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SINCE 1975

SUNDAY, February 17, 2019 Jumada Al-Thani 12, 1440 www.arabnews.com

The Voice of a Changing Region

# Iran 'leading state sponsor of terror'

Pence chastises Europe over nuclear deal with Tehran
Vows to 'hunt down' Daesh even after pulling troops out of Syria

Reuters, AP Munich

US Vice President Mike Pence has doubled down on his criticism of European nations working to preserve a nuclear deal with Iran, saying they should follow Washington's lead and withdraw from the agreement.

Speaking on Saturday right after Chancellor Angela Merkel defended the 2015 Iran deal, Pence said: "The time has come for our

European partners to stop undermining US sanctions against this murderous revolutionary regime" by continuing to offer economic incentives in exchange for Tehran limiting its nuclear capability.

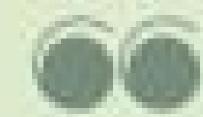
He said Europe should withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal "and join. us as we bring the economic and diplomatic pressure necessary to give the Iranian people, the region and the world the peace, security and freedom they deserve."

Pence also called Iran "the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world." The Iranian regime openly

advocates another Holocaust and it seeks the means to achieve it. Pence, who also visited the Naziconcentration camp Auschwitz, told delegates.

Pence said: "The time has come for our European partners to stand with us and with the Iranian people, our allies and friends in the region. The time has come for our European partners to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal."

The comments came after Merkel said she shared concerns about many Iranian efforts to grow its power in the region. While she



The time has come for our European partners to stop undermining US sanctions against this murderous regime.

Mike Pence US vice president

said the split with the US over the nuclear agreement "depresses me very much," she defended it as an

important channel to Tehran. "I see the ballistic missile program, I see Iran in Yemen and above all I see Iran in Syria," she said.

Pence also vowed that the US would "hunt down" Daesh even after pulling its troops out of Syria, where the terrorists are facing the loss of their final scrap of land.

"The United States will continue to work with all our allies to hunt down the remnants of Daesh wherever and whenever they rear their ugly heads," Pence said.

Meanwhile, US-backed fighters in Syria are poised to capture Daesh's last, tiny enclave on the

Euphrates, the battle commander said on Saturday, bringing its selfdeclared caliphate to the brink of total defeat.

Jiya Furat said the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) had cornered the remaining militants in a neighborhood of Baghouz village near the Iraqi border, under fire from all

"In the coming few days, in a very short time, we will spread the good tidings to the world of the military end of Daesh," he said.

Related report Page 8

GRAND WELCOME

# MBS to get a 21-gun salute on arrival at Islamabad airport

Saudi Arabia a 'creditable and respectable friend, say Pakistan's political parties

Arab News Islamabad

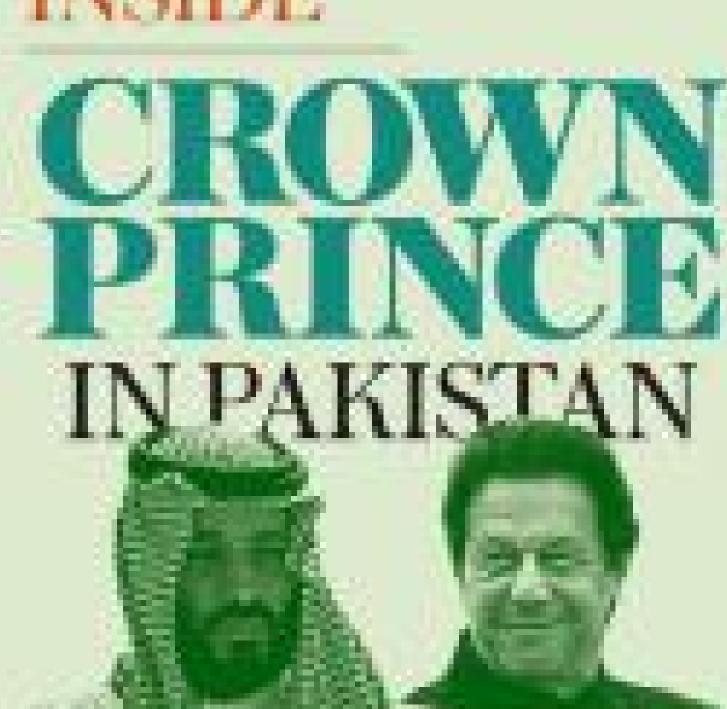
Top government and opposition party figures in Pakistan have released messages of support ahead of a visit from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is due to arrive in Islamabad on Sunday.

Information Minister Fawad

Chaudhry told reporters in Islamabad on Friday that the government had finalized arrangements to welcome the crown prince, and that Prime Minister Imran Khan would personally receive him at the airport.

"A fleet of Pakistan Air Force jets will escort his airplanes as they enter the country's airspace. The crown prince will be given a 21-gun salute at the airport," Pakistan's state-run news agency APP quoted Chaudhry as saying.

Opposition leader and president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party (PML-N); Shahbaz



MBS: Architect of a new Saudi-Pakistani bond Page 3

Crown prince's visit raises hopes for trade Page 3

Riyadh, Islamabad to sign deals worth up to \$20bn Page 4

 Pakistani economist helped build KSA banking system Page 5



Islamabad streets are decked up with life-sized posters of Pakistani and Saudi leaders to welcome Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. AN photo

prince's visit on Twitter.

He said that the economic relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia was in the interests of both countries and the Muslim Ummah (community).

Sharif, welcomed the crown Former President Asif Ali Zardari He called Saudi Arabia 'a very ahead of the crown prince's arrival. said the opposition Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Bhutto family welcomed the crown prince's visit and expressed hope for further improvement in bilateral relations.

creditable and respectable friend of our country and its people," adding: "Saudi Arabia has always stood by Pakistan in moments of need and will hopefully continue to do so." Pakistan has been busying itself

Flights have been rescheduled, luxury hotels have been booked out. and, according to one media report, thousands of pigeons and balloons are being corralled as part of a colorful welcoming ceremony.

#### The Brief Saudi ministry defends Absher, saying app helps millions of citizens

#### VR IN HOSPITALS

Falsal Ashour helped introduce VR to Saudi hospitals. He saw it as a form of pain relief, by delivering enough sensory information to reduce patient anxiety, eliminating the need for sedatives. P6

#### S. KOREA ALERT

South Korea is on high alert after. a UN Security Council report warned hundreds of Uzbeks linked to terrorist networks could have entered the country. P8

#### DUBAI TENNIS

Tennis fans in Dubai are in for a treat as nine of the world's top 10 players do battle in the city to claim the Duty Free Championship crown, which starts today. P15

#### Rawan Radwan Joddah

Saudi Arabia's Interior Ministry rejected what has been described as a campaign of calumny from a section of the Western media against a government app that makes life easier for citizens and expatriates.

In an official statement, the ministry said the Absher platform centralized more than 160 different. services for all members of society, including women, the elderly and people with special needs.

The app makes electronic government services available for beneficiaries to access directly at any time and from any place in the Kingdom, the ministry said.



Absher makes e-services available for beneficiaries to access directly at any time and from any place in the Kingdom. Photo/Supplied

The clarification flies in the face of a New York Times report that quoted Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden describing the app as a "tool of oppression."

Apple and Google were urged to remove the application from their devices over claims that it "enables abhorrent surveillance and control of women."

Arab News conducted a detailed investigation to explain how the app works, and how it helps millions of Saudi residents and expatriates.

Muna Abu Sulayman, an awardwinning media personality, told Arab News the introduction of Absher had helped strengthen women's rights.

"The discussion on guardianship law is internal and ongoing - it is something that has to be decided by our society and not as a result of outside pressure. We're making strides toward equality and Absher is a step in the right direction," she said.

Detailed report Page 7.











Jazan

#### Entertainment

A family social event at Jazan's Northern Corniche, near the heritage village. There are several activities, including a mini 200, food trucks and booths, a circus and theater performances. It ends Feb. 25, and runs from 4 p.m. to 12 a.m.



Riyadh

#### Welcome Winter

A one-month oriental event that includes outdoor restaurants. cafes, and entertaining activities at Souq Bazar, exit 16. It continues until March 15, running from 4 p.m. to II:45 p.m.



Riyadh

#### Deirah Circus

Circus auditions for aspiring Saudi performers in Riyadh, where they will hope to perform with a European circus team. The event will run until Feb. 21, from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily at Al-Hokair Land Khalid Exhibition and Conference Hall.



#### Al-Ahsa Date Festival

A family event that takes place at the International Exhibitions Center. It includes shopping opportunities, educational programs about nutritional, economic and educational aspects of the dates trade. It runs from 9 a.m. to noon and from 4 p.m. to midnight, and continues until Feb. 18.

# The Register



This heartwarming photo of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman with Prince Abdul Aziz bin Fahd and his daughter Al-Jawhara bint Abdul Aziz bin Fahd was tweeted by Prince Nawaf bin Faisal (@nawafbinfaisal) on Saturday.

audi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is winning the hearts of people over and over again with his kindness and compassion.

A heartwarming video tweeted by Prince Nawaf bin Faisal on Saturday shows the crown prince at the home of Prince Abdul-Aziz bin Fahd (Prince Nawaf's uncle), along with the Minister of Interior Prince Abdul-Aziz bin Saud bin Naif.

Prince Abdul Aziz bin Fahd was carrying his daughter Al-Jawhara bint Abdul Aziz bin Fahd, and the crown prince gave her a kiss on the forehead. This compassion toward children warmed the hearts of

citizens on social media.

Prince Nawaf bin Faisal conawafbinfaisal tweeted: "A few moments ago, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (Allah protect him) and Prince Abdul Aziz bin Saud bin Naif, the minister of interior (Allah protect him) in Riyadh at the home of my uncle Prince Abdul Aziz bin Fahd and his daughter Al-Jawhara (Allah protect them)."

comtar 100 said: "This footage brought joy and happiness to my soul. The ruling family is a source of safety and stability to the Saudi people."

Pointing to the crown prince, of 15 sa

said: "The love for this man increases in the hearts of citizens each day."

arbraow said: "The most beautiful thing I have seen this blissful morning. May Allah protect you and maintain this endearment."

@arahmanriyadh said: "May Allah protect this country, its people and its rulers."

@mohammedI74444 said: "What a beautiful scene."

goalisaced said: "Like father like son." gowed19982 said: "A family atmosphere with the voices of children, Allah bless them."

## What's Trending Today's hot topics explained by Deema Al-Khuduir



ENGAGEMENT

### #KatyPerry



Valentine's Day.

Singer Katy Perry and actor Orlando Bloom are engaged, with the couple sharing the happy news on social media. They had

the same closeup photo of their faces and Perry's new engagement ring on Instagram on Friday, but with different captions. Perry captioned hers "full bloom" while

Bloom wrote "Lifetimes" on his. The internet got emotional for Perry and Bloom, who made the "announcement" on

## MaCumai said: "You deserve all the happiness and love that exists. Will always support you."

mikatycatpoppy said: "So happy for you, happiness is what a deserve."

CONCERT

#### #KadimAlSaher



Iraqi singing legend Kadim Al-Saher had his Sandi audience swooning following a night of love songs at a cultural festival in Al-Ula

The self-out audience at the Winterat Tantora festival was treated to a memorable performance from Al-Saher as well as from his Iraqi compatriot. Ilham Al-Madfai.

Al-Madfai was first on stage at the Maraya concert hall. The veteran entertainer performed a selection of his hits including "Bent Al-Shalabiya," "Khuttar" and "Ashgar Beshama." Al-Saher entertained the crowd with

"Zidini Al-Eshq" and \*Eid w Hub." Fans tweeted their praise for Al-Saher, referring to him by his

nickname.

a selection of his songs including Ashqan," "Kul æshosha 7275 said:

"Even the way he bids farewell is special. We witnessed creativity and elegance from the Caesar last night, as we are always used to."

aoshooda20 said: "How charming you

are." arLode101K said: "What a legend you

are, Caesar." attAlobaidi1986 said: "Kadim Al-Saher

is enchanting."

abilail3891 said: "There are no words to describe Kadim Al-Saher. He is creative. with every meaning of the word."

szibrahemahmedH9 said: "He succeeded, as always." @moonfeb05 said:

"I didn't want the concert to end." 667oytHI

> said: "It was a lavish concert with every meaning of the word." festival runs until Feb. 23.

# Todays Number

# D. HI

The number of Umrah pilgrims who have arrived in the Kingdom since the start of the current Umrah season has reached 3,454,398, while the number of pilgrims who left the Kingdom reached 3,023,105, according to data provided by the Hagi and Umrah Ministry.

# FaceOf



#### Dr. Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Qasem

Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Qasem has been president of the Saudi Red Crescent Authority since his appointment in November 2016 by royal decree. He is also the head of the standing committee of International Humanitarian Law,

Recently, Al-Qasem met with the president of the Human Rights Commission, Dr. Bandar bin Mohammed Al-Aiban, in Riyadh.

Al-Qassim affirmed that International Humanitarian Law seeks to enhance awareness of international humanitarian law in training or practical application in accordance with the Kingdom's international commitments.

Previously Al-Qassim worked as a consultant to a number of ministers, including the minister of communications and information technology. the minister of commerce and industry, and the minister of health.

He received his bachelor's degree in 1990 in information systems from the College of Computer and Information Science at the University of King Saud in Riyadh.

In 1994 he obtained his master's degree in information systems from the University of Pittsburgh in the US.

He also holds a Ph.D. in computer science, which he received in 1999 from the University of Keele in the UK. He also supervised the digital excellence award and the national CTT plan, and the e-training caravans at the Ministry of

Technology. Al-Qasem is a member of the Social Charity Fund. He was a director of the Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment

Company between 2013 and 2016.

Communications and Information

### TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

#### Arab News Dubel

 Abu Dhabi hosts the International Defense Exhibition and Conference that kicks off today. It is the only exhibition of this kind in the MENA region. showcasing the latest technology across land, sea, and air defense.

 The Gulfood Exhibition in Dubai launches today. The event has been a leading conference in the global food industry since its first edition. Now in its 24th year, Gulfood expects around 5,000 exhibitors from 185 countries, as well as thousands of attendees.

The Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships gets underway today. The prestigious sporting event will see several world class players in exciting rounds until March 2. Organized by Duty Free, the event's ticket prices start at \$15.

 Egyptian emerging artists Mona Essam Eldin and Nesreen Mamdouh's works are displayed at SOMA Art School and Gallery in Zamalek. Titled "August's Room," the exhibit explores themes of the unconscious mind.

#### Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

Feb. 17	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	leha
Makkah	5.34	6.50	12:35	3.53	8:20	7:50
Madinah	5:36	6:54	12:36	3.52	6:18	7:48
Riyadh	5:07	6:26	12:08	3:24	5:49	7:19
Abha	5:21	6:36	12:24	3:44	6:12	7:42
Dammam	4:54	6/14	11:54	3:09	5:34	7:04



# MBS: Architect of a new Saudi-Pakistani bond

SHEHRYAR KHAN AFRIDI

merican author John Maxwell once said: "A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way." Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman stands true to that saying. After decades of regional conflicts and chaos, the crown prince has put the Arab world on a path to economic development.

The engine of growth is Saudi Arabia, which is leading the way for its neighbors. The magician behind this phenomenal turnaround is the young, dynamic, reformist crown prince, who has put the Kingdom on a transformational path to becoming a booming economic force.

The entire Pakistani nation awaits Sunday, when he will land at Nur Khan Airport on a state visit, leading a huge official delegation. While the crown prince plans to sign investment agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) amounting to \$20 billion with Pakistan, a major deal set to be signed involves an oil refinery in the city of Gwadar. This day will be remembered as a watershed in the history of Saudi-Pakistani relations, as both governments will ink 10 agreements and MoUs on investment in tourism, technology, food processing, construction and defense production, among other fields.

Pakistan has opened a new vista of opportunities for investors, and Saudi

Arabía has become a major investment partner in the past two decades. I will be honored to witness this historic moment, and will be signing two agreements between the countries' interior ministries.

Under visionary Prime Minister Imran
Khan, Pakistan is fast becoming a thriving
economy, and a destination for foreign
investors and tourists. In December 2018,
the country was ranked top among 20
adventure travel destinations by the British
Backpacker Society. Pakistan has adopted an
open-visa policy, opening itself for tourists
and investors, coupled with a reform agenda
under Khan. The new government has
departed from the country's traditional
outlook of a security state into an open,
thriving economy eager to engage its
neighbors and distant friends to form a new
bond of global and regional peacemakers.

Pakistan is playing a key role in fostering peace and harmony among Middle Eastern states, and it is being acclaimed for its peace efforts in the region and in Afghanistan. Khan has been lauded by US President Donald Trump and other world leaders for his outright support for the Afghan peace process.

Stability and peace in Afghanistan will spread to the region, and will foster trade

and investment through greater connectivity between the Far East, Central Asia, the Arab world, Africa and Europe. Pakistan today is a safe, secure and friendly destination for tourists and investors. It is about time that investors

explore opportunities in the country.

As I write these lines, I can see from the window of my office the charismatic, Saudi-funded Faisal Mosque, one of the many icons of friendly relations that have stood the test of time. Both countries are now moving together in pursuit of a renewed partnership that will benefit our peoples and generations to come.

According to public opinion polls, 95
percent of Pakistanis view Saudi Arabia
favorably. Pakistan, as one of the strongest
military powers in the Muslim world, has
maintained a unique position in helping
the Kingdom with its defense needs.
Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has always
helped Pakistan whenever necessary.

The Kingdom is the biggest host state for overseas Pakistanis, with around a quarter of Pakistani expats living there. Over the years, Pakistani expats have contributed a lot to the Kingdom's transformation into a modern and thriving economy.

As a student of political history, I know that the names of the Saudi crown prince

and Pakistan's prime minister will be remembered for generations. Their resolve and wisdom are taking practical steps to translate the excellent bilateral relationship into economic cooperation.

As minister for interior, I will keep working diligently to provide a safe, secure and peaceful environment for all foreign investors and companies working on projects across Pakistan. I will be working closely with my Saudi counterpart to form a joint front against crime and terrorism.

I will also try to put in place agreements and MoUs to ensure that no individual or group could harm or jeopardize the excellent ties between the two countries. Since the war on corruption is very close to the hearts of Khan and the crown prince, and both have made major gains in this regard, my focus will be to ensure that no individual or company involved in fraud or corruption goes scot-free.

I will always cherish, as I will witness history in the making. With our brave, farsighted and sincere leaders shaking hands to take the two nations to new highs, I will stand tall and feel proud of being part of this process, which is set to usher in a new era of friendship and brotherhood. Long live Saudi-Pakistani friendship.

Shehryar Khan Afridi is Pakistan's minister of state for interior. UPBEAT

#### Saudi crown prince's visit raises hopes for trade

Aamir Shah Islamabad

The Saudi crown prince's visit to Pakistan must be used to open new avenues of cooperation between the staunch allies, Pakistani analysts said.

Mohammed bin Salman is expected to bring with him a record investment package, including a \$10 billion refinery and oil complex in the deepwater Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea.

Former Pakistani diplomat Javed Hafeez said bilateral relations have so far mostly revolved around defense and strategic cooperation, but there is a need to "diversify" and focus on trade and economic cooperation. "Trade between both Islamic countries is minimal, and this needs to be enhanced to the fullest," Hafeez told Arab News.

There is huge potential for Pakistan to increase its exports of food items, garments, medicines and sports goods to the Kingdom, he said. "The crown prince's visit is good news for Pakistan, as this shows Saudi Arabia's close association and love for our people."

The crown prince has emerged as "one of the most influential figures in the Muslim world," and his visit will "open new avenues of cooperation between both countries,"



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INTERVIEW

# Saudi oil refinery in Gwadar to help Islamabad save \$3bn a year

Kingdom is also setting up reservoirs for liquified natural gas in Pakistan, says Petroleum Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan

Anmir Shah Islamabad

Pakistan expects to agree a deal to build an oil refinery and petrochemical complex at the Balochistani deep-sea Port of Gwadar, during the first state-level visit by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The deal will see Pakistan join with Saudi Aramco to build the facility, expected to cost \$10 billion.

"We are working on feasibility studies for the establishment of the oil refinery and petrochemical complex in Gwadar, and will be ready to start by early 2020," Pakistan's Minister for Petroleum Ghulam Sarwar Khan told Arab News on Thursday.

Once established, the project will help the South Asian nation

#### INNUMBERS

# \$75m

of initial investments have been made by Exxon Mobil, which has returned to Pakistan after 27 years.

# \$16bn

is spent by Pakistan each year on importing 26 million tons of petroleum products.

300%

barrels per day will be produced by the Gwadar refinery once it is completed.



A Saudi technical team, including Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih, has visited Gwadar twice in recent months to examine the site for the refinery. Twitter photo

cut its annual crude oil imports by up to \$3 billion annually, in addition to creating thousands of job opportunities in the impoverished western province.

The country spends more than \$16 billion each year on importing 26 million tons of petroleum products, including 800 million cubic feet of liquified natural gas (LNG) from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other Gulf countries.

Khan claimed the refinery would produce up to 300,000

barrels per day once completed.

"The Saudi authorities have

asked us to complete all the initial work on the project on a fast track, as they want to set it up as early as possible," he said.

A Saudi technical team, including Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih, has visited Gwadar twice in recent months to examine the site for the refinery, getting briefings from Pakistani officials on security in the area near the border with Iran.

"We will ensure complete security for Saudi investments and people working on the project. A detailed security plan has already been chalked up with help of the security agencies," Khan added.

Pakistan currently has five oil refineries, but they can only satisfy half of its annual demand. Islamabad and Riyadh have long maintained strong ties, with the latter repeatedly offering the former financial assistance. Last year, the Kingdom guaranteed Pakistan \$3 billion in foreign currency support for a year, and a further loan worth up to \$3 billion in deferred payments for oil imports, to help stave off an economic crisis. The Islamic Republic also received \$3

billion from the UAE to protect its foreign reserves.

Khan added that the Pakistani-Arab Refinery Co. (PARCO) was also setting up an oil refinery at Khalifa Point, near the city of Hub in Balochistan.

"The work on this project is at an advanced stage. Land for it has been acquired and other formalities are being fulfilled," he said.

Khan hopes the world's perception of Pakistan will change upon completion of these deals, after years of war in the surrounding region. Exxon Mobil returned to Pakistan last month after 27 years, and started offshore drilling with \$75 million of initial investments.

"All results of the drilling are positive so far, and we expect huge oil and gas reserves to be discovered soon," he said.

"More foreign companies are contacting us to invest in offshore drilling and exploration. Saudi Arabia is also setting up reservoirs for LNG in Pakistan. More Saudi investment will come to Pakistan with the passage of time."

DIPLOMACY

# Saudi-Pakistan bond stronger than ever, says ambassador

Halla Tashkandi Riyadh

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will arrive in Pakistan on Sunday to begin his official visit to a country that is widely considered to be "Saudi Arabia's closest Muslim ally."

Given this close relationship, it is little surprise that Raja Ali Ejaz, Pakistan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, considers it such a privilege and honor to be the envoy to a country he considers a "second home" for Pakistanis.

"Saudi Arabia is an important country for Pakistan," he told Arab News.

"The Kingdom hosts one of the largest expatriate communities of Pakistanis. Under the present leadership in both countries, the role of the Pakistan Embassy has become more challenging and more significant."

According to the Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at least 2.7 million Pakistani expats live in Saudi Arabia, 1.6 million of whom moved there to work between 2011 and 2015.

The ambassador was keen to highlight the strong relationship between the countries, and the ways in which the crown prince's visit will further strengthen the bonds. The nations have long enjoyeda close, mutually beneficial



Raja Ali Ejaz, Pakistan's ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Ali photo

relationship and Pakistan has benefited from Saudi resources in many ways, not least because the Kingdom is the country's biggest supplier of oil.

"Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have always stood by each other in times of need," he said.

"The leadership of the two countries has a vision of taking the relationship to new levels in the days ahead, and the bilateral visits by the highest leadership are the manifestations of this.

"The upcoming visit of Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman will be historic and elevate relations to an unprecedented height. The government and people of Pakistan appreciate (his) visionary policies, which will lead to the prosperity and development of Saudi Arabia and stability in the region."

The total volume of trade between the two countries is currently worth about \$3.4 billion. Pakistani exports to Saudi Arabia include food and textiles.

"We are looking forward to enhanced cooperation between two brotherly countries in areas including culture and media, energy, trade and investment, mining and tourism and so on," said Ejaz.

"These agreements will create enormous opportunities for both sides, as well as for people-topeople contact."

The ambassador also suggested that cultural exchanges could become increasingly important, creating eye-opening experiences for citizens of both countries.

"The people of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan were united in an everlasting bond of faith and culture even before the creation of the two countries," he said. "This spiritual bond has gradually transformed into a strategic political alliance.

"The people of Pakistan consider Saudi Arabia their second home and a visit to the Two Holy Mosques is the lifelong desire of every Pakistani. On the other hand, Pakistan is blessed with regions of historical heritage, unmatched natural scenery and excellent climate."

Obtaining a visa to visit Pakistan is a difficult task; the application process is one of the lengthiest of its kind. Ejaz said, however, that steps were being taken to make the process easier and more accessible for Saudi citizens.

INVESTMENT BOOST

### Saudi Arabia, Pakistan to sign deals worth up to \$20 billion'

Khurshid Ahmed Karachi

Saudi Arabia is expected to announce investments in Pakistan worth between \$15 billion and \$20 billion during Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's official visit, according to the head of

Pakistan's Board of Investment.

The Kingdom and the UAE in recent months have offered Pakistan more than \$30 billion in loans and investments to tackle a soaring current-account deficit. The Saudi crown prince is due to sign off on his country's deals, including one for a \$10 billion oil refinery in Pakistan's Gwadar Port.

"We are expecting Saudi investment in the range of \$15 billion to \$20 billion based on the interest investors have expressed so far," said Haroon Sharif, minister of state and chairman of the Board of Investment.

Sharif previously said that Pakistan expected investments worth about \$15 billion from Saudi Arabia over the next three years, and about \$40 billion from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and China combined in the next three to five years.

Mian Mehmood, the Pakistani head of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said recently that in addition to the oil refinery project, a further \$10 billion is expected to be invested in sectors other than oil and gas, bringing the total to \$20 billion.

"About 25 to 30 agreements are expected to be finalized during the visit of the crown prince," said Mehmood who recently led a business delegation to the Kingdom to explore bilateral investment and cooperation opportunities.

More than 30 public and private companies are poised to invest in Pakistan, including Saudi Aramco, SARIC and ACTUA Decrease board dod.

SABIC and ACWA Power, he added,
The sectors targeted for Saudi
investment include oil refining,
petrochemical, mining, construction, power generation, agriculture and glass.

"Ten Saudi manufacturing companies working in construction and allied materials, and 10 companies interested in the food processing sector will come to sign agreements," Mehmood said.

Speaking this month during a visit to Gwadar to inspect the site of the \$10 billion oil refinery, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said; "Saudi Arabia wants to make Pakistan's economic development stable through establishing an oil refinery and partnership with Pakistan in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor."

Work on the refinery is expected to begin within 18 months.

SUCCESS STORY

# 50 years of memories: Pakistani economist who helped build Saudi banking system

Muhammad Umer Chapra won the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies in 1990

Deema Al-Khudair Jeddah

Of the many Pakistanis who have contributed to the growth and development of Saudi Arabia, economist Muhammad Umer Chapra is undoubtedly one of the most significant.

Born in 1933, he arrived in the Kingdom in 1965 — one of the first Pakistani nationals to move there — and helped transform the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) during its early stages.

He is now an adviser to the Islamic Research and Training Institute of the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah. Chapra won the King Faisal International Prize for Islamic Studies in 1990. In recognition of his services to the Kingdom, he was granted Saudi citizenship.

Chapra vividly remembers the day he was offered a job at SAMA, which was in its formative stages at the time.

Talking to Arab News during an exclusive interview, he said: "They needed competent people from Pakistan and other countries, and I was in the United States at that time (teaching) economics as an associate professor at the University of Wisconsin, and then the University of Kentucky."

"My wife and I were going from Kentucky to see the New York World's Fair and we stopped in Washington because my wife

wished to visit the city. I called a friend of mine (who was working) for the International Monetary Fund and he said that the governor of SAMA was there and he would be happy to see you."

The governor was visiting Washington to find an economic adviser.

"I went there and we talked for quite a while about different things, economic problems and what could be done to help it," said Chapra. At the end of their conversation, he was offered the chance to join SAMA.

"I said, 'I have no objection. If you can make me an offer I will be happy to come.' He said, 'When I go back, I will talk to the board of directors and send you a cable.' Then we went ahead to New York for the purpose we had come, to see the World's Fair."

After the trip, Chapra returned to work at the University of Kentucky, where the summer term was about to begin.

"I was in my office and I received a cable," he said. "It was an offer (from SAMA), but the condition was that I must join immediately. How can this be? The summer session is starting tomorrow and I'm going to teach during it — how can I go immediately? I went to the chairman of the department and talked to him.

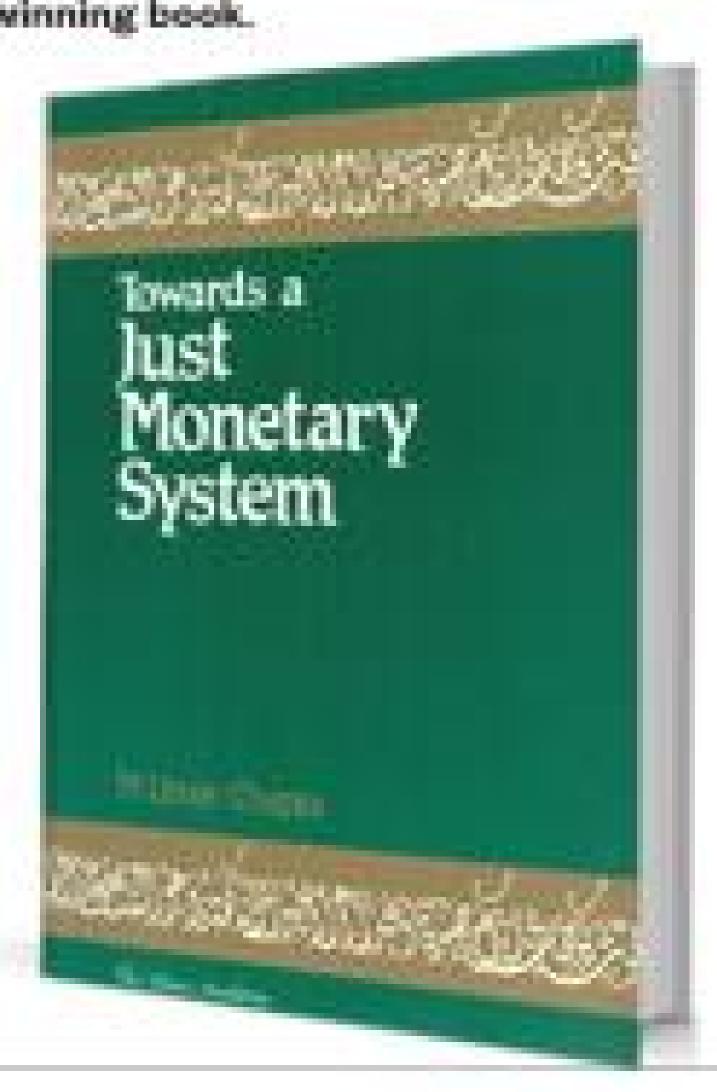
"He said, 'If you want, we would like to have you even next year, not only this summer but



Umer Chapra and the cover of his prize-winning book.

also next year. But the problem is the summer session is starting tomorrow and you're going to teach in it. If you can get us a substitute, we will let you go.'

"So I came out of his office and God arranges things. I met a professor who was teaching the same subjects as I was. In economics, there are a lot of things: Money and banking, public finance, economic development, all these different things. So I talked to him about it and he



#### FASTFACTS

 Born in 1933, economist
 Muhammad Umer Chapra arrived in the Kingdom in 1965

 one of the first Pakistani
 nationals to move there — and helped transform the Saudi
 Arabian Monetary Agency during its early stages.

He is now an adviser to the Islamic Research and Training Institute of the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah. In recognition of his services to the Kingdom, he was granted Saudi citizenship.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are consistently friendly, Chapra says.

said, 'Well, I kept myself free this summer for research but if you want to go, I will take over.'

"I escorted him to the chairman's office and the whole thing was arranged. They sent us the visas and we came to Jeddah. And gradually, the problems started getting solved. This was in 1965. Now it's 53 years we've been in Saudi Arabia."

Chapra arrived in the Kingdom during the reign of King Faisal and initially worked with Finance Minister Sheikh Mohammed Abalkhail.

"He was very good," he said.
"I saw him a number of times

during the preparation of the monetary policy of Saudi Arabia and economic development and so on. He was very nice and he would listen very patiently.

"Sheikh Abalkhail was prepared to listen to advice, and even King Faisal was very good in this respect. He was willing to listen to advice and also act upon it."

Chapra is modest in describing the important role he played in the development of the finance system in the Kingdom.

"It's not only one person who can play a really clear role," he said, 
"Sheikh Abalkhail was very competent and very good, so I helped him in developing the banking system in this country and the financial system and the government's monetary policy and

very well."

Relations between Saudi Arabia
and Pakistan are consistently
friendly, Chapra said.

so on. These things went around

"They have always been good, from the time when Pakistan was established in 1947," he said, "Pakistan gets help from Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia gets help from Pakistan.

"Saudi Arabia was very helpful from the very beginning and it has continued to be so. And Pakistan has been able to send manpower to this country. Military manpower plus economics — there has never been any problem between the two countries," he added.

DIPLOMACY

# 'Generous support' from Kingdom helped Pakistan after nuclear tests, says diplomat

Anmir Shah bilamabad

Saudi Arabia has helped Pakistan in many ways over the years. One notable example of this, according to a Pakistani diplomat and author who was present during the discussions, was the generous support and encouragement the Kingdom offered Islamabad as Pakistan prepared for its first nuclear tests in May 1998.

"Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif spoke with King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz on the telephone before the nuclear tests and received his full-fledged support," said Bahrullah Hazarvi, who was the interpreter during the conversation. Pakistan's first nuclear test, on May 28, 1998, was a direct response to arch rival India's second round of nuclear tests on May II and I3,

"The generous support of Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries at the time encouraged Pakistan to give a befitting response to India," he added.

Hazarvi worked in Saudi Arabia for more than three decades in a number of diplomatic positions and also wrote a book on the life of King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud, the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was published in 1997 in English, Arabic and Urdu.

His first posting to Saudi Arabia, in June 1977, was as a coordination officer in Pakistan's consulate general in Jeddah. He continued to work there until he retired 2010, by which time he was director of Hajj. He is currently working on a new book documenting his experience and life in Saudi Arabia.

Hazarvi's long stay in the Kingdom and grasp of Arabic allowed him to study many aspects of the lives of the Saudi people and their rulers, including King Salman. He was also frequently called upon to serve as an interpreter for Saudi dignitaries and officials during visits to Pakistan. He carried out this role in 1998, for example, when King Salman, who at the time was still a prince, held official meetings with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and other dignitaries during a

Recalling his motivation to write a book about the life of the Kingdom's founder, Hazarvi said: "King Abdul Aziz's love for peace and Muslims all over the world inspired me to

seven-day visit to Pakistan.



King Abdul Aziz's love for peace and Muslims all over the world inspired me to write the book. It is a kind of tribute to his services for Muslims.

Bahrullah Hazarvi.
Pakistani diplomat and author.

write the book. It is a kind of tribute to his services for Muslims."

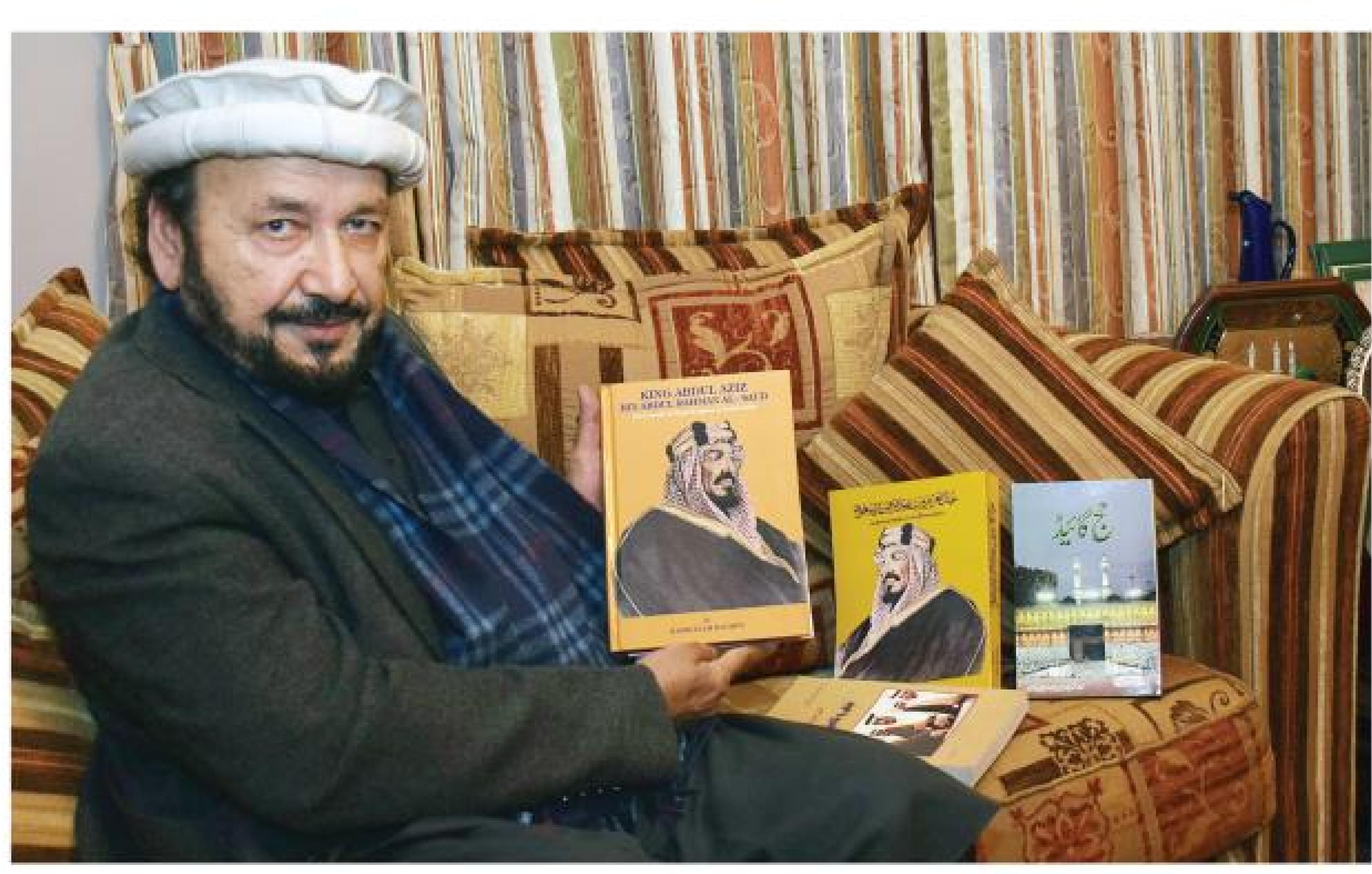
In the book, he describes the king as a great leader, known for "forthright expression of pure and clear faith," who always appreciated the "loyalty and sincerity" of his people.

"We only want one system and that is the system bestowed upon us by Allah, and our only endeavor is to establish peace on this land," King Abdul Aziz told a large gathering of pilgrims in 1925. The author also praises the king for his decision in 1952 to abolish Hajj fees for pilgrims.

"This was considered a very great achievement and to this day the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not charge any fee from pilgrims," Hazarvi writes in his book, which features a preface from Pakistan's former president Farooq Leghari.

The author notes that the Pakistani community in Saudi Arabia had grown from 1.5 million in 1980s to 2.1 million in 1990s and wrote: "Pakistanis enjoy all basic rights in Saudi Arabia...and send huge remittances back home every year to support their families and contribute to the prosperity of the country."

Hazarvi said that Saudi Crown
Prince Mohammed bin Salman's
visit to Pakistan is evidence of his
love for the people of Pakistan, "He
has emerged as a visionary leader
of Saudi Arabia and this visit will
further strengthen the bilateral
relationship," he said.



# HIGH

Bahrullah

Hazarvi worked in Saudi Arabia for more than three decades in a number of diplomatic positions.

Hazarvi's
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lives of the
Saudi people
and their rulers.

Pakietani diplomat

Bahrullah Hazarvi

with a copy of his

book about King

Photo/Supplied:

and author

Abdul Aziz.

### News Saudi Arabia



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman presents the trophy to the winner of the horse racing competition in Riyadh. SPA

CULTURAL LEGACY

# MBS honors winners of horse race in Riyadh

Arab News Riyadh

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman presided over the ceremony of the Equestrian Club's Grand Annual Horse Race in Riyadh on Friday night.

held at the was King Abdul Aziz Racetrack in Janadriyah.

Upon his arrival at the King Abdul Aziz Arabian Equestrian

Center, he was received by Prince Faisal bin Bandar, governor of Riyadh, Prince Bandar bin Khalid Al-Faisal, chairman of board of directors of the Equestrian Club, and Prince Abdul Aziz bin Saud bin Naif, minister of interior.

Trophies were presented to Hassan Issa Al-Buainain, who rode a horse named "Al-Nashas" to a first place finish in the race for locally bred horses, and another Abdurrahman Abdullah Al-Makhdhoub, who rode "Hipo"

to victory in the contest for imported horses.

The event was also attended by a number of princes, ministers and civil and military officials.

Riyadh is keen to develop its sports industry as part of reforms to diversify the economy beyond. oil exports and create a more modern, dynamic society.

Earlier, the sports authority said in a statement that it is a way to share Kingdom's historic and cultural legacy with the world.

GAME CHANGER

### VR to improve patient experience in health care

Saudi engineer's innovation will help people with anxiety, addictions

Ameera Abid Jeddah

Virtual reality (VR) is a computerbased three-dimensional imaging sequence that creates a world within a computer system, allowing users to interact with it via a display screen, usually mounted to the face.

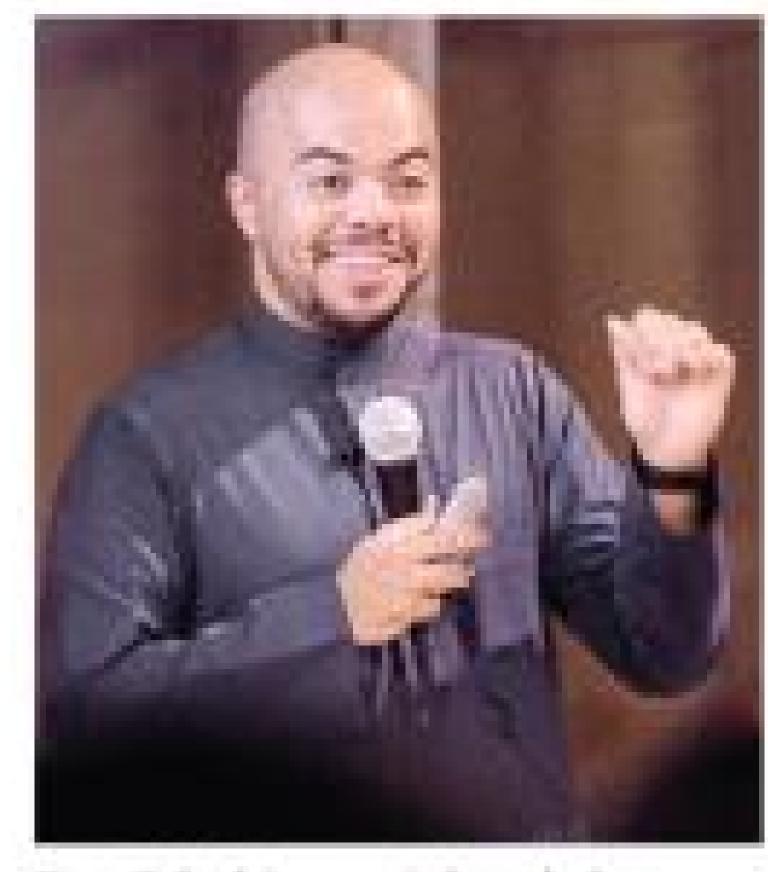
Previously, VR had only really impacted the public through video games, but Eng. Faisal Ayman Ashour looked at it differently.

He saw it as a potential non-pharmacologic form of pain relief, by delivering enough sensory information to reduce patient anxiety. eliminating the need for sedatives.

Many hospitals around the world have started experimenting with it. A Calgary hospital recorded 75 percent reductions in discomfort monitoring patients using it, while another at Stanford in the US had similar results when using VR to distract children from receiving previously distressing procedures.

Ashour helped introduce VR to Saudi hospitals last year.

"I always believed every human has a purpose and a mission in this life, we all have talent within us, the challenge is how we develop such a talent. Not to reinvent the wheel and



Eng. Faisal Ayman Ashour helps introduce virtual reality (VR) to Saudi hospitals in 2018. Photo/Bupplied

share someone else's work, but to develop it. VR was invented for entertainment mostly, but such technology can enhance the patient's quality of life at a low cost," he said.

The target patients are children and those in palliative care, receiv-

Many hospitals around the world have started experimenting VR to improve patients quality of life. Shutterstock

ing procedures as simple as a vaccination, or as painful as resetting bones and applying casts.

\*T've developed and gained more knowledge by merging engineering with medicine. I got my fellowship in medicine to speak the same language as physicians, to develop a solid medical simulationtraining program in the Kingdom. Since 2016 I've developed several applications involving VR and alternative reality to help patients," Ashour added.

VR technology in medicine has also been implemented in radiotherapy, CT scans, MRIs, physiotherapy and psychology. This progress hasn't been without problems, however.

"Introducing such a new technology or concept to be used to replace a previous technique is challenging, especially in the medical field. Experiments must be completed before an idea can be distributed, that sometimes takes.

more than 10 years," said

Ashour. "The idea was to engage engineers and physicians to introduce such a modern technology to enhance patient quality of life, and maximize cost efficiency. We have developed more than 10 environments for both

medical training pur-

poses, and to improve

medical outcomes."

## Road 102 30

### Mining a rich seam for the Saudi economy

BASIL M.K. AL-GHALAYINI

Saudi Arabia has vast mineral resources which, due to the ready supply and market for its oil, remained largely untapped for decades. However, as the government attempts to diversify its revenue stream away from its reliance on oil, mining has taken on more importance as a driver of economic growth.

As part of the Vision 2030 reform plan, the Ministry of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources seeks to increase mining's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) from \$17 billion currently to \$64 billion by 2030.

Last week, Saudi Arabia announced it would invest around \$3.8 billion to enhance access to geoscience data and reduce regulatory red tape as it looks to boost mineral exploration.

Efforts to encourage greater private sector participation have coincided with strong growth in Saudi Arabia's mining sector.

The government recently announced the completion of the adjusted mining investment. system, which will allow investors and the public. sector to benefit from the promising investment opportunities in this vital sector. The government plans to attract private sector investments worth SR1.6 trillion (\$426 billion) over the next decade.

The strategy seeks to increase mineral production and to make mining the fourth pillar for Saudi industry in addition to the petroleum, gas and petrochemical sectors.

Moreover, the government is banking on small

industry.

and medium companies to develop the domestic mining sector with the support of public funds which can contribute significantly to the development of the

While the Kingdom is pushing the development of the mining sector as a way to diversify revenue streams, it is

also promoting mining as a means of increasing employment opportunities and developing regions.

Gold, phosphates and bauxite are found in Saudi Arabia's western and northern regions, which are far less developed than the eastern and coastal. areas. Mining now accounts for 265,000 to 300,000 jobs. By 2030, the government wants to increase that number to more than 400,000 jobs.

I believe there are huge investment opportunities in the mining sector. However to thrive in the industry's boom and bust cycle, and capitalize on new opportunities, companies must rethink the traditional mining model and leverage transformational digital and technology strategies.

In addition, the mining industry's continued expansion will present firms with growth opportunities, as the expected quadrupling of mining's economic output will require significant investment in dedicated infrastructure, equipment and technology.

Bessit M.K. Al-Ghalayini in the Chairman and CEO of BMG Financial Group.

Source: GaBat

#### LOCAL/FOREIGN WORKERS IN SAUDI ARABIA Labor market by region [thousand] 500 Makkah Eastern Province-Riyach Madina

THE BEST OF THE REST

#### Pilgrims services

#### Ministry: More than 3.8m Umrah visas issued so far

The number of Umrah visas issued this year has reached 3,896,580, of which 3,454,398 pilgrims have arrived in the Kingdom, according to data provided by the Hajj Ministry.

There are 431,293 pilgrims still in the Kingdom, with 297,147 in Makkah and 134,146 in Madinah.

Most pilgrims — 3,069,062 came to the Kingdom by air, while 357,165 entered by land and 28,171 arrived by sea.

The largest number of pilgrims are from Pakistan (863,317) followed by Indonesia (564,273), India (373,781), Yemen (191,214), Malaysia (185,716), Egypt (177,695), Turkey (143,074), Algeria (119,545) and Bangladesh (86,476).

The weekly data also included the number of Saudi staff within Umrah companies and institutions. They are 10,124 Saudis including 8,386 males and 1,738 females:

Developing Hajj and Umrah organizations and services in the Kingdom is among the top priorities of the Saudi government.

Government and private sector entities in Makkah and Madinah are providing first-class services to the worshippers.

The Vision 2030 reform plan aims to attract more than 30: million Umrah pilgrims, and provide them with excellent services and an outstanding experience. AN Jeddah

#### A Nation without Violations Over 2.62m illegals arrested from different parts

Nearly 2.62 million violators of residency, work and border security systems have been arrested in a year-long roundup, according to an official report.

Since the campaign began in November 2017 the total number of offenders was 2,626,580, which included 2,046,421 for violating residency regulations, 401,804 for labor violations and 178,355 for border violations, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

The report said that 44,133 people were arrested while trying to cross the border into the Kingdom, 51 percent of whom were Yemeni citizens, 46 percent were Ethiopians and 3 percent were of other nationalities.

Some 1,893 people were arrested for trying to cross the border into neighboring countries and 3,382 were arrested for involvement in transporting and harboring those violators.

1,077 Saudi citizens were arrested for harboring the violators against local laws, of which 30 are being detained, pending the completion of procedures.

Immediate penalties were imposed against 401,123 offenders; 359,541 were transferred to their respective diplomatic missions to obtain travel documents; 448,128 were transferred to complete their travel reservations; and 664,931 were deported. AN Jeddah

#### Infectious disease

#### 21 MERS cases detected across KSA in one week

The current epidemiological week has seen an increased number of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infections, with 21 new cases reported in the Kingdom, of 15 men and six women, including three fatalities, according to an electronic survey conducted by the Ministry of Health.

Of the 21 cases reported, 16 are in the city of Wadi Al-Dawasir, three in Riyadh and the other two cases in Buraydah and Najran. According to the survey, the youngest patient, 16, had close

contact with an infected subject, while the oldest patient, an 80-year-old lady, acquired the infection while under medical

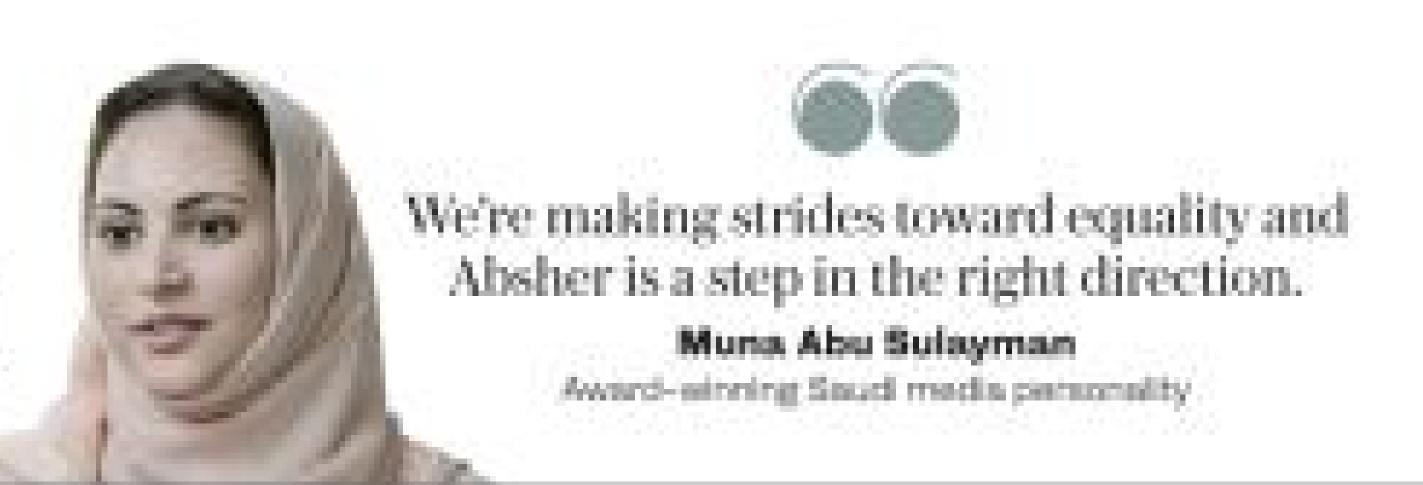
Twelve patients were admitted to hospitals, six were quarantined, and three have since died.

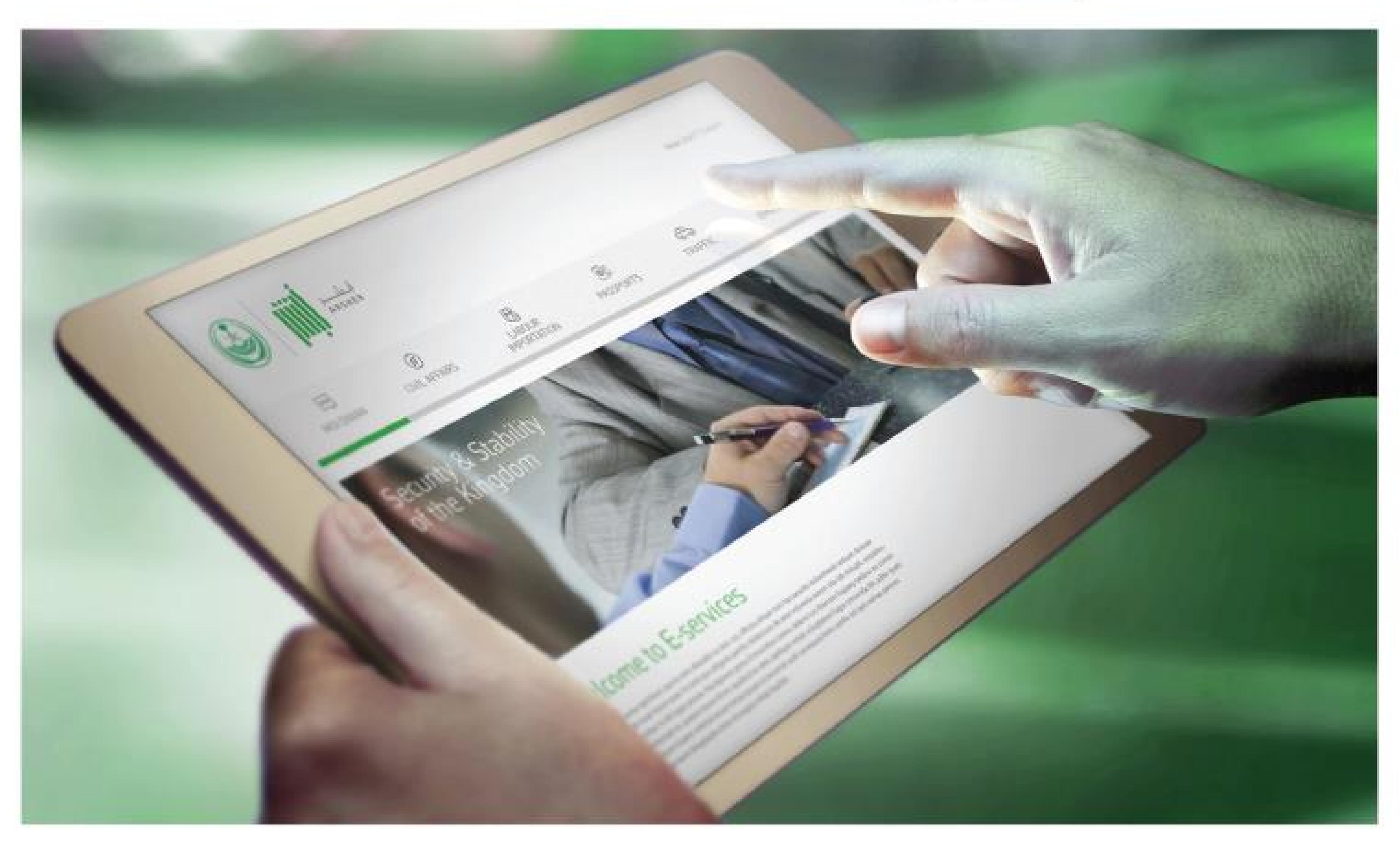
Field teams from the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture also detected positive MERS samples in camels in the affected areas.

The Health Ministry command and control center called upon citizens and residents to take precautions when coming into close contact with camels by complying with general hygiene measures, such as regular hand washing before and after touching animals, avoiding contact with sick animals and wearing protective clothing when handling them. AN Jeddah



### News Saudi Arabia





INTERFACE OF CONVENIENCE

# How Absher app liberates Saudis from government bureaucracy

Western media mistaken in portraying app as a tool of repression, leading female journalist says

Rawan Radwan Jeddah

Absher, the "one-click" e-services app launched by the Interior Ministry in 2015, is now regarded as the leading government platform for Saudi citizens, freeing them from bureaucratic inefficiency and endless queuing for everyday services.

However, in a recent New York Times article, the app was criticized as a "tool of repression" following claims by Democratic Senator Ron Wyden and women's rights groups.

Apple and Google were urged to remove the application from their devices over claims that it "enables abhorrent surveillance and control of women."

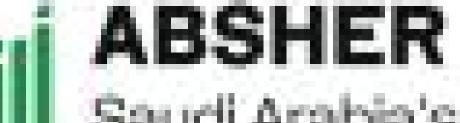
In an official statement, the The Ministry of ministry rejected the allegations and said the Absher platform centralized more than 160 different services for all members of society, including women, the elderly and people with special needs.

The app makes electronic government services available for beneficiaries to access directly at any time and from any place in the Kingdom, the ministry said.

Absher allows residents of the Kingdom to make appointments, renew IDs, passports, driver's licenses, car registration and other services with one click.

Many Saudis still recall having to queue at government agencies, such as passport control offices and civil affairs departments, for a variety of official procedures. Appointments could take weeks to arrange, with people relying on their green files, or "malaf allagi" - the 1980s and 1990s paper form of Absher that was known as the citizen's "lifeline," both figuratively and literally.

Hours would be spent as government departments ferried files back and forth, and if a form was lost, the whole transaction process would have to start again. As complicated as it was for men,



Saudi Arabia's number one online platform, assisting and expediting MOI services in one click



IIm

Users of Absher

and Absher







Branches for thre MCI available on platform.

SERVICES: Chill Afford Passport Control Hujelphilty.

Yemeni expatriates

Public Senice Traffic Control Traffic violations loama sanitoes Renewal of Driver's license.

Exit, Entry Vision for Expertriates Car Insurance Health Insurance Family visitor's viese

Trainsfer of Sponsors



Interior (rejects) attempts to politicize the systematic use of technology, which represents the legitimate rights of its users.

women suffered more.

Muna Abu Sulayman, an awardwinning strategy adviser and media personality, told Arab News the introduction of Absher had helped strengthen women's rights.

Sulayman said she was disappointed at comments on the e-services platform being made abroad. "There are consequences that people don't understand. It's a very idealistic and naive way of understanding what is going on," she said.

"The discussion on the guardianship law is internal and ongoing - it is something that has to be decided by our society and not as a result of outside pressure. We're making strides toward equality and Absher is a step in the right direction," she said.

"In a Twitter survey, I asked how many women have access to their guardian's Absher. Most answered that they control their own fate. Men who don't believe. in controlling women gave them access to their Absher and that shows an increase in the participation of women in their own decision-making."

Absher also provides services such as e-forms, dealing with Haji eligibility, passport control, civilaffairs, public services, traffic control, and medical appointments at government hospitals.

The platform is available to all men and women, and removes much of the bureaucracy and time wasting associated with nonautomated administrative systems.

On the issue of granting women travel permits, the law requires a male guardian to grant it through the portal, as well as for men under the age of 21.

Retired King Abdullah University professor Dr. Zainab M. Zain. told Arab News: "I always had issues with my passport renewalas well as my children's as they are both non-Saudi. For years it was risky not to follow up properly at passport control - you never knew what could happen, but now I can renew their permits by paying their fees online through Absher from the comfort of my home in Abu Dhabi."

Ebsanul Haque, a Pakistani engineer who has lived in the Kingdom for more than 30 years, said: "Absher has helped tremendonaly with requests, such as exit and entry visas for my family and myself. I can receive approval within an hour whereas once it. would've taken me days," he said.

"The platform has eased many of my troubles."

Absher website 3150 provides information on how toreport wanted persons, or administrative or financial corruption.

In April, 2018, the ministry launched "Absher Business," a technical initiative to transfer its business services to an interactive digital system.

With an annual fee of SR2,000 (\$533), business owners such as Marwan Bukhary, owner of Gold Sushi Club Restaurant in Jeddah, used the portal to help manage his workers' needs in his expanding business.

"There are many features in Absher that helps both individual and establishment owners," he said. "I took advantage of the great features it provided, and it saved me a lot of time and trouble and also my restaurant workers. It's a dramatic change. When Absher Business was launched last year, it organized how I needed to manage my workers' work permits.

"Through the system, I could see the status of all my employees, renew their permits, grant their exit and entry visas, and have their permits delivered to my house or my business through the post after paying the fees. It saved business owners a lot of time and energy.

"I used to have to do everything manually myself or have my courier help. I believe it's the government's most advanced system yet with more features being added every now and then," Bukhary said.

"Absher has eased our burden, unlike the old days when we needed to visit government offices and it would take four weeks just to get an appointment. One click is

all it takes now."

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- Must have excellent skills in MS Office.
- \* Must be able to manage handle a team and ensure the daily tasks are assigned and completed on a daily Basis.
- \* To ensure the operations run smoothly in the assigned area...
- Must Have good leadership and problem solving skills.

Must Have good leadership and problem Solving skills.

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### News International

DANGER

# Seoul on alert over possible Uzbek terrorists

South Korean diplomatic missions increases scrutiny of visa applicants

Jeff Sung Secul

South Korea is on high alert after a UN Security Council report warned hundreds of Uzbeks linked to terrorist networks could have entered the country.

The report on Daesh and Al-Qaeda stated members of the Katibat Imam Al-Bukhari and Katibat Al-Tawhid wal Jihad groups had requested entry to South Korea via Turkey. The militants chose the South due to the large Uzbek community already living there.

"Many ethnic Uzbeks request deportation from Turkey to the Republic of Korea, where the total number of Uzbeks is estimated to be between 20,000 and 30,000," the reports states, "Some Uzbek migrant workers in the Republic of Korea are reported to have been radicalized, and to be a source of financing for the travel of extremists to the Syrian Arab Republic."

Seoul has asked South Korean diplomatic missions overseas to increase scrutiny of Uzbeks applying for South Korean visas.

"Upon receiving the UN report, we ordered the immigration office to tighten its screening of Uzbek travelers from Turkey," the Justice Ministry said in a statement.

"We also asked our embassy in Turkey and other diplomatic offices overseas to thoroughly examine the travel documents of Uzbek visa applicants while closely watching any unusual movements (regard-

ing Uzbeks) here and abroad,"

Uzbek nationals are not subject to visa exemptions in South Korea, so they are required to apply at the South Korean Embassy in Uzbekistan. If they have permanent residence or long-term residency in another country, however, they can apply for a visa in a third country.

#### FASTFACTS

- The militants chose the South due to the large Uzbek community already living there.
- 20,000 to 30,000 Uzbeks live in South Korea.
- 0.3 percent of the South
   Korean population is Muslim.

"We'll limit issuing visas to Uzbek citizens confirmed to have visited banned countries, including Syria," a ministry spokeswoman told Arab News. "In addition, we'll try to block the entry of terror suspects while strengthening cooperation with foreign governments to stop any influx of terrorists to our nation."

Terrorism is rare in South Korea, but fear and hatred toward terrorism prevail though the nation has a very small Muslim community of about 135,000, 0.3 percent of the population.

South Korea sent troops to Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s at the request of the US. In 2004, a South Korean worker in Iraq was beheaded by militants who called for the withdrawal of South Korean troops from their country.

In 2007, 23 South Korean missionaries were abducted by members of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Two of the hostages were executed before a deal was reached for their return.

In 2015, an Indonesian was arrested by Korean police for suspected links to a terrorist group. The 32-year-old was suspected to have links to Al-Nusra Front, an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. In that same year, the National Intelligence Service revealed that 10 South Koreans had tried to contact Daesh.

ANHA

# Briefs

#### Terrorism

#### Boko Haram kills eight in northeast Nigeria

Boko Haram insurgents killed eight people in Nigeria during an attack on the northeastern city of Maiduguri, a civilian militia leader said on Saturday.

"We recovered a total of eight bodies of residents killed in the Boko Haram attack," late on Friday, Haram Abba Aji-Kalli of the Civilian JTF militia said.

The attack came hours before Nigeria's electoral commission announced it was postponing Saturday's presidential and legislative vote for a week.

The delay has been condemned by both President. Muhammadu Buhari, who is standing for a second term, and his chief opponent former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar. AFP

#### National concern

#### Protesters hold scattered demos in France

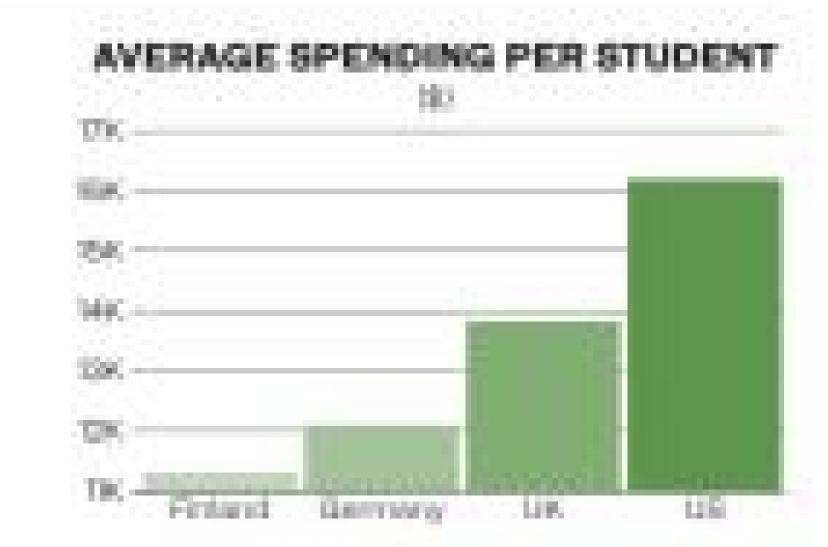
Yellow vest protesters are holding scattered demonstrations around Paris and the rest of France amid waning support for their movement.

A few hundred people
gathered peacefully Saturday
on the Champs-Elysees, the
stage of past rioting. This marks
the 14th straight weekend of
demonstrations by a movement
that started against fuel taxes
and grew to a mass movement
against President Emmanuel
Macron and his pro-business
policies.

Another protest planned later Saturday was organized to denounce anti-Semitism, after recent anti-Semitic vandal attacks that raised national concern. AP

#### The Days FIGURES

Southern Streetholics inches



# What We Are Reading Today

FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

#### Revolutionizing the Sciences

PETER DEAR

REVOLUTIONISING

THE SCENCES

Bearing and Madesterly

to Transferre

This thoroughly revised third edition of an award-winning book offers a keen insight into how the scientific revolution happened and why. Covering central scientific figures, including Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and Bacon, this new edition features

greater
treatment of
alchemy and
associated
craft activities
to reflect trends
in current

scholarship.
The book reflects on the origins of scientific practice in early modern

the revolution in thought that changed the natural world from something to be contemplated into something to be used, says a review on the Princeton University Press website. Concise and readable, this

Europe. Peter Dear traces

book is ideal for students who

are studying
the scientific
revolution and
its impact on the
early modern
world. The first
edition was the
winner of the
Wetson Davis
and Helen
Miles Davis
Prize of the
History of
Science Society.



US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters celebrate their victory in Raqqa, Syria. AP

PULLOUT PLAN

# US withdrawal from Syria risks boosting Russia, Iran influence: Merkel

AFP Munich

German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned on Saturday that Washington's plan to swiftly pull its soldiers out of Syria risks allowing Russia and Iran to boost their role in the region.

Daesh militants have been boxed in to a scrap of land in the battle for their last remaining territory in northeastern Syria and their final defeat is expected imminently.

Once they are defeated, US forces are set to soon withdraw after President Donald Trump in December announced the pullout of around 2,000 troops.

But Washington is struggling to convince allies to stay on in Syria after it leaves and Merkel warned of the risks of leaving a vacuum in the region.

"Is it a good idea for the Americans to suddenly and quickly withdraw from Syria? Or will it once more strengthen the capacity of Iran and Russia to exert their influence?" Merkel said at the Munich Security Conference. Pentagon chief Patrick Shanahan on Friday pledged ongoing backing for the fight against Daesh — but kept allies guessing as to how that would be achieved once US forces pull out, and won no solid pledges of support.

Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said the US had told partners in the global anti-Daesh coalition that its soldiers would leave in "weeks rather than months."

The decision has stunned allies including France, which contributes artillery and about 1,200 forces in the region, including soldiers who train Iraqi troops.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian asked why the US would create a vacuum in Syria that could benefit its enemy Iran, calling the approach a "mystery."

A French government source told AFP it was "totally out of the question" to have French troops on the ground without US forces.

#### Victory in few days

Meanwhile, Kurdish-led forces said on Saturday they were

#### FASTFACT

Washington is struggling to convince allies to stay on in Syria after it leaves and Merkel warned of the risks of leaving a vacuum in the region.

holding up the announcement of final victory over the Daesh group for "a few days" because the large number of civilians remaining on the battlefield had forced a delay.

Trump had said on Friday that he expected the eradication of the "caliphate" that Daesh proclaimed in 2014 to be announced within 24 hours.

But spokesmen for the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said the surprise discovery of so many civilians still inside the militants' last enclave had forced commanders to slow the advance.

Daesh is now reduced to a tiny pocket where its militants and civilians still under their control are holed up in tunnels, the assault's overall commander Jia.

Furat told a news conference.

"In a very short time, not longer than a few days, we will officially announce the end" of Daesh's existence, Furat said.

Advancing SDF fighters have been met by "large numbers" of civilians, to the surprise of commanders who had thought the exodus of recent days had emptied the remaining Daesh pocket of all but diehard militants, SDF spokesmen said.

Women and children who had endured appalling conditions inside the remaining enclave were emerging from tunnels and foxholes beneath the battlefield.

"There are still civilians inside in large numbers," SDF spokesman Adnan Afrin told AFP at the main staging point for frontline forces.

"We weren't expecting this number, otherwise we wouldn't have resumed the campaign four days ago. This is why it's been delayed," Afrin said.

#### Crackdown

#### Drug lords surrender to Bangladesh police

Some 102 Bangladeshi meth dealers have surrendered to authorities at a pre-scheduled ceremony in a coastal town, officials said on Saturday, as a Philippines-style anti-narcotics crackdown sows fear among kingpins.

Bangladesh last year
launched a "war" on drugs
following a proliferation of
filegal substances in the South
Asian nation of 165 million
people, mostly of cheap
methamphetamine pills known
as "yaba."

Police said 24 yaba "godfathers," as well as lieutenants and peddlers, surrendered to the country's home minister in Teknaf town — the key gateway for smuggling yaba into the country from Myanmar, where the pills are manufactured by the millions. AFP

#### Unrest

#### Opposition rally turns violent in Albania

Thousands of Albanian opposition supporters on Saturday clashed with police in an anti-government rally to protest what they say is a corrupt and inefficient Cabinet, demanding its resignation and early elections.

Protesters broke through police ranks as they tried to enter the building of leftist Socialist Party Prime Minister Edi Rama.

The main poster read: "This is the end of the thieves," while another was a picture of Rama's face made to resemble that of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

The rally was organized by the center-right Democratic Party.

Demonstrators threw flares

and other objects and tried to destroy a protective cover at the main door, which was later broken. They did not go inside. AP



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ما المرأة إلا الأفقُ الذي تُشرقُ منه شمسُ المعادة على هذا الكونِ فتنيرُ ظلمتَهُ. (مصطفى لطفي المنظرطي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

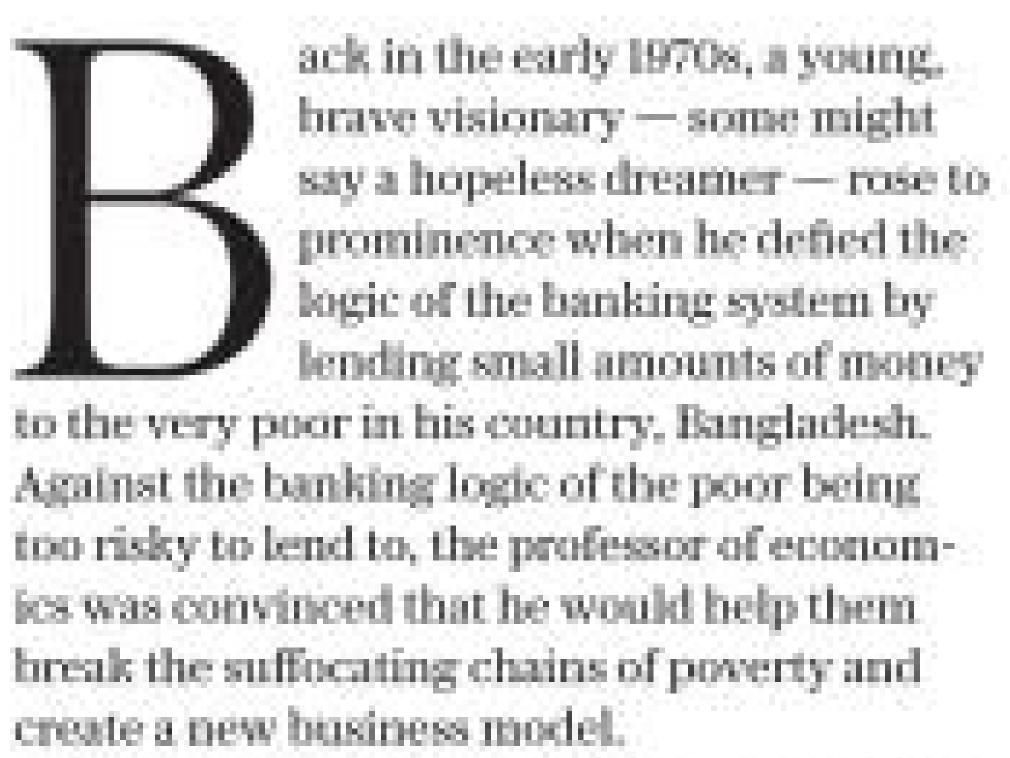
Women are nothing but the horizon where from the sun of happiness rises to turn the darkness of this universe into light.

Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfaluti (An Egyptian writer and poet)



# Gaza's entrepreneurial spirit can change the narrative of despair

VOSSI MESELBER



He was correct beyond his wildest dreams. Muhammad Yunus turned into the great oracle of microfinance and social enterprise, and his Grameen Bank has been the driving force behind the elevation of many millions out of poverty — not only in his own country, but in other places that have been open to taking on board his economic philosophy.

A central pillar to this philosophy has always been that entrepreneurship is a trait that exists in all of us, and it is circumstances and conditions that can either supress it or allow it to flourish. A new report by the Israeli human rights organization Gisha, which surveyed small businesses in the Gaza Strip, provides a clear validation to his approach.

The very idea that against the backdrop of siege and oppression can emerge an entrepreneurial private sector, as tiny as it is, is a great victory for the human spirit and a testament to the Gazan people, considering the dire

conditions in this small enclave, which is home to nearly 2 million people.

Since a land, sea and air blockade was imposed on Gaza by Israel, the stories coming out of this small and highly populated piece of territory are always of war, suffering, poverty and unemployment. Hence the report's stories are heart-warming.

For instance, there is Sumah Al-Nahal, a communications studies graduate from Al-Aqsa University in Gaza who started a jewelry and card business; Shadi Salameh, who owns a mobile phone sale and repair business; or Hanan Khashan, an independent digital marketing consultant.

Young people in their late 20s and early 30s are, against the odds, breaking the chains of their dire conditions, in complete defiance of those who are making their lives almost impossible by blockading them, misgoverning them, or using them as pawns in Palestinian domestic politics. The people of Gaza are caught between all these forces, though they have shown great stamina in withstanding everything that has been thrown at them.

But as encouraging as Gisha's report is — and it is right to highlight entrepreneurial activities in Gaza — this represents a mere drop in an ocean of disheartening news. Bringing such activities to light in a place where it would be easy to be defeated by despair, as those who have laid a cruel siege on the people of Gaza would like them to be, is a cause for optimism.



Yosai Melierberg is professor of international relations at Regent's University Landon, where he is head of the international frelations and Social Sciences Program. He is also an associate fellow of the MENA Program at

Twitten @YMekelberg

Given a change in current Israeli policy, and the creation of conditions conducive to economic development and enterprise in cooperation with authorities in Gaza, the private sector, international organizations and NGOs, the discourse in the territory could change from one of conflict to one of economic prosperity, healing the rifts within Palestinian society and leading to peaceful coexistence with Israel.

Entrepreneurial minds exist everywhere, but they need to be nurtured from an early age. As the saying goes, "necessity is the mother of invention," and the Gazan people have demonstrated this in all walks of life, peaceful and otherwise. For small businesses and startups to develop and flourish, they need a conducive environment, including stability and certainty.

In Gaza, we can witness people refusing to lose hope and proving their resourcefulness. Their success is, of course, a cause for celebration and needs to be highlighted on its own merit. However, it also should lead us to try and imagine just what this world's biggest open-air prison could have been had it not suffered from a sea, air and land blockade.

How different could have been the lives of its people had Gaza not been under constant threat of war, with just a few hours of electricity per day, with fast-deteriorating access to sanitation and clean water, as the infrastructure continues to erode and a

humanitarian crisis is always looming. Conditions such as those in Gaza not only deprive people of their basic rights, but also lead to deep-seated resentment and conflict.

Yunus encapsulated this in his Nobel
Peace Prize acceptance speech, saying:
"Poverty is the absence of all human rights.
The frustrations, hostility and anger generated by abject poverty cannot sustain peace in any society. For building stable peace, we must find ways to provide opportunities for people to live decent lives." Morality and expediency can enhance each other, not hinder one another.

Reading Gisha's report reminded me of when I joined the corps of journalists to cover the Israeli disengagement from Gaza in the summer of 2005. On the road between two settlements overseeing the pristine Gazan beach stood the small Cafe Salah, which was a gathering place for journalists from across the world. The owner, gazing with hope and excitement at the recently evacuated Israeli settlements nearby, shared with us his dream to build a luxurious beach resort in place of the erstwhile settlements.

Needless to say, this resort has never been built, and his entrepreneurial instincts have to wait for more hopeful times. But despite this, I hope he will never abandon his dreams. In them lies the hope for normalcy, in a place on which total madness has been imposed for way too long.



In Gaza, people are refusing to lose hope and proving their resourcefulness



The single currency area stands on the brink of yet another downturn

### Spanish election call adds to eurozone unease

ANDREW HAMMOND



France and Italy.

With the eurozone celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the single currency area stands on the brink of yet another downturn.

And this even before the possibility next month of a no-deal Brexit that could send economic shockwaves across the continent.

The Spanish election, to be held on April 28, comes only seven months after Sánchez was sworn in as the nation's prime minister. And that political instability is mirrored in France, where President Emmanuel Macron remains under severe pressure from the so-called "yellow vest" protests; in Germany, where Chancellor Angela Merkel's long period in power is now in its twilight; and in Italy, where Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was forced on Friday to dismiss speculation that reported tension between coalition partners the Five Star Movement and the League could cause it to collapse.

Moreover, this political angst, alongside the continuing drama of Brexit, appears to During that period, Italy fell into recession, in a blow to its populist right-wing government that has promised to rejuvenate growth. And it was announced Thursday that Germany only very narrowly avoided a recession after the nation's GDP was flat in the October-December quarter, following a contraction from July to September.

It is amidst these economic woes that the latest Spanish political setback comes, causing deep uncertainty over the nation's future governance. The ruling Socialist Party (PSOE), which currently leads polls with around 30 percent of support, is nonetheless still widely blamed for the fact that it was also in government around a decade ago when the Spanish economy went into deep recession, and currently has only 84 MPs in the 350-seat legislature. This tally follows the Socialists' worst national election showing — in 2016 — since Spain transitioned to democracy after the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975,



The fragile legislative position of the PSOE, which has headed a minority government since the middle of last year, should be seen in the context of an even bigger story in Spanish politics following the June 2016 election, in which no party emerged with an overall majority.

A dominant narrative of that ballot, the second in the space of six months, was the shattering of the long-running post-Franco political duopoly of the right-of-center People's Party (PP) and the PSOE that has dominated the country since the late 1970s. Indeed, the combined vote of the PP and PSOE, which comprised around 85 percent of the ballot in the 2008 general election, fell to around 55 percent in 2016.

Several "new" parties have helped fill the political vacuum, including the far-right nationalist party. Vox, which could secure parliamentary seats for the first time this spring.

Other recently arrived parties include the left-wing, anti-austerity Podemos and Izquierda Unida (collectively known as Unidos Podemos) — seen as the sister grouping of the ruling Syriza in Greece — and the centrist, business-friendly Ciudadano.

The rise of these groups has been fueled by popular anger over political scandals, the fallout from the deepest economic recession in the country for over a generation, and the growing political clamor for independence in Catalonia.

As well as the economic pain and political

scandals of recent years, a key backdrop to this spring's election is the tension between Madrid and separatists in Catalonia over the enduring territorial and political crisis. Separatist tensions reached a spike in 2017 when Catalonia sought to break away from Spain in a referendum. While this dramatically escalated the issue, the backdrop for the event was rising support for Catalan independence since 2010, when a reform to extend the regional government's powers was struck down by the Spanish Constitutional Court.

With the potential for significant continuing political uncertainty in Spain, financial markets may become increasingly jittery, as the election outcome may not provide even short-term—let alone medium- or long-term—stability.

If political problems were to increase significantly in coming weeks, as pre-election polling begins, this would have the potential to undermine the Spanish economic recovery from the worst recession in decades, which saw a property crash and unemployment peaking at 27 percent (almost 60 percent for young adults under 24).

Taken overall, the new Spanish governmental uncertainty is a microcosm of wider political angst within the eurozone. This instability in its core nations may yet help drive the single currency area into a significant new slump, especially if the shock of a no-deal Brexit adds to the continent's current woes.

Andrew Hammond is an associate at LSE IDEAS at the London School of Economics.

# Opinion

# World's Valentine's Day message to Iran

CAMELIA ENTEKHABIFARD

he Warsaw Conference ended last Thursday. Valentine's Day with a message to Iran from 60 countries. all urging Tehran to change its regional behavior.

The Middle East security conference's final statement failed to mention the republic by name, but at the press conference, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and his Polish counterpart Jacek Czaputowicz both emphasized the threats Iran's worrying regional ambitions posed to the world.

It is true that China and Russia were absent, and France and Germany didn't send their foreign ministers to protest at US President Donald Trump's aggressive approach to Iran. Of greater significance, however, was the participation of Arab and Muslim nations, all seated next to each other, with the aim of drawing the world's attention to the results of Tehran's proxy wars. These include millions of Yemeni children suffering as a result of Tehran's support for the Houthis, and millions of Syrians displaced because of Tehran's support for the Assad regime.

Iran's disruptive behavior is also fueling Iraq's sectarian conflict and explains why the Lebanese are unable to exercise their constitutional right to be independent without fear of being dominated by armed militia.

Regional countries are acting destructively toward each other because Iran wants to become hegemonic and is empowering Shifte minorities to achieve this goal. While politics and diplomacy are rarely straightforward, there is a simple and obvious reason to make peace. With its wealth and resources, the Gulf region has the potential to become a great

partner to others in the international community - but first it needs to establish its own peace and security. Millions of

frustrated Iranians inside the country and

its neighbors are demanding the ayatollahs and their supporters change their behavior. China and Russia failed to attend the summit in Warsaw, but that doesn't mean they are siding with Iran - just that their business with the regime is more important.



#### The Gulf region needs to establish its own peace and security

The participation of a small regional country such as Oman. which is friendly with Iran, signals that Tehran will have to alter its

There is no need for an international consensus. The message to Iran is clear: Spend your wealth on your own needy children in Sistan and Baluchistan provinces who living in poverty before building schools and hospitals in southern Lebanon or Africa.

First, solve the unemployment issue facing millions of Iranian youth, then help Iraqis with free water and electricity.

As the proverb says: "A light that is needed at home is forbidden to be given to a mosque." In other words, serve your own homebefore you serve others.

Camella Entekhabifact is an Iranian-American journalist and political commentator, and the author of Camella-Slove Yourself By Telling the Truth' (Seven-

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### Middle East peace remains elusive after Warsaw summit

HAFED AL-GHWELL



However, when President Trump's special representative for Iran, Brian Hook, set about organizing the conference, the aim was explicitly to bill Iran as the biggest stumbling block to the Middle East's stability. This was eventually toned down at the behest of European allies, and the agenda was quickly expanded to include Israeli-Palestinian relations, the civil war in Syria and Yemen as well as Iran's growing influence in the region. It remains to be seen whether a two-day policy conference will be sufficient to lay down all the groundwork for a persistently elusive "peace" in the region.

There were plans to unveil a "deal of the century" to put an end to the decadeslong Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That has been delayed until after elections in Israel on April 9, smearing the conference as an electioneering stunt for the embattled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is seeking re-election amid allegations of bribery and fraud. This laser-focus on the Middle East peace plan comes at a time when the US is seeking to disengage in the region and lean more on regional partners. Israel and Saudi Arabia are the primary allies, but cooperation between them is hampered by the unresolved Palestine question.

Apart from its problematic duration, the conference was also beset by no-shows from prominent diplomatic figures. Some 60 nations were represented, but the EU's top diplomat, Federica Mogherini, and officials from Russia, Lebanon, Palestine and Iran declined to attend the event. The conference came at an awkward time for Europe, given a recently announced creation of a special purpose vehicle by Germany, France and the UK aimed at facilitating trade with Iran. Russia, China and Turkey have also joined in similar sanctions-dodging initiatives. Should they succeed, it would go a long way toward blunting any US sanctions on Iran, robbing the White House of an economic stick in the face of growing Iranian hegemony in the region.

Overall, these kinds of developments are characteristic of the complexities of Middle East involvement. While other countries elect for diplomacy and careful compromises,



Washington dispensed with measured words and polite rhetoric. Comments by US Vice President Mike Pence and Washington's top diplomat erased all illusion from the Warsaw Conference's revised broader aims. According to Pompeo, "you can't achieve peace and stability in the Middle East without confronting Iran."

Iran's presence in Yemen has not won the increasingly isolated state any friends. Its support of Houthi rebels in the civil war comes from the Hezbollah Al-Hejaz, a pro-Iranian militant organization active on the Arabian Peninsula, and the Liwa Fatemiyoun, a Shia militia backed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Despite a December cease-fire that should have led to troop withdrawals and the distribution of critically needed humanitarian aid, the war still rages on.

A few days ago, UN aid chief Mark Lowcock had to issue a public plea to Houthi rebels in control of Hodeidah, where enough grain to feed 3.7 million Yemeni is stored and inaccessible. Even with these upsetting developments, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution on Wednesday to end support for the coalition backing the Yemeni government. House Republicans opposed the resolution, as they see US involvement as a bulwark against Iranian adventurism and the expansion of Al-Qaeda and Daesh on the Arabian Peninsula. It is likely that President Trump will veto the bill, should it pass the US Senate. However, in light of disengagements elsewhere in the Middle East, this bill may just offer the White House a quick exit from a highly contentious involvement.

Iran's influence is also palpable in disputes. from Afghanistan to Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon and even Morocco. Notably, Tehran has entrenched itself in post-civil war Iraq, after arming and inspiring Shia militia groups in the numerous battles to regain territories lost to Daesh. Presently, even though Iran-backed Hadi Al-Amiri lost in the 2018 elections, he is still the leader of the secondlargest political party in Iraq and part of the Badr Organization, which runs the Iraqi Interior Ministry. This is eerily similar to how Hezbollah has gained influence in the Lebanese Parliament, with two supporters. of the Iran-backed group becoming parliamentary speaker and deputy speaker. In addition, 70 of 128 seats in Lebanon's Parliament were won by candidates who back Hezbollah's possession of arms.

Unfortunately, with the US in retreat across the Middle East, it is likely that Iran will be able to, and even eager to, fill the inevitable vacuum.

Haffed Ai-Ottwell is a nonresident senior fellow with the Foreign Policy Institute. at the John Hopkins University School of Advance International Studies.

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# Syria conference confronts quagmire of interests

CORNELIA MEYER



ast week saw two international meetings on the future of the Middle East. One was in Warsaw and focused on Iran and the nuclear deal. It was sponsored by the US and attended by Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary. of State Mike Pompeo, along with senior government officials from 60 countries.

The other was a summit on Syria - hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin — that was attended by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In Warsaw, the US impressed very strongly on the Europeans that they adhere to US sanctions. Pence criticized the UK, France and Germany for a non-dollar denominated payment channel to enable trade with Iran and urged all European nations to terminate the nuclear deal.

While the European members of the UN Security Council and Germany acknowledge that Iran has undue influence in many parts of the Middle East, they feel that dialogue rather than isolation may help them exert. more pressure on Iran.

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of view.

There were differences of opinion at the other conference too. The Russians criticized. Turkey for not aggressively eliminating terrorists in Idlib. The Turks were worried. about increased warfare on their borders.

Turkey is proposing a humanitarian zone along its borders. Russia says Syria's President Bashar Assad needs to approve such a zone.

Ankara is not talking to Assad and Erdogan is said to be going ahead with his "safe zone" despite Russian, Iranian and Syrian pushback.

Here is where the problem with Syria lies. Everybody is chasing different and irreconcilable objectives.

The region as a whole does not know what to make of President Donald Trump's announcement that the US would withdraw its troops from Syria and subsequent statements from senior US officials that a withdrawal was not imminent. The only ones rejoicing at a smaller US footprint are Russia, Iran and Assad.

Assad looks set to stay in power. Alas, many observe that the last chapter may not yet be written there either. But some Arab states are dealing with the status quo.

The UAE has opened an embassy in Damascus, Sudanese President Omar-Al-Bashir has paid a state visit. Jordan has opened a border crossing and some in the Arab League want to discuss readmitting Syria into the fold.

Irrespective of the regime, Syria needs major reconstruction efforts. Putin visited German Chancellor Angela Merkel last summer to try and drum up support for the rebuilding because Russia lacks the wherewithal to go it alone.

But it will be hard to rebuild Syria as long as it remains a pariah state and nobody is able to untangle the mess of divergent interests. In the meantime, it is ordinary Syrians who suffer.

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YASER DAJANI HEAD OF REGIONAL FORENSIC INVESTIGATIONS, FTI CONSULTING

# A corporate sleuth for the digital era

Snooping through trash bins for clues? That's so '90s, says the investigator using high-tech skills to stay ahead of the pack

Frank Kane Dubai Hustration by Luis Grafiena

he old image of the corporate investigator — a seedy individual tailing a "suspect" along darkened alleyways, occasionally stopping to rummage through garbage bins for tell-tale correspondence — was never realistic.

These days, it is further away from the truth than ever. The investigations industry now is staffed by people with degrees in information technology who know how to use sophisticated software to get the information they need, and run by executives who are all but indistinguishable from their client bankers, lawyers and accountants.

Executives such as Yaser Dajani, the senior managing director for the Middle East and North Africa for FTI Consulting, who is in charge of forensic and litigation consulting in the region for the US-listed firm. Dajani is polished and C-suite sleek, as far removed from the traditional "gumshoe" as: you could imagine.

"There has been a transformation in the corporate investigations business," Dajani said, highlighting the move away from intelligence gathering by people to electronic techniques.

\*For example, transactional due diligence work has either moved toward compliance, a box-ticking exercise, or very complex business. intelligence work. That middle space is no longer relevant. We only do the latter — complex work. The investigations business in the Middle East is a tough industry. and those who don't understand. the challenges operate in a gray area — the one that we avoid," he added.

Dajani spent a good part of his career at the Middle East unit of Kroll, the original corporate investigations business dating back to 1970s Manhattan, Almost two years ago he joined FTI to set up a. forensic and litigation business for the firm.

FTI also has operations in corporate finance and restructuring, economic consulting, strategic communications and technology. "It is a multi-disciplinary platform that offers different services across a range of sectors, and they all complement each other," he said.

"The methodology of 10 years: ago is no longer valid. Then a report would have been produced. based on rumors and market gossip, but it was really of very little: added value. Unfortunately, many still do that, and that gets people in a lot of trouble. You have to have human intelligence still, but the role of online research has grown with the digital age. Our methods involve deep web research using state-of-the-art software," Dajani

"Those firms that do this are staying ahead of the curve, for example in social media analytics and predictive sciences. Technology applies across everything we do, and that is part of the reason. we have set up the forensic technology business — that business focuses on data analytics, computer forensics, cybersecurity and cyber investigations. These are very sophisticated technological platforms created by us."

The benefits of a high-tech approach have not been lost on other players in the corporate intelligence sector, which is becoming increasingly crowded

Dajami explained:

"We are advising banks

and regulators on these

issues and helping banks

in the Middle East. Not only have the specialist firms - many with origins in Europe and North America — expanded with offices in the region (to mixed results), but the big accounting firms also have boosted their own in-house investigations capabilities.

Dajani believes his approach produces better results. "The Big Four accounting firms have set up investigations businesses in response to client demand, but we do it better because we are experts in what we do and have diverse experiences and credentials," he said.

So why has the Middle East suddealy become a target market for the investigators? Dajani sees the demand for his services coming from several areas, but the family businesses that have traditionally been the backbone of regional

"In many cases they have not evolved very far along the corporate governance spectrum. We can help them come in line proper board structures, financial oversight, codes of conduct, ethical standards and oversight mechanisms.

"Those that have been slow." doing this often face internal value destruction. It usually hapretires, and women family members are very often the victims in these cases. We have been busy.

Dajani, below. says Saudi Arabia has become a focus in the past few years, "Some of the work. relates to public companies facing challenges, but we also help family

businesses,

regulatore

and the

and deal with

government."

respond to queries and orders from regulators and banking counter-parties. The Gulf has come under greater scrutiny in this respect in the past five years, with the emergence of groups such as Daesh and situations like Iran and Yemen," he said.

In addition, regional regulators and the banking authorities have become more inquisitive about who is doing business in the Middle East, often in response to international pressure.

"The central bank of the UAE, for example, has been a lot more active in the past year on antimoney laundering activities,"

Dajani said.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the international body set up to coordinate action in response to global financial crime, is due to visit the UAE later this year to deliver a verdict on the efficiency of the country's measures against money laundering and terrorism finance.

The other important reason for the growth in the regional investigations business is that US authorities have become more interested in the Gulf's financial. systems.

"America is looking at banks in the Middle East more closely. In

part this reflects the growth of the BIO regional banking industry, with many having operations in the US and, therefore, subject to US bank-BORN ing regulations," Dajani said. 1976

Jerusalem,

EDUCATION

Bachelor's

GeorgeMason

in political

University,

Virginia, US

Master's

King's College

London, UK

Advanced

in law and

security,

studies,

Palestine

"Most of them also conduct." many of their operations in dollar denominations, which gives the US authorities the right to look at them. The extent of intrusion by US authorities into regional banks and financial institutions is very high, and this is where we often get called in."

Saudi Arabia has become a major focus of the FTI business in the past few years. "We don't have an office there yet, but everyone in the UAE office has a Saudi visa and we travel to the Kingdom on a regular basis. We will respond to our clients' needs there. We have been asked to set up a Saudi office and we are looking into it," he said.

"In the Kingdom some of the work relates to public companies facing challenges, but we also again — help family businesses and also deal with regulators and the government. Much of the work is dispute driven. Saudi

Arabia is modernizing its corporate, legal and regulatory structures, and in addition will always remain a strategic location for foreigners and regional players wanting to invest," he said.

recognized with its anti-corruption campaign, there is still work to be done. Last week the EU criticized the Kingdom for its practices to curb money laundering. The last visit by the FATF in 2017 found: "KSA is achieving good results in fighting terrorist financing, but needs to focus more on pursuing larger-scale money launderers and confiscating their

Dajani will not reveal the names: of his clients in Saudi Arabia, or elsewhere for that matter. But FTI has worked for some of the biggest names in the region, not only in investigations, but also through

> previous firm and the man who made the corporate investigations business, was featured in The New York Times, smoking a fat cigar, wit Gordon Gekko braces and his feet. up on a mahogany desk under the heading "Wall Street's private eye."

Is Dajani the modern equivalent, minus subterfage, uprooted from New York and set down in the Dubai International Financial Center?

"I wouldn't call myself a private eye. That is not the appropriate term in this region and certainly the practices of the 1980s and 1990s are no longer appropriate. We have set the standards for investigations here. We are the best at what we do. We are experts with impact," he replied.



### Business News



Eni's adjusted 4Q net profit jumped 55 percent to \$1.65 billion. It produced a record 1.851 million barrels of oil equivalent per day in 2018, lifted by operations in Egypt, Indonesia and Kazakhstan. Fourters

ENERGY

# Eni Gulf expansion 'has just begun'

Italian energy major has secured nine deals in the UAE, gained a foothold in Bahrain and expanded in Oman

Reuters Mitan

Italian major Eni said it intends to expand in the Middle East after a spree of deals in the Gulf last year, pressing ahead with plans to reduce its reliance on Africa and oil and gas exploration.

Since last March Eni has secured nine deals in the UAE, gained a footbold in Bahrain and expanded in Oman to underpin its future growth.

Last month it pledged \$3.3 billion to buy part of the world's fourth-

biggest refinery in the UAE, increasing its own refining capacity overnight by more than a third.

Chief Executive Claudio Descalzi said there were huge opportunities to grow in the Gulf area and rebalance the group's operational port-

"It's not fimished, we've just started," he told analysts on a conference call after its fourth-quarter results, adding long-term the group aimed to produce 100,000 barrels per day in the area.

Eni, which generates more than half its output in Africa, produced a record 1.851 million barrels of oil equivalent per day in 2018, lifted

FASTFACT

Amount pledged by Eni to buy part of the world's fourthbiggest refinery in the UAE.

by operations in Egypt, Indonesia and Kazakhstan.

Giant gas discoveries in Mozambique and, more recently, Egypt. have given the energy major the strongest discovery record in the industry, boosting its credentials with oil-producing nations. "We'll be able to enter new markets thanks to our technology and know-how," Descalzi said.

The 63-year-old said that besides the Gulf, Eni is also looking to Asia to boost its gas prospects as well as Alaska to increase its oil production. "That's a main oil target for us," he said.

Eni said it had made a C470 million (\$529.50 million) writedown on reserves in Venezuela where it has a 50 percent stake in the giant Perla gas field and 40 percent of the Junin 5 oilfield.

"Outstanding arrears with the country amount to about \$700 mil-



We'll be able to enter new markets thanks to our technology and know-how. Besides the Gulf, Eni is also looking to Asia and Alaska.

lion," said CFO Massimo Monduzzi. A deep economic and social crisis in Venezuela has seen output plummet and the recent move by Venezuela's opposition to oust president Nicolas Maduro has made matters critical.

In the fourth quarter Eni's adjusted net profit jumped 55 percent to CL459 billion (\$1.65 billion), above an analyst consensus forecast of €L19 billion.

Free cash flow after dividends was the highest since 2006, with excess cash for the year of €3.8 bil-

Massimo Bonisoli, oil analyst at Milan-based broker Equita, said that the strong set of results showed the improvement in the group's asset portfolio.

"The improvement of shareholders' remuneration is likely through buy-back and some dividend increase in 2019," he said in a note.

CURRENCY

# l'urkish bank lowers lira reserves required

Reuters Ankara

Turkey's central bank on Saturday lowered the level of lira reserves that banks most hold against deposits, while also raising the limit of gold that lenders can hold.

In an issue of the Official Gazette, the central bank said the reserves ratios were by reduced by 100 basis points for deposits and participation funds with maturities up to one year and for other liabilities with maturities up to, and including, three years. All other liabilities were cut by 50 basis points.

It also said the upper limit of holding standard gold converted from wrought or scrap gold was increased from 5 percent to 10 percent of lira reserve requirements.

Reducing reserve requirements gives banks more money that they can use, for example, for lending.



Reserve requirement reductions give banks more money for lending. Heuters

FRAUD CHARGES

### Russian court jails US founder of investment fund pending fraud trial

AFP Moscow

A Russian court on Saturday jailed the US founder of an investment firm for two months over fraud charges he says were fabricated for use in a shareholder battle.

Michael Calvey, inset, founder the multibillion-dollar investment fund Bar-Vostok Capital

Partners (BVCP), was placed under arrest until April 13 as he and five others await trial on charges they embezzled 2.5 billion rubles (\$37.7 million).

Authorities detained four BVCP employees on Friday, including French national Phillipe Delpal. Two other suspects include: a former fund employee and someone at another firm mentioned in the probe. All six are now under pre-trial arrest. In a statement

Saturday, Baring Vostok said the claims made against its employees "have no merit."

The case has already drawn comparisons to other high-profile probes against foreign investors in Russia, notably one against Bill Browder and the Hermitage Capi-

> tal fund. Ironically, it comes as Russia hosts a highprofile investment forum in its Black Sea city Sochi.

Calvey says he is innocent and argued in court that the probe is a bid to exert pressure

on him amid a shareholder conflict within Vostochniy Bank, which he is trying to resolve in a London arbitration court. The charges against him are intended. to "pressure Baring Vostok to drop its arbitration claims in London or to obstruct the new share emission of Vostochmiy Bank," he said.

NATURAL GAS

#### Ethiopia, Djibouti reach deal to build pipeline

AFP Addis Ababa

Landlocked Ethiopia on Saturday said it had concluded a deal with Djibouti to build a 765-km (475mile) pipeline to transport its natural gas to ports in the neighboring Horn of Africa nation.

Ethiopia's mining ministry said the pipeline will be built by Chinese firm Poly-GCL and transport gas from fields in the eastern Ethiopian Somali region to Djibouti to be exported from there. There was no mention of cost, nor of when the project will come on stream.

All but 65 km of the pipeline will be located in Ethiopia, whose government has previously announced plans to generate \$1 billion annually from extraction of natural gas and crude oil deposits.

Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country with around 100 million people, relies on Djibouti's ports for exports and imports.

### Business News

AUTOMOTIVE

# Merkel: US saying European cars a threat is 'frightening'

German leader slams Washington's claims that auto imports risk national security



The production line of a Daimler factory. US President Donald Trump has threatened to slap duties on European car imports, especially targeting Germany. Reuters

AFP Munich

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday labelled as "frightening" tough US trade rhetoric planning to declare European car imports a national security threat.

"If these cars suddenly spell a threat to US national security, than that is frightening to us," she said.

Merkel pointed out that the biggest car plant of German luxury brand BMW was not in Bayaria but in South Carolina, from where it exports vehicles to China.

"All I can say is it would be good if we could resume proper talks with one another," she said at the Munich Security Conference.

"Then we will find a solution."

A US Commerce Department report has concluded that auto imports threaten national security, setting the stage for possible tariffs to be introduced by the White House,

two people familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

The investigation, ordered by President Donald Trump in May, is "positive" with respect to the central question of whether the imports "impair" US national security, said a European auto industry source. "It's going to say that auto

security," said an official with another auto company. The report, which is expected to be delivered to the White House by Sunday, has been seen as a

major risk for foreign

automakers. Trump threatened to duties percent European autos, especially targeting Germany, which he says the American harmed car industry.

After receiving the report, the US president will have 90 days to FASTFACT

Level of threatened new duties on European autos imported to the US.



Credit support

for smaller and

privately owned

firms holds the

key to China's

according to

spokesman.

Reuters

a central bank

economic welfare.

decide whether to move ahead with tariffs.

Trump in July reached a trade truce with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. with the two pledging no new tariffs while the negotiations continued.

Brussels has already drawn up a list of €20 billion (\$22.6 billion) in US exports for retaliatory tariffs should Washington press Jean-Luc Demarty, the commission's director-general for trade, told the European Parliament last month.

The White House has used the national security argument saying that undermining US manufacturing base impairs military readiness — to impose steep tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, drawing instant retaliation from the EU. Canada, Mexico and China.

> Trading partners have sometimes reacted with outrage at the suggestion their exports a threat to US pose national security.

FINANCE

### China's central bank urges lending for 'real economy'

Resident Shanghail.

China should encourage its banks to support smaller, private firms in the real economy, rather than forced lending or policies such as quantitative easing, a state newspaper quoted a central bank official as saying on Saturday.

"The central bank doesn't wish administrative methods to require banks (to lend)," Sun Guofeng, head of the monetary policy department at the People's (PBOC), told China the Financial News, a bank publication.

"It wants to establish positive mechanisms. encouragement though monetary policy tools to encourage banks to increase their support for the real economy, especially toward smaller and privately owned firms," Sun said.

The comments come a month after Sun wrote a commentary in which he argued that problems replenishment, with capital



bank liquidity gaps and poor rate "transmission" are three major constraints on banks' supply of credit.

interview with the In the Financial said Sun News, monetary policy transmission had "noticeably improved," showing

that steps to enhance transmission. mechanisms had been effective.

He said the central bank would increase the strength of innovation in monetary policy

Perpetual bond issuance "is only one breakthrough" in reducing BACKGROUND

China's banks made the most new loans on record in January - totalling 3.23 trillion yuan (\$477 billion) — as policymakers try to jumpstart sluggish investment and prevent a sharper slowdown in the world's second-largest economy.

capital constraints on banks, Sunsaid, adding that "other methods" could be used in the future.

He said quantitative easing was neither necessary nor possible at the moment, noting that under China's financial system the significance of the central bank buying Chinese treasury bonds on the secondary market is limited.

China's banks made the most new loans on record in January following a series of moves to boost lending as authorities try to prevent a sharp slowdown in the world's second-largest economy.

# BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

#### Trade row

#### China-US talks makinga final sprint'

Chinese state media on Saturday expressed cautious optimism over trade talks between the US and China, a day after President Xi Jinping said a week of discussions had produced "step-by-step" progress.

Xi made the comments at a meeting on Friday with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in Beijing, after a week of seniorand deputy-level talks.

The People's Daily, the official paper of the ruling Communist Party, said that Xi's meeting with US negotiators had "injected new impetus into the next stage of the development. of Sino-US trade relations."

The talks "have made important progress" for the next round of negotiations in Washington next week, the paper said. Reuters

#### Arms exports

#### Airbus CEO tells Germany to reform defense policy

Airbus CEO Tom Enders urged Germany to press ahead with plans to create common European regulations on arms exports, saying the issue posed a litmus test for Berlin's ambitions to foster a European defense policy.

By showing "a kind of moral. superelevation" on arms exports. Germany was frustrating Britain, France and Spain, Enders said, adding that without a common European approach Airbus could consider manufacturing German-free products. Berlin can stop exports of arms that include parts made in Germany.

"It has been driving us crazy at Airbus that when there is even a tiny German. part involved in, for example, helicopters the German side gives itself the right to, for example, block the sale of a French helicopter," he said. Reuters

Emerging-market assets retreated last week. amid fears over global growth, and despite positive news on US-China trade talks.

Source: Bloomberg:



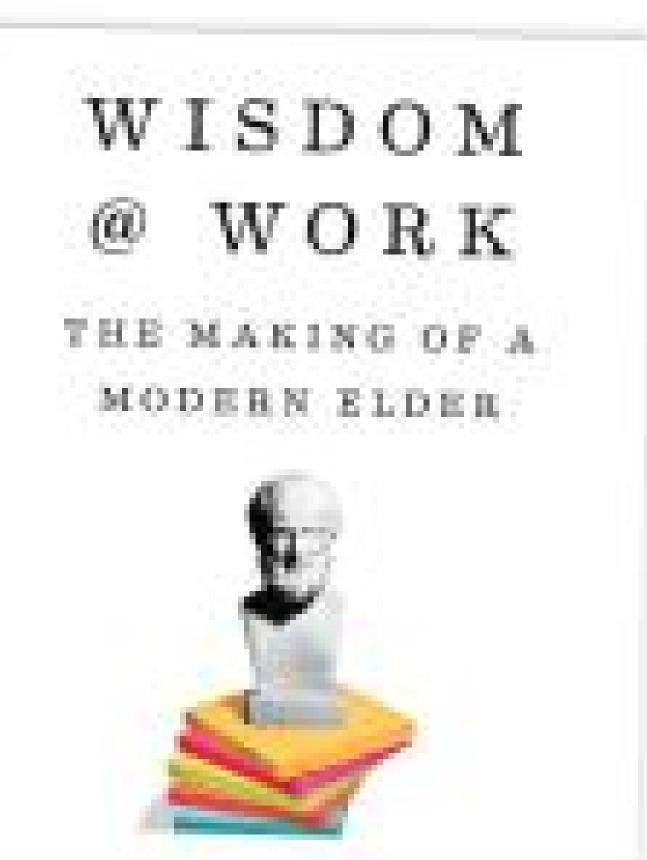
### What Were Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

#### Wisdom at Work: The Making of a Modern Elder

CHIP CONLEY

Pesky millennials outshining you at work? Fear not; you may be older than them, but that means you have years' more experience. This book ignites a debate about ageism in the workplace, drawn from the author's experience of joining Airbnb at 52. It looks at how older people can use their experience, while also learning new skills in the digital age.



#### Banking

#### HNA cuts stake in Deutsche Bank to 6.3%

Chinese conglomerate HNA has cut its stake in Deutsche Bank to 6.3 percent, according to a filling with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

That marks a reduction from 7.64 percent of voting rights reported in the most recent filing in Germany.

HNA, even with the reduced holding, would remain one of the largest shareholders in Germany's largest lender.

Spokesmen for HNA in Germany and Deutche Bank declined to comment.

HNA initially bought into Deutsche Bank in early 2017, amassing a stake of close to 10 percent. But it has since trimmed its stake in instalments.

High debts at the conglomerate have fueled speculation about the future of its Deutsche stake as it reduces or exits some of its other holdings.

Reuters

#### Energy

#### Mexico to inject 83.9bn into state oil company

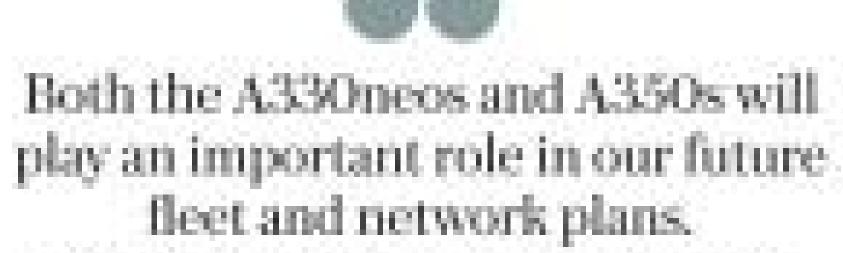
Mexico will inject \$3.9 billion: into ailing state oil company Pemex, officials said on Friday, promising to strengthen its finances and prevent a further credit downgrade, although investors saw the plan as only a short-term fix.

Falling oil output, corruption and high labor costs have contributed to the decline of the company that was once a symbol of national pride. It now holds about \$106 billion in financial debt, the highest of any national oil company in Latin America. Fitch and Moody's rate its credit one notch above junk.

Fitch said on Friday that the plan, which includes additional tax cuts, more government spending on the company and debt refinancing, would likely not be enough to prevent. "continued deterioration" in Pemex's credit quality.

Reuters





Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum Chairman and chief executive. Emirabes Group



INNOVATION

# Bosch opens flagship store in Jeddah

European home appliances brand-Bosch has opened its flagship store in the Kingdom. The showroom, located in the heart of Jeddah, was recently inaugurated in the presence of Holger G. Ziegeler, the German consul general in Jeddah.

Spread across 300 square meters of built-up area, the new Bosch store makes room for a product display ranging over 100 different appliances and models, all designed by German engineers.

The showroom follows a two-story structure, with the ground floor dedicated to product showcases according to themes and categories.

It hosts a welcome area, a brand heritage and innovation wall along with areas dedicated to kitchen inspiration, cooling, laundry, cooking and baking. The floor above makes room for a live cooking area and a "Perfect Kitchen" concept.

"Our new flagship store strengthens our brand presence in the Saudi market and complements our existing network of outlets — which are

Emirates airline has announced

an order for 40 A330-900 aircraft

and 30 A350-900 aircraft during

an agreement signed with Airbus.

The deal is worth \$21.4 billion at

The latest generation Airbus

A330neo and A350 aircraft will be

delivered to Emirates starting from

In addition, Airbus and Emir-

The airline will receive 14 more

A380s from 2019 until the end of

2021, taking its total A380 order

Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Mak-

tourn, chairman and chief execu-

tive, Emirates Group and airline,

said: "After many months of discus-

sions, we have come to an agree-

ates reached an agreement on out-

2021 and 2024, respectively.

standing A380 deliveries.

book to 123 units.

list prices.

currently in shop-in-shop forms," said BSH Home Appliances CEO Tomas Alonso.

He added: "This purpose-built space will help us deliver the quality, innovation, design intelligence and efficiency that Bosch stands for. Bosch prioritizes innovation in the service of a healthy balanced life, and Hook forward to people exploring the concept themselves in this beautiful new space."

The showroom will also showcase the strides Bosch is making toward intelligent eco-friendliness, where appliances reduce their energy and water footprints. Consumers not only give back to the environment but also save costs through reduced. utility bills.

The store, operated by Bosch Home Appliances Saudi Arabia distributor and partner Abdul Latif Jameel Electronics, also serves asa logistics hub for Bosch products across the Kingdom.

"Bosch products have proved very popular with Saudi households

ment with Airbus and Bolls-Royce.

supporter of the A380 since its

very inception. While we are dis-

appointed to have to give up our

order, and sad that the program

HIGHLIGHT

respectively.

for Emirates."

The latest generation Airbus

A330nec and A350 aircraft

will be delivered to Emirates

starting from 2021 and 2024.

could not be sustained, we accept

that this is the reality of the situa-

tion. For us, the A380 is a wonder-

ful aircraft loved by our customers

and our crew. It is a differentiator

"Emirates has been a staunch



The new Bosch store in Jeddah makes room for a live cooking area and a 'Perfect Kitchen' concept.

#### NUMBER

different appliances and models, all designed by German engineers, are on display at the new Bosch store in Jeddah.

HIGH STANDARDS

Emirates signs deal for 40 A330-900s, 30 A350-900s

thanks to the brand's association. with quality, trust and excellent design. Bosch products are invented for life, with the goal of making life noticeably easier, healthier and more balanced. We are proud to be exclusive partners and distributors of Bosch in the Kingdom, and are delighted to be able to welcome customers to a new, easily accessible location," said Hisham Hamza, CEO of

Abdul Latif Jameel Electronics. The showroom is open from 9 a.m.

until 9 p.m., Saturday to Thursday. ESH Bosch und Siemens Hausgeräte GmbH is the largest manufacturer of home appliances in Europe

and one of the leading companies in

the sector worldwide. The group was founded in 1967 as a joint venture between Robert Bosch GmbH (Stuttgart) and Siemens AG (Munich), Today, BSH operates 40 factories in 13 countries in Europe, the US, Latin

America and Asia.

# Briefs

#### Banking

#### Special prices at Samaco for Riyadh Bank customers

Riyad Bank is offering its customers a host of attractive deals on carprices at Samaco Automotive Company, an authorized dealer of luxury and premium automotive brands in Saudi Arabia. Customers of its various banking programs including private banking, Diamond Banking, Golden Banking and Silver Banking can avail the offers.

"The offers are part of Riyad Bank's efforts to meet the customers' needs and aspirations ... by providing best financial solutions and services along with competitive benefits," the bank said in a statement. Customers of Riyad Bank have access to a number of benefits, special offers and good services. "These advantages are designated especially for them through private centers characterized by luxury and privacy to enable such customers to perform their banking transactions with utmost ease and comfort," the statement said.

Established in 1957, Riyad Bank is one of the largest financial institutions in Saudi Arabia, ranked third in assets.

#### Airport

#### FedEx Express signs up for BIA's new cargo area

The new \$58.5 million air cargo area at Bahrain International Airport (BIA) is set to welcome its first tenant as US-based FedEx Express signed a deal to move to the expanded freight complex at the airport, further strengthening its operations as a GCC logistics hub.

The multinational courier delivery services company will be occupying a total of 9,000 square meters out of the 25,000-squaremeter available space in the new air cargo area, of which 5,000 square meter will be warehousing and the rest will be maneuvering area.

Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications and Bahrain Airport Company (BAC) Chairman Kamal bin Ahmed Mohammed said: "BAC has a comprehensive planto attract prominent cargo companies to the Kingdom, which will strengthen Bahrain's strategic position as a leading provider of efficient logistics services in the region.

On the decision to purchase A330Necs and A350s, Sheikh Ahmed said: "Emirates' fleet strategy to operate a young, modern, and efficient all-wide body fleet remains unchanged.

#### the Emirates A380 experience will always be top-notch."

Fleet strategy

onboard products and services so

our customers can be assured that

The 40 A330neos and 30 A350s that we are ordering today will complement Emirates' fleet mix, support our network growth, and give us more flexibility to better serve seasonal or opportunistic demand. Both the A330neos and A350s will play an important role in our future fleet. and network plans."

#### FOOD SERVICES

### Herfy taps into Capillary solutions for digital reforms

Herfy Food Services Company, Saudi Arabia's largest fast-food chain, has signed an agreement with Capillary Technologies, a cloud-based software solutions provider that enables brands to intelligently engage

with their customers, to revamp its

digital platforms for enhanced cus-

tomer engagement and experience. Herfy is the largest quick-service restaurant (QSR) chain in the Kingdom and one of the largest in the Middle East with over 367 stores, surpassing most international restaurant chains in terms of presence in Saudi Arabia.

Capillary Technologies will facilitate Herfy to adopt a mobile-first approach for intelligent customer engagement. Capillary will implement this with progressive web app (PWA) to syndicate Herfy's web page and mobile application.

Louay Ajam, marketing and advertising assistant director at Herfy Food Services Company, said: "We are glad to associate with Capillary Technologies to tap their solutions that will give a seamless digital experience to our customers. This is a continuation of our digital transformation journey. As a market leader, Herfy is constantly innovating and elevating its customer experience. The development of the e-commerce platform is part of our digital. strategy to build a strong digital ecosystem so that customers can convemiently interact with the brand."

Nitin Kaushal, president and general manager — EMEA at Capillary Technologies, said: "We are proud to collaborate with Herfy Food Services Co. to help modernize their

#### FASTFACTS

The latest generation Airbus A330neo and A350 aircraft will be delivered to

Emirates starting from 2021 and 2024, respectively.

"We have shown how people can

truly fly better on the A380, and

Emirates has set the standards for

that by introducing customer expe-

riences that are unique to the A380

Herfy is the largest quickservice restaurant (QSR) chain in the Kingdom and one of the largest in the Middle East with over 367 stores.

like our shower spas and onboard

lounge. The A380 will remain a pil-

lar of our fleet well into the 2030s.

and as we have always done, Emir-

ates will continue to invest in our

 Capillary Technologies has a strong presence in the MENA region and covers over 300 million consumers.

at catering to the needs of the everevolving customer profile and market requirements. Our role is to help businesses get ahead of the digital evolution and stay 'always consumer ready' with a tangible ROI, which we are committed to deliver."

digital engagement practices aimed

Herfy has been a success story in the Middle East and other regions, with its products manufactured in-house right from bread to meat, which are "100 percent halal and hygienically processed."

Louay said: "The presence of our restaurants is significant keeping in view the rapid growth of the fastfood industry sector of the key markets in the region. As a market leader in the segment, Herfy is steadily expanding its presence in other countries across continents."

Capillary Technologies has a strong presence in the MENA region and covers over 300 million consumers, 25,000 stores and over 300 marquee brands across various industries on its SaaS (software-as-a-service) platform across 30 countries.

#### Smartphone

#### Samsung reveals new prices for Galaxy A7/A9

Samsung Electronics has announced new prices and complementary accessories for its Galaxy A7/A9 smartphones to provide its customers with the latest technology at affordable prices, starting Feb. 14. The company said: "These new prices are carefully catered to meet the needs of our loyal customers and provide a convenient variety of the latest smartphones,"

The Samsung Galaxy A7, originally priced at SR1,299 (\$346), will now cost SR999. The Galaxy A7 will also be sold with a complementary Samsung Care Card worth SR600. The Samsung Galaxy A9, which was originally priced at SR1,999, will now cost SRL699. The Galaxy A9 will be sold with a complementary. Battery Pack (10,000 mAh) and a Samsung Care Card. The warranty period is valid for 24 months from the date of purchase and the warranty of the screen protection is in accordance with Samsung Care Cards' terms and conditions.

# Sport News

TENNIS

# Osaka throws down gauntlet to star-studded Dubai field

Japanese superstar looks to cement No. I spot against leading women rivals

Arab News London

Tennis fans in Dubai are in for a treat this week as nine of the world's top 10 women players do battle in the city to claim the Duty Free Championship crown, which starts today. Arab News picks out likely winners and glamor ties to keep an eye on during the tournament.

#### NAOMI OSAKA

The Japanese superstar, fresh from winning her second Grand Slam at the Australian Open last month, is playing her first event as world No. I and her first since her shock split with her coach Sascha Bajin.

The German had helped guide Osaka to back-to-back Grand Slam triumphs, with her win at the US Open last year. Osaka is yet to reveal why she decided to part ways with Bajin.

Regardless of events off-court. the Japanese will be the woman to beat and she will be playing the winner of the first-round tie between Kristina Mladenovic and Omani wildcard Fatma Al-Nabhani.

The last 12 months have seen a meteoric rise for Osaka, She started 2018 at number 68 in the WTA rankings. Going into the first Grand Slam of 2019, she was ranked 4th in the world, and thunks to Indian Wells now finds herself at the summit of women's tennis. Expect her to go deep into the tournament in Dubai.

#### SIMONA HALEP

The Romanian could well face Osaka if she makes it to the semifinals, but will fancy her chances of reaching her first final in Dubai since she claimed the trophy in 2015.

She will also be delighted that Serena Williams is not in Dubai, having been stopped in her tracks in Melbourne earlier this year by the American, her ninth defeat in 10 games to her nemesis.

She will also be buoyed by the fact that by virtue of reaching yesterday's final in Doha, she is guaranteed to move up to world No. 2 before even serving a ball.

Halep will open her tournament against either a resurgent Eugenie Bouchard or Vera Lapko, with a



The last 12 months have seen a meteoric rise for Osaka (who) now finds herselfat the summit of the women's game.

Naomi Osaka, left, will face nine of the world's top women players, including, top to bottom, Simona Halep, Elina Svitolina, and Potra Kvitova, AFP



showdown against either Aryna Sabalenka or Caroline Wozniacki in the quarterfinals. She comes

into Dubai with the weight of expectation on her shoulders, but Halep should cope.

tricky potential Doha rematch-

against Elize Mertens to come by

the third round, which should she

win would set up a blockbuster

#### ELINA SVITOLINA

The two-time defending championis part of an exclusive club as one of only three women to win back-to-back Dubai titles (Justine) Henin and Venus Williams also accomplished the feat), and this week the No. 7 seed will be looking to so one better and win a third straight Dubai crown.

Svitolina will be disappointed she could not turn a commanding 4-1 lead over Halep in her Doha semifinal into a win, but will have put that loss behind her.

The Ukrainian will have to be at her best as she has been given a tough route to a potential final in Dubai. She opens against either Donna Velkic or Tunisian Ons Jabeur, the best-ranked Arab on the tour. A third-round battle with Garbine Muguruza looks likely, while Halep and Osaka could be waiting for her in the quarterfinals and semifinals, respectively. It would be a remarkable achievement if Svitolina made it three in a row in Dubai.

#### PETRA KVITOVA

Having made the Australian Open final, Kvitova had to take a short break from the game to testify against the man who attacked her in 2016, reliving the traumatic life-threatening ordeal that left her with nerve damage in all five fingers of her left hand. Her courageous comeback on the tour was hailed by both players and fans.

"I'm not sure any day that I'll be completely over that. I'm glad that this one's over," she said in Dubai on Saturday, referring to her testimony in court.

Kvitova knows what it takes to win in Dubai, having claimed the trophy in 2013, and opens her campaign against either Petra Martic or Katerina Siniakova in the second round.

# SportBriefs.

Cricket

#### Perera the hero as Sri Lanka stun South Africa

Sri Lanka pulled off a stunning against-the-odds run chase to beat South Africa by one wicket in the first Test on Saturday as Kusal Perera almost single-handedly won the game with his 153 not out.

Chasing an unlikely 304, Sri Lanka were 226-9 and seemingly out of it. But a last-wicket partnership of 78 between Perera and Vishwa Fernando took the tourists to a thrilling victory on the fourth day.

Perera scored 68 of those 78 runs, but Fernando hung in for 27 balls for his 6 not out to allow Perera to guide the tourists home.

Sri Lanka's victory gives them. a 1-O lead in the short two-test series and ends South Africa's run of seven straight home series wins.

Sri Lanka's 304-9 was the third-highest successful run chase in nearly 100 years of Test cricket at the Kingsmead ground in Durban.

Perera won it with a late cut down to the boundary for four, prompting Sri Lankan players to sprint from the dressing room and out on to the pitch to congratulate their match winner.

The batsman removed his helmet and thrust both arms in the air to celebrate one of the best innings ever by a Sri Lankan.

Sri Lanka have lost their last three series, and had two debutants and a new captain. for the first Test, meaning few people gave the inexperienced visiting team a chance against South Africa.

Reuters

# Tale of the Tape

The 19th women's Dubai Tennis Championships get underway today. The event has seen a host of famous stars grace the Aviation Club over the years. Here we look back at the stats behind the Middle East's premier tennis tournament.

Number of Dubai titles Justine Henin won during her time at the top. The Belgian won her first title in 2003 and last in 2007.

Number of finals that have gone to three sets. The vast majority, 14, have been won in straight sets.

Different nationalities have lifted the trophy at the Aviation Club.

Number of times Venus Williams has won the title, the most recent in 2014.

Number of Grand Slam champions to have tasted glory in Dubai (Martina Hingis, Amelie Mauresmo, Justine Henin,

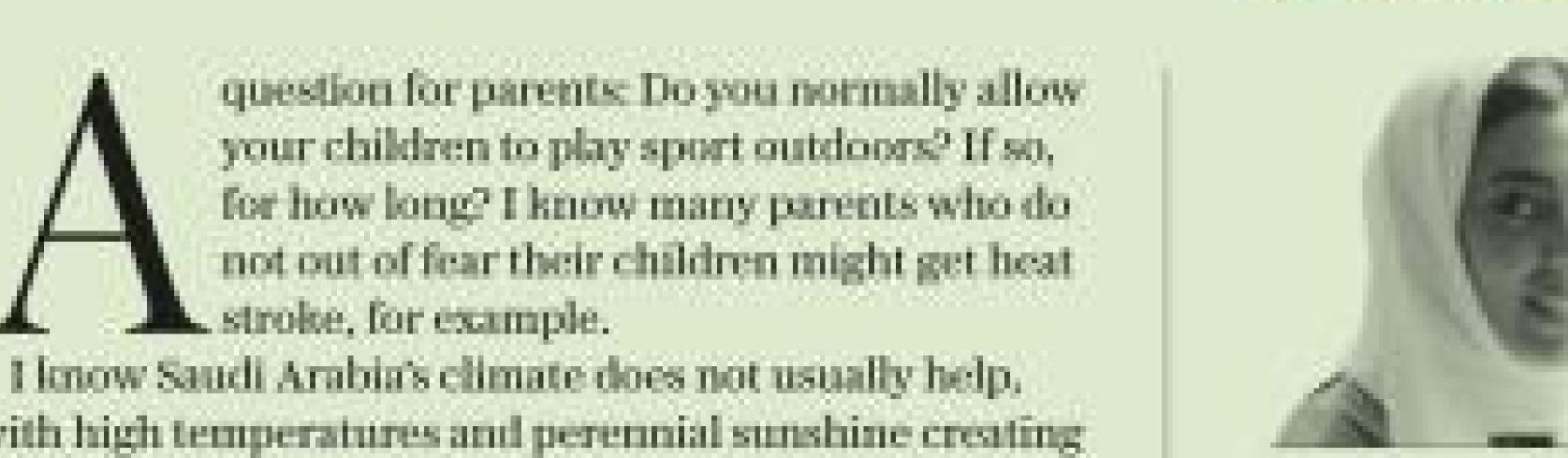
Lindsay Davenport, Venus Williams, Caroline Wozniacki, Petra Kvitova and Simona Halep).

> Number of French women to have lost in the final (Nathalie

Tauziat. Sandrine Testud, Amelie Maureamo. Virginie Razzano and Alize Cornet).

## Why outdoor sport makes winners of us all

DR. BAZAN BAKER



with high temperatures and perennial sunshine creating a difficult environment for sporting activity. But on the other hand, it is important that every child builds up their immune system early on and gets enough sunshine, so they do not end up with vitamin D deficiency. It is well known that a lack of vitamin D increases the risk of injury and and hinders prolonged recovery. The vitamin can also play a major role in the prevention and treatment. of different diseases, including diabetes, osteoporosis, hypertension and multiple sclerosis.

In 2007, a review published in the New England Journal of Medicine said that 30 to 50 percent of adults and children who covered up were vitamin D deficient - even in sunny areas of Australia, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and India. Studies have also revealed that more than 70 percent of Arab women are deficient in the vitamin.

I am not going to talk further about the medical side of the question, but about the social side instead - how the experience of playing sport is reflected in the child's social behavior growing up, for example.

First, children playing outside are more willing to meet and compete with their peers who share the same passion in sport. Second, children get closer to nature and respect the environment, trying to keep it neat and clean. Third, playing



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sport outdoors makes it easier for them to release all their negative energies - in short, nature makes them happier.

According to a study carried out in Australia in 2016. children's physical and mental health benefits from contact with nature. Spending more time outdoors also leads to positive changes in behavior, improving concentration, for example.

Another study found that dinghy sailing had a profound effect on children aged from 9 to 13. It helped develop key life skills, self-esteem and, ultimately. improved their performance in the classroom - what an amazing bonus from nature.

Over the past two years Saudi Arabia has initiated major sporting developments. These have included integrating new sidewalks and parks in cities, and promoting suitable sports such as cycling, hiking, diving, and jet ski, based on the geographical nature of each location.

Now, especially as we are enjoying the best season of the year, families tend to enjoy time outdoors with their children whether its playing sport or just leisure activities in general. This is obviously a good thing, but there is clearly more things we can all do to promote getting outside and encouraging every household to get active.

Countries with similar climates go through similar situations, especially during summer. A good example is Spain, where they enjoy their siesta, or afternoon nap. Perhaps we should have a similar siesta in Saudi Arabia? Either way we need to find ways to get out more often and play sport. There are few downsides and a host of positives.

#### Cricket

#### England set to face Brathwaite after Windiesrecall

The West Indies have called up Carlos Brathwaite, Sheldon Cottrell and John Campbell for the first two one-day internationals against England.

The trio were recalled. following injuries to Keemo Paul, Royman Powell and Evin Lewis, as well as the four-game ban handed out to bowler Shannon Gabriel following his exchange with Test captain Joe Root in the third Test.

Brathwaite is best known to England as the man who smashed Ben Stokes for four successive sixes in the final over of the Twenty20 World Cup.

Campbell played in all three Tests as the Windles won the recent Wisden Trophy series 2-1 while left-arm seamer Cottrell has played six ODIs. AN

#### Horse racing

#### Saudi trainer lands double at Gulf Cup

Saudi Arabian trainer Mutlaq bin Mashref landed a one-two finish at the inaugural Gulf Cup for Purebred Arabians in Sharjah, with his horse Mubasher Al-Khalediah winning the race.

Jockey Abdullah Al-Fairoz was on board the highly rated horse and judged the 1.7 km course perfectly with stablemate Morheb Al-Khalediah half a length behind. Tadhg O'Shea, rading the UAE-bred AF Maher. was a further half-length behind in third.

Mubasher Al-Khalediah's victory takes his record to five wins and one runner-up finish from six starts.

"Mubasher Al Khalediah has proved he's the best in the Gulf." said Mashref.





Producers of the television drama 'Empire' are disputing reports that Jussie Smollett's character is being written off the show as police continue to investigate the violent attack on the actor on Jan. 29.





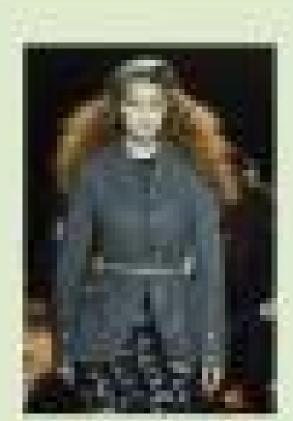
#### Arab and Muslim models in NY

Arab and Muslim models took the runways by storm at New York Fashion Week, which closed on Sunday in the Big Apple.



#### Bella Hadid

The Palestinian-American model was a smash during the Michael Kors show, which paid tribute to 1970s fashion, rocking a sparkling black blazer with feathers on the sleeves.



#### Gigi Hadid

The hectic supermodel lifestyle didn't get in the way of Bella's sister, who was seen on the streets in her retro runway hairdo after walking the Michael Kors show,



#### Halima Aden

This Muslim model turned heads when she closed the Christian Cowan show with an oversized black and neon pantsuit and a chain-link rhinestone hijab.



Noor Tagouri

This Libyan-American journalist took her confidence to the next. level when she decided to put down her pen and walk the runway for US brand Rebecca Minkoff.



Nora Attal

The British-Moroccan model kicked off the week in elegant leatherwork by French brand Longchamp and walked the runway for Brandon Maxwell.



#### Shanina Shaik

The Australian model, who was raised a Muslim and whose father is half-Saudi, modeled for Vietnamese designer Nguyen Cong Tri.

CLOSE UP

# Universe hits NY with faux fur coat by Dubai-based designer

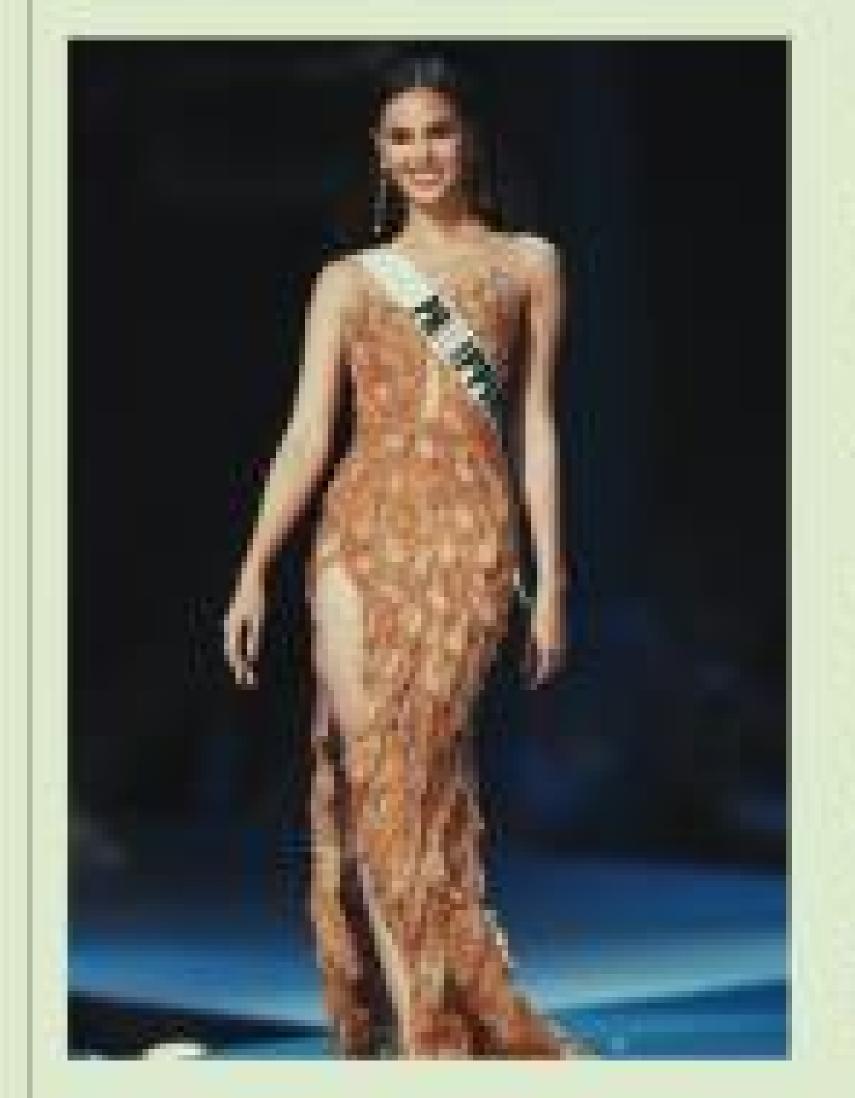
Arab News Dubal

The reigning Miss Universe, Catriona Gray, was spotted last week at a New York Fashion Week show wearing a faux fur jacket made by the Dubai-based designer Ollia Tzarina.

Gray was attending a show last Wednesday by Vietnamese designer Phuong My, when she was seen wearing the light grey Princess Fox jacket, which she paired with a buby pink satin dress to keep warm in the near-freezing New York weather.

The Filipino-Australian model, who won the prestigious pageant in December 2018, posted the photos on her Instagram account, posing with her fellow Miss Universe contestant. Vietnamese model H'hen Nie, and American-Moroccan model Iman Oubou.

"Despite the snow/rain/hail today's highlight was definitely catching up with my @missuniverse sister whhemmie official," wrote Gray. The beauty queen also wore it over a black dress in a Valentine's Day Instagram post, in which she encouraged people to "take today as



a remander to love in all forms."

The faux fur jacket was from Tzarina by Ollia, a fashion label launched in 2015. It has since made headlines when Hollywood A-listers started showing off its range of colorful faux fur jackets, including Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, Rita Ora, Ciara, Christina Aguilera, Mary J. Bligge, Ariana Grande and the Kardashian-Jenner clan.

When asked about dressing these fashion powerhouses, Tzurina said: "I feel lucky! They have a very powerful social media presence, so for any startup brand this is a dream come true and a fantastic platform for the brand to be promoted."

The Greek-Russian fashion entrepreneur launched her brand in her bedroom in 2015 after failing to find a fur coat in a particular shade. Now, her brand offers faux fur coats and gilets in more than 50 colors.

Asked why she decided to specialize in faux furs, Tzarina pointed to a "massive customer outreach," and more importantly a "global movement toward the eco-fur."

Although the Middle East has soaring summer temperatures, Tzarina said it's one of her favorite markets to concentrate on, banking on the cooler winter months when the jackets can be a hit.

The recent exposure during New York Fashion Week is yet another boost for Tzarina. As Gray goes about her duties as the current Miss Universe title holder. she has been known for nailing every look, and this latest one is no exception.



#### Rocker Ryan Adams accused of abuse

AFP New York

Alternative singer-songwriter Ryan Adams has been accused by several women of emotional abuse and exploiting his position as a career mentor as a means to obtain sex.

An expose in The New York Times details a pattern of manipulative behavior from the 44-yearold Grammy-nominated artist. including testimony from performer Mandy Moore, his ex-wife.

In one instance the newspaper - which interviewed more than half a dozen women and reviewed a trove of the US rocker's digital communications — describes Adams as sending graphic texts to a 14-year-old aspiring bass player and exposing himself on Skype.

The paper said he continued the sexually provocative correspondence for months despite appearing to doubt that she was of age.



Ryan Adams

ACADEMY AWARDS

#### Oscar organizers struggle to keep show relevant

APP Los Angeles

From going without a host to handing out key awards during commercial breaks, to a quickly nixed idea for a popular film category - Oscar organizers are struggling to keep Hollywood's biggest night relevant while dealing with a string of messy controversies.

With less than two weeks to go before the February 24 gala, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences has been weathering the latest debacle over four awards to be presented off-air a decision many in the industry. have denounced as "stupid" and "disrespectful."

The awards are Best Cinematography, Best Film Editing, Best Live Action Short, and Best Makeup and Hairstyling.

REVIEW

## Line of Descent: A dramatic tale of crime and atonement

Gautaman Bhaskaran Cheoriai

Cinema has often told stories about crime families. Hollywood's "The Godfather" series, or Scott Cooper's 2015 "Black Mass" with an unrecognizable Johnny Depp. or even Bollywood's bloody thriller "Titli" about a Delhi carjacking family, which first screened at Cannes in 2014.

The latest addition to the genre is writer-director Robit Karn Batra's "Line of Descent" which premiered on Sunday at the European Film Market, currently running alongside the Berlin Film. Festival. This movie is also set in

Delhi, India's crime capital, where some families have built unimnginable wealth through nefarious land deals, extortion, kidnapping and murder.

An aged patriarch, Bharath Sinha (essayed by Hindi cinema's legendary villain, Prem Chopra), heads a family of three sons -Prithyi (Romit Roy), Siddharth (Neeraj Kabi) and Suraj (Ali Hajji). Equally at home in Delhi's seedy underbelly as in some of the poshest enclaves and among India's elite, this is a clan with many conflicting faces, unified on the outside, but conflicted within by division, vice and repentance.

Bharath's notoriety as a criminal gives way to remorse and shame for the legacy he will leave behind. His death, and the bequesting of all his ill-gotten wealth to

his eldest son Prithyi, creates a storm among the brothers, with Siddharth demanding his share so that he may partner with an arms dealer, Charu (Brendan Fraser).

When things begin to get out of hand, a cop named Raghay (Abhay Deoll, is drawn into the mix, and asked to go undercover.

"Line of Descent" is tightly and imaginatively scripted. Its exposition of organized crime is masterful, and some brilliant performances, especially from Deol, Roy and Kabi add a dash of class to an otherwise gritty enterprise. A compelling dramatic arc is established from the start in this fast-paced thriller, and the themes of guilt and atonement permeate throughout the movie, with both coming home to roost for the Sinha family in a touching final sequence.

