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FNRCO
First National Company
"FNRCO" Consultant Solution & Manpower Services
"HAYS" Global Recruitment
"FAHSS / TUV NORD" Training & Certification
Affiliates in Providing Quality Services Together
HAYS Recruiting experts worldwide
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ARAB NEWS
The Voice of a Changing Region

SUNDAY, June 16, 2019
Shawwal 13, 1440
www.arabnews.com
SINCE 1975

Tehran regime rapped

Supporters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran rally outside the EU headquarters in Brussels on Saturday demanding a regime change in Tehran.

AFP

SYRIA BLOODSHED

45 killed in failed Assad regime attacks on 2 villages

AFP Beirut

At least 45 people died in northwest Syria on Saturday as Russian-backed Assad regime forces failed to retake two villages seized by militants and allied opposition forces.

Ten civilians and 35 fighters, mostly pro-regime forces, were killed in clashes and airstrikes in Hama province that erupted at dawn.

"Since this morning, the Syrian regime and allied fighters have launched five failed attempts to regain control of Jibine and Tal Maleh," said Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights head Rami Abdel Rahman.

Regime airstrikes killed nine militants and opposition fighters. Ensuing clashes in the north of Hama province left 26 pro-regime forces dead, including eight who were killed in a mine explosion.

In neighboring Idlib, regime airstrikes killed 10 civilians, including three children. The strikes hit the towns of Maaret Al-Numan and Al-Bara, and the village of Al-Ftira.

In Damascus, an explosion on Saturday in an ammunition depot in a military zone west of the capital was caused by wildfires, Syrian state television claimed. It said the depot was in the Dummar residential area.

But residents said the explosion, which could be heard across the capital, appeared to have come from a mountainous area between Dummar and Qudsaya, where large army units are stationed.

Israel has attacked Iranian targets in Syria before, including those of allied militia such as Hezbollah.

Detailed report Page 6

BACKGROUND

Regime airstrikes killed nine militants and opposition fighters. Ensuing clashes in the north of Hama province left 26 pro-regime forces dead, including eight who were killed in a mine explosion.

IRAN IN A TIGHT SPOT

Saudi Arabia urges 'swift, decisive' response to Gulf tanker attacks

UAE, GCC, G20 join calls to protect security of global energy supplies through Hormuz Strait

Arab News Jeddah

Saudi Arabia called on Saturday for a "swift and decisive" response to protect global energy supplies after last week's attacks on two tankers in the Gulf of Oman.

UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary-General Abdullatif Al-Zayani also urged world powers to protect international shipping lanes and hold the perpetrators of the attacks to account.

The latest incident followed repeated threats by Iran to block the Strait of Hormuz, through which a third of the world's gas and a fifth of its oil passes between the Arabian Gulf and consumers worldwide.

"There must be a swift and decisive response to the threat to energy supplies, market stability and consumer confidence, which is posed by recent terrorist acts in both the Arabian Sea and the Arabian Gulf against the major global energy supply chains," Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said.

"The Kingdom is committed to ensuring stability of global oil markets," he said in Japan at a meeting of energy ministers from the G20 group of nations.

Japanese Industry Minister Hiroshige Seko said ministers agreed on the need to "work together to deal with the recent incidents from energy security point of view."

Sheikh Abdullah called on world powers "to secure international navigation and access to energy," and urged a de-escalation of tensions. "We remain hopeful of attaining a broader framework for cooperation with Iran," he said at a summit in Bulgaria.

> **There must be a swift and decisive response to the threat to energy supplies, market stability and consumer confidence, which is posed by recent terrorist acts ... against the major global energy supply chains**
>
> **Khalid Al-Falih** Saudi energy minister

The GCC's Al-Zayani also described the attack as a "direct threat" to energy supplies. Oil prices have increased by 3.4 percent since Thursday's attacks, and ship insurers said insurance costs for ships sailing through the Middle East have also risen by at least 10 percent.

US Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan said the Pentagon was "planning various contingencies" to deal with the threat to international shipping, but the focus was on building an international consensus. "We also need to broaden our support for this international situation," he said.

Meanwhile the two stricken tankers — the Japanese-owned Kokuka Courageous and Norwegian-owned Front Altair — were being towed by tugs to port in the UAE.

Tehran has denied being responsible for the attacks on the two vessels, but US President Donald Trump has said the incident had Iran "written all over it."

The US has also accused Iran of sabotage attacks on May 12 on four tankers anchored in the Gulf of Oman off Fujairah.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an independent investigation. "It's important to know the truth, that responsibilities are clarified," he said. "Obviously that can only be done if there is an independent entity that verifies those facts."

Tanker attacks jolt oil-import dependent Asia Page 12

The Brief

FAKE NEWS IN EGYPT

Egypt is reported to have 4 to 6 million fake news pages on social media accounts, according to Ali Hosni, a top official at the Egyptian Interior Ministry. **P7**

AFGHAN PEACE PROCESS

President Ashraf Ghani said that a breakthrough in Afghanistan's peace process will require more time. He was speaking at the Bishkek conference. **P8**

CRYPTO PITFALLS

'I am bullish on the Saudi market prospects,' UAE-based entrepreneur David Sumner tells Arab News. He offers a timely lesson in avoiding the crypto pitfalls. **P11**

FAKE NEWS ALERT

Saudi sources deny 'unsubstantiated' reports of permitting alcohol

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has no plans to allow the sale or public consumption of alcohol, a senior government source has told Arab News.

The official with access to relevant decision-makers categorically denied "unsubstantiated" media reports in some international and regional news outlets.

"If you read the fake news, you will notice it is all based on hearsay and tweets by accounts known to have a questionable agenda when talking about the Kingdom," he said.

"As the country moves forward with its reform plans, we expect much speculation and attempts by critics to hold us back. And while people are allowed to speculate and criticize, their speculation should not be treated as the truth."

The Kingdom's tourism projects have included pop-up versions of international restaurants such as Signor Sassi, right, Nusr-Et and Nobu. None has served alcohol. AN photo

A second source at the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) also denied such reports. "The leadership has made it clear from day one; it is simply not happening," he told Arab News. "I have not heard of any plans to allow alcohol in major cities, free zones or new projects."

The SCTH is responsible for licensing and rating hotels and restaurants. Any plans for the sale or consumption of alcohol would have to go through the commission for implementation.

Saudi Arabia has witnessed substantial social reforms over the past three years, such as the curbing of the previously unchecked power of the religious police, reopening cinemas and allowing women to drive.

There has also been a major shift on previously prohibited public entertainment and gender mixing. International artists including Mariah Carey, Yanni, Andrea Bocelli, Enrique Iglesias and Black Eyed Peas have all performed.

Tourism projects have included pop-up versions of international restaurants such as Signor Sassi, Nusr-Et and Nobu. None has served alcohol.

"Officials have repeatedly said all changes were and will always be in line with Islamic teachings and traditions," the senior source told Arab News.

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No matter what the differences in our culture or religion may be, we all agree on the key humanitarian norms that constitute the framework of our natural law.

Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa
Secretary-general, Muslim World League

Radar

KSA *today*

Riyadh

Circo Americano

The circus is in town, bigger and better than ever. Catch thrilling acrobatic acts, hilarious clowns and more at the Circo Americano. The show takes place at the Big Top in Granada Square every day at 6 p.m. or 9:30 p.m. until June 23. Tickets are available from TicketingBoxOffice and range in price from SR50 ($13) to SR250.

Buraidah

Summer festival

Music, food and live shows are among the attractions for visitors to the Buraidah Summer Festival, which runs until the end of July from 6 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. in King Abdullah Park. The 45-day festival offers a range of fun activities to suit all ages.

Al-Baha

Flower festival

Nature lovers and garden enthusiasts will be delighted by the flower festival at Al-Baha National Wealth Park. Open every day from 9:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. until June 22, the free festival showcases an array of beautiful arrangements featuring the region's famous flowers, as well as vendors offering a selection of wares, including perfumes made from the flowers themselves.

Jeddah

Glow Garden

The Glow Garden is where art, technology and innovation combine to create a stunning outdoor light festival featuring sculptures, light fixtures and other artwork that mimic the underwater world of the Red Sea. The free Glow Garden takes place in Al-Hamra from 7 p.m. to 2 a.m. until July 18.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY

Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Walid bin Abdullah Bukhari met with a delegation of the Rally for Sovereignty of Lebanon. SPA

Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Walid bin Abdullah Bukhari met with a delegation of the "Rally for Sovereignty" led by its coordinator Naufal Daou at the Saudi Embassy in Beirut.

Speaking on behalf of the delegation, Daou valued the leading role of Saudi Arabia in confronting Iran and its policies aiming at destabilizing the region.

He assured the group's support to the Kingdom and its efforts to ward off these threats for the sake of the stability of the Arab region.

Bukhari briefed the delegation on the political, diplomatic and field developments witnessed in the past few days, expressing "the Kingdom's satisfaction with the political and field situations."

Earlier, the Saudi ambassador met with the former Lebanese Prime Minister Tammam Salam.

During the meeting, they reviewed the latest developments as well as the upcoming visit of the Saudi Shoura Council delegation to Beirut.

What's Trending

Today's hot topics explained by ***Ruba Obaid***

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

EgyBest

EgyBest was a top trending Google search on Saturday in Saudi Arabia.

EgyBest is one of the most-visited movie piracy websites in the world, and has relaunched with an alternative website after it was shut down a few weeks ago by the Egyptian government over copyright issues.

Fans from around the Arab world used to name the website "Netflix for the poor." The website's shutdown caused a huge reaction and people were expressing their frustrations online.

EgyBest2, the replacement, has been hailed by a number of other websites.

The new site offers a variety of Arab and foreign films alongside drama and sport without adverts for free, reports Sabah Egypt.

NETFLIX SERIES

Jinn

A new Arabic language series on Netflix has sparked uproar in the region, especially Jordan, after it was released on Thursday, June 13.

The series title topped Google searches and Twitter trending hashtags in several Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia.

It is the first-ever original Arabic series Netflix has produced. The five-episode show is a supernatural drama that switches between modern Amman's chaotic streets and the ancient ruins of Petra. It is directed by Lebanese filmmaker Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya and features prominent Middle Eastern talent.

It has caused huge controversy for alleged "lewd scenes." However, Netflix Middle East denounced the controversy on Twitter as a "wave of bullying."

@abrm96 said on Twitter: "Jinn series is the actual representation of 'western wannabes' in our society nowadays. I'm more disgusted with their opinions than the show itself."

@xzh_0 also tweeted: "They just did what they wanted ... which is wiping off all of the Arabic culture ... and make it like we don't have any identity, and we're just copying other culture ... shame on you."

Today's Number

40k

More than 40,000 people from all over Al-Qassim region flocked to Al-Basr Festival organized in Prince Faisal bin Mishal Park in Buraidah to enjoy its cultural, social and awareness activities, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday. Fifty new activities were introduced to meet the expectations of visitors, and satisfy the many interests and aspirations of families and young people, including preparation of traditional and international food in mobile restaurants, and making traditional handicrafts.

Who's Who

Saleh bin Manea Al-Khalewi

Saleh bin Manea Al-Khalewi has been a Saudi Shoura Council member since December 2016, and is a member of the Saudi-Jordanian Parliamentary Friendship Committee.

He is also chairman of the Arab Company for Drug Industry and Medical Appliances. He holds a bachelor's degree from Riyadh's King Saud University.

Al-Khalewi served as deputy minister of finance for central services, and as a specialist in foreign aid at the Finance Ministry.

He also served as director-general of the ministry's Department of International Development Cooperation, director-general of customs, and director-general of administrative and financial affairs at the ministry.

He has completed many courses in management and finance, and has participated on the boards of government institutions and companies, including as chairman.

A Shoura Council delegation headed by Al-Khalewi will begin an official visit to Jordan on Sunday. He said the visit will further strengthen Saudi-Jordanian ties.

"Our relationship is witnessing continuous development in various fields, strengthening cooperation and relations between the Shoura Council and the Jordanian Parliament Council and Senate," he added.

The Region

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Dubai

- Today is International Day of Family Remittances, as declared by the UN to recognize the contribution of over 200 million migrants to the improvement of the lives of their families in their home countries. Gulf countries are some of the biggest remitters in the world, owing to their huge expatriate communities.

- The Tahrir Cultural Center at the American University of Cairo is hosting a special screening of "Another Day of Life" by Raul De La Fuente and Damian Nenow.

- Opex Week Middle East: Business Transformation Leaders Summit opens today at the Le Royal Meridien Beach Resort and Spa in Dubai. The event, which runs until June 18, will feature top business figures from the region including high-ranking officials from companies like Takaful Insurance, Barclays and Dubai Airports.

- At the Qasr Al-Muwaiji, silent scenes portraying the people of the 20th century and their daily practices will be performed. The event will run until November this year.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

June 16	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:11	5:38	12:22	3:41	7:05	8:35
Madinah	4:02	5:32	12:23	3:43	7:12	8:42
Riyadh	3:33	5:04	11:54	3:15	6:44	8:14
Abha	4:10	5:34	12:11	3:34	6:48	8:18
Dammam	3:13	4:46	11:41	3:07	6:35	8:05

Spotlight

It is primarily the leadership of Saudi career oilmen that charted a path for Aramco to become the most profitable companyin the world today.

Ellen Wald
Author of 'Saudi, Inc.'

SAUDI ARABIA

Aramco's early Americans

The Kingdom's biggest asset has retained the dynamism of the US pioneers who first discovered oil

The drilling crew of Dammam Well No. 7 pose on the steps of the rig, where drilling for oil began in 1935. Three years later, oil was struck here on March 4, 1938. Saudi Aramco

Frank Kane Abu Dhabi

By March 1938, in the rocky desert around Dammam, Tom Barger and Max Steineke were men under pressure.

The two American geologists had been searching barren eastern Saudi Arabia for oil for three years, but the six wells they had drilled had yielded nothing. Their bosses at the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL), having sunk millions of dollars into the Saudi project, were losing patience.

American oil industry expert Ellen Wald writes in her book "Saudi, Inc." that well No. 7 in Dammam was proving especially troublesome. The rock was too hard, and even at a hard-won depth of 4,500 feet, none of the precious black stuff had materialized.

SOCAL bit the bullet with a telegram to the two geologists, ordering them not to drill any new wells. Enough was enough — there was no oil in Saudi Arabia, they had concluded.

Barger and Steineke had been led to Dammam by their Saudi guide Khamis ibn Rimthan, who must have had some kind of sixth sense about the rolling desert region. Steineke took the decision to drill a further 200 feet deeper — and suddenly the future of Saudi Arabia was unleashed.

On the first day, 1,500 barrels of crude gushed from No. 7. A few days later, it was at 4,000. When King Abdul Aziz ceremonially turned the spigot to let the oil flow through the new pipeline to Ras Tanura on the Gulf coast in 1939, Saudi Aramco was effectively born.

Today Saudi Aramco is the world's biggest oil exporter, but it is an extraordinary company in several ways. It is already the world's most profitable company; when it is listed on a stock market — planned for 2021 — it will be by far the most valuable company in the world; and it is sitting on one of the biggest recoverable reserves of oil on the planet.

Under Chairman Khalid Al-Falih and CEO Amin Nasser, Aramco has just set a record for the largest capital-raising exercise by an emerging market company with the $12 billion bond that attracted $100 billion of interest from global investors.

But it is unique in another way, too: it is the single biggest asset of the Kingdom, led by expert Saudi executives, but its origins are unmistakably American, and it has retained the dynamism and efficiency of a great US corporation.

Jamal Al-Kishi, CEO of Deutsche Bank in the region and an astute observer of international business affairs, said: "American companies and engineers worked assiduously to develop what is today Saudi Aramco, an undisputed global leader across the hydrocarbon value chain, run competently by Saudi nationals."

That Barger and Steineke were there at all in 1938 owes a lot to the vision of another American SOCAL man, Fred Davies, a Minnesotan who had been foraging around the Middle East for oil for most of the 1930s.

He and another American, Lloyd Hamilton, had been part of the SOCAL team that had negotiated the oil concession with King Abdul Aziz in 1933.

Perhaps the most vital contribution of the Americans to the Saudi oil industry is the development of Saudi local talent through education and training.

OIL PIONEERS

- **Karl S Twitchell (1885-1968): Mining engineer who evaluated Saudi Arabia for mineral and petroleum resources; crossed Arabian Peninsula to meet US geologists in 1933.**

- **Charles Crane (1858-1939): Plumbing tycoon who in 1931 introduced the King to Twitchell, who delivered positive outlook for oil.**

- **Stephen Bechtel (1900-1989): Engineer whose Bechtel Corporation built the Ras Tanura refinery, deep-water pier, power plants, airports, hospitals and infrastructure.**

For what now seems the ridiculously small sum of £35,000 ($44,000) in gold and a further £20,000 in 18 months, with £5,000 annually in rent and bigger royalty payments if oil was discovered in meaningful quantities, SOCAL had bought the rights to Saudi oil.

Aramco's profit last year amounted to $111 billion — proof that the Americans were on to a good thing 80 years ago.

By the end of World War II, Saudi Arabia was a valued oil exporter for the West, and the Arabian American Oil Company — Aramco for short — was already an engine for economic growth in the Kingdom. Wald calculates that in 1946 Aramco was providing more money to the Saudi treasury than it ever got from pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah, traditionally the Kingdom's big revenue stream.

All that was about to shift up several gears with the discovery in 1948 of the Ghawar, which is still the biggest single oil field in the world. The Americans called it "the field of dreams."

A crucial role in the economic development of Saudi Arabia was played by another big US corporation. Stephen Bechtel, whose family company had helped built the gigantic Hoover Dam in the USA, saw the opportunities and immediately traveled to Saudi Arabia for meetings with Aramco and with the King.

The result was a spree of development projects to enhance the oil industry but also modernize the Kingdom. A railroad was built to link the capital Riyadh with the oil-producing provinces; pipelines were laid to get the crude to export hubs on the Gulf coast; refining and processing facilities were built to handle the tidal wave of crude now flowing from Saudi wells.

The most ambitious project of all — the Trans Arabia Pipeline or Tapline — was built to bring crude overland to refineries and ports on Lebanon's Mediterranean coast, and thence to Europe.

Bechtel's work began to change the look of the traditional Kingdom. At Aramco's growing production HQ in Dhahran, American executives and engineers expected some of the comforts of home, and Bechtel built what is still referred to as "The Camp" — a little bit of suburban America, complete with porches, BBQs and cinemas, in the heart of Arabia.

Most of Bechtel's work was for Aramco, but the benefit was felt across Saudi society. Roads, power plants, desalination facilities, hospitals, schools and hotels all followed in a gigantic public works campaign.

By the 1970s, the global oil market had begin to change, and economic power was increasingly in the hands of the producers.

In a series of purchases, the Kingdom took control of Aramco, buying out the original American owners.

Although that was the end of American ownership, it was not the end of cooperation with the US oil industry. Modern-day Aramco still employs American experts, and has a huge presence in the American oil business.

Since the 1980s, the growth of Saudi Aramco into a global energy powerhouse has been led by Saudis, but that success owes a lot to its American heritage.

Deutsche Bank's Al-Kishi, who is one of the Kingdom's leading bankers, said: "Perhaps the most vital contribution the Americans have made to the Saudi oil industry and Saudi Arabia is the development of Saudi local talent through the establishment of educational and training centers in the Kingdom and the sponsorship of Saudi nationals in American higher education."

"The American corporate culture still runs through modern-day Aramco," Wald said to Arab News, highlighting the fact that many of the most influential leaders of the company since the 1970s were American-educated and trained, notably the former CEO Ali Al-Naimi.

"It is primarily the leadership of Saudi career oilmen like Al-Naimi and others," Wald said, "that charted a path for Saudi Aramco to become the most profitable company in the world today."

MILESTONES

1933
Oil concession agreement signed

1935
The first test well is drilled into the Dammam Dome

1937
Chief geologist Max Steineke (above) crosses Saudi Arabia for the first time

1938
Commercial quantities of oil discovered at Dammam Well No. 7

1939
First tanker load of petroleum exported

1940
Abqaiq field discovered

1947
Ras Tanura completes first year of operations

1949
Oil production hits 500,000 bpd

1950
The Tapline is completed

1951
Safaniya offshore oil field discovered

1958
Oil production exceeds 1m bpd annually

1976
First time production exceeded 3b barrels of oil in a year

1980
Saudi government concludes purchase of Aramco

1984
Ali Al-Naimi appointed company's first Saudi president

1995
Program completed to build 15 supertankers

2000
Research & Development Center opens

2015
Saudi Aramco pledges to reduce greenhouse gas intensity

SUSTAINABILITY

Kingdom celebrates Environment Day to beat air pollution

SPA Jubail

The Royal Commission for Jubail and Yanbu celebrated World Environment Day for the fifteenth time, with an event called "Beat Air Pollution," organized at Al-Fanateer Cultural Center in Jubail's industrial city.

The event included an environmental exhibition during which the commission recognized and rewarded companies with the best environmental performances in 2018.

"This event focuses on the environmental challenges facing industrial activities globally, which are considered a great source of pollution, as well as other factors that have a greater impact such as agriculture, transport, sand storms, volcanic eruptions and forest fires," said the director of the Royal Commission's Environmental Control Department, Owayed Al-Rashidi.

"The celebration aims at highlighting these experiences and spreading information regarding the role of industry in mitigating pollution," he added, noting "corporations in Jubail's industrial city have received numerous international prizes in the fields of sustainability and environmentalism.

"Jubail is home to a company that won the environmental initiative award after recycling 60,000 tons of waste in 2015. The commission values such companies and it will try to honor them and support sustainability in the city.

"Companies with the best environmental performance are all on the right path. They are resorting to the best modern technologies and respecting the Kingdom's environmental sustainability standards, which made it hard for us to reward some and not others.

"The commission has set environmental sustainability standards in order to improve technologies needed to recycle industrial waste, now considered a vital resource and a pillar of the national economy," Al-Rashidi continued.

"Industrial waste is now being used in 'downstream' industries. We currently have 10 companies that recycle industrial waste in Jubail, where we reached a recycling capacity of 56 percent in 2018, and we are seeking to raise it to 58 percent.

"The commission had an initiative registered with the National Transformation Program 2020 to recycle 57 percent of the industrial waste. In fact, we will achieve almost 60 percent, and will go even higher after 2020."

HIGHLIGHTS

- The theme for 2019, 'Beat Air Pollution,' is a call to combat this global crisis.
- The celebration of this day provides an opportunity to broaden the basis for an enlightened opinion and responsible conduct.
- Since it began in 1974, it has grown to become a global platform for public outreach that is widely celebrated in more than 100 countries.

Governorates of the region have introduced programs and activities aimed at visitors and tourists. SPA

HOSPITALITY

Asir's ancient villages revived under tourism plan

SPA Dhahran

A "Hospitality" initiative, implemented by Prince Turki bin Talal, governor of Asir region, under the slogan "Hello 1000," has restored ancient sites and villages to boost tourism in Asir.

Governorates of the region have introduced programs and activities aimed at visitors and tourists.

In Dhahran Al-Janoub governorate, officials and residents have focused on restoring ancient sites in the area, including the Elephant's Road, mountain inscriptions and archaeological villages.

Dhahran Al-Janoub Gov. Mohammed bin Falah Al-Qarqah, said that summer activities made the Hospitality initiative a basic pillar, and a starting point for all programs and events.

The municipality of Dhahran Al-Janoub has equipped the ancient palace on King Khalid Road to be the headquarters for all activities of the initiative. The palace contains a museum and a historic photo gallery.

Al-Qarqah said that large numbers of tourists are keen to visit the area, especially in summer.

A "Tourist Caravan" takes visitors to sites and archaeological villages every Tuesday, using special cars with tour guides.

The initiative includes a "Helping the Visitor" program implemented by Al-Bir Charity Association in Dhahran Al-Janoub to provide assistance to visitors in case of emergency, including financial aid, housing and transportation.

FASTFACT

Folklore and poetry evenings are also held every Monday evening during summer.

Road *to* 2030

Can we make money out of waste?

BASIL M.K. AL-GHALAYINI

Saudi Arabia has been witnessing rapid industrialization, high population growth rate and fast urbanization, resulting in increased levels of pollution and waste. Solid waste management is becoming a big challenge for the government and local bodies with each passing day, but the Kingdom is looking for solutions, which will alleviate the issue and create jobs and opportunities.

Saudi Arabia as the largest waste generator in the region (15 million metric tons a year, doubling by 2033). Much of its solid waste is organic matter, followed by paper and plastics. Solid waste management is becoming a big challenge in the largest cities — Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam. Jeddah alone produces 4.5 million tons of solid waste a year.

It is worth mentioning that municipal solid waste (MSW) in the country is collected from individual or community containers and sent to landfills after partial segregation and recycling. The major portion of collected waste ends up in landfills untreated.

Backed by ambitious targets for diverting waste away from these sites, the Saudi government is willing to do more about waste management in both the private and public sectors. This has led to a flurry of recent announcements regarding new legislation and initiatives to tackle the problem through a variety of means.

While some of these measures involve greater education and support for recycling at home, many of them are in direct support of "cleantech" investments, and the exploration of innovative new green waste management solutions.

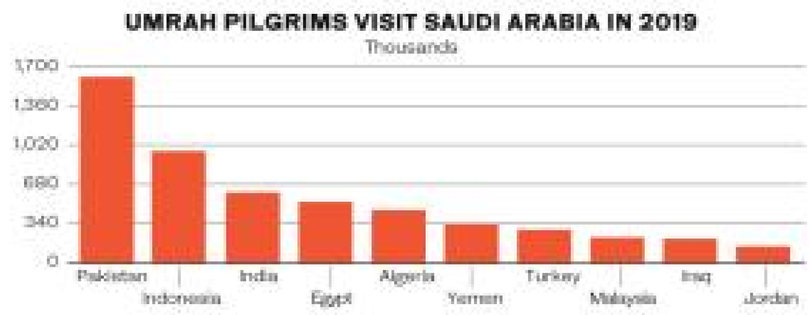
Recycling, reuse and energy recovery are still at an early stage. Waste sorting and recycling are driven by an active informal sector. Recycling activities are mostly manual and labor intensive. Composting is also gaining increased interest in Saudi Arabia due to the high organic content of MSW (around 40 percent).

Responding to this growing issue, in 2017 the Public Investment Fund established the Saudi Investment Recycling Co. (SIRC) to develop, own, operate and invest in various activities across all waste management in the Kingdom, including cutting-edge treatment and recycling facilities, and "waste to energy" solutions that will support the National Renewable Energy Program. In addition, SIRC will act as the national champion in the waste management sector by creating a range of opportunities for private sector participation, investing in companies and identifying opportunities to invest in and localize proven and scalable technologies.

Upgrading the sector will yield significant environmental, social and economic benefits for the Kingdom, as SIRC aims to contribute over SR37 billion ($10 billion) to gross domestic product, attracting up to SR6 billion in inward investments and creating around 23,000 new jobs by 2030.

Basil M.K. Al-Ghalayini is the Chairman and CEO of BMG Financial Group.

The Day's FIGURES



Source: SPA

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Protection

OIC to hold meeting on women's empowerment

The general secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Sunday will hold a meeting in Cairo to draft the internal regulations of its Women's Development Organization.

The meeting will be attended by experts from member states and relevant international and regional institutions, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Egypt has called for a ministerial-level roundtable on "empowering women in (OIC) members states" on Monday, with the participation of ministers of women's affairs.

They will discuss issues such as the role of women in combating extremism, women in decision-making positions, protection of women against all forms of violence, and women's economic empowerment, according to a statement by the OIC.

It is worth noting that the Women's Development Organization, based in Egypt, was established by virtue of a resolution of the 37th Session of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in 2010 as a specialized organization for the development and advancement of women and for building their capacities and skills in the member states. Until now, 12 states have ratified the statutes whose entry into force requires ratification by 15 states. **SPA Riyadh**

Strengthening ties

Saudi Shoura Council delegation to visit Jordan

A delegation from the Saudi Shoura Council, headed by Saleh bin Manea Al-Khalewi, member of the Saudi-Jordanian Parliamentary Friendship Committee, will begin an official visit to Jordan on Sunday.

Commenting on the visit, Al-Khalewi stated it would further strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

"Our relationship is witnessing continuous development in various fields, strengthening cooperation and relations between the Shoura Council and the Jordanian Parliament Council and Senate," he said.

Al-Khalewi added that the Shoura Council delegation would brief Jordanian officials on the Kingdom's Vision 2030 reform plan, as well as discuss various means of strengthening diplomatic and business relations between the two countries across the board.

The delegation will also meet members of the Saudi-Jordanian Parliamentary Fraternity Committee in the Jordanian House of Representatives, to discuss ways to arrange and utilize bilateral parliamentary committees between the Kingdom and Jordan, given the active role these committees play in pushing constructive policy in various fields to serve the common interests of the two countries and their peoples. **SPA Riyadh**

Border control

Over 3.32m held for residency, labor, border violations

More than 3.32 million violators of residency, work and border security systems have been arrested in an over one-year roundup, according to an official report.

Since the campaign began in November 2017, there have been 3,320,518 offenders, including 2,588,737 for violating residency regulations, 511,983 for labor violations and 219,798 for border violations, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

The report said that 55,897 people were arrested while trying to cross the border into the Kingdom, 49 percent of whom were Yemeni citizens, 48 percent were Ethiopians and 3 percent were of other nationalities.

2,458 people were arrested for trying to cross the border into neighboring countries and 3,918 were arrested for involvement in transporting and harboring those violators. 1,339 Saudi citizens were arrested for harboring the violators against local laws, of which 38 are being detained, pending the completion of procedures.

Immediate penalties were imposed against 478,179 offenders; 434,594 were transferred to their respective diplomatic missions to obtain travel documents; 552,362 were transferred to complete their travel reservations; and 826,144 were deported. **SPA Riyadh**

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Chief conductor Pietro Mianiti leads the Orchestra of the Teatro Alla Scala Academy in 'An Italian Opera Journey.' Photo/Supplied

WORLD-CLASS ENTERTAINMENT

World-famous Italian opera house orchestra debuts in Kingdom

Hala Tashkandi Riyadh

Residents in Riyadh were treated on Friday to some of the best that Italian opera had to offer, with a performance by the symphony orchestra of the Teatro Alla Scala Academy, which made its debut in Saudi Arabia.

La Scala is one of the most famous opera houses in the world, dating back almost 250 years.

The academy offers world-class training in all disciplines of symphony, opera and ballet, under the supervision of famous musicians.

Organized by the Saudi Culture Ministry, "An Italian Opera Journey" took place at the King Fahd Cultural Center.

Only registration was required to attend the free event, which sold out almost instantly, with 3,000 music lovers, artists and poets enjoying an hour of beautiful tributes to classical music.

The show opened with a surprise performance of the Kingdom's national anthem by Saudi opera singer Sawsan Al-Bahiti, who received a standing ovation for her rendition.

Al-Bahiti was invited by the ministry to perform at the event as part of its efforts to showcase national talents.

The orchestra was conducted by maestro Pietro Mianetti, and featured performances by soprano Francisca Manzo and tenor Ricardo Della Sciucca.

Some of the most iconic pieces from 19th-century Italian opera were performed.

At the end of the show, a standing ovation led to an encore.

Deputy Culture Minister Hamed Fayez took to Twitter to express how much he enjoyed the evening.

"A beautiful night spent with the esteemed La Scala opera at the King Fahd Cultural Center in Riyadh, amidst a wonderful crowd, with an exceptional performance from our Italian guests," he tweeted, posting photos. The performance is one of the ministry's efforts to attract high-quality artistic events that enrich the Saudi cultural landscape and enhance quality of life.

The Kingdom's first opera house will be built in Jeddah, and is scheduled for completion in 2022.

The institution aims to become the new home of a Saudi resident orchestra.

The Kingdom has also seen the opening of a music institute by famed Egyptian violinist Mahmoud Sorour, with a second music institute in the works.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The show opened with a surprise performance of the Kingdom's national anthem by Saudi opera singer Sawsan Al-Bahiti, who received a standing ovation for her rendition.
- Al-Bahiti was invited by the Saudi Culture Ministry to perform at the event as part of its efforts to showcase national talents.

NUMBER

3,000

music lovers, artists and poets enjoyed an hour of beautiful tributes to classical music in Riyadh.

JEDDAH SEASON

Kanz Al-Balad, Al-Ozwa Street Performance enthrall visitors

Arab News Jeddah

The 40-day Jeddah Season festival is currently underway, with the launch of a schedule of international shows and plays being presented for the first time in Saudi Arabia.

The festival, which began on June 8 and runs until July 18, forms part of a major drive to boost tourism in the Kingdom.

Most of the festival's events are taking place at King Abdullah Sports City, Jeddah's historical area, Al-Hamra Corniche and the Jeddah Waterfront.

Among the events is the Kanz Al-Balad scavenger hunt for families and children, with 41 shows lined up for the duration of the festival.

Kanz Al-Balad is organized daily at Bab Jadeed from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., and is aimed at helping participants learn more about Jeddah, interact with businesses, and improve their creativity and problem-solving skills.

Participants are split into teams, and are tasked with finding hidden objects or places with the help of clues.

Kanz Al-Balad takes visitors on a historical journey through Jeddah's Al-Balad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

For comedy and history lovers, Al-Ozwa Street Performance is a must. There are four 45-minute shows daily until the end of the festival.

The interactive play, set 100 years ago, is about a young man named Omar who is preparing for his engagement ceremony, and encounters a dilemma unrelated to his engagement.

He needs the audience's help to get him out of the trouble he is in, and to have a problem-free engagement ceremony. Show timings are 6:15 p.m., 7:30 p.m., 8:45 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Raed Abuzinada, general supervisor of Jeddah Season, said the festival is part of a national initiative to promote the tourism sector, which is a major contributor to the Saudi economy.

Visitors buying tickets online for any of the festival's events can secure an e-tourism visa at the same time, he added. The visa will be issued within three minutes, he said. Details are at www.sharek.com.sa.

Kanz Al-Balad will take place at Bab Jadeed of Historic Jeddah Season. Photo/Supplied

ELECTRIC CARS COMPETITION

Sixth season of Formula E to start in Ad Diriyah in November

SPA Riyadh

FIA World Motor Sport Council revealed on Saturday that the 2019 Saudia Ad Diriyah E Prix will kick off the new season on Nov. 22 and 23, 2019, on the outskirts of Riyadh.

The electric cars competition, organized by the FIA and the Saudi Arabia General Sport Authority (GSA), will witness two rounds as part of the sixth ABB FIA Formula E competition, out of 14 organized in 12 cities on four different continents including, Santiago, Mexico City, Hong Kong, Rome, Paris, Berlin, New York, and London and Seoul, which were recently added.

Alberto Longo, vice CEO of Formula E, said that the upcoming season will be one of the most exciting in the short history of the competition.

He also welcomed Mercedes Benz and Porsche to the list of competitors, and Seoul and London to the competition's venues.

He said that the present season is about to end with three more rounds to go, and that there is a fierce competition for the title.

CHAMPIONSHIP PROGRAM

- Nov. 22: Ad Diriyah, Saudi Arabia
- Nov. 23: Ad Diriyah, Saudi Arabia
- Dec. 14: TBA
- Jan. 18, 2020: Santiago, Chile
- Feb. 15, 2020: Mexico City, Mexico
- March 1, 2020: Hong Kong, China
- March 21, 2020: TBA — China
- April 4, 2020: Rome, Italy
- 9 April 18, 2020: Paris, France
- 10 May 3, 2020: Seoul, S. Korea
- 11 May 30, 2020: Berlin, Germany
- 12 June 20, 2020: New York, US
- 13 July 25, 2020: London, UK
- 14 July 26, 2020: London, UK

In Syria, who are the regime's guarantors? Russia and Iran.
Mevlut Cavusoglu
Foreign Minister

FLARE-UP

35 fighters, 10 civilians die as clashes intensify in Syria

Russian-backed regime forces try to retake villages seized by opposition forces and allied fighters

AFP Beirut

At least 10 civilians and 35 combatants, mostly pro-regime forces, were killed on Saturday in clashes and airstrikes that erupted at dawn in northwestern Syria, a war monitor said.

The flare-up came as Russian-backed regime forces tried to retake two villages seized by opposition forces and allied fighters earlier this month, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"Since this morning, the Syrian regime and allied fighters have launched five failed attempts to regain control of Jibine and Tal Maleh in northwestern Hama province," said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman.

Syrian regime airstrikes killed nine opposition fighters, the war monitor said.

Ensuing clashes in the north of Hama province left 26 pro-regime forces dead, including eight who were killed in a mine explosion, the Observatory said.

In neighboring Idlib, regime airstrikes killed 10 civilians, including three children, the Observatory said.

The strikes hit the towns of Maaret Al-Numan and Al-Bara as well as the village of Al-Ftira, according to the war monitor.

The Idlib region of some 3 million people is supposed to be protected from a massive regime offensive by a buffer zone deal that Russia and Turkey signed in September.

But it was never fully implemented, as opposition refused to withdraw from a planned demilitarized zone.

In January, the Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham alliance led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate extended its administrative control over the region, which includes most of Idlib province as well as adjacent slivers of Latakia, Hama and Aleppo provinces.

The Syrian regime and Russia have upped their bombardment of the region since late April, killing nearly 400 civilians, according to the Observatory.

Since this morning, the Syrian regime and allied fighters have launched five failed attempts to regain control of Jibine and Tal Maleh in northwestern Hama province.
Rami Abdel Rahman
Syrian Observatory for Human Rights chief

Turkey said on Friday that it did not accept Russia's "excuse" that it had no ability to stop the Syrian regime's continued bombardments in the last opposition bastion of Idlib.

"In Syria, who are the regime's guarantors? Russia and Iran," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told state news agency Anadolu in a televised interview.

"Thus we do not accept the excuse that 'We cannot make the regime listen to us'," he said.

Damaged and destroyed buildings in the town of Ihsim, in Syria's Idlib region, on Friday. AFP

IGNITING TENSIONS

Mortar attack on Iraqi base home to US troops; no casualties

AP Baghdad

Militants in Iraq fired three mortar shells early Saturday into an air base just north of Baghdad where American trainers are present, causing no casualties, the Iraqi military said.

The military statement said the attack on Balad Air Base caused small fires in bushes on the base, which were extinguished immediately.

An Iraqi army general said the attack occurred shortly after midnight on Friday. The senior officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said American trainers are stationed at Balad Air Base.

The attack comes amid rising tensions in the Middle East between the US and Iran, which ratcheted up on Thursday after suspected attacks on two oil tankers near the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Iran has denied involvement.

Last month, a rocket exploded less than a mile away from the sprawling US Embassy in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, also causing no casualties.

SPEEDREAD

- **The attack comes amid rising tensions in the Middle East between the US and Iran, which ratcheted up on Thursday after suspected attacks on two oil tankers near the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Iran has denied involvement.**
- **Last month, a rocket exploded less than a mile away from the sprawling US Embassy in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, also causing no casualties.**
- **There have been concerns that Baghdad could once again get caught in the middle, just as it is on the path to recovery.**

On Friday night, a rocket struck a home in Baghdad's Jadriyah neighborhood causing material damage, the Iraqi military said.

The military did not say if the rocket had fallen short before reaching the Green Zone, which is located on the other side of the Tigris River.

Like neighboring Iran, Iraq is a Shiite-majority country, and has been trying to maintain a fine line between allies Tehran and Washington.

There have been concerns that Baghdad could once again get caught in the middle, just as it is on the path to recovery. The country hosts more than 5,000 US troops, and is home to powerful Iranian-backed militias, some of whom want those US forces to leave.

The current regional crisis is rooted in the US withdrawal last year from the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers. Washington subsequently reimposed sanctions on Iran, sending its economy into freefall.

American forces withdrew from Iraq in 2011 but returned in 2014 at the invitation of Iraq to help battle the Daesh group after it seized vast areas in the north and west of the country, including Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul.

A US-led coalition provided crucial air support as Iraqi forces regrouped and drove Daesh out in a costly three-year campaign. Iranian-backed militias fought alongside US-backed Iraqi troops against Daesh, gaining outsized influence and power.

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EMPOWERING IRAQ

US allows Iraq to import Iranian energy for three more months

Reuters, AP Baghdad

The US has allowed Iraq to import Iranian gas for its power grid for another three months by extending a waiver to sanctions — but insists that Baghdad seek alternative sources.

Two Iraqi officials said the US has given Baghdad a new 90-day extension for an Iran sanctions waiver allowing the country to import electricity and natural gas from Tehran.

Iraq has had several extensions to the waiver first granted last year after Washington reimposed sanctions on Tehran's oil sector forbidding countries from purchasing Iranian energy.

An Iraqi official said that Baghdad was informed about the waiver during a call the previous day between US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi. The State Department said the US continued to insist on "diversifying energy imports away from Iran," however.

President Donald Trump's administration has said oil-rich Iraq must become more self-reliant for its electricity, including by harnessing gas energy and reducing flaring at oil production sites.

HIGHLIGHT

Iraq has had several extensions to the waiver first granted last year after Washington reimposed sanctions on Tehran's oil sector forbidding countries from purchasing Iranian energy.

US energy giant General Electric is in the running to win a large share of multibillion-dollar contracts to rebuild Iraq's electricity system amid intense US lobbying efforts.

Sanctions

Washington reimposed sanctions on Iran's oil industry in November, citing concerns about its nuclear program and what it said was its meddling in the Middle East. Iraqi officials have said they might need years to wean the country of Iranian power.

Iraq relies heavily on Iranian gas to feed several power stations, importing roughly 1.5 billion standard cubic feet per day via pipelines in the south and east.

Washington wants to roll back Iranian influence in the Middle East, including in Iraq, where Tehran holds broad sway over politics and trade.

Although Iraq has one of the world's largest natural gas reserves, it has moved slowly to develop them and has relied on Iran to supply it with gas and electricity. Another official confirmed the waiver, saying it will start June 19.

Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Iraq's power sector is in disrepair and does not generate enough electricity to meet domestic demand, especially during the scorching summer months.

Iraq has received one waiver after another since US sanctions on Iran went into effect in November.

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FACING JUSTICE

Sudan's Bashir to appear in court on graft charge

Sudan says military council suspends decree on UN premises

AFP Khartoum

Ousted Sudanese leader Omar Al-Bashir will appear in court next week to face charges of corruption and possessing foreign currency, the country's acting prosecutor general told reporters on Saturday.

The announcement came more than two months after the military overthrew Bashir on April 11 following months of nationwide protests against his 30-year iron-fisted rule.

Bashir "will appear in court next week following charges of corruption and possessing foreign currency," Al-Waleed Sayyed Ahmed said, without specifying the day.

He added that the investigation launched against Bashir for the charges had been completed.

On Thursday, an unnamed Sudanese official was quoted by the official SUNA news agency as saying Bashir was facing charges including "possessing foreign funds, acquiring suspected and illegal wealth and ordering (the state of) emergency." Bashir swept to power in a coup in 1989.

Sudan suffered high rates of corruption during his rule, ranking 172 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Last month, Ahmed ordered Bashir questioned over money laundering and "financing terrorism." In an effort to quell protests that erupted against his rule in December, Bashir imposed a nationwide state of emergency on Feb. 22.

In May, the prosecutor general said that Bashir had been charged over the killings of protesters during those anti-regime demonstrations, which eventually led to his ouster.

Ahmed also said on Saturday that 41 other charges against "symbols of the ousted regime" were under investigation.

He did not name the others accused but said most of the charges were related to the "possession of land."

Separately, Sudan's Transitional Military Council (TMC) has suspended implementation of a decree demanding that the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur hand over its premises as part of its withdrawal next year, a Sudanese diplomat said on Friday.

Omer Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed told the UN Security Council that the TMC also decided on Thursday to withdraw all armed forces and other security forces from sites the government has already received from the peacekeeping force known as UNAMID.

Limited freedom in the occupied land Palestinian men, women and children gather on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea in Gaza city on Friday. AFP

BETRAYING TRUST

Egypt reported to have 4-6m fake news pages

'The fake accounts ... are usually not owned by Egyptians, but by foreigners'

Arab News Cairo

Egypt is reported to have 4 to 6 million fake news pages on social media accounts, according to Ali Hosni, undersecretary at of the General Directorate of Information and Relations at the Egyptian Interior Ministry.

The fake accounts, made to spread false information, are usually not owned by Egyptians, but by foreigners, he added.

Egypt has faced a flood of false rumors on an almost weekly basis, with claims such as that a newly appointed minister was in fact dead, or that of a girl kidnapped in the Beheira, who turned out to have runaway to avoid taking her exams.

According to a recent global survey, 86 percent of internet users have admitted that they have fallen for fake news online. The survey also showed that Egyptians were the most gullible in terms of fake news.

Prohibitory step

The government passed a law prohibiting fake news in an attempt to control the problem. The law, passed in July 2018, states that social media accounts with over 5,000 followers will be treated as media outlets, and their owners could be subjected to fines or prison for spreading fake news.

NUMBER

86%

of global internet users have admitted that they fell for online fake news, according to a recent global survey.

Responses to the law were skeptical, as people wondered what defined fake news, while others found the law to be vague. With the global survey's results, it can be presumed that the 2018 fake news law did not have too much of an impact.

There have been multiple reports of social media accounts masquerading as officials and in Egypt turning out to be fake. One, the page for Education Minister Mahmoud Abo Nasr, had 80,000 Facebook followers on it — his genuine official page had only 55,000 followers.

BOMB BLAST AND REVENGE ATTACK

Deadly incidents leave nine civilians, many policemen dead in Somalia

AFP, Reuters Mogadishu, Nairobi

Nine civilians were executed by a local militia in war-torn Somalia after the killing of a policeman by the militant group Al-Shabab, police said on Saturday.

Separately, a roadside bomb hit a police vehicle patrolling near Kenya's border with Somalia, killing several of the 11 officers inside, a police spokesman said.

Exact casualty figures from Saturday's patrol attack were still unclear, police spokesman Charles Owino told Reuters. Both attacks were claimed by Somali insurgents who also kidnapped three Kenyan police reservists on Friday from the same area in Wajir district in northeast Kenya.

The revenge attack on Friday just outside Galkayo — one of the most developed cities in the center of the country — targeted the Rahanweyn clan, several of whose members are suspected of being Al-Shabab militants.

"This was a horrible incident, a gruesome killing against nine unarmed innocent civilians in southern Galkayo. All of the civilians belong to one clan and the gunmen shot them dead in one location a few minutes after suspected Al-Shabab gunmen killed" a policeman, Mohamed Abdirahman, a local police official said.

"This is an unacceptable act and we will bring those perpetrators to justice," said Hussein Dini, a traditional elder.

Security forces stand near the wreckage of an official vehicle that was destroyed in a bomb attack in the capital Mogadishu, Somalia, on Saturday. AP

SPEEDREAD

The local militia which staged the revenge attack are from the Saad Habargidir, a sub-clan of the Hawiye group which is dominant in the southern part of the city.

"Their killing cannot be justified. It seems that the merciless gunmen were retaliating for the security official who they believe was killed by Al-Shabab gunmen belonging to the clan of the victims."

Fomenting instability

Witnesses told local media that the victims were rounded up from the streets or their homes and then shot dead on the outskirts of Galkayo. Local officials have in the past fingered the Rahanweyn clan for fomenting instability in the region and supplying militants to Al-Shabab.

The local militia which staged the revenge attack are from the Saad Habargidir, a sub-clan of the Hawiye group which is dominant in the southern part of the city.

Galkayo, situated about 600 km north of the capital Mogadishu, straddles the frontier with the self-proclaimed autonomous regions of Puntland and Galmudug.

The city has been the scene of violent clashes between forces of the two regions in recent years and also witnessed violence between the two rival clans occupying its northern and southern districts.

'BURDEN-SHARING'

South Europe summit calls for 'fair' migrant distribution

AFP Valletta/Malta, Tunis

Southern European leaders called for a fair distribution of migrants arriving from across the Mediterranean as the latest NGO boat carrying rescued families was denied a safe port by Italy.

The leaders of Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain said on Friday the EU should "guarantee effective implementation of the principle of solidarity and fair burden-sharing between member states."

A joint declaration at the end of the summit in Valletta also said "efforts to break the smugglers' business model need to be further enhanced, with the aim to also prevent tragic loss of life."

A day earlier, dozens of migrants rescued in international waters off Tunisia are still stranded 15 days later as authorities refuse to allow the boat carrying them to access a nearby port, the UN said late Friday.

Egyptian tugboat Maridive 601 rescued 75 migrants off the southern Tunisian coast in late May after they embarked from Libya, a key launchpad for sub-Saharan Africans making dangerous bids to reach Europe by sea.

The vessel has been anchored since May 31 off the southern port of Zarzis, where authorities have refused to allow the vessel to dock despite an appeal by the boat's captain.

The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Friday that the vessel's owners have since been providing those aboard with food and water.

Tunisian officials contacted by AFP refused to comment on the situation, although an Interior Ministry official said last week, on condition of anonymity, that "the migrants want to be welcomed by a European country."

Humanitarian groups say Tunisia, which has already received several hundred migrants since the start of the year, is reluctant to take on more new arrivals, demanding that they agree to be repatriated before being allowed to enter Tunisian territory.

FASTFACT

Dozens of migrants rescued in international waters off Tunisia are still stranded 15 days later.

News International

Amanda Knox, who has returned to Italy for the first time since being cleared of the murder of British student Meredith Kercher, cries as she speaks at the Criminal Justice Festival in Modena, Italy.

ROW ESCALATES

Boat sinking 'signals new offensive' by China, says Filipino judge

Ellie Aben Manila

A leading Philippines judge has described the sinking of a Filipino fishing boat by a Chinese vessel as a "quantum escalation" of Beijing's aggression in the South China Sea.

Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio late on Friday said it was highly likely a Chinese maritime militia vessel had rammed the Filipino fishing boat F/B Gimver 1 on June 9 in Recto Bank.

Carpio warned that the incident "may signal the start of a new 'gray zone' offensive by China to drive away Filipino fishing vessels in the West Philippines Sea (South China Sea) in the same way that the Chinese are driving away Vietnamese fishing vessels in the Paracel Islands."

"The Filipino people must send a strong signal to China that any new 'grey zone' offensive of ramming Filipino fishing vessels in the West Philippines Sea will mean a break of diplomatic ties with China," he said.

The Philippines must take a strong stand against China's latest aggressive act and demand compensation for the owner of the fishing vessel as well as punishment for the captain and crew of the Chinese vessel, he said.

Ready to save the world Visitors in Star Wars costumes pose in front of a Hercules aircraft during German Armed Forces Day at Fassberg Air Base, northern Germany. AFP

IN SEARCH OF PEACE

No quick breakthrough in Taliban talks, warns Ghani

Afghan president says deal not possible without a 'regional consensus'

Sayed Salahuddin Kabul

President Ashraf Ghani said late on Friday that a breakthrough in Afghanistan's peace process will require more time.

"We consider the US commitment to a political solution to be credible and are coordinating to build the necessary international consensus on peace. But without a regional consensus on peace and addressing Taliban's interdependencies with their supporters, breakthroughs will take time," Ghani said.

Ghani made the comments on Friday at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. His remarks are his first in public since a series of talks between US special envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Taliban emissaries held in recent months in Qatar.

Afghan government delegates were excluded from the discussions because the Taliban consider Ghani's administration a puppet of the West.

Khalilzad is in Afghanistan hoping to revive talks between the Taliban and other Afghans, including government delegates, after Ghani called off such a gathering in April in Qatar. Ghani summoned a grand traditional assembly, or Loya Jirga, afterwards in Kabul to set a mechanism for talks with the Taliban.

In Bishkek, Ghani said his government's mandate for seeking peace with the Taliban comes from the 23-point resolution of the Jirga.

HIGHLIGHT

Ghani said that although the Afghan war is multi-dimensional, reaching a peace agreement with the Taliban is a key component for the reduction of violence.

He said that "although the Afghan war is multi-dimensional, reaching a peace agreement with the Taliban is a key component for the reduction of violence."

Ghani put forward four proposals for an Afghan peace deal. It includes the formation of a regional and international coalition for peace and the creation of a regional task force to develop bankable programs and projects for regional connectivity and poverty reduction.

He said dealing with drugs as a driver of conflict and criminality should be comprehensively addressed within the peace-making and peace-building framework. Agreeing to a regional framework for fighting terrorism was also essential.

Ghani said his government will hold the presidential elections on Sept. 28, which have been delayed twice so far. Some of Ghani's rivals accuse him of using government resources in his favor for the poll, while other politicians, including Khalilzad, favor postponing the poll until the talks with Taliban have finished so that the latter can also take part in the elections.

Jamaludin Badar, a former governor who is a member of the government-appointed High Peace Council, said that, given the regional and international involvement in Afghanistan's long war and the complication of the conflict, headway cannot been expected soon in the talks.

"There are countries in the region and beyond who want their interest to be protected in Afghanistan post the peace deal," he told Arab News. "So it is natural for the peace process to drag on and on. These countries have a consensus on ending the war, but not on their interests and future involvement here."

Nazar Mohammad Mutmaeen, an analyst, said: "Ghani wants to remain in power for another five years and makes different comments at different juncture of time. The Taliban do not trust Ghani ... and there is no possibility of any compromise between Ghani and the Taliban."

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Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Criminal negligence

7 die cleaning Indian hotel septic tank

Seven people have suffocated to death while cleaning a hotel septic tank in western India without safety gear, police said Saturday.

The hotel owner has been charged with causing death due to negligence following the incident on Friday night in Gujarat state's Vadodara district, a police official said.

Four of those who died had been called to clean the tank while three others were hotel employees who were assisting.

Hundreds of thousands of mostly low-caste Indians are employed as "manual scavengers" who clear underground pipes and septic tanks without any protective gear or masks. AFP

Major climbdown

HK leader halts extradition bill as fresh rally planned

Hong Kong's embattled leader on Saturday suspended a hugely divisive bill that would allow extraditions to China, in a major climbdown following unprecedented unrest, but protesters vowed to press ahead with a mass Sunday rally.

The concession from chief executive Carrie Lam was swiftly rejected by protest leaders, who called on her to resign, permanently shelve the bill and apologize for police tactics.

The finance hub was rocked by the worst political violence since its 1997 handover to China on Wednesday as tens of thousands of protesters were dispersed by riot police firing tear gas and rubber bullets. AFP

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Spectator Index

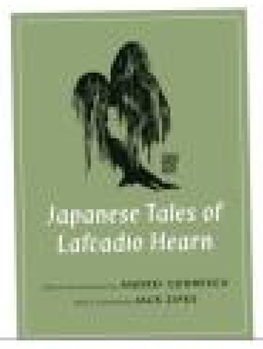
What We Are Reading Today

FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

Japanese Tales of Lafcadio Hearn

INTRODUCED, EDITED BY ANDREI CODRESCU

Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904) was one of the 19th century's best-known writers, his name celebrated alongside those of Mark Twain and Robert Louis Stevenson. Born in Greece and raised in Ireland, Hearn was a true prodigy and world traveler. He worked as a reporter in Cincinnati, New Orleans, and the West Indies before heading to Japan in 1890 on a commission from Harper's. There, he married a Japanese woman from a samurai family, changed his name to Koizumi Yakumo, and became a Japanese subject. An avid collector of traditional Japanese tales, legends, and myths, Hearn taught literature and wrote his own tales for both Japanese and Western audiences. Japanese Tales of Lafcadio Hearn brings together 28 of Hearn's strangest and most entertaining stories in one elegant volume. Hearn's tales span a variety of genres. Many are fantastical ghost stories, such as "The Corpse-Rider," in which a man foils the attempts of his former wife's ghost to haunt him.



Throughout this collection, Hearn's reverence for Japan shines through, and his stories provide insights into the country's artistic and cultural heritage.

Pakistan embarrassed

Press conference livestreamed with cat filters on

A politician in northwestern Pakistan was given paws for thought after his press conference was streamed live on Facebook with the "cat filter" turned on, giving him on-screen whiskers and ears.

The online stream of regional minister Shaukat Yousafzai speaking with journalists went viral on Friday after a member of his social media team accidentally activated the filter on the social network.

Comments started pouring in as Facebook users noticed pink cat-like ears and whiskers had appeared on the heads of the minister and two accompanying officials.

There's "a cat in the cabinet" one said. Others were more literal: "Shaukat Yousafzai looks like a cat — Meow meow meow." AFP

War against terror

Maldives seeks foreign help to deal with Daesh

The Maldives on Saturday called for international help to rehabilitate up to 160 of its nationals languishing in Syrian detention camps after the defeat of Daesh.

Speaker Mohamed Nasheed said the Maldives kept a close tab on citizens who had joined the militant group, but that the island nation was not ready to accept them back without an internationally supervised reintegration program.

Visiting neighbouring Sri Lanka where 258 people were killed in terror attacks recently, Nasheed said the question of foreign Daesh fighters in Syria should be addressed as a global issue.

As many as 160 Maldivians are thought to be held in detention camps after the fall of Daesh in March. AFP

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والله ما تركتُ النادرة ولو قتلتني في الدنيا
وأدخلتني النارَ في الآخرة
(الجاحظ)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

I swear to God that I never shun a funny or interesting anecdote, even if it would lead to my death in this life or send me to hell in the hereafter!

Al-Jahiz
(Islamic theologian, intellectual and literateur)

Opinion

Three things Western analysts get wrong about the Mideast

SIR JOHN JENKINS

In 1870, that great Victorian, John Henry Newman, published his "Grammar of Assent." It was — and is — a justification for religious faith in a skeptical world.

My aim is less noble: To provide the outlines of a "Grammar of Dissent" — a justification for skepticism about many claims commonly made by Western commentators about the recent history of the Middle East and North Africa.

It has become almost standard for anyone who wants to criticize US policy on Iraq or Iran, or the actions of some regional states, to create "straw men." In other words, they attribute positions or beliefs to Western states or individual commentators that they then proceed to discredit and so — as if producing a rabbit from a conjuror's hat — win an argument rigged in their favor. This is disreputable. Here are some examples.

1. "Many of the problems in Iraq today lie in the US decision in 2010 to withdraw its troops."

This is the classic straw man argument. It is used to criticize presidents Obama and Trump together — but for entirely the wrong reasons.

The US would have liked to keep troops in Iraq for training and support, but Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki would not allow any further extension of the Status of Forces Agreement.

The Iranians wanted Al-Maliki to ensure the removal of all Western troops in return for their support in his bid to overturn the election victory of Dr. Iyad Al-Allawi's Iraqiyya list. He had already made it clear that the British would not get an extension to their agreement.

In any case, it is not obvious what Britain or the US could have done even with troops on the ground, given Al-Maliki's increasing authoritarianism and his decision to replace virtually all divisional military commanders with incompetent loyalists (a large part of the reason for the collapse of the Iraqi military five years later).

The real problem was political, letting Al-Maliki get away with the theft of the elections, which left in charge of Iraq a man driven not by concern for the national interest but a vindictive sectarianism, benefiting himself and Iran above all.

2. "Hawks in Washington and elsewhere think Hezbollah, the Houthis and the Shiite militias in Iraq are no more than puppets of Iran."

We all know the truth is much more complex. However, they all share an underlying ideological orientation; they are committed Shiite Islamists who ultimately want to overthrow what they consider an unjust and illegitimate colonial order in the Middle East to usher in the "reign of the saints," or more precisely the reign of the qualified Shiite jurisprudent who will act as the regent of the imam on earth.

Iran is the state where that doctrine arose, which adopted it as its governing principle and which claims to be the protector of Shiites everywhere, providing national Shiite movements with funding, military support and political cover. Everything Hezbollah does suggests that it is determined to harness this for its own purposes and to undermine any potential rivals to continue to benefit exclusively from Iranian support.

Sir John Jenkins is a senior fellow at Policy Exchange. Until December 2017, he was corresponding director (Middle East) at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Manama, Bahrain, and was a senior fellow at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs. He was the British ambassador to Saudi Arabia until January 2015.

In return, if Iran were attacked (which I very much hope does not happen; though Tehran continues to provoke, as we saw again last week), do I think Hezbollah would attack Israel? You bet I do. Do I think this serves Hezbollah's interests or those of the Lebanese Shiites as a whole? You bet I do not. Do I think they would do it because Iran wanted them to do so? You bet I do.

Equally, do I think the Da'wah party in Iraq is an Iranian tool? No. It grew out of clerical circles in Najaf in the late 1950s. But it has changed over the years and Iran's patronage has become much more significant.

The Houthi relationship with Iran, too, has evolved over the years. The current conflict in Yemen gives them an opportunity to cause trouble for everyone. Iran likes that, Iran helps them, and that helps Iran.

This particular straw man is, of course, designed to discredit anyone who claims that Iran-aligned Shiite militias are a problem, by suggesting that they are better understood on their own terms in a national, rather than an international, context. But what can "on their own terms" mean when most of them openly admit to their close connections with Iran and their loyalty to the supreme leader? Puppetry is, after all, a highly skilled art, designed to remain invisible.

3. "The Muslim Brotherhood is a moderate and democratic movement, forced into extremes by oppression."

I have lost count of the times this argument has been made to justify support for Islamists in Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, Turkey and in exile. Imprisoning, torturing and killing people for their political beliefs is wrong. Period. But you cannot have it both ways. You cannot say Egypt's political system (or Jordan's or Kuwait's or Morocco's) has been rigged for years and is a fake democracy, and then say that the Brotherhood, which has played those systems since the 1970s, is a democratic party. It has simply learned to pretend very well.

Between 2011 and 2013, the Brotherhood thought its moment had come. It had not, any more than it had in 1953. While they are good at playing games, when reality hits, they do not know what they are doing.

In the end, all these straw men arguments are meant to discredit those who believe that what is happening in the region is a struggle for its future — not between freedom and oppression, but between oppression in the name of God or sect and what Ibn Khaldun or Al-Mawardi would have recognized as a form of government dealing with the problems of this world with due respect for the divine but a profound understanding that human problems are for human ingenuity to solve.

It is going to be messy. But to adapt the Brotherhood's slogan, al 'aql – huwa al hall.

It has become almost standard for anyone who wants to criticize US policy on Iraq or Iran, or the actions of some regional states, to create 'straw men'

COURTESY: ANWAR RAMMAL/ASHARQ AL-AWSAT

This year's event could be especially memorable given the possibility of tensions easing or escalating significantly between Trump and Xi

Why the G20 summit in Japan may be a memorable one

ANDREW HAMMOND

World leaders are finalizing preparations for this month's G20 summit in Osaka, Japan, potentially the most important since the 2009 meeting in London during the storm of the international financial crisis.

The countries present account for about 90 percent of global gross domestic product, 80 percent of world trade and about 66 percent of the world's population.

Recent summits, especially the one in Hamburg in 2017, have been perhaps most memorable for the divisions within the G20 powers, especially with regard to the US and key EU countries, over issues such as international trade, migration and climate change.

One flashpoint at times has been strong disagreement over global trade. In Hamburg, for instance, German Chancellor Angela Merkel pushed for a strong G20 reaffirmation of international trade, while US President Donald Trump secured language in the end-of-summit communique that ensures countries can protect their markets with "legitimate trade-defense instruments."

This same topic is likely to be central to the narrative of this year's meeting, with Beijing and Washington having been embroiled for well over a year in what could yet descend into a trade war, with both sides having already imposed hundreds of billions of dollars of tariffs. While a deal appeared imminent in March there has since been a frosty air, with Trump accusing Beijing of "breaking the deal" by backtracking on key issues, including Chinese state subsidies.

Trump has repeatedly expressed optimism that a breakthrough might yet be reached, and the G20 forum could be important to this in at least two respects. First, the two sides brokered a truce at last year's event in Argentina, agreeing to delay the imposition of further tariffs in a move that kickstarted the flurry of negotiations this year that gave rise to the hopes of an agreement.

A second reason the G20 could be important is that it offers a relatively rare forum for Xi Jinping and Trump to meet face to face. Given the importance the US president places on such personal interaction and summitry, it remains possible that the mood music in Japan could yet be more positive than many expect, with the outside chance of a breakthrough with Xi.

In this tricky, uncertain context one indicator of the summit's success would be the ability to break through the disagreements that do arise among the leaders and agree on a powerful end-of-summit communique.

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

All previous G20 sessions have done so, but recent global summitry — including last year's G7 in Canada and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Papua New Guinea last November — both ended with unprecedented failures to agree on communiques.

Another reason this summit will be noteworthy is that it will be the final G20 for several world leaders, including British Prime Minister Theresa May, who will leave office soon. Other leaders who may lose power in the next year are Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Merkel.

The significant amount of attention on this year's G20 highlights, yet again, is that since the 2008-09 financial crisis the body is widely perceived to have seized the mantle from the G7 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation and global economic governance. It is now more than a decade since the G20 was upgraded from a gathering of finance ministers to one at which heads of state meet too — a move that was greeted with considerable fanfare, such as from the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who claimed that "the G20 foreshadows the planetary governance of the 21st century."

Yet the fact is that the forum has failed so far to realize the full scale of the ambition thrust upon it by some at the height of the international financial crisis. A key reason for this failure is that the G20 meetings have no formal mechanisms to ensure enforcement of agreements by world leaders.

There also remain concerns among states outside the G20 about the club's composition; the members were originally selected in the late 1990s by the US and its G7 colleagues. While they were nominally selected according to criteria such as population and GDP, the group has been criticized for omissions such as Nigeria, sometimes called the "giant of Africa," which has three times the population of South Africa.

Former Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store has gone so far as to call the G20 "one of the greatest setbacks since the Second World War," in that it undermines the UN's universal sense of multilateralism. Reflecting this, the UN General Assembly convened a rival UN Conference on the Global Economic Crisis in 2009 to provide an alternative forum.

Nevertheless, the G20 continues to be prized by its members, as the session in Japan will show. This year's event could be especially memorable given the possibility of tensions easing or escalating significantly between Trump and Xi in the context of the long-running US-China trade tantrum.

Opinion

Food waste: A crime against humanity

NATHALIE GOULET

A crime is ravaging the world, and we are all guilty. We have no one to blame but ourselves for the fact that 821 million people worldwide suffer from some level of malnourishment, and every five seconds an innocent child dies from hunger.

We have more than enough food, but too much of it ends up as waste. Every year, about 1.6 billion tons of food, a third of global production for human consumption, is lost or wasted, at a cost of $2.6 trillion when you factor in secondary effects such as methane emissions and soil degradation. It is not only an economic and environmental issue, but also an ethical one.

In the Arab region specifically, food loss and waste is a major issue. Saudi Arabia wastes an estimated 427kg of food per person per year, almost 300kg more than the global average.

Elsewhere, there are promising developments in waste reduction and disposal. In Europe, Australia, and parts of North America, anaerobic digestion has increased in popularity. It essentially turns organic waste — which would otherwise end up decomposing in a landfill and releasing methane — into biogas fuel, gray water, and sediment that can supplement fertilizers instead of nitrification.

The environmentalist organization EcoMENA has repeatedly pushed for increased use of biogas in the Middle East, but fossil fuel subsidies, the low cost of dumping, a lack of infrastructure, and a lack of awareness stand in the way of useful and proven technologies such as anaerobic digestion. On an individual level, "smart-kitchen" technology, such as bins that can analyze trash and report which items are overbought and wasted, are a fascinating idea to counter waste, yet remain cost prohibitive to most people.

Tax incentives for food manufacturers, packagers, butchers, hotels, restaurants, wedding venues etc., to reduce their waste would be a simple incentive to sustainable dining. If less is used unnecessarily, supply and demand will dictate that less will be produced unnecessarily. An especially important measure is promoting the idea that food, especially fruit and vegetables, does not have to look perfect to be safe to eat, as so many food products are tossed before even hitting the shelves.

Additional leadership from religious authorities is also crucial. During Ramadan, for example, half the lavish iftar food prepared in Saudi Arabia and 40 percent in the UAE is wasted, despite this being frowned upon in the Qur'an: "And do not waste, for God does not love the wasteful."

Makkah food charity director Ahmad Al-Matrafi told Arab News: "The food wasted in Makkah could feed 17 percent of hungry children in 18 developing countries."

And that is just one city. If an entire region changed its ways, the future of the world would look brighter than it has in a long time. With so many precious, finite resources and so many human lives at stake, the only question is, what are we waiting for?

Nathalie Goulet is a member of the Senate of France, representing the Orne department (Normandy).
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Trump deal with North Korea remains frustratingly elusive

HAFED AL-GHWELL

A year after the highly unusual 2018 summit between the US and North Korea, at which President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un hoped to completely denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and settle a 65-year-old stalemate once and for all, this historic encounter of opposites has crumbled and the optimism, pomp and circumstance that came with it are a distant memory.

Working-level talks have stalled since another failed summit in Hanoi, Vietnam. Pyongyang has also stopped cooperating in inter-Korean projects, which South Korea was keen on as a tool to de-escalate tensions and foster closer ties in lieu of the less-favored reunification.

In a particularly stinging blow to the White House, North Korea has also resumed its nuclear and ballistic missiles programs not long after a triumphant Trump declared that Pyongyang was no longer a nuclear threat. Despite the assertions at both summits, North Korea left its ballistic and nuclear missiles programs intact, and the country's capabilities are advancing at a rapid pace.

Even Trump's effusive characterizations of Kim Jong Un are overshadowed by reports that senior officials involved in the failed Singapore summit were executed by firing squad. Some doubt the veracity of these reports given that they originated in an extreme right-wing South Korean newspaper. However, such executions — and there have been many — will not be as alarming as a US president willfully ignoring them in pursuit of a warm, personal relationship with a brutal dictator.

The US has returned to the familiar yet bizarre world of conflicting statements and contradictory positions. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo mixes firmness and consistency while leaving a door open for dialogue. John Bolton, the national security adviser, has adopted a more hard-line approach, pointing to North Korea's missile tests as violations of UN Security Council resolutions that should justify the ratcheting up of sanctions, as well as pressuring China and Russia on sanctions enforcement.

Trump initially denied that the missile tests took place, then dismissed them as attention seeking, and ultimately declared that they were unimportant since the short-range missiles tested were incapable of reaching the US.

Washington's North Korea policy is now caught between an amiable White House full of glowing praise for Kim, and the reality that the US will not unilaterally lift sanctions without Pyongyang unilaterally denuclearizing. There is also the question of what both countries mean by denuclearization. There is little to suggest that Kim will completely abandon his nuclear missiles, a key pillar of his unquestionable authority in North Korea and the most important strategic bargaining chip in the complex, high-stakes negotiations for denuclearization.

On the other hand, US policy desires a verifiably nuclear-free North Korea before easing sanctions. It requires nuclear inspectors to be given unfettered access, which North Korea views as a violation of its sovereignty. Without trust-building mechanisms and permanent reconciliation, there is little incentive for Pyongyang to allow inspectors in, or for US officials to trust North Korean reports that facilities are being dismantled in compliance with Washington's demands.

On a more positive note, President Trump is expected to visit South Korea at the end of June. Before that, South Korean officials are looking to arrange another meeting between the leaders of the two Koreas. It is unclear whether Moon Jae-in, the president of South Korea, will highlight the paths open to Pyongyang to break the deadlock, given that his focus has always been on establishing stable inter-Korean relations ahead of larger denuclearization, or even reunification, goals.

If anything, Moon will probably echo the sentiments of Russian President Vladimir Putin in April this year — a commitment by North Korea to continue dialogue with Washington. China is also on board with more talks, acknowledging that denuclearization is a complex issue that cannot be solved overnight — a minor slight aimed at the rather short Hanoi and Singapore summits at which Trump failed to achieve his objectives.

For now, "fire and fury" has been supplanted by overtures and the nurturing of a personal bond between Trump and Kim. Whether that will translate into progress in talks remains to be seen. However, even this low-hanging fruit remains elusive given the pressing issues Washington faces in Asia from the trade spat with Beijing, a controversial withdrawal from Afghanistan and escalating tensions with Iran.

Hafed Al-Ghwell is a non-resident senior fellow with the Foreign Policy Institute at the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.
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Hong Kong 1, China 0 (extra time being played)

CORNELIA MEYER

When Britain returned Hong Kong to China in 1997, after its 99-year lease expired and 156 years of British rule ended, the territory became a "special administrative region" in an agreement commonly referred to as "One Country, Two Systems." That served both countries and Hong Kong well; the UK could hold its head high for having preserved a democracy of sorts, and the people of Hong Kong felt their civil rights were protected — a necessity for China, which needed the thriving business hub on its southern border to advance its own economic goals.

However, as China's economic might has grown, so have its regional and geopolitical ambitions. No wonder, then, that it has become more assertive toward its southern territory. The first inkling was in 2003 when Beijing inserted an anti-subversion article into Hong Kong's Basic Law. Half a million took to the streets in protest, and demanded the removal of the territory's chief executive. The demonstrations were peaceful, and achieved nothing.

In 2014 China ordered a revision of the electoral law whereby candidates for the Hong Kong legislature had to be "registered" in Beijing. Democracy and human rights activists saw this as a violation of universal suffrage and an attempt by Beijing to undermine Hong Kong's status. The Umbrella movement occupied central Hong Kong between the end of September and mid-December. Again, neither the protests nor the umbrellas achieved the desired result.

In came Carrie Lam as chief executive. She is very much Beijing's woman. Her draft law enabling Hong Kong to extradite criminals to the People's Republic provoked a groundswell of opposition. This time 1 million took to the streets, one in every 7 inhabitants. The size of last week's protests was a surprise, given that several leaders of the umbrella movement were imprisoned this year.

So, what happened between 2014 and now?

The timing was significant, immediately after the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen uprising. There are several demonstrations in China each year. They take place under wraps, and unreported. Demonstrations on the scale seen in Hong Kong must cause unease among the leadership in Beijing.

Unlike in 2014, the demonstrators were joined by an increasing number of mainstream business leaders who feared the new law was bad for business, because it allowed anyone who had become cumbersome in the eyes of Beijing to be extradited. As many businesses have strong links to the mainland, it could leave their leaders vulnerable, which would in turn be bad for business. There seems to be some validity to that concern.

International reaction was interesting, too. When the protests turned violent on Wednesday, the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, asked for Hong Kong to be treated like the People's Republic and no longer exempted from trade sanctions.

On Friday, Lam met her Chinese masters across the border in Shenzhen. As a result, she announced on Saturday that she would suspend the bill. This was probably too little, too late. The demonstrators had asked for the proposal to be scrapped, not postponed, and by Wednesday they had also asked for Lam's resignation. There will be new protests on Sunday, although we can expect the numbers to be smaller.

All in all, the past two weeks have proved that "One Country, Two Systems" will always produce stress points. On the one hand, we have an ascending global superpower, and on the other a small territory whose pro-democracy activists are supported by many NGOs. Overlaying the US-China trade tensions makes for heightened volatility.

Hong Kong will always be weaker than China, but the territory holds several strong cards: It is the fourth-largest trading partner of the People's Republic, and Beijing needs the territory's unfettered access to global capital markets and multinational corporations — for now at least.

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ARAB NEWS
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Security tokens are backed by an underlying asset (the security). An ICO has no security.
David Sumner
CEO SGH Global

Interview

DAVID SUMNER
CEO SGH GLOBAL

Crypto convert's crash course in 'tokenomics'

The UAE-based entrepreneur with interests in Saudi health care offers a timely lesson in avoiding the crypto pitfalls

Frank Kane Dubai
Illustration by Luis Grañena

In the great debate over crypto finance, there is little middle ground. Either you are deeply suspicious of the brave new world of bitcoin and blockchain — like the eminent economist Nouriel Roubini, whose attacks on the fintech phenomena have sparked a Twitter storm of argument — or, like a growing number of crypto believers in the Middle East, you believe that the new wave is unstoppable.

The authorities in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other parts of the region are all hatching plans to encourage the crypto revolution in their financial zones.

David Sumner comes at the issue from a rather more nuanced position. His Dubai-based investment holding company SGH Global (Sumner Group Holdings), which is backed by some eminent UAE investors and could soon be expanding significantly into Saudi Arabia, is on the verge of closing a security token offering (STO) launched earlier this year.

Sumner believes STOs offer a digital way forward that avoids the pitfalls of crypto-currencies and initial coin offerings (ICOs) which have been the subject of scams and scandals around the world. So what is the difference between the two forms of crypto-instrument?

"Security, security, security. Security tokens are backed by an underlying asset (the security). An ICO has no security, which leaves any investor very exposed. The security-backed nature of this new financial instrument is why they are proving so successful," he said.

"In launching our STO, we are offering potential accredited investors access to a digital asset backed by a privately held diversified portfolio of natural resources, building materials, digital media and health care recruitment companies — security backed by real assets," Sumner added, in what amounted to a crash course in "tokenomics."

In the course of recent presentations to current and potential investors, he spelled out the attractions of token trading: Reduced costs, round-the-clock trading and increased liquidity. The use of blockchain technology means that tokens can be delivered by "smart contract" programmed with all the relevant investor information, aimed at improving transparency and integrity. Tokenizing SGH also helps avoid the discount that would be applied to a conglomeration of assets such as SGH.

It is a far cry from the days of paper share ledgers and physical certificates, but Sumner believes it overcomes many of the criticisms leveled at digital crypto investment, be it in currencies or other securities.

Sumner, a Londoner by birth, began his business career at the UK-listed company Shire Pharmaceuticals, which he said gave him valuable experience in a quoted blue chip environment, before moving on to a startup in medical technology, where he ended up as chairman after taking the company public.

He has been involved in the Middle East for many years in various capacities, but his latest venture — owned by a Jersey parent company but managed from Dubai — began in 2014 when he began to accumulate the assets that comprise the SGH portfolio.

These comprise an eclectic global mix, ranging from gold and silver mining in Peru, to health care recruitment in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, via oil and gas services in the Gulf region. It also has interests in digital technology and real estate.

This collection of assets was attractive enough to grab the attention of prominent Abu Dhabi investors. Two firms from the UAE capital, Blue Stone Capital and Blue Rock Capital, represent the business interests of prominent Emirati investor Khalifa Hasan Ali Saleh Al-Hammadi. They have each signed up for $10 million of SGH.

Other big UAE investors are also believed to be considering involvement in the offering, including some of the best-known names in the Dubai business scene.

"We are extremely pleased that SGH has managed to attract some of the most prominent names in UAE's investment community. Having them on board essentially means they share our long-term view to capital appreciation and believe in the investment proposition of SGH Global. They have put their trust in what is a fundamentally strong business model and a company that is steered by a team of sector experts, overseen by an eminent and diverse board of directors," he said.

Sumner and his team have been "roadshowing" the SGH proposal around Asia, from a base in Singapore, but he is now back in the Middle East with further marketing tours planned in the UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Sumner said that the implied fair value of SGH assets is $125 million, which will be pushed up to around $225 million by the STO proceeds, but the plan is to augment the value of the portfolio significantly ahead of a full initial public offering, planned on the LSE for next year.

After the token cash is raised, Sumner and other members of the management team will hold 51 percent of the company, with the balance held by the new token holders in the form of B shares, Sumner explained.

"Our vision is sharp, and we have a solid growth strategy in place which serves to benefit all stakeholders. This provides a strong dividend while holding the tokens, and an expected doubling of their money after the capital has been deployed and value increased ahead of the IPO in London, where we are targeting a $400 million to $500 million market capitalization on debut," he added.

But the immediate objective is to complete the STO successfully, probably by the end of this month.

The tokens will probably be listed in Singapore, which already allows such digital offerings, but the Abu Dhabi Global Market recently announced it was also ready to list crypto-securities. A listing on a Middle East exchange has not been ruled out, and neither has a listing on a London derivatives exchange.

As a relatively new concept, token trading appears to be a complex process, but SGH is working with leading advisers in blockchain and digital assets, as well as professional services providers, including some of the best-known names in finance, to create, manage and list the tokens.

Sumner has paid a lot of attention to assembling a quality board of directors. "I know what my strong points are, and hiring experience to grow the portfolio companies we are invested in is crucial. I have built my team with care over the years, finding the very best people with deep sector expertise and management experience to drive SGH Global to growth," he said.

"Together with the board, we have extensive and 'grade A' professional experience in all relevant industry sectors, with a strong pedigree in both traditional capital markets and now, dare I say, emerging digital capital markets," he added.

The board consists of non-executive directors such as Lord Chadlington, the British peer with strong links to the ruling Conservative Party and founder of the public relations firm Weber Shandwick, and US investor Jide Zeitlin, a former Goldman Sachs investment banker and chairman of US luxury brands group Coach, to back up a four-man executive team headed by Sumner.

These are the people who will oversee the imminent expansion strategy. Where does he see opportunities?

"Anywhere and everywhere. Our approach to investing is sector and geography agnostic. Having spent time working and living in Saudi, I get it and I like it. Our goal is to increase exposure to businesses across a range of sectors and regions so as to maximize shareholder value," Sumner said.

"Our recruitment company has just entered the Saudi market and it has been incredible. Saudi Arabia is at an exciting stage of development.

The transition is opening up opportunities in a number of sectors and industries, and stimulating the investment landscape. In general, I am bullish on the Saudi market prospects and we have penciled in a roadshow visit there after our trip to Asia."

Sumner is in a hurry to build SGH and then move on to the next venture in his entrepreneurial career.

"I like things to happen yesterday and so frustration sets in when things take longer to happen than predicted (as they sometimes can). It's a frustration I will never give up trying to beat," he said.

I am bullish on the Saudi market prospects.

BIO

BORN
- London 1971

EDUCATION
- Northamptonshire, UK

CAREER
- Executive, Shire Pharmaceuticals
- Director and chairman of medical technology startup
- Number of directorships on public and private companies
- CEO SGH Global

Business News

The attack on the Front Altair has underlined the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow strip of water that much of Asia relies on for the oil that fuels the region's progress. AFP

SHIPPING

Tanker attacks jolt oil-import dependent Asia

Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz have alarmed Japan, China and South Korea

AP Seoul

The blasts detonated far from the bustling megacities of Asia, but the attack this week on two tankers in the strategic Strait of Hormuz hits at the heart of the region's oil import-dependent economies.

While the violence only directly jolted two countries in the region — one of the targeted ships was operated by a Tokyo-based company, a nearby South Korean-operated vessel helped rescue sailors — it will unnerve major economies throughout Asia.

Officials, analysts and media commentators on Friday hammered home the importance of the Strait of Hormuz for Asia, calling it a crucial lifeline, and there was deep interest in more details about the still-sketchy attack and what the US and Iran would do in the aftermath.

In the end, whether Asia shrugs it off, as some analysts predict, or its economies shudder as a result, the attack highlights the widespread worries over an extreme reliance on a single strip of water for the oil that fuels much of the region's shared progress.

Here is a look at how Asia is handling rising tensions in a faraway but economically crucial area, compiled by AP reporters from around the world:

Why Asia worries

The oil, of course.

Japan, South Korea and China don't have enough of it; the Middle East does, and much of it flows through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, which is the passage between the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

This could make Asia vulnerable to supply disruptions from US-Iran tensions or violence in the strait.

The Andrea Victory was mined in the earlier attack in May. Reuters

The attack comes months after Iran threatened to shut down the Strait of Hormuz to retaliate against US economic sanctions, which tightened in April when the Trump administration decided to end sanctions exemptions for the five biggest importers of Iranian oil, which included China and US allies South Korea and Japan.

Japan is the world's fourth-largest consumer of oil — after the US, China and India — and relies on the Middle East for 80 per cent of its crude oil supply. The 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster led to a dramatic reduction in Japanese nuclear power generation and increased imports of natural gas, crude oil, fuel oil and coal.

In an effort to comply with Washington, Japan says it no longer imports oil from Iran. Officials also say Japanese oil companies are abiding by the embargo because they don't want to be sanctioned. But Japan still gets oil from other Middle East nations using the Strait of Hormuz for transport.

South Korea, the world's fifth largest importer of crude oil, also depends on the Middle East for the vast majority of its supplies.

Last month, South Korea halted its Iranian oil imports as its waivers from US sanctions on Teheran expired, and it has reportedly tried to increase oil imports from other countries.

China, the world's largest importer of Iranian oil, "understands its growth model is vulnerable to a lack of energy sovereignty," according to market analyst Kyle Rodda of IG, an online trading provider, and has been working over the last several years to diversify its suppliers. That includes looking to Southeast Asia and, increasingly, some oil-producing nations in Africa.

The geography and the politics

Asia and the Middle East are linked by a flow of oil, much of it coming by sea and dependent on the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran threatened to close the strait in April. It also appears poised to break a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, an accord that US President Donald Trump withdrew from last year. Under the deal saw Tehran agree to limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of crippling sanctions.

For both Japan and South Korea, there is extreme political unease to go along with the economic worries stirred by the violence in the strait.

Both nations want to nurture their relationship with Washington, a major trading partner and military protector. But they also need to keep their economies humming, which requires an easing of tension between Washington and Tehran.

Japan's conservative prime minister, Shinzo Abe, was in Tehran, looking to do just that when the attack happened.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Japan is the world's fourth largest consumer of oil, after the US, China and India. South Korea is the fifth largest importer.**
- **The Strait of Hormuz has been called Japan's lifeline. There are fears that if mines were planted in the strip of water the oil trade would be paralyzed.**

His limitations in settling the simmering animosity, however, were highlighted by both the timing of the attack and a comment by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who told Abe that he had nothing to say to Trump.

In Japan, the world's third largest economy, the tanker attack was front-page news.

The Nikkei newspaper, Japan's major business daily, said that if mines are planted in the Strait of Hormuz, "oil trade will be paralyzed." The Tokyo Shimbun newspaper called the Strait of Hormuz Japan's "lifeline."

Although the Japanese economy and industry minister has said there will be no immediate effect on stable energy supplies, the Tokyo Shimbun noted "a possibility that Japanese people's lives will be affected."

South Korea, worried about Middle East instability, has worked to diversify its crude sources since the energy crises of the 1970s and 1980s.

The future

Analysts said it's highly unlikely that Iran would follow through on its threat to close the strait. That's because a closure could also disrupt Iran's exports to China, which has been working with Russia to build pipelines and other infrastructure that would transport oil and gas into China.

For Japan, the attack in the Strait of Hormuz does not represent an imminent threat to Tokyo's oil supply, said Paul Sheldon, chief geopolitical adviser at S&P Global Platts Analytics.

"Our sense is that it's not a crisis yet," he said of the tensions.

Seoul, meanwhile, will likely be able to withstand a modest jump in oil prices unless there's a full-blown military confrontation, Seo Sang-young, an analyst from Seoul-based Kiwoom Securities, said.

"The rise in crude prices could hurt areas like the airlines, chemicals and shipping, but it could also actually benefit some businesses, such as energy companies (including refineries) that produce and export fuel products like gasoline," said Seo, pointing to the diversity of South Korea's industrial lineup. South Korea's shipbuilding industry could also benefit as the rise in oil prices could further boost the growing demand for liquefied natural gas, or LNG, which means more orders for giant tankers that transport such gas.

WEEKLY ENERGY RECAP

Traders keep their heads

Faisal Faeq Riyadh

Counterintuitively, the latest attacks on tankers in the Gulf of Oman which ratcheted up regional tensions, did not have the same effect on the oil price, which ended the week lower.

Brent crude and WTI prices deteriorated to $62.01 and $52.51 per barrel respectively. In the past even an isolated tanker hijacking or fire was enough to send the price rocketing — but these days traders appear more fixated on where global trade winds are blowing.

Oil seems to be steady in the $60 per barrel range for Brent even if the Arabian Gulf is now considered as one of the riskiest areas for oil tankers since the Iraq War.

It is worth remembering that the Arabian Gulf is where more than a third of the world's hydrocarbons are transported — a fact reflected in the rising premiums for tanker insurance in the region.

A slowing economy, trade war worries and rising shale output have capped price increases.

Yet while insurers seem to have responded to the increased geopolitical risks, oil traders are more sanguine. A slowing global economy, persistent trade war worries and rising shale output have combined to cap price increases.

The latest monthly reports from both OPEC and the IEA also cut their demand forecasts, adding to bearish sentiment.

OPEC, in its report, cited weaker growth in global oil demand amid escalated and ongoing global trade tensions, as a key factor in the downward adjustments to the outlook for global oil demand.

Faisal Faeq is an energy and oil marketing adviser. He was formerly with OPEC and Saudi Aramco. **Twitter:@faisalfaeq**

Saudi Arabian Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih says agreement is close. AFP

ENERGY

Saudi energy minister says hopes to balance oil market before next year

Reuters Karuizawa

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said on Saturday that he hopes oil producers will be able to balance the oil market before next year.

"We hope that we will balance the market before next year. We are working on it," Al-Falih told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of G20 energy and environment ministers in Karuizawa, Japan, when asked about the current oil market situation.

Al-Falih said earlier this month that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was close to agreeing to extend a pact on cutting oil supplies beyond June, although more talks were still needed with non-OPEC countries that were part of the production deal.

Business News

AVIATION

Court grants American Airlines' request to end 'devastating' slowdown by unions

Reuters Bengaluru

A US federal court has granted American Airlines Group's request to halt an alleged illegal slowdown by its mechanics' unions that the airline said had become "devastating" to its operations.

The US District Court for the Northern District of Texas granted American Airlines, the world's largest airline by passenger traffic, a temporary restraining order against the airline's two mechanics unions demanding the workers stop interfering in American's operations.

The restraining order followed a lawsuit and preliminary injunction order that American filed against the unions three weeks ago.

American Airlines accused its mechanics unions of creating 'an operational crisis' through illegal slowdown activities. Reuters

The unions have "dramatically expanded their illegal slowdown activities and are creating an operational crisis causing significant damage to American, the traveling public and American's employees," the company said in its request for the restraining order.

The District Court ordered the two unions, the Transport Workers Union of America and the International Association of Machinists, to issue a notice to their workers to no longer continue activities such as refusing to work overtime, slowing their job performance or other activities that would negatively affect American's operations, according to the court filing on Friday.

American alleged in the lawsuit filed in May that the unions are directing the slowdown to strengthen their position in labor talks that began in 2015.

The unions have complained that American is trying to outsource more maintenance jobs, a move the airline has indicated is necessary to cover increased wages.

The slowdown has resulted in 722 flight cancelations since the company filed the lawsuit, the airline said, adding that the number of affected passengers has increased to 11,000 per day since June 7.

An Embraer E195-E2 on display before the opening of the 53rd Paris Air Show. Slowing passenger growth is a major concern for global airlines. Reuters

AVIATION

Gathering storm casts a pall over Paris Air Show

Industry optimism stalls over safety concerns, declining orders

AFP Paris

Slumping orders, production bottlenecks, regulatory pressures and the prospect of fewer flyers: Aviation executives have plenty on their minds as they head to France on Monday for the opening of the Paris Air Show.

It is a starkly different mood from the previous edition two years ago, when airlines worldwide were optimistic about their prospects and placing big orders for new planes.

But industry leaders Airbus and Boeing have instead seen clients cancel orders for dozens of planes in recent months, managing to sell just a handful of new jets.

While Airbus might claw back some ground with the launch of the A321XLR at the airshow in Le Bourget, north of Paris, Boeing's future has been clouded by two deadly crashes that have grounded its popular 737 MAX.

With the cancelations, "we're in negative territory for the year, and Airbus has a chance to rescue that a bit, but Boeing does not," said Richard Aboulafia, a longtime industry analyst at the Teal Group in Fairfax, Virginia.

He said that slowing passenger traffic globally — year-on-year growth slowed to just 4.3 percent in April, compared with 6.5 percent growth for all of 2018 — also has airlines worried.

The decline echoes soft global economic growth amid trade tensions between the US, Europe and China.

Aboulafia noted that air freight levels are usually good predictors of passenger traffic trends, "and these past couple of months have been even worse for cargo traffic."

The International Air Transport Association said that freight traffic has been in a downward spiral since the beginning of the year.

"The two most recent months, March and April, were just awful, and we're going into this show not really knowing what is happening," he said.

Boeing and Airbus can take comfort in the fact that both their order books remain strong after hefty revenue growth last year, when combined they delivered more than 1,600 planes.

FASTFACT

1,600

Boeing and Airbus delivered more than 1,600 planes last year.

And their dominance has been bolstered by the woes at two main rivals, Canada's Bombardier — which has hived off aviation units while cutting thousands of jobs — and Brazil's Embraer, which is selling its commercial plane division to Boeing.

That leaves them in prime position to meet an expected surge in global passenger traffic, especially in Asia — at least until China's state-owned Comac starts marketing its first jet in 2021.

Analysts say nearly 40,000 planes will be in service by 2038, double the industry's current fleet.

Yet the frenetic production pace has left several Airbus and Boeing suppliers struggling to keep up, leading to delays as "gliders" without engines or other key parts remain parked on tarmacs.

Some pilots and travelers also suspect the rush to build may have contributed to the flawed anti-stall technology in the Boeing 737 MAX.

The so-called Manoeuvring Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS) is blamed for an Ethiopian Airlines crash in March and an Indonesian Lion Air crash in October, which together claimed 346 lives. "The 737 MAX crisis has an impact across nearly the entire industry, because aviation security is an essential issue for every player," analysts at AlixPartners said in a research note.

"Winning back passengers' confidence will be a true challenge for the entire industry," they wrote.

French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to the show's 53rd edition on Monday highlights another headwind: Government pressure to limit carbon emissions.

The French leader has made no secret of wanting airlines and aviation firms to make more of an effort.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Industrial relations

Tennessee VW plant rejects unionization

Workers at Volkswagen's plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, voted on Friday night against forming a factory-wide union, handing a setback to the United Auto Workers' efforts to gain a foothold among foreign auto facilities in the South.

The vote of hourly workers began on Wednesday and concluded on Friday. Preliminary results show 833 employees voted against representation and 776 voted for it, the German automaker said in a statement. VW said about 93 percent of the roughly 1,700 eligible employees voted.

"Our employees have spoken," Frank Fischer, president and CEO of Volkswagen Chattanooga, said.

He said the company looks forward to "continuing our close cooperation with officials and business leaders in Tennessee."

AP

Automotive

Nissan offers concession to alliance partner

Nissan is considering giving its alliance partner Renault some seats on planned oversight committees after the French automaker expressed discontent with the envisioned governance reform, a source said.

The partnership was plunged into a crisis earlier this week, as the French automaker's demand for a greater say in Nissan's new governance system drew public censure by the Japanese firm.

Renault signalled it would block Nissan from formally adopting an overhauled governance structure at a June 25 shareholder meeting unless Renault received representation on new Nissan committees.

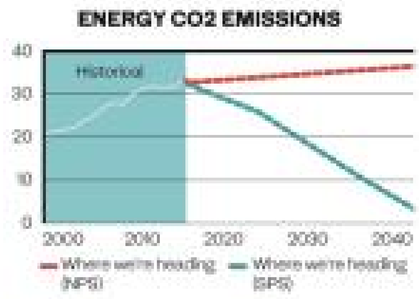
Nissan is now considering having Renault executives as members of the nomination, audit and compensation committees, a person with direct knowledge said.

Reuters

Chart of THE DAY

Global economies appear far from on track in meeting proposed climate goals set out in the Paris Agreement.

Source: IEA



What We're Riding

BIG WHEELS FOR BIG DEALS

BMW S 1000 RR

The new flagship 2019 S 1000 RR roadster will offer four riding modes: Rain, Road, Dynamic and Race. It is a full second faster on lap times than its predecessor and is also lighter, making for a more nimble ride. The bike comes with a futuristic-looking, fully electronic display.

Trade

India 'set to raise tariffs on some US goods'

India has decided to raise tariffs on imports of 29 goods from the US after having deferred the move several times since last year, media reported on Saturday.

The government had said last June it would raise import taxes on a slew of US goods including almonds and apples, apparently irked by Washington's refusal to exempt New Delhi from higher steel and aluminum tariffs.

But it delayed raising tariffs several times as trade talks raised hopes of a resolution.

President Donald Trump's decision to strip New Delhi of its preferential trade status earlier this month appears to have triggered the latest Indian move.

There would be no further delays in imposing the retaliatory tariffs, the Economic Times reported, quoting a government official, with the new taxes due to take effect from Sunday.

AFP

Finance

Turkey hits out at Moody's after credit rating cut

Turkey on Saturday lambasted Moody's ratings agency after it cut Ankara's credit rating further into junk territory, saying the downgrade raised concerns over the institution's "objectivity and impartiality."

The agency downgraded the long-term debt rating to B1 from Ba3 and said it maintained the negative outlook for Turkey.

Although the country had a "large, diverse economy" and government debt was low, Moody's said this was outweighed increasingly by "continued erosion in institutional strength and policy effectiveness on investor confidence."

But the Turkish finance ministry said the move was "incompatible with the Turkish economy's fundamental indicators."

"This raises questions over the objectivity and impartiality of the body's analyzes," it added.

AFP

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We are delighted to continue to report strong development progress at Harbour Row.
Laith Al-Memar
Acting CEO of GFH Properties

Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

Renewables deliver on all main pillars of sustainable development — environmental, economic and social.
Francesco La Camera
Director-general of IRENA

HOSPITALITY

Millennium MEA confirms rights to Makkah hotel

Millennium Hotels and Resorts Middle East and Africa (MEA), a hotel management company in the region, has addressed its guests with deep regrets for the inconvenience they might have encountered during their stay at Makkah Millennium Hotel and Towers.

"It is with regret that Millennium and Copthorne had announced that on June 13, 2019 the owner of Makkah Millennium Hotel and Towers had unlawfully, and in contrary to the terms of the operating and management agreement, interfered with the exclusive rights of Millennium in the management and operation of the hotel and towers," the company said in a press release.

"Millennium disagrees with the owner's acts and had commenced proceedings to remove this interference and confirm Millennium's exclusive rights to manage and operate the hotel and towers without interference from the owner or others.

"Millennium regrets any inconvenience this situation has caused or may continue to cause to its guests."

The company said it is pursuing all available legal courses of action inside the Kingdom, and is confident of the Saudi judiciary system in the protection of rights and imposing of justice.

Operating 4,067 keys in the Kingdom, Millennium Hotels and Resorts MEA has affirmed its commitment to the Saudi market and pledged to continue its efforts toward tourism, travel and hospitality sectors in Saudi Arabia to achieve the goals of Vision 2030 and beyond.

Millennium Hotels & Resorts is a global hotel company, which was founded in 1989, on the vision of its chairman, Kwek Leng Beng, who leads Singapore's Hong Leong Group. With almost 40,000 rooms worldwide, the company currently operates 40 hotels, has 14 hotels due to open this year and 35 hotels in the pipeline across the region.

The five-star Makkah Millennium Hotel is the closest hotel to the Holy Mosque, located by the Holy Haram Piazza in front of King Fahd Gate.

The luxury hotel features direct views of the Grand Mosque and the Holy Kaaba. The hotel has five restaurants, namely, Jasmin Café, Al-Fayhaa Restaurant, Al-Andalus Restaurant, Al-Noor Restaurant and Lagenda Restaurant.

Makkah Millennium Hotel is located close to many main attractions in the city, including important Islamic holy sites that are less than five miles away. Zamzam well, Jabal Al-Nour, Cave of Hira and the Makkah museum are some of the nearby landmarks, while other areas of interest close by include a large shopping mall, supermarket, and a variety of international restaurants and lounges.

The five-star Makkah Millennium Hotel is the closest hotel to the Holy Mosque, located by the Holy Haram Piazza in front of King Fahd Gate.

HIGHLIGHT

The company said it is pursuing all available legal courses of action inside the Kingdom, and is confident of the Saudi judiciary system in the protection of rights and imposing of justice.

REAL ESTATE

GFH Properties launches Harbour Row residences

GFH Properties, the real estate arm of GFH Financial Group, has launched sales for its Harbour Row residences with a financing plan that enables prospective buyers to purchase a home in one of Bahrain's best waterside locations.

GFH Properties is also showcasing offerings to visitors at The Avenues with a sales center booth located in the heart of the mall.

Harbour Row is situated at the Bahrain Financial Harbour in the heart of Manama within close proximity to all the city's major commercial centers and prime lifestyle and tourist attractions. The development is made up of six buildings, split between the West and East side, four of which are residential buildings consisting of 322 apartments, with the other two buildings set to house a five-star hotel and 150 hotel apartments.

Sales and an exclusive financing package have now been launched for luxury, state-of-the-art studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and penthouses with private swimming pools. The first installment of 15 percent is due 14 days from booking, a second installment of 15 percent due on handover, with the remaining 70 percent to be paid thereafter in 60 equal monthly installments.

Laith Al-Memar, acting CEO of GFH Properties, said: "We are delighted to continue to report strong development progress at Harbour Row, which now enables us to launch sales of these luxury residences. There is strong demand for centrally located, high-end waterside living in Bahrain and there is no better option for buyers than Harbour Row.

"Future residents can now book and purchase their properties through a flexible and well-planned financing package that we've designed to serve various segments of the market. We look forward to further rapid progress at Harbour Row and to welcoming future residents to this one-of-a-kind project."

GFH Properties is also showcasing offerings to visitors at The Avenues with a sales center booth located in the heart of the mall.

ANNUAL REVIEW

11m people employed in renewable energy in 2018

Eleven million people were employed in renewable energy worldwide in 2018, according to the latest analysis by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). This compares with 10.3 million in 2017. As more and more countries manufacture, trade and install renewable energy technologies, the latest Renewable Energy and Jobs — Annual Review finds that renewables jobs grew to their highest level despite slower growth in key renewable energy markets, including China.

The diversification of the renewable energy supply chain is changing the sector's geographic footprint. Until now, renewable energy industries have remained relatively concentrated in a handful of major markets, such as China, the US and the European Union. Increasingly, however, East and Southeast Asian countries have emerged alongside China as key exporters of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. Countries including Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam were responsible for a greater share of growth in renewables jobs last year, which allowed Asia to maintain a 60 percent share of renewable energy jobs worldwide.

"Beyond climate goals, governments are prioritizing renewables as a driver of low-carbon economic growth in recognition of the numerous employment opportunities created by the transition to renewables," said Francesco La Camera, director-general of IRENA. "Renewables deliver on all main pillars of sustainable development — environmental, economic and social. As the global energy transformation gains momentum, this employment dimension reinforces the social aspect of sustainable development and provides yet another reason for countries to commit to renewables."

Solar photovoltaic (PV) and wind remain the most dynamic of all renewable energy industries. Accounting for one-third of the total renewable energy workflow, solar PV retains the top spot in 2018, ahead of liquid biofuels, hydropower, and wind power. Geographically, Asia hosts over 3 million PV jobs, nearly nine-tenths of the global total.

NUMBER

60%

of all renewable energy jobs were hosted by Asia last year.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Innovation

New patient portal for Bourn Hall Fertility Clinics

Bourn Hall International (BHI) MENA Ltd., the holding company of the Bourn Hall Fertility Clinics in Dubai and Al-Ain and a provider of reproductive services in the UAE, has launched a new electronic patient portal.

Katherine Borge, the company's new chief business officer who spearheaded the launch, explained how the portal will ensure even better privacy, safety and compliance for patients and serve as an electronic medical record system and information resource. "Offering our patients a communication and record-keeping tool that is not only convenient but also safe is an important pillar of our strictly patient-centric approach," she said.

Through a mobile-friendly electronic platform, the new patient portal enables patients to communicate directly with clinicians and staff, review results that are uploaded directly from the lab, and book appointments electronically with automated appointment reminders.

Fashion

Givenchy debuts footwear collab with Onitsuka Tiger

As the special guest at the 2019 edition of Pitti Uomo, Givenchy took this opportunity to reveal its new collaboration with Onitsuka Tiger during its runway presentation on June 12.

A blend of couture savoir-faire and Japanese leather-working know-how, this long-term collaboration marks the first time the House of Givenchy has ever partnered with an outside sneaker manufacturer on a global scale. It is also a first for the Japanese company, which has never before worked with a luxury fashion house.

As revealed on the runway, the Givenchy x Onitsuka Tiger collaboration shoe "Mexico 66 GDX" features two variations on "Nippon Made Mexico 66" heritage style: An all-white version with the brand's hallmark dynamic "Onitsuka Tiger stripe" lines and "Givenchy" lettering, and a black version with signature Givenchy details in red and white. Both styles feature a back tab bearing the dual inscription "Givenchy — Onitsuka Tiger."

Investment

Greenstone gets license to promote financial products

Greenstone Equity Partners, the largest fund placement firm in the Middle East, has become the first firm of its kind to obtain a license to promote financial products and foreign securities by the UAE's Securities and Commodities Authority (SCA).

The SCA has granted Greenstone's UAE subsidiary, Greenstone Equity Partners Financial Products Promotion L.L.C., a license to perform the activities of financial product and foreign securities promotion.

Under the new license, Greenstone will be able to carry out fund placement activities for its clients by registering funds with the SCA and providing international and local investment options for institutional and noninstitutional investors in the UAE.

West Indies all-rounder Carlos Brathwaite has received an official reprimand for showing dissent to an umpire's decision during Friday's match against England.

Sport News

FOOTBALL

Everton and Neres in contention for Neymar's spot in Brazil

AP Sao Paulo

Brazil's 3-0 win over Bolivia in the Copa America opener on Friday showed two players fighting for the starting position that until recently belonged to injured Neymar.

Everton scored the third with a blast from the edge of the box, at the best Arjen Robben style, while David Neres was Brazil's sharpest dribbler in the match at the Morumbi Stadium in Sao Paulo.

Both played in the left wing, where Neymar would be if he had not injured his right ankle in a friendly last week.

The 23-year-old Everton replaced 22-year-old Neres at 80 minutes, when Brazil stopped pressuring Bolivia and Bolivia did little to hurt Brazil's advantage.

The Gremio striker has been in top form in Brazil, with nine goals in the year. The screamer against Bolivia was his first for the national team.

The Ajax winger is having an even better season, after he became a key player for Ajax to reach the Champions League semifinal. Many fans believe the Dutch side did not play in the final because Neres was absent in the 3-2 home defeat against Tottenham, which qualified the English team to play against Liverpool.

Brazil coach Tite picked Neres to start because of his European experience, but hinted Everton is now in contention after the goal in Sao Paulo. "Everton is a vertical player. He is acute, he is incisive," Tite said. "David is very aggressive. Not so much when it comes to finishing, but with dribbles, with his one-on-ones."

Everton said he was not thinking of fighting for the starting position. All he wanted at the Morumbi was to score a goal.

"I was pressuring myself a lot for that goal. My anxiety bothered me a little, I wanted to score for Brazil so much," he said.

Brazil's Everton celebrates after scoring against Bolivia during their Copa America football tournament group match in Sao Paulo. File/AFP

CRICKET

Finch, Starc shine as Australia beat Sri Lanka in World Cup

Defending champions record their fourth win of tournament at the Oval encounter

AFP London

Australia captain Aaron Finch and pace bowler Mitchell Starc stole the show as the holders eased to an 87-run win over Sri Lanka at the Oval on Saturday.

Finch equalled his career-best one-day international score with a masterful 153 and Steve Smith chipped in with 73 as Australia scored 334-7.

Needing a World Cup record run-chase to claim a shock win, Sri Lanka got off to a flying start thanks to a first-wicket partnership of 115 between captain Dimuth Karunaratne and Kusal Perera.

But Perera departed for 52 and when Karunaratne fell on 97 the game swung back in Australia's direction.

Starc was the catalyst with a fiery spell of three wickets in six balls, Australia eventually dismissing Sri Lanka for 247 thanks in large part to his 4-55 from 10 overs.

Kane Williamson added three wickets of his own as Australia made it four wins from their five group matches after previously beating Afghanistan, the West Indies and Pakistan.

Their lone defeat in the 10-team tournament came against India and their latest victory puts them well on course for a semifinal berth.

Sri Lanka, who lost their last seven wickets for 42 runs, have only one win from their five matches, a disappointing run that includes two washouts.

They face a struggle to reach the semifinals with only four matches left, a spell that features encounters with title contenders England and India.

Australia's captain Aaron Finch hit a career-best 153 in spearheading his team to 334-7 against Sri Lanka at the Oval on Saturday. AP

Sri Lanka had briefly looked capable of surpassing the World Cup chase set by Ireland, who made 329-7 to beat England in 2011.

Karunaratne and his opening partner Perera blasted 24 from the first two overs and reached their fifty partnership in just the seventh over.

But Starc bowled Perera and Jason Behrendorff dismissed Lahiru Thirimanne for 16 as Australia hit back.

FASTFACT

Aaron Finch survived an LBW replay review when he was on 35 as he progressed serenely toward his century.

A six from Kusal Mendis in the 31st over signalled Sri Lanka's intent to get cracking.

But crucially Karunaratne stumbled short of his maiden World Cup century when he carelessly flicked Richardson to Glenn Maxwell at backward point.

That left Sri Lanka 186-3 and set the stage for Starc to turn the screw by dismissing Milinda Siriwardana, Thisara Perera and Mendis in quick succession.

Mendis's mistimed drive off Starc reduced Sri Lanka to 222-7 and shattered their resistance.

Earlier, Finch took the Sri Lanka attack apart with a dazzling display that included 15 fours and five sixes.

He was well-supported by Smith's 73 from 59 balls and the pair put on 173 runs for the third wicket.

Together with opening partner David Warner, Finch took the attack to the Sri Lankans after being put in to bat under cloudy skies in south London.

The pair passed 50 for the opening wicket for the fourth time in five games at the World Cup.

How water sports can make an impact on society

DR. RAZAN BAKER

I come from a family which regarded the sea as an almost sacred place. My grandfather and great-grandfather were known as "Sheikhs of the Sea" almost 70 years ago, because of their import/export business. Seafood was their staple diet, and swimming and fishing were their main hobbies, as they were for my uncles later.

I don't know if it's genetic, but I too grew up with a love for the sea, and as soon as I learned of the possibility of getting a scuba diving license, in 1997, I went and got one.

The whole experience was overwhelming. I was introduced for the first time to the world below the waves.

The impact of that experience is ongoing, and includes many mixed feelings, but one thing I'm sure of is that I want that world to remain as beautiful as it was and deserves to be.

And I believe anyone who experiences it would feel the same.

The fact that Saudi Arabia has the Red Sea to the west and the Arabian Gulf to the east has encouraged many Saudis to explore the opportunities offered by the sea.

Not only is it a source of food and a platform for transportation, but it opened the door to new passions — water sports including swimming, fishing, diving, jet skiing, rowing, and sailing.

The inauguration of open beaches last year means that more people than ever before have access to the joys of the sea.

Although water sports — like many other sports — have traditionally been dominated by men, when the door was opened to women, they did not hesitate to join in.

For example, last year there was a watersports workshop run by social entrepreneur Mona Othman; Nouf Alosaimi, the first Saudi woman to become a qualified scuba diving instructor; Captain Rebhi Skaik; and Abdulrahman Saati, founder of Saati Adventures.

Dr. Razan Baker is a member of the board of directors at the Saudi Bowling Federation, a specialist in corporate social responsibility in sports, and a sports columnist and journalist.
Twitter: @RazanBaker

Meanwhile, since 2015, Dr. Mariam Binladen has used her swimming skills to effect change and advocate for Syrian child refugees.

In 2016, to raise awareness for the plight of children affected by the ongoing civil war in Syria, she swam the River Thames in London, completing 101 miles in 11 days.

The Saudi Arabian Maritime Sports Federation supervises all sea-related sports and leisure activities in the Kingdom, along with the General Entertainment Authority.

It's a field that has expanded rapidly in the past three years, thanks to Vision 2030 — the latest example being the "Sea & Culture" activities on the Corniche as part of the Jeddah Season.

The beautiful thing about water sports is that the more you dig into the world under the sea, the more you want to dig out the dirt and garbage that we have left there.

The more you enjoy the sea, the more you feel responsible for it and the more you want to keep it clean.

If practicing sports in general helps to develop good values and morals, then water sports are no exception. For one thing, they will increase awareness of the maritime environment and its inhabitants. And for the younger generation, water sports are "learning by playing," which is always an advantage.

In addition, the relationship you build with the sea tends only to grow stronger, as will your sense of responsibility toward the sea. How strong is your bond?

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Women's World Cup

Neville's England 'family' head for WWC knockouts

Phil Neville hailed the togetherness of his England side after they joined Germany, France and Italy in the last 16 of the Women's World Cup thanks to a hard-fought victory over Argentina.

Jodie Taylor broke a 14-month goal drought to shoot England past Argentina and into the knockout stages of the tournament, and they now need a point against Japan on Wednesday to ensure they top the group.

England topping the group would mean they should avoid a next-round clash with European champions the Netherlands.

The fancied Dutch only just squeezed past New Zealand n their opening match thanks to a last-gasp Jill Roord header, and now face a tricky test against a Cameroon side they have never played before. AFP

Cricket

Pakistan and India meet in Manchester today

India and Pakistan will face off on a Manchester cricket field on Sunday in one of the World Cup's most hotly anticipated and massively watched games.

Pakistan are the undoubted underdogs, having never beaten India at a World Cup, not even when they won the title in 1992.

Under Virat Kohli, India have made a strong start to their quest for a third World Cup title, with a clinical victory against holders Australia. Sarfaraz Ahmed's men need a pickup after slumping to a second defeat in four matches against Australia. Reuters

Athletics

Semenya declines Rabat 800m race: Organizers

Two-time Olympic champion Caster Semenya will not run her specialist 800m distance at Rabat on Sunday despite having received an invitation to do so, in the latest twist of her bitter court battle over gender rules.

"She received an invitation but is unable to organize her schedule to come to Rabat," said organizer Alain Blondel.

Semenya was cleared to take part in the Diamond League meeting after Switzerland's top court rejected an IAAF request to reimpose rules obliging her to lower her testosterone before competing in certain events.

Organizers of the Morocco event had initially refused to allow the South African to take part but on Friday they "confirmed her invitation." AFP

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

Toronto Raptors super fan Drake celebrated the team's NBA championship win with the surprise release of two new tracks, 'Omerta' and 'Money in the Grave.'

Finally

The Six

Airbnb Adventures

Airbnb just unveiled "Airbnb Adventures," opportunity for daring guests to take tours organized by local hosts. One of the featured tours is the "Mystical Oman Trek," a five-day trip around the country.

Day 1: Camp under the stars

Travelers will be picked up in Muscat, before heading to Jabal Hatt in Al-Hamra, which is 2,200 meters above sea level.

Day 2: Canyoning in Snake Gorge

After off-roading in Wadi Bani Awf, visitors will be taken to Snake Gorge where they will explore water pools and a cave.

Day 3: Honey tasting tour

The morning starts off with a visit to a local honey museum. Then, the tour will move on to Al-Hamra Bait Al-Saffah, a 400-year-old house in Oman.

Day 4: Nizwa Fort and camping

After attending a livestock auction in Nizwa, visitors will take in the old fort before camping in the desert.

Day 5: Camel rides and dune bashing

After a morning of dune bashing and camel rides, visitors will explore Wadi Miham's natural pools before heading back to Muscat.

Day 6: Visit the opera

The official tour ends with the return to Muscat, but if travelers find they have a day to spare Muscat's Royal Opera House is worth a visit.

Above: In May, Priyanka Chopra visited the Bambasi Refugee Camp Primary School in Ethiopia. Photo/ Instagram

CLOSE UP

Priyanka Chopra 'incredibly humbled' by UNICEF award

Arab News Dubai

Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra is set to be honored by UNICEF for her work with underprivileged children around the world.

The star, who crossed over into Hollywood in recent years, took to Instagram over the weekend to announce that she will receive the Danny Kaye Humanitarian Award at the UNICEF Snowflake Ball in New York on Dec. 3.

Chopra took to Instagram and Twitter to share the news by posting a photo of her recent trip to a school in Ethiopia, where she headed after a stint at this year's Cannes Film Festival in May.

"So incredibly humbled. Thank you, UNICEF USA for honoring me with the Danny Kaye Humanitarian Award at the UNICEF Snowflake Ball in December," she wrote on Instagram. "My work with UNICEF on behalf of all the world's children means everything to me... Here's to peace freedom and the right to education."

The star has worked with UNICEF since 2006 and was appointed as a National UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador for Child Rights in India in 2010, before being made a global ambassador in 2016.

> **My work with UNICEF on behalf of all the world's children means everything to me... Here's to peace freedom and the right to education.**
>
> **Priyanka Chopra**
> Bollywood actress

In May, Chopra visited the Bambasi Refugee Camp Primary School in Ethiopia and shared a series of snaps from the camp.

"At the Bambasi Refugee Camp Primary School there is a shortage of trained teachers, with one teacher for every 89 students," she captioned one of the photos, adding: "This second grade class is taught by Hubahiro, she is a refugee child who is an 8th grade student at the school... she teaches grades 1-4 in the morning, and in the afternoon attends school to continue her education. Like her mother, who is also a refugee and teacher at the school, she earns a small stipend. When I first met the kids, they were extremely introverted and timid. It took a lot of tickles and cuddles to get them to interact with me. Thank you Hubahiro for translating and helping the kids understand that I was a friend."

The award Chopra will receive is named after American actor Danny Kaye, who worked closely with UNICEF until he died in 1987.

K-POP DRAMA

Founder of K-pop label YG resigns amid scandals

Reuters Seoul

Yang Hyun-suk, the founder of South Korea's YG Entertainment, which manages top K-pop performers, stepped down on Friday from his duties as chief producer, in the aftermath of drug and sex scandals involving his artists.

In March, a member of YG's boyband Big Bang quit showbiz over sex bribery accusations, prompting police investigations and the resignation of four K-pop stars including him.

Allegations subsequently surfaced of a network of pop stars, businessmen and cops having colluded and enabled tax evasion, bribery and prostitution, exposing the dark side of the glitzy industry.

Madonna released her 14th album on Friday.

MADAME X

Madonna's new album receives mixed reviews

Arab News Dubai

Pop icon Madonna marked the release of her 14th album Friday, with critics offering mixed reviews of "Madame X."

Earlier this month, the US-born artist said she had initially taken time to settle down after coming to Portugal two years ago, however that changed when she began forging contacts with Portuguese-based artists she says inspired the new album, a fusion of a variety of musical influences.

The Associated Press' Mark Kennedy called the album "a needy, trying-too-hard mess of an album," before adding, "Madonna has plenty to say but none of it is very coherent."

The 13-track "Madame X" sees her collaborate with the hot young things of pop — Quavo, Swae Lee, Maluma and Anitta.

Forbes is less scathing, saying, "'Madame X' is not Madonna playing it safe after four years away. Instead, she takes risks, some of which pay off brilliantly."

LUXURY FORUM

Exploring the relationship between art and luxury in the Mideast

Arab News Dubai

Panelists convened at the Arab Luxury World forum in Dubai last week to shed light on the explosion of the art scene in the region, with moderator Myrna Ayad, who runs her own art advisory, posing questions about collaborations between luxury brands and artists and what it means for the two industries.

She kicked things off by spotlighting the 2013 collaboration between Louis Vuitton and Tunisian calligraffiti artist eL Seed, who famously designed a range of scarves for the French fashion house, but added in a later conversation with Arab News that such collaborations should not be "one-hit" wonders.

"Say I'm a luxury brand and you're an aspiring artist, I would like to see that we court you, we commission you and we try to further your career. So, you're forever in our safekeeping ... we kind of incubate you. I would like to see that," she said.

Adding her own two cents, Vilma Jurkute, of Dubai-based arts hub Alserkal Avenue, spoke about Burberry's 2017 exhibition in the space, which featured a curated collection of coveted handmade capes, as a prime example of the world of luxury retail and art colliding for the better.

Myrna Ayad spoke to Arab News about the need for international brands to 'localize' their campaigns. Art Dubai

She added that more collaborations were vital to ensure brand loyalty in the region, before Saudi Arabia-based designer Hatem Alakeel jumped in to say it is essential that international luxury brands have an understanding of local culture.

"If someone is wearing the shemagh wrong (in an advertising campaign), we can see through it in two minutes," he told the audience.

The discussion reflected the wider mood at this year's Arab Luxury World forum that luxury brands from the Western world need to do more to identify with Middle East-based consumers.

"Brands need to localize!" Ayad exclaimed at one point in the conversation.

"How do brands do it? Either you have a person within your team who is fluent as far as the local culture ... or you find someone to help explain it to you. You need someone who speaks that language to help you understand what is faux pas, what's in favor. I think brands should invest in that kind of person," she told Arab News later on in the day.