg raised."



Paired Silhouettes

Samia Halaby, Palestine

Halaby is widely recognized as a regional pioneer in modern art, particularly abstract works. In its biography of the artist, Ayyam Gallery explained that she "works with the conviction that new approaches to painting can redirect ways of seeing and thinking, not only within the realm of aesthetics, but also as contributions to technical and social advancement."

Radwi is regarded as one of the most significant artists in Saudi Arabia's history, and one of the pioneers of modern art in the Kingdom.

Becoming With (Blue-Red)

Ayman Zedani, Saudi Arabia

Zedani, a contemporary artist, was the recipient of last year's inaugural Ithra Art Prize. He's back at Art Dubai this year with work displayed at ATHR Gallery's booth. In an interview last year, Zedani — who studied biomedical science — said

he was "interested in experimentation with different media, the properties of unconventional materials, the concept of assemblage and how objects can offer different readings in logical and metaphysical interpretations."



Situation 10

Hamza Bounoua, Algeria

Bounoua's work is influenced by "Berber, Islamic and African arts and ethnicities," according to Amman's Wadi Finan Art Gallery, which displayed Bounoua's latest works at Art Dubai — photographs showing the artist interacting with some of his calligraphy sculptures, continuing his exploration of letters, geometry, and shadows.