

OPINION

CANDID TALKS KEY TO BUILDING EFFECTIVE GCC-NATO TIES

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WHY FAST BOWLING REMAINS ONE OF CRICKET'S MAJOR SPECTACLES

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FRIDAY, May 12, 2023 Shawwal 22, 1444 www.arabnews.com

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

Taliban police patrol

Taliban security forces ride horses along the Qargha Lake on the outskirts of Kabul on Thursday. A UN report has strongly criticized the Taliban for carrying out public executions, lashings and stonings since seizing power in Afghanistan, and called on the country's rulers to halt such practices.

AFP



DEADLY PROTESTS

New chaos in Pakistan as Imran set free

Arab News Islamabad

Pakistan faced further chaos on Thursday when its top court ruled that the arrest of former Prime Minister Imran Khan was illegal, and ordered his immediate release.

Imran was detained on Tuesday by paramilitary Rangers troops on the orders of the anti-corruption National Accountability Bureau, which is investigating him and his wife in a case involving a land bribe.

His arrest sparked two days of protests in which at least six people were killed. Supporters blocked roads, torched trucks and cars, clashed with police and ransacked government buildings, including military property. Authorities arrested almost 3,000 people.

The government called in the army to Islamabad and the provinces of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to maintain order.

Imran's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party challenged his arrest at the Supreme Court, and a three-member bench led by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial agreed. The arrest inside the Islamabad High Court had "violated the sanctity" of the judiciary, the judge said.

Imran was released from custody but will remain under the protection of security forces at a safe location in Islamabad. He is due to appear again before the Islamabad High Court on Friday.

After Imran's release his supporters poured on to the streets of Islamabad to celebrate, and there were fresh clashes and tear gas shelling. Police on Thursday filed new terrorism accusations against Imran on charges of inciting mobs to violence.

Over 100 cases have been registered against Imran since he was removed as prime minister in April last year after losing a parliamentary confidence vote. He says the cases are politically motivated.

Imran's party welcomed his release on Thursday and said it would "decide the next political course of action after consultation." It said: "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf believes in peaceful political struggle," adding that it hoped "all institutions will strictly follow the orders of the Supreme Court."

OUTRAGE

'End this carnage now'

- Foreign ministers from four countries demand an immediate halt to 'bloodletting' in Gaza
Two militants die in new Israeli strike • 4 women, 7 children among dead since Tuesday

Hazem Baloueha Gaza City
Mohammed Najib Ramallah

Foreign ministers from Egypt, Jordan, France and Germany on Thursday demanded an immediate end to violence in Gaza as the death toll from three days of Israeli airstrikes rose to 28, mostly innocent civilians including women and children.

Islamic Jihad commanders Ali Ghali and Ahmed Abu Daqqa died in the latest attacks on Thursday, along with two members of a militant splinter group. At least four women

and seven children are among the dead since Tuesday. In Israel, one person died in a Palestinian rocket strike in Rehovot, south of Tel Aviv.

"The bloodletting must end now," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said after hosting talks in Berlin with the three other ministers. Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said it was urgent to "calm the situation."

The four ministers said in a joint statement that the Israeli assault on in Gaza had "claimed unacceptable civilian casualties."

They said: "We urge an immediate comprehensive ceasefire that will end Israeli military operations in Gaza and indiscriminate

We can't sleep at night because we worry about bombardment. People have no clue what will happen next, whether there will be a truce or whether the war will continue.

rocket firing against Israel."

Israel said its warplanes had hit 158 targets in Gaza since Tuesday, and Islamic Jihad had fired more than 500 rockets, of which 380 crossed into Israel. "The Zionist occupation continues to target people who are

safe in their homes and apartments," the militant group said.

As the violence continued, Egypt hosted senior Islamic Jihad official Mohammad Al-Hindi in Cairo to try to mediate an end to the flare-up, but there was no sign of an immediate breakthrough.

"Egypt's efforts to calm things down and resume the political process have not yet borne fruit," Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said.

Meanwhile, civilians in Gaza continued to bear the brunt of the violence, with the closure of the Erez and Kerem Shalom crossings halting supplies of essentials such as fuel and medicines.

"We can't sleep at night because we worry about bombardment," said Mohammad Abu Aql-Subbah, 24, outside a bakery in Gaza City.

"People have no clue what will happen next, whether there will be a truce or whether the war will continue."

In the occupied West Bank, Ghazi Shehab, 66, died from gunshot wounds after he was shot by Israeli forces who stormed Nur Shams camp near Tulkarm.

Palestinian government spokesman Ibrahim Melhem told Arab News the Israeli army was now waging open war in the West Bank. "They consider every Palestinian a target," he said.

CARE

Saudi Arabia begins flying humanitarian aid into Sudan

Arab News joins flight carrying emergency supplies to Sudanese civilians made homeless by fighting

Lama Alhamawi Riyadh

Saudi Arabia has begun flying emergency humanitarian aid into Sudan to help those forced to flee their homes amid fighting by rival military groups.

Two flights arrived in Port Sudan from Riyadh on Tuesday, carrying 20 tons of emergency supplies. Arab News joined the third flight on Wednesday night, and saw tons of food and medical aid, blankets and cooking equipment loaded on the aircraft by the Saudi military.

With the cargo loaded, military personnel and media representatives boarded the aircraft, sitting shoulder to shoulder on the floor



or on canvas seats with cargo nets as back support, and settled in for the three-hour flight.

Landing in a dark Port Sudan at midnight, the plane was met by

Two Saudi flights arrived at Port Sudan, carrying 20 tons of emergency aid for the Sudanese. AN photo

volunteers from the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, Saudi military and Sudanese airport staff, who raced to unload the aid — an operation that took

three hours using forklifts, pulleys and ropes.

Nasser Alsubale of RSrelief, told Arab News: "We are here in Port Sudan airport to receive the third plane from RSrelief. This aircraft is carrying food baskets, non-food items, shelter and medical supplies and medical aid. With this aid we will target internally displaced persons."

Once the supplies were unloaded, those returning to the Kingdom to collect the next cargo reboarded the aircraft. The plane touched back down in Jeddah in the early hours of Thursday, the city asleep and largely unaware of the mission — but there was one final show of appreciation for those on board.

The Brief

SAUDI TALENT

Jordanian film producer and script consultant Deema Azar has mentored four writers at Idhra, which she says demonstrates the rich pool of talent available in Saudi Arabia. P5

MYANMAR UNREST

ASEAN's credibility was at stake as the bloc came under pressure over the lack of progress in ending Myanmar's violence, said the Indonesian president. P8

OIL DEMAND

OPEC's oil demand forecast for 2023 has been held steady with the group citing the potential Chinese growth to be offset by downside economic risks elsewhere. P11

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Radars



We appreciate the long-standing relationship with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman, which has grown stronger over the years.

Patrick Simonnet
EU ambassador to Saudi Arabia

KSA today



Jeddah Walking tour

A walking tour of Jeddah's Al-Balad district will take in the area's culture, art, and history while allowing time to visit its markets, shops, cafes, and recreational spaces. Al-Balad is listed as a UNESCO world heritage site. To join the trip, go to the Hala Yalla app.



Riyadh Stage night

Sing and dance the night away at Syrup Stage in Riyadh, a co-acting space that allows members of the public to enjoy the stage and share their love for music and art. To book seats, visit the Hala Yalla app.



Al-Ahsa Flower farm

Trips around Al-Ahsa city's flower farm, with its renowned landscapes, are being run by the Lafa tours team. To book and for further details, see the Hala Yalla app.



Online Drawing lessons

Artist Hamna is running art lessons for people aged 10 and over, from Sunday to Thursday. Details on how to register and more information are available on the Hala Yalla app.

The Register

THE PICTURED THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning, Faisal bin Fadel Al-Ibrahim, paid an official visit to Belgium, during which he discussed with the Belgian deputy prime minister,

David Clarinval, ways of enhancing the economic cooperation between both countries and investment opportunities among other issues of common interest. The minister also met with Vice

President and Senior Portfolio Officer for Research, Development and Innovation at IMEC Patrick Vandenameele to review several areas of cooperation, including nanoelectronics and digital technology.

Today's Number

4.1%

The General Authority for Statistics said that The Industrial Production Index increased by 4.1% in March this year compared to March 2022. The IPI continued to show positive growth rates due to the high production in mining and quarrying, manufacturing activity and electricity and gas supplies.

Review

'The Old School'

SULAF ALKHUNAIZI

Saudi director and writer Abdullah Al-Khamees welcomed Saudi Film Festival visitors with screenings of his comedy short film "The Old School."

The 14-minute film had those watching bursting with laughter. The story is about a Saudi man named Battal facing a major dilemma. After months of not being at work, he returns to find himself in a modern work environment to which he has a difficult time adjusting.

He returns to see an office he barely recognizes and co-workers he has never seen before. English is the primary language of the workplace, which sends him into shock.

Battal tries to adjust by teaching himself English and speaking to his co-workers, but finds himself even more confused than before.

The final straw is when Battal's boss asks him to present a PowerPoint



presentation to his team in English, which results in a hilarious and unexpected ending.

The casting of Saudi content creator and actor Aboslo as Battal makes the movie work. Aboslo embodies the character of Battal in an authentic way and manages to bring him to life.

"The Old School," as the name suggests, highlights that acceptance to change may not come naturally to some individuals.

Many Saudis who grew up practicing traditional customs have lived the same reality as Battal. This makes the film accurate, while its comedy scenes elevate it to a masterpiece.

Both direction and script are witty and clever, as if the idea and jokes came from a naturally funny individual who has experienced a quite normal life in the Kingdom.

What's Trending Today's hot topics explained by Nada Jan



REALITY SHOW

Family matters

US action star Sylvester Stallone joined his three daughters on "Today" to promote their family reality show.

Sophia, 26, Sistine, 24, and Scarlet, 20, told host Hoda Koth that their father's intimidating behavior often scares their dates away.

When Sophia said they are all single, Stallone joked that he is working on making them stay single forever.

"I'm hoping they turn out to be spinsters. I'm working on that. They stay home forever," the protective father said.

Sistine went on to say that it is difficult to date because most guys they meet are scared of their father, who is best known for his roles in "Rocky," "Creed," "Rambo" and "The Expendables."

"It's very difficult," Sistine said. "He's quite intimidating to most, and most of the time when they come over to meet the parents, they don't necessarily return, simply because he's just so scary."

Stallone added that he does not trust the guys they meet because he knows men.

According to Stallone, the reality series will detail his family's day-to-day life and it "is going to shock people, for sure."

SAD DEMISE

Heather Armstrong

Pioneering American "mommy" blogger Heather Armstrong has died at the age of 47.

Armstrong's partner, Pete Ashdown, confirmed the news to media outlets, saying that she died by suicide.

He described Armstrong as "a brilliant, funny, compassionate writer who struggled with mental health and alcoholism," adding: "She saved many lives through her authorship on depression, but in the end could not save herself."

"She was a loving companion and mother who was always open for a new adventure or concert. Heather believed that ending her life was wrong, but in the end, her judgment was clouded by alcohol. She was loved and will be deeply missed."

Armstrong's blog Dooce went viral in the early 2000s after she described getting fired from her

job and mentioned colleagues by name.

The blog began as a space for Armstrong to vent about unwanted things happening in her life. But after the story of her job loss made the blog popular, the word "Dooce" entered several digital dictionaries, including Cambridge, which defines it as "to lose your job because you have written something bad about it on a blog."

Armstrong attracted another wave of attention when she began writing about her children, Leta and Marlo, and about her life as a mother.

According to The New York Times, Dooce was the first blog to accept a high number of paid ads. In 2019, Vox

reported that the blog was read by 8.5 million readers per month, making Armstrong one of the "30 Most Influential Women in Media" on Forbes that year.



TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

• Curated by Tom Eccles and Bouthayna Baltaji, "Your Brain to Me, My Brain to You" made by Swiss visual artist Pipilotti Rist invites visitors to embark on a journey of self-discovery through a multi-sensory experience that inspires introspection and awe. This installation symbolizes humanity's collective

unconscious and the power of the mind. The gallery will run until July 15.

• "Chicago The Musical — In Arabic" is an adaptation of the longest-running musical in Broadway history and is written, choreographed, and directed by Roy El-Khouri. The show will take place at Casino du Liban, Jounieh, Lebanon, and will run

until May 14. Doors open at 8 p.m.

• RumSky Stargazing Adventure observatory in Jordan is conducting workshops and trips full of astronomical fun. Attendees will learn to find their way in the dark via stars, be introduced to different constellations, listen to ancient stories about stars, and more. The observatory opens daily, and the activity will run until Feb. 5, 2025.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

May 12	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Aar	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:33	5:53	12:18	3:41	6:44	8:14
Madinah	4:28	5:51	12:20	3:47	6:49	8:19
Riyadh	3:59	5:22	11:51	3:19	6:20	7:50
Abha	4:28	5:46	12:08	3:24	6:30	8:00
Dammam	3:42	5:07	11:38	3:08	6:09	7:39

**THE RAY
HANANIA**
— RADIO SHOW —

Spotlight



SUDAN CRISIS

'A brutal war without ethics'

Humanitarian workers relate their experiences navigating bullets, bombs and checkpoints as they fled violence in Khartoum

Ray Hanania, Chicago

An American officer of a major humanitarian aid organization and a Sudanese American doctor working to provide medical care in Sudan have spoken about their experiences navigating bullets and bombs as they fled the strife-torn country last month.

Preferring anonymity, the director of the aid organization, which provides healthcare to more than 200,000 refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers, disclosed details of her journey out of Sudan on "The Ray Hanania Radio Show," sponsored by Arab News.

She described how the violence erupted around her home and offices in Khartoum on April 15 and the flight of some 50 people led by her to safety — through nights filled with explosions and bombings, amid raging gun battles, and past checkpoints manned by jittery young militia members.

Since fighting broke out between army chief Abdel Fattah el-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, it is estimated more than 750 people have been killed, about 730,000 internally displaced, and more than 150,000 have fled to neighboring countries.

Civilians have been killed most notably in Khartoum, El-Geneina, Nyala and El-Obeid, but with cease-fires repeatedly failing to halt the fighting, more and more desperate Sudanese are joining foreigners in undertaking dangerous journeys to safety across Sudan's borders.

"The evacuation plans of the international community were flawed, if not non-existent," the humanitarian aid officer said.

"We had hoped to join the UN convoy to Port Sudan. We had a bus that we had arranged, and I was going to take 50 people, four of whom were international staff of (the aid organization). I was able to get them to the hotel, thanks to the Sudanese, our guards, (who) made four round trips to (escort) them to safety," she said, her voice cracking with emotion.

"We were all in the hotel, and at midnight, the night before we were supposed to leave we found out that our bus was outbid by the UN. We were willing to pay a certain sum but the UN (offered double the amount) so they could take our bus in their convoy. So, we were left stranded, without transport."

People desperate to get out of the country split from the group, leaving her with about 20 people, mostly Sudanese volunteers and workers. This made her task more difficult. She said the UN added an additional hurdle by only allowing non-Sudanese nationals to join a UN-sanctioned convoy out of the war zone.

"They (the UN) also had a mandate that Sudanese would not be allowed in the convoy. And when I found that out, I said, 'That is unfair. I am not leaving my Sudanese family,'" she said, referring to her Sudanese colleagues who were also desperate to flee the violence.



The people of Sudan continue to suffer as the fighting in the country between rival military factions is about to enter its second month.
AN photo by Faiz Abubakr

What is sad about this war, is seeing an escalation of targeting of health workers and health facilities.

Dr. Hafeez AbdelHafeez

Board member of the Sudanese American Physicians Association



Not being able to travel with a UN convoy, she said the group she was with was forced to split up. Some of them took a detour, hoping to reach a place called El-Gadarif, where her aid organization had a large operation that was in a position to provide support.

The remaining staff, including her, stayed in the basement of As-Salam Hotel in Khartoum. As they waited, more people desperate to leave begged to join them. Saying she could not possibly say no to anyone, 26 people — all Sudanese except for six from other countries — crammed into four SUVs, creating a new convoy. They had to pay a black-market rate of \$100 per gallon of fuel.

"When we left, there were bodies on the streets, bombed buildings and burning military vehicles," she said. "It was clear those places had seen a lot of fighting the day before. There was bombing right around the hotel. We were in a bunker in the basement for about an hour as air strikes were happening."

"(The combatants) bombed a bank right next door to the hotel, which provided the impetus for us to move. We were able to get out of Khartoum without incident. We moved very slowly, a convoy of four (vehicles). The paramilitary let us through."

The scenes she saw were surreal, she said, with intense fighting and bombing in the part of Khartoum from which her convoy departed, and peace, tranquility and business as usual in areas normally 15 minutes from the hotel, but which took 45 minutes to

reach. "Life there was normal. Public transport was working, shops were open. People were on the streets," she said.

As they got further from the fighting in Khartoum, she said she saw many Sudanese coming out of their homes to greet them and to offer food and water.

"We made it to Madani (the capital of Al-Jazirah state in east-central Sudan), had a bunch of falafel sandwiches, our first meal in a couple of days, and then we made it to El-Gadarif. That whole trip usually takes about six hours. It took us about nine. Along the way, there were wonderful young Sudanese on the road holding signs saying: 'For those of you coming from Khartoum, we can protect you in our village!'"

"They were handing out water and food. I get very emotional remembering those moments because that is Sudan. That is who the Sudanese are. They will give you everything even if it means they will take nothing."

"And the beauty of Sudan and its people will not be broken by this conflict. They took care of the international staff, putting themselves at risk because that is who the Sudanese are."

Instead of going to Port Sudan, her group crossed the border into Ethiopia and drove to the safety of Gondar. She then traveled to Addis Ababa, from where she flew back to the U.S. She said she is planning to return to Sudan as soon as possible.

Dr. Hafeez AbdelHafeez, a board member of the Sudanese American Physicians Association, gave a



Refugees from Sudan cross into Ethiopia. It is estimated 150,000 have fled to other countries. AFP

similar account of his escape from the violence-torn country.

The association consists of doctors and surgeons who go into a war zone to treat the injured. One of its doctors was among three American citizens killed in the first 10 days of the fighting in Sudan.

**LISTEN
RAY HANANIA
SHOW**

Find the full interview at arabnews.com/RayRadioShow

Scan this code to visit



INNUMBERS

750

killed in Sudan fighting.

730,000

Internally displaced by violence.

150,000

Have fled to neighboring countries.

Source: OCHA

Abdelhafeez, a surgeon at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, said he arrived in Sudan with his young children to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr barely five hours before fighting erupted on April 15.

He described the situation in Khartoum as "disastrous" and said the bombings and gun battles had destroyed homes, hospitals and schools in many areas of the capital and other Sudanese cities.

"It is a devastating, brutal war that erupted in a very sort of strange time. It was a festive time, the end of Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr. People were expecting a political agreement to be signed and a transition back to a civilian government. But this fighting between those two generals erupted," Abdelhafeez said, adding that there is no way to estimate yet how many people have been killed.

"But what I can tell, what is sad about this war, is seeing an escalation of targeting of health workers and health facilities. Seventeen hospitals have been bombed. Twenty hospitals have been forcibly evacuated. More than 15 physicians have been killed. Ambulances had been confiscated. It is just a brutal war with no ethics whatsoever."

Speaking about Dr. Bushra Suleiman, the association member killed in Sudan, Abdelhafeez described him as a personal friend and as a champion of patient rights who had returned to his home country to help his people.

"This is a war in the middle of a city, on the streets of the city ... bullets are going through the walls," he said. "It is a very difficult situation now."

After leaving embattled Khartoum, Abdelhafeez said he and his children were able to find refuge in Madani, nearly 137 km southeast of the city.

He said his association intends to open a new office in Khartoum to provide supplies and salaries to medical workers who continue to operate dozens of hospitals and healthcare facilities in the shadow of violence and death.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 61 percent of health facilities are closed and only 16 percent are operating as normal in Khartoum, leaving millions without access to healthcare.

It said looting of humanitarian assets and offices has compromised humanitarian action in key locations, but "efforts are ongoing to deliver assistance wherever and whenever possible."

Prices of food, fuel and other basic goods are reportedly skyrocketing, making critical goods unaffordable for many Sudanese.



Tabuk region is one of the Kingdom's growing markets in the field of honey production and sale. Supplied

AGRICULTURE

Tabuk's honey festival highlights the role of beekeepers in KSA

Event provides beekeepers in the region with effective ways to introduce their products

Dhal Al-Mutairi Riyadh

The Honey and Agricultural Products Festival in the Tabuk region in the north of the Kingdom puts the focus firmly on the role of beekeepers.

There are more than 24 of them at the festival, showcasing various types of honey from the region, from sidr, tahl and samer to citrus and eucalyptus.

Honeys of the Tabuk region abound, and beekeeper Hasan Al-Qarni, owner of Azhar Tabuk apiaries, is delighted with the success of this year's event.

He told Arab News: "The festival is exceptional in the variety of crops, honey products displayed, and its introduction for the consumer to the agricultural products of Tabuk."

"It also provides beekeepers in the region with effective ways to introduce their products."



HIGHLIGHT

The festival is exceptional in the variety of crops, honey products displayed, and its introduction for the consumer to the agricultural products of Tabuk.

Azhar Tabuk's honey products are diverse and seasonal, with the apiaries following the advice issued from the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture.

Al-Qarni added: "Our products from the beehive include pollen

and royal jelly. We also have transformational products that are produced, including moisturizers, creams, and Vaseline."

He believes the Tabuk region is one of the Kingdom's growing markets in the field of honey production and sale.

He added: "The Tabuk region is distinguished by the diversity of its vegetation covers, which differ from other regions in the Kingdom."

"The types of flowers present in the region, the diversity of honey, and the mountain ranges are also important."

Al-Qarni is a trainer and consultant in apiaries and beekeeping production. He holds international certificates in beekeeping from Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan, and is a member of the Arab Beekeepers Union.

Persistence pays off for beekeepers and organic production of honey usually takes place away from day-to-day agricultural activity.

'HAJJ JOURNEY'

Saudi documentary series in Indonesia focuses on facilities provided to pilgrims

Arab News Riyadh

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah recently launched in Jakarta the "Hajj Journey" documentary series, which tells the story of eight Indonesian pilgrims and highlights the facilities provided for them by the Kingdom.

The series follows the pilgrims' journey, from leaving their homeland, their welcome in Saudi Arabia, performing the rituals, and finally returning home.

The launching ceremony in Jakarta was attended by the Saudi Ambassador to Indonesia, Faisal Al-Amoudi; Undersecretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, Prof. Halman Latif; and Director General of the General Management of Corporate Communication, A. Turki Al-Khalaf, who is also the director general of the General Awareness Department.

Al-Amoudi said that the series highlights efforts made by the Kingdom to facilitate pilgrims' journeys.

Indonesia's Minister of Religious Affairs, Yaqut Khalil Oumas, expressed his gratitude to the



The series will be shown on the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah's YouTube channel, and will be broadcast on several Indonesian and Saudi channels. Supplied

FASTFACTS

• The series follows the pilgrims' journey, from leaving their homeland, their welcome in Saudi Arabia, performing the rituals, and finally returning home.

• The launching ceremony in Jakarta was attended by the Saudi Ambassador to Indonesia, Faisal Al-Amoudi and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, Prof. Halman Latif.

Ministry of Hajj and Umrah for producing the documentary.

Al-Khalaf said that 60 filming stations used in the series highlighted farewells from Indonesia, reception

procedures inside the Kingdom, the performance of Hajj and Umrah rituals, the visit to the Two Holy Mosques, and the return home.

"This media production provides the Islamic nation, in general, and Muslims in Indonesia, in particular, with a vivid memory of the greatest journey a Muslim can go on. This 10-episodes series took more than 240 hours of filming for 120 working days. Episodes were filmed in Indonesian to be understood by Indonesians, and were later translated into Arabic and English," he said.

The series will be shown on the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah's YouTube channel, and will be broadcast on several Indonesian and Saudi channels.

TheSpace

●● Saudi humanitarian efforts cannot be ignored

NOOR A. AL-NABOUD



History has a way of repeating itself, and when it does so, it proves over and over that Saudi Arabia has the biggest heart in providing relief and protecting the region. The Kingdom proved, as if it needed to, its commitment to aiding its citizens and others by evacuating numerous Saudis and non-Saudis from Sudan after the recent outbreak of fighting in the North African state.

One need only look back to the Gulf war in 1990, when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait, to notice the same Saudi attitude towards a neighbor in distress, this time during the late King Fahd's reign.

The emir of Kuwait, his family and other government figures, as well as a large number of Kuwaiti citizens, made it to the safety of the Saudi border, where they were offered protection by the King, who declared: "Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are one. We live together and we die together."

Can Saudi Arabia's efforts during the Sudan crisis inspire countries, leaders and politicians worldwide? The international media were impressed by the Kingdom's efforts, and shed light on the details for the rest of the world to examine.

According to a statement issued by the Saudi Foreign Ministry on May 8, a total of 8,498 individuals were evacuated from Sudan by the Kingdom, including 278 Saudis.

The overwhelming feeling, shared openly by foreign ambassadors in Riyadh regarding the evacuation, revealed that Saudi Arabia has a global commitment to saving people (not to mention preserving

economies and culture) whenever required.

For most of Saudi history, the Kingdom has been at the forefront of efforts regarding humanitarian work. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, also known as KSRelief, is a role model project that serves in many countries.

During the Sudan crisis, three Saudi relief flights took off carrying supplies to Port Sudan; the third, which took off this Wednesday, was loaded with 10 tons of food, shelter, and medical supplies, according to the Saudi Press Agency. The operation was organized by KSRelief, in line with directives from King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Verifying Saudi efforts in the Sudan crisis confirms an accurate picture of the Kingdom's values towards the international community. Saudi Arabia's efforts deserve more media exposure, as each great deed of a country must be noted for posterity.

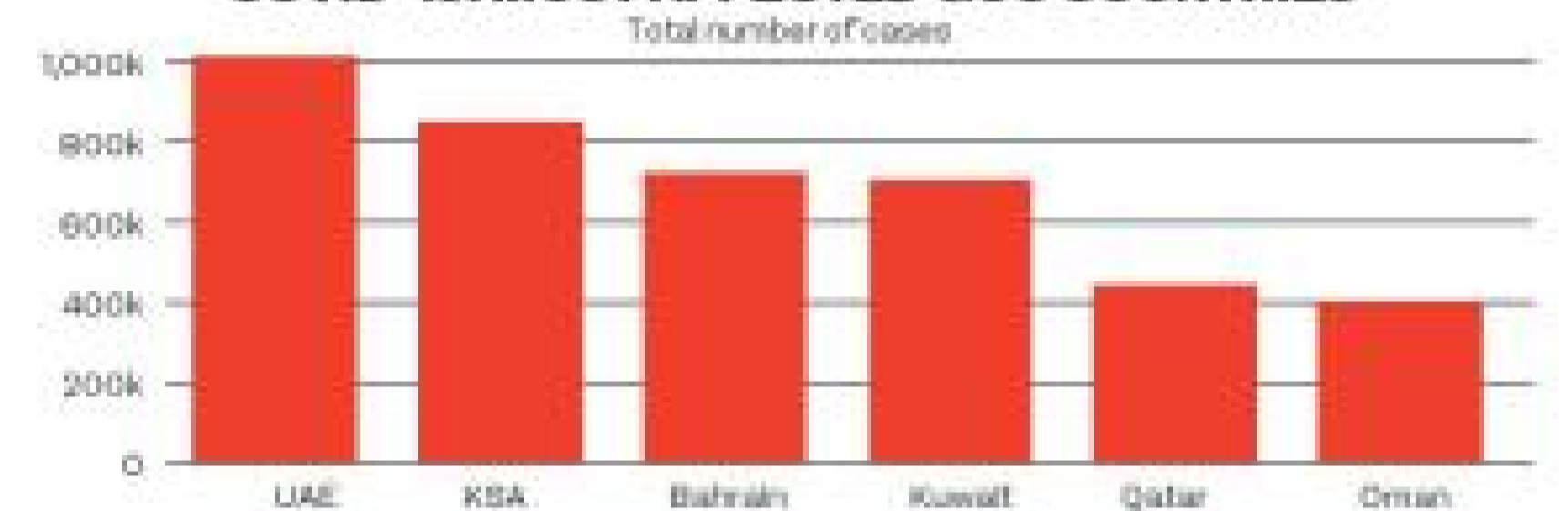
The Kingdom's remarkable endeavors for fellow human beings, juxtaposed with the fake news spread by opponents of the country, is a conflict that can be resolved through deeds, and Saudi Arabia's humanitarian efforts in Sudan indicate that Riyadh's commitment to humanitarianism is impossible to ignore.

We see an expanding definition of kindness, social conscience and public spirit in Saudi Arabia. I feel honored to be a tiny part of this Kingdom.

Noor A. Al-Naboud is a writer, marketing and external communication and insurance expert.

The Day's FIGURES

COVID-19: MOST AFFECTED GCC COUNTRIES



Source: Worldometers

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Sustainability

Forum discusses lifelong learning in Arab cities

Representatives of 26 Arab and four non-Arab cities, along with members of international organizations and government agencies, gathered on Wednesday at the first regional forum of Arab Learning Cities.

The event, titled "Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Solutions in Arab Learning Cities," was organized by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Arab Gulf States and the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, and hosted by the Royal Commission in Yanbu in cooperation with UNESCO's regional offices in Beirut and Doha.

Its aim was to discuss the development of a regional network of learning cities in Arab countries and support lifelong learning in Arab cities through the promotion of a comprehensive and flexible learning environment, the development of strategies to achieve this, and the exchange of experiences and practices.

Abdulrahman Al-Asimi, director-general of the education bureau, thanked the Saudi leadership for its continuing support and said his organization is working to create a network of Arab learning cities that promote lifelong learning and improve the quality of education. **SPA Riyadh**

Agri-food sector

Saudi dates feature at Italian TuttoFood show

The National Center for Palms and Dates, a group which aims to contribute to the development of the date palm and dates sector, successfully concluded its participation in the TuttoFood exhibition.

Held May 8-11 at the Fiera Milano Exhibition Center in Italy, the event is one of the top food platforms held every two years, bringing together the world's leading food manufacturers.

During the exhibition, which hosted 1,472 exhibitors from 31 countries, the National Center for Palms and Dates highlighted the main features of the Saudi date industry, as well as the stages of development and its derivatives and the extent of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 interest in enhancing the sector as an economic tributary to maximize non-oil revenues.

The TuttoFood exhibition is an international reference for food and beverage business development and supply chains. It is also a leading event for the global agri-food sector, which provides an integrated service package to identify the trends of consumers, producers, and new market sectors. It is a business and content platform for the world's entire food community, where food tradition meets innovation, and a national and international point of reference for sector development. **SPA Riyadh**

Fight against narcotics

Attempt to smuggle 199kg of hashish in Aseer foiled

Land patrols of the Saudi border guard command in Aseer have foiled the smuggling of 199 kilograms of hashish. The initial statutory procedures have been completed and the seized quantity has been handed over to the competent authority.

Meanwhile, authorities in the Jazan foiled attempts to smuggle 300 kg of the narcotic khat on Wednesday.

The Kingdom has stepped up its crackdown on smuggling operations.

Earlier this month, 25 people were arrested in raids and anti-drug operations targeting smugglers in regions across the Kingdom.

Six expats in Jeddah were detained by the General Directorate for Narcotics Control following an attempt to smuggle the drug methamphetamine, known as "shabu," as well as a sum of money. Authorities also arrested another six people in Badr in Madinah governorate in connection with an attempt to smuggle 50,530 amphetamine tablets and 1.4 kg of hashish. A large sum of money was also seized.

Sami Al-Shwerli, spokesman for the General Directorate of Public Security, said seven people were arrested in a raid on a house in Al-Muzahimiyah in Riyadh.

SPA Abha

News Saudi Arabia

TRAINING PROGRAM

Saudi storytellers showcase rich and diverse talent, says top filmmaker

Deema Azar mentored 4 promising writers in Kingdom; 6-day Feature Script Development Lab recently held in Dhahran

Sulafa Alkhunaizi Dhahran

Jordanian film producer and script consultant Deema Azar recently mentored four promising writers at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, or Ithra, which she says demonstrates the rich pool of talent available in the country.

The creatives were chosen from eight scriptwriters, who were selected out of 401 applicants, for the Screenplay-In-Progress Competition of the Saudi Film Festival.

Azar's project, Feature Script Development Lab, was a six-day program that ended on Thursday, which focused on the process of developing a picture-perfect script.

"A film's journey, be it short or feature-length, starts with the script. The script should undergo a development process, one that could take various forms, which allows it to grow by working towards ensuring that the story it tells is coming across as flawlessly as possible in terms of story elements, structure, tone and



Jordanian film producer and script consultant Deema Azar mentored four Saudi scriptwriters for six days at the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, or Ithra. Supplied

pace," said Azar, who is also the co-founder and managing partner at TaleBox, a women-led production company based in Amman, Jordan.

Azar traveled to the Kingdom to attend the film festival and offer her services to aspiring and talented Saudi scriptwriters.

"These past few days at the Screenplay Development Lab have been quite intense as we delved deeply into story origins and elements, characters' journeys and overall structure and form of each screenplay.

"The process has been quite profound and concentrated and

FASTFACT

Azar believes that the Saudi cinema industry is on the right track and hopes to see a greater focus on scriptwriting.

I believe the participants will leave the lab seeing their scripts in a complete new light given the amount of useful feedback that came out of the workshop, and which I hope will be integrated (and) reflected in their next screenplay drafts," she said.

Azar expressed her excitement to work alongside Saudi talent who she says have a world of stories to tell. "It is such an exciting and stimulating process to discover original Saudi stories and the talented voices behind them and to work closely with the participants towards a polished version of their scripts," she said.

"The diverse nature of stories in this year's lab, which also happen to be very different

Deema Azar



from last year's lab, confirms to me that the pool of storytelling diversity in Saudi Arabia is deeper and richer than originally anticipated and that is so exciting," Azar added.

Azar hopes that the trainees have gained knowledge and will apply it to their future projects. "Like their screenplay characters, I hope that the participants have taken a similar journey that enriched them through their participation in the Screenplay Development Lab here at the 9th Saudi Film Festival."

Azar believes that the Saudi cinema industry is on the right track and hopes to see a greater focus on scriptwriting.

"I believe that Saudi cinema is taking steady steps towards establishing a complete and sustainable cinema industry and ecosystem in the Kingdom, which would support local and Arab talents.

"I look forward to seeing the next Saudi creations on the big screen and hope the necessary focus on developing scripts before turning them into films receives the attention it deserves, to ensure that local stories coming out of Saudi Arabia are conveyed to wider audiences as powerfully as possible."

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News Middle East

ELECTION ON SUNDAY

Turkish candidate drops out in boost to Erdogan's main challenger

AP Ankara

A candidate in Turkey's presidential election announced his withdrawal from the race on Thursday, a move that's likely to benefit President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's main challenger.

The candidate who pulled out, Muharrem Ince, is the leader of the center-left Homeland Party.

He was one of four contenders running in Sunday's presidential election. Turkey holds a parliamentary election the same day.

Ince had faced criticism for potentially ciphering support from the six-party Nation Alliance, which has united behind the candidacy of opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, and thereby forcing the presidential contest into a second-round.

"I am withdrawing from the race," Ince told reporters in front of his party's headquarters, following weeks of resisting calls to step down. "I am doing this for my country."

Erdogan, who has led Turkey as prime minister and president since 2003, is facing the most challenging election of his 20-year rule.

Polls have given Kilicdaroglu a

slight lead over Erdogan, although neither candidate was expected to garner the more than 50 percent of the vote required to be elected in the first round.

Ince had polled at around 8 percent of the vote when his candidacy was first announced, but his popularity had since dropped to around 2 percent, according to opinion surveys.

I am withdrawing from the race. I am doing this for my country.

Muharrem Ince
Homeland Party leader

The firebrand politician did not throw his support behind another candidate, but analysts said his withdrawal was likely to boost Kilicdaroglu's chances.

"Ince was drawing on support from voters dissatisfied both with Erdogan and Kilicdaroglu," Hamish Kinnear, senior Middle East and North Africa analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft, wrote in emailed comments.

"While polling indicates that a majority of Ince's voters are likely



Supporters of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attend a rally in Ankara ahead of Sunday's presidential and parliamentary elections. Reuters

to flip to Kilicdaroglu, it's unclear if there will be enough voters to give him an outright victory in the first round," he said.

Nation Alliance members

welcomed Ince's decision to step down, expressing hope for a first-round victory on Sunday. Kilicdaroglu called on Ince to join the opposition coalition.

"Let's leave old resentments, old grievances behind," Kilicdaroglu wrote on Twitter.

Erdogan meanwhile, said he regretted Ince's decision.

"Of course, it is impossible to understand why he withdrew. Honestly, I was saddened," Erdogan said during an election rally in Ankara.

ARAB COALITION'S SUPPORT

Reopening of Riyan airport will alleviate humanitarian crisis in Yemen: Governor

Terminals, car parks and other facilities will be renovated and new routes are planned

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

Control of Riyan International Airport, in the port city of Al-Mukalla in southeastern Yemen, has been returned to local authorities by the Arab coalition that has been guarding it during the conflict in the country, Mabkhout bin Madhi, the governor of Hadramout province, has announced.

He said the coalition has handed over the airport to the provincial government, which has pledged

to renovate it and establish new air routes.

The reopening of the airport will help to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the country and make it easier for thousands of Yemenis to travel to other countries, the governor added.

"The airport terminals and civil facilities were received in the context of joint coordination and within the framework of the brothers in the leadership of the Arab Coalition's support for efforts to normalize life, following their support for maintaining security following the liberation of the Hadramout coast from Al-Qaeda

FACTFACT

Arab coalition forces have controlled the airport since early 2016, when coalition-backed Yemeni forces drove Al-Qaeda out of Al-Mukalla, Hadramout's capital, and nearby coastal areas.

elements," said bin Madhi.

Yemen's Prime Minister Maen Abdul Malik Saeed directed the Ministry of Transportation to quickly implement the renovation plans so that the airport can return to operating at full capacity.

Arab coalition forces, primarily from the UAE, have controlled the airport since early 2016, when coalition-backed Yemeni forces drove Al-Qaeda out of Al-Mukalla, Hadramout's capital, and nearby coastal areas.

In 2019, the UAE Red Crescent opened a new hall at the airport, paving the way for Yemenia Airways to plan weekly flights to Jeddah, Socotra and Aden. Bin Madhi said the local government will now renovate terminals, car parks and other facilities, so that the airport can establish new routes and offer flights to more destinations. Before the long-running war in the country,

Yemenis flew from the airport to Kuwait, Cairo, Amman, Kuala Lumpur, Sanaa, and other Yemeni and international destinations.

Yemenis have long complained about the long distances they must travel to reach one of the two airports that remained operational in the country: Seiyun Airport in Hadramout and Aden International Airport.

Meanwhile, in Aden, the head of the Presidential Leadership Council, Rashad Al-Alimi, told Al Arabiya TV on Wednesday that the Iran-backed Houthis should embrace the Saudi peace plan to end the conflict in Yemen and halt the fighting for good.

He accused the Houthis of using temporary truces to regroup and replenish before resuming fighting.

He also commended Saudi Arabia on the assistance it has provided to Yemen in the health, transportation and other sectors.

"The Yemeni people need peace, health and services; the Yemeni people want life," he added.

On Wednesday, Al-Alimi and the Saudi ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed Al-Jaber, officially launched a number of Saudi-funded development projects in Aden, including the renovations of Aden's airport and a government-run hospital.

REFORMS PUSH

Lebanon presidential hopeful Frangieh holds 'friendly' talks with Saudi envoy

Najla Houssari Beirut

Marada Movement leader and Hezbollah-backed presidential candidate Suleiman Frangieh said that he held a "friendly and quite excellent" meeting with Saudi Ambassador Walid Bukhari in Beirut.

The meeting on Thursday was the first since the Maronite leader emerged as a presidential candidate with Hezbollah's support.

The two last met in November 2022 during the Saudi Embassy's commemoration of the 33rd

anniversary of the Taif Agreement in Beirut.

Bukhari visited Lebanese officials and met parliamentary blocs last week.

"Saudi Arabia does not place a veto on any presidential candidate, and it welcomes the agreement among the Lebanese to elect a new president" he said. "The most important thing is the president's program and his work mechanism."

After meeting with Bukhari on Thursday, Islamic Group MP Imad Al-Hout said that the Saudi

ambassador was acting as a mediator to bring together points of view and was not suggesting any names.

Riyadh was not setting any conditions on Lebanon but was trying to help it carry out reforms, he added.

According to Al-Hout, the Saudi ambassador said that "no one will help Lebanon and the Lebanese if they do not help themselves and try to gain each other's trust," adding: "Through reform measures, they can then gain the trust of the Arab and international community. This is all the Kingdom wants, nothing else."

Bukhari also held a meeting on Thursday with the National Moderation parliamentary bloc, which includes former members of the Future Movement bloc.

The bloc presents itself as being apart from "political alignments."

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri had stopped calling parliament to convene to elect a president amid a sharp division among MPs over candidates.

Although the Saudi ambassador and other foreign envoys hold the Lebanese alone responsible for staging presidential elections, the



Lebanese protesters burn tires during a recent demonstration called for by the bank depositors' committee against monetary policies. Lebanon's economic meltdown has plunged most of the population into poverty, according to the UN. File/APP

account the limits imposed by our respect for Lebanon's sovereignty, and it is up to the Lebanese to decide their fate; we cannot impose solutions."

Several opposition MPs held meetings in parliament on Thursday to search for a presidential hopeful after MP Michel Moawad was rejected by Hezbollah and its allies as a provocative candidate.

However, opposition MPs and those of major Christian blocs in parliament believe that Frangieh's candidacy is also provocative.

Berri insisted on Wednesday that the presidential elections must be completed by June 15. "No one can predict where the country is heading amid the presidential vacuum," he said.

Berri's media office quoted him as saying: "It is not permissible for the Arab region to achieve understanding and harmony while we bicker internally and lose our unity and our rights."

He stressed that the Taif Agreement — if implemented — paves the way for Lebanon's gradual transition to a civil state.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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News Middel East

CONFLICT

Sudanese refugees fleeing the war find their homes occupied by fighters

AFP Khartoum

Like many Sudanese forced to flee their homes amid raging street battles, Mohammed said that when he finally returned to his flat, he found heavily armed paramilitaries had moved in.

After cautiously approaching his Khartoum apartment block, he discovered that "the entire building had become like a military barracks filled with weapons and ammunition."

Almost a month of heavy fighting has turned Khartoum into a war zone, with the city's 5 million residents enduring artillery barrages, gunfights, airstrikes and anti-aircraft fire.

Many have hunkered down at home amid power outages and a lack of clean water, food and medicines — but many have also been forcefully evicted.

The northern suburb where Mohammed lived has become a major battleground in the war between army chief Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Burhan and Mohamed Hamsan



Refugee children have their breakfast on Thursday beside makeshift shelters near the border between Sudan and Chad. Reuters

Dagalo, commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces or RSF.

After Mohammed's family had spent terrifying days at home, waking and sleeping to deafening ex-

plosions and gunfire outside, RSF fighters came to evict them.

"They knocked on the door and asked us to leave," said the 54-year-old, who like others interviewed by

AFP for this article asked not to be identified by his full name citing security fears.

Before leaving home, Mohammed's family took what they could

carry and locked their doors, he added. When he returned days later to collect some belongings, Mohammed was interrogated by the RSF paramilitaries whom he had found sitting inside his apartment.

Witnesses in Khartoum say RSF fighters have often taken up positions in leafy residential streets, with soldiers hiding camouflaged trucks under trees.

BACKGROUND

Almost a month of heavy fighting has turned Khartoum into a war zone, with the city's 5 million residents enduring artillery barrages, gunfights, airstrikes and anti-aircraft fire.

Men in military fatigues patrol in pickup trucks mounted with heavy machine guns.

Another man, Babiker, 44, said he fled his home in central Khartoum amid incessant gunfire, only to return two weeks later to find it occupied by the RSF.

"I found more than 20 paramili-

taries living there," he said, adding he was interrogated for half an hour before being allowed entry.

"They were using all appliances and cooking in our kitchen," he said.

"All the bedrooms that we had locked before leaving were open."

Sudan's bitter fighting has so far killed at least 750 people, wounded thousands and uprooted hundreds of thousands, with many refugees fleeing the country.

The UN's human rights commissioner, Volker Turk, said the RSF had allegedly taken "possession of many buildings in Khartoum to use as operational bases, evicting residents and launching attacks from densely populated urban areas."

He also criticized Sudan's military for launching "attacks in densely occupied civilian areas, including airstrikes" that have killed residents.

The paramilitaries have also turned many hospitals and medical facilities into "barracks" — a practice the UN World Health Organization has condemned as a "gross violation."

SECURITY

Egypt to exempt travelers who bring gold from customs duties

Gobran Mohamed Cairo

Egypt's Cabinet has approved a draft decree exempting gold imports brought by travelers from abroad from customs duties for a period of six months.

The Egyptian Council of Ministers made the decision in its weekly meeting.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Cabinet said that the draft decree will provide exemptions for half-manufactured

gold imports, gold prepared for currency trade, and jewelry parts made or coated with a layer of precious metals.

The exemption does not apply to natural or cultivated pearls, gemstones, or composite or

inlaid semi-precious stones on jewelry.

The Cabinet approval follows efforts to stabilize gold prices and reduce smuggling attempts at customs checkpoints.

Egypt has recently witnessed a

rise in gold prices.

The price of gold on the Egyptian market is determined by several factors, including the value of the dollar, supply and demand, and the policies of the Central Bank.

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NEW MARKETS

UAE woos Indian businesses with free zone opportunities

Economic ties between India, UAE got a boost with a free trade pact signed last year

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

A UAE free economic zone invited Indian companies on Thursday to expand operations into the region, as the Gulf state tries to attract investors from South Asia's largest economy with new opportunities.

Economic ties between India and the UAE received a major boost when their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into force in May last year.

The landmark deal reduced tariffs on about 80 percent of all goods and provided zero-duty access to 90 percent of Indian exports.

The potential for further trade expansion under the pact's framework was explored by businessmen on Thursday during the "Dubai — India's Gateway to the World" session held in New Delhi by the Confederation of

Indian Industry and Jebel Ali Free Zone, or Jafza.

Considered the world's leading free zone and integrated business hub, Jafza, which hosts thousands of companies, is part of the Emirati multinational logistics company DP World.

"The purpose is basically to promote 'Made in India' through Dubai as a gateway for Indian exports," Abdulla bin Damithan, CEO and managing director of DP World UAE and Jafza, told Arab News.

With the trade pact in place, Indian businesses can benefit from the UAE's similar agreements with other countries, which could become their new markets.

"We have heard a lot of customers here in India — investors and businessmen — who want to further expand their growth into Africa and other countries, where we have a presence, our own capabilities to enable them to enter



The purpose is basically to promote 'Made in India' through Dubai as a gateway for Indian exports.

Abdulla bin Damithan
CEO and managing director of
DP World UAE and Jafza.

these markets," Bin Damithan said. "Our customers can benefit from our network around the world."

For the Confederation of Indian Industry, engagement with Dubai can have an enabler effect for businesses.

"Earlier, Dubai Port or DP World was a logistic provider, and now it is a trade enabler where logistics is one component. Besides that, you have facilitation of business providing you the land for business, they are giving you manufacturing facilities," the confederation's international

director, Manish Mohan, told Arab News.

"They want Indians to invest in their free zones and they will facilitate and enable the expansion of trade in the Gulf and African regions and other parts of the world ... The CII is actively promoting UAE as the trading, manufacturing and logistics hub for the GCC, Africa and other key markets and identifying opportunities for Indian investments."

The free zone also hosts incubation centers and schemes, which appeal to emerging Indian business players.

"Dubai offers an opportunity for a startup like me to incubate ... for three years, and explore markets and establish ourselves," said Rajan Moga, founder of Club TV, which offers virtual reality services in the hotel industry.

"We want to get insight into the Dubai market and understand its ecosystem."



Structure Students at the Hong Kong Institute of Construction receive instructions from their instructor during a bamboo scaffolding class. The world's most skyscraper-laden metropolis is also one of the last remaining major cities to use bamboo scaffolding for modern construction and building repair.

AFF

'NO SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS'

Indonesia says ASEAN credibility at stake as Myanmar crisis worsens

Sheany Yasuko Lal Jakarta

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said on Thursday that the credibility of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is at stake, as the bloc comes under increasing pressure over the lack of progress in ending ongoing deadly violence in Myanmar.

ASEAN leaders met this week for the first of their biannual summits in Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara, with the exception of Myanmar's junta leaders who have been barred from attending over their lack of progress in implementing a peace plan endorsed by the regional grouping in 2021.

More than two years since the military junta seized power and unleashed a bloody crackdown on opponents, violence in Myanmar has been on the rise. One of the most recent incidents included an attack on an aid convoy comprising Indonesian and Singaporean diplomats.

"ASEAN's credibility is at stake, and Indonesia is ready to talk with anyone, including with the junta, and all the stakeholders in Myanmar for the sake of humanity," Widodo told a press briefing at the summit's conclusion.

He added that "engagement doesn't mean recognition."

As ASEAN chair this year, Indonesia said it has engaged many stakeholders in Myanmar to discuss possible solutions, as it continues to push for dialogue and the implementation of its peace plan, which has not been enforced since the bloc forged it with Myanmar's top general in April 2021.

The Five-Point Consensus plan, also referred to as 5PC, called for an immediate end to the violence in Myanmar and dialogue among

FASTFACTS

● **Indonesia acknowledges lack of progress in Myanmar peace plan.**

● **Jakarta says ready to engage anyone, including junta, other groups.**

contending parties to seek a peaceful solution, to be brokered by an ASEAN special envoy.

"I have to be honest, there has been no significant progress in the implementation of the Five-Point Consensus, so we need ASEAN unity to formulate our next steps," Widodo told Southeast Asian leaders.

More than 3,450 people have been killed by security forces since the junta took power, and

thousands more remain imprisoned, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, a nongovernmental organization that tracks killings and arrests.

In April, an airstrike killed at least 100 people, who were mostly civilians and included many children. Human Rights Watch on Tuesday described the attack as a war crime.

"There is disunity within ASEAN regarding on how it should actually deal with Myanmar crisis to some extent," Lina Alexandra, senior researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told Arab News.

"This is a very crucial time for Indonesia and the fact that there is no progress that means Indonesia needs to work harder," she said. "Indonesia (needs) to be much more bold ... and also to be more brave, particularly to discuss this further with the other ASEAN leaders ... to push for a breakthrough."

Indonesian President
Joko Widodo



Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Declining cases

WHO declares mpox no longer a global threat

The World Health Organization declared that mpox no longer constitutes a global health emergency on Thursday, almost exactly a year after the disease formerly known as monkeypox started spreading globally.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the decision was prompted by sharply falling case numbers worldwide, but emphasized that the disease remains a threat, particularly in areas of Africa where it has long been endemic.

The announcement comes a week after the UN agency also declared that COVID-19 no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, its highest level of alarm.

"However, as with COVID-19, that does not mean that the work is over," Tedros told an online press conference. **AFF**

New law

Amsterdam bans fast-delivery grocery hubs

Amsterdam is banning fast-delivery grocery companies from setting up so-called dark stores in residential areas, the local city council decided late Wednesday, citing noise and nuisance complaints from the public.

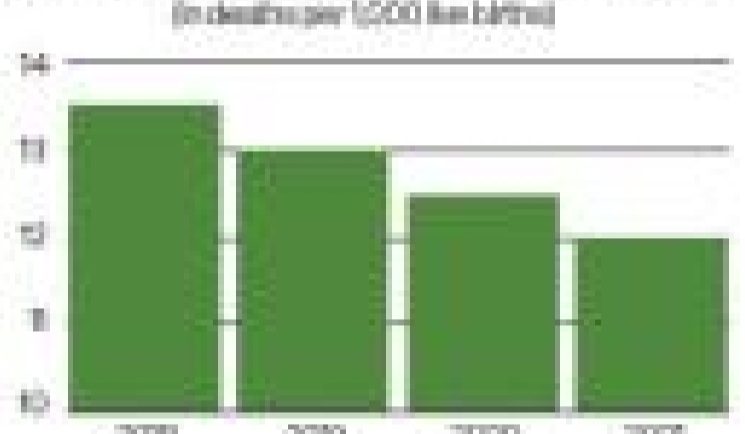
Dark stores, small distribution hubs used by burgeoning fast grocery services such as Gorillas and Getir, will only be allowed in business parks, or — in exceptional cases — in mixed residential-work areas.

"Amsterdammers will receive a nicer living environment," Reinier van Dantzig, the municipal executive responsible for the city's spatial planning, said in a statement, adding the new policy would help tackle the proliferation of delivery drivers in residential areas.

Routers

The Day's FIGURES

PANAMA: INFANT MORTALITY RATE



Source: Statista

What We Are Reading Today

FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

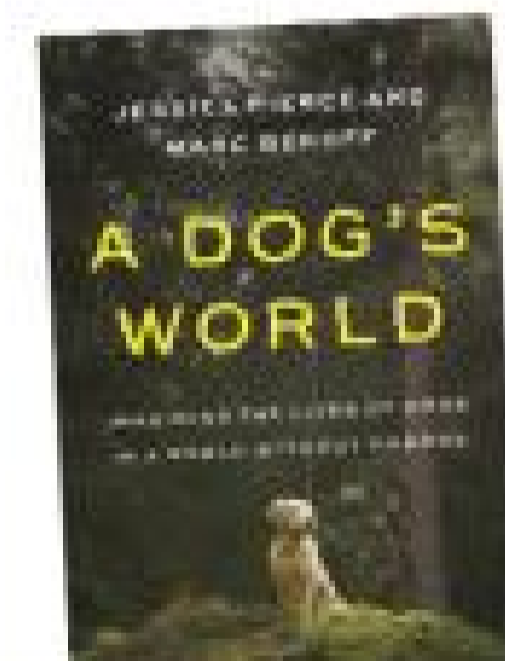
'A Dog's World'

JESSICA PIERCE AND MARC BEKOFF

What would happen to dogs if humans simply disappeared? Would dogs be able to survive on their own without us? "A Dog's World" imagines a posthuman future for dogs, revealing how dogs would survive—and possibly even thrive—and explaining how this new and revolutionary

perspective can guide how we interact with dogs now.

Jessica Pierce and Marc Bekoff show how dogs are quick learners who are highly adaptable and opportunistic, and they offer compelling evidence that dogs already do survive on their own—and could do so in a world without us.



Major accident

Van carrying oxygen tanks explodes in Milan

A van that was transporting oxygen tanks to a nearby medical facility exploded in the center of the Italian city of Milan on Thursday, forcing the evacuation of a school and residential apartment buildings. The driver suffered minor injuries.

Images on Sky TG24 show a plume of dark smoke rising from a narrow street near Porta Romana, where flames scorched nearby cars and motorcycles and exploded windows in adjacent buildings, including the school. Firefighters quickly brought the flames under control.

The driver of the van suffered an injury to his hand when he tried to douse the flames, firefighter Carlo Cardinali told reporters at the scene. The driver was treated at the scene and transported to a hospital.

It wasn't immediately known what sparked the explosion, but Cardinali said the rapid spread of the flames was due to the quantity of explosive material on board. Law enforcement was investigating. **AP**

Narrow escape

Finnish footbridge collapse injures 27, mostly kids

Some 27 young people, mostly children, were injured in Finland on Thursday when a temporary footbridge near a construction site collapsed and they fell several meters onto a road, officials said.

The accident occurred at around 9:20 a.m. (0620 GMT) in Espoo, near the capital, Helsinki, when wooden planks are believed to have given way and the group fell 5-6 meters onto the carriageway of the small side road.

Most of the injured were eighth-year pupils aged around 14 or 15, who were on a school field trip, city officials said. Their teacher was among the injured. Twenty-four people were taken to various hospitals in the Helsinki region.

"No one has life-threatening injuries," Helsinki hospital service HUS said, adding that the majority had limb fractures.

"There has been no indication of any risk of paralysis but there are some head injuries involved as well," HUS medical director Eero Hirvensalo told reporters. **AFF**

العجب لمن يشتري المماليك بماله
 وكيف لا يشتري الأحرار بفعالته؟
 (المهلب بن أبي صفرة)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

One wonders why the person buying slaves with money cannot buy the free folk through his good deeds.

Al-Muhallab bin Abi Sufra
 (Medieval Arab military commander)

Opinion

Candid talks key to building effective GCC-NATO ties

ABDEL AZIZ ALUWAISEH



Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg is the Gulf Cooperation Council assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation, and a columnist for Arab News. The views expressed in this piece are personal and do not necessarily represent GCC views. Twitter: @abuhamad1

Bahrain this week hosted an important meeting of NATO and its regional partners to discuss closer cooperation. This was the fifth meeting held by the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Policy Advisory Group since it was established and its first since 2018, reflecting the urgency NATO gives to the Gulf region after the Ukraine conflict.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was established at the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul to promote security cooperation between the organization and partner countries. Although the original purpose was to include the broader Middle East region, currently only four countries have joined the ICI — Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE. Other GCC countries participate in selected activities within the ICI framework without formally being part of it.

Activities under the ICI initiative include political and security dialogue, practical cooperation, defense planning, civil preparedness, counterterrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

NATO has applauded the ICI partners' contributions to NATO-led operations and missions. It cites Bahrain's contribution to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Kuwait, meanwhile, signed the first ever transit agreement in the Gulf with NATO in 2012, allowing for the movement of military equipment through the country. It is also part of the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction mechanism, an international initiative to combat piracy in the Indian Ocean. Qatar participated in Operation Unified Protector

in Libya in 2011. The UAE has also contributed substantially to NATO operations and missions over the years, including in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, which started in 2003, and joining the International Security Assistance Force in 2008. The UAE also participated in Operation Unified Protector in Libya in 2011. In recognition of the importance of Kuwait and the Gulf region in general to NATO, the NATO-ICI Regional Center was established in Kuwait City in 2017. It acts as a hub for the enhancement of practical cooperation between NATO and its ICI partners and the GCC region as a whole. According to NATO, the center's goal is to "improve common understanding of security challenges... increased interoperability and standardization." It promotes practical cooperation in various areas including strategic analysis, civil preparedness, military-to-military cooperation and public diplomacy. Its activities are open to all countries participating in the ICI, as well as other GCC countries and the GCC Secretariat.

The Bahrain meeting held on Wednesday and Thursday sought to shore up cooperation between NATO and its ICI partners, but also to the rest of the GCC membership and its institutions. When the GCC was established in 1981, integration between its six member states was its main objective. Since then, the focus of that process has revolved around four main parallel tracks — political, defense, internal security and economic integration — almost in equal measures.

Those four paths of integration intersect during the GCC's periodic assessments of regional

threats and challenges. On Sunday, for example, its regional security team will meet, for the fourth time in the past 12 months, for that purpose.

In the current review of regional security, more than a dozen threats and serious challenges are examined. They include Iran's nuclear deal, the proliferation of missiles and drones, territorial disputes with Iran, instability in neighboring countries, maritime security, cybersecurity, terrorism, arms smuggling, drug trafficking, illegal migration, and human trafficking. Challenges that also affect regional security include climate change, water security, food security and the recurrent spread of pandemics. There are also competing Gulf security concepts that the GCC needs to address.

Most, though not all, of these security concerns intersect with those of NATO, which argues for closer cooperation between the two organizations. NATO has recognized the need to engage with countries outside its membership and, given the GCC states' strategic importance and geographic location, those countries have figured prominently in its partnership plans with nonmembers. The Ukraine war has added some urgency to NATO's reaching out to GCC states and others. There were extensive discussions on enhancing cooperation among ICI partners, which will likely continue within the ICI and NATO institutional setup. In addition, NATO is seeking out wider cooperation with other GCC states that are not currently ICI members and with the GCC organization. The GCC and NATO have been discussing for some time possible formal instruments for cooperation. GCC-NATO

cooperation would be in parallel with and not a substitute for cooperation among the current ICI partners, although they will likely overlap at times. Some of the proposals currently under discussion for GCC-NATO engagement include political dialogue, as both organizations are concerned with regional crises and their spillover effects globally, such as the conflicts in Yemen, Sudan, Palestine/Israel and Syria/Lebanon. Security dialogue is also important, as both are also concerned about Iran's nuclear program and the proliferation of missiles and drones, cyberwarfare and threats to maritime security and freedom of navigation.

The political and security dialogues being proposed for GCC-NATO are similar to those conducted or planned under the framework of the GCC-EU Strategic Partnership announced in February 2022.

In addition to these dialogues, the GCC and NATO could also consider closer engagement on defense integration modalities, including the GCC's unified military command. NATO naturally provides a model for the most effective joint command. Another area of cooperation could involve the recently established GCC Strategic and Defense Academy, which will accept its first students in September.

The GCC and NATO have overlapping interests, but they also have differences in their approach to regional crises. To build an effective partnership, open and candid discussions need to take place to address the shared interests, differences and special concerns that each organization may have.

The GCC and NATO have overlapping interests, but they also have differences in their approach to regional crises



COURTESY: AHMAD NOURWANING AL-AWADAT

Kishida's visit carried a powerful symbolism reminiscent of the iconic moment when Mitterrand and Kohl held hands

Japan, South Korea could learn much from European example

KHALED ABOU ZAHR

The relationship between France and Germany offers important lessons for Japan and South Korea as they navigate their historical grievances and strive to strengthen regional ties. Indeed,

France and Germany's journey toward reconciliation provides valuable insights. The two European countries went from being consistent and ruthless enemies to becoming the engine of European construction.

France and Prussia/Germany faced each other in a total of seven wars in the 18th and 19th centuries, including the Franco-Prussian War and the Napoleonic Wars. Then, the 20th century witnessed the horrors of the First World War and the Second World War. These conflicts were driven by a combination of territorial disputes, such as for the Alsace-Lorraine region, national ambitions and ideological differences. They resulted in immense human suffering, loss of life and significant geopolitical changes.

However, the post-Second World War era, with the important role of the transatlantic alliance, has witnessed a remarkable transformation in the relationship between France and Germany — initially as West Germany and then as a reunified country. They have worked toward reconciliation, cooperation and the establishment of a united Europe.

The relationship between French President Charles de Gaulle and West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was the cornerstone of this new era. It underwent a remarkable evolution and played a crucial role in shaping the future

of both Franco-German relations and European integration. At their first meeting in Colombey-les-Deux-Eglises in 1958, the relationship was marked by a degree of skepticism and caution. De Gaulle was concerned about German power and sovereignty. Adenauer, on the other hand, sought to rebuild Germany's reputation and establish strong ties with its Western neighbors.

However, as time passed, the two leaders developed a deep mutual respect and understanding. They recognized the shared interests and benefits of Franco-German cooperation, particularly in the face of the Cold War and the desire for European integration. Their joint commitment to overcoming the past and fostering reconciliation was epitomized by the historic meeting at the Elysee Palace in 1962, which solidified the foundations of a close partnership. The relationship between De Gaulle and Adenauer laid the groundwork for the Franco-German alliance and set a precedent for future generations of leaders, who would build upon their legacy to forge a united and prosperous Europe.

More than two decades later, in 1984, the iconic image of Francois Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl holding hands at the site of the Battle of Verdun became another significant symbol of Franco-German reconciliation. The Battle of Verdun, which took place during the First World War, remains a symbol of the horrors of trench warfare. It was fought between the German and French armies and resulted in a staggering loss of life. Hence, this powerful gesture represented a deep commitment to peace and symbolized



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the overcoming of historical animosities. It showcased the transformative power of personal relationships between leaders and the ability to set aside past conflicts for the greater good.

With the end of the Cold War, Germany started its reunification process in 1989. And the Franco-German friendship grew ever stronger within the construction of the EU, which was founded in 1993.

In a remarkable development this week, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida made a reciprocal visit to South Korea, where he expressed genuine empathy for the victims of colonial rule. This visit carried a powerful symbolism reminiscent of the iconic moment when Mitterrand and Kohl held hands. It signifies the potential for a new era in relations between these two Asian countries. This is especially important as they face shared regional challenges, such as China's growing influence and the persistent issue of a nuclear North Korea. Strong personal relationships and dialogue are the foundation for a more robust and harmonious future. Both Japan and South Korea are strategic partners within the NATO framework, emphasizing the significance of their role in regional stability and global security.

While the Franco-German experience serves as a good example, it is worth noting that, with the rise in geopolitical and military challenges, as well as renewed ideological debates, relations between Paris and Berlin have not been without their challenges. Tensions have arisen on various issues, including economic policies,

energy, European integration and defense. They stand at a decisive and dangerous moment in the future integrity of Europe. Nonetheless, the lessons learned from their shared history and commitment to work through their differences have enabled them to maintain a strong partnership within the framework of the EU and NATO.

The Japanese PM's visit to South Korea presented an opportunity for both countries to embark on a new chapter in their relationship and foster a transformative moment, similar to that witnessed between France and Germany. This can lead to a broader unity among Asian countries, just like it did for Europe. While challenges may arise, the commitment to reconciliation and the pursuit of common interests can pave the way for a more peaceful and prosperous future.

The lessons that Japan and South Korea can draw from France and Germany's experiences are of paramount importance. Yet, we should remember that nothing is written in stone and alliances, more than anything else, demand consistent hard work, communications and an alignment of interests. They sometimes demand putting a supranational interest above anything else. The goodwill between their leaders presents an opportunity for both countries to embark on a new chapter and foster a transformative moment, in which they take greater control in deciding the future path for their countries and invite others to join them as they seek to strengthen regional partnerships and ensure a more stable and prosperous Asia.

Opinion

World watches as Turks decide which path to take

ANDREW HAMMOND



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

This year is a massive one for G20 state Türkiye — and not only because it marks the 100th anniversary of the republic. Sunday's presidential and legislative elections have key domestic implications, but also big international ones too.

This is because Turkish foreign policy could be at an inflexion point if President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has been in national office since 2003, is defeated. His foreign policy was predominantly pro-Western during his prime ministership, from 2003 to 2014, and for much of his presidential term from 2014 to 2018. However, change intensified following the 2016 attempted coup, since when he has also had cordial ties with other states, especially Russia, in what he calls his independent foreign policy.

In this context, Turkish domestic politics has recently delayed a number of key foreign policy decisions, including the approval of Sweden's accession to NATO. Whether Erdogan or opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu wins the ballots, it is likely that Ankara's objections to Stockholm's membership of the military alliance will eventually fade away.

Another key international implication of the elections is the looming renewal of the Black Sea grain deal with Russia, Ukraine and the UN, which expires on May 18.

The importance of this agreement is highlighted by the fact that nearly 30 million tons of foodstuffs have been exported from Ukraine since last summer, including nearly

600,000 tons of grain for aid operations in nations such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Somalia.

If Erdogan were to retain power, there is a higher probability of the agreement being extended, as his candidacy is backed by Vladimir Putin. However, a renewal of the deal is significantly less likely if Kilicdaroglu wins the presidency.

This is, in large part, because he and other key opposition leaders are widely distrusted by Russia, not least because some of them are vocally opposed to the Ukraine war. One particular figure who has been widely criticized by Putin is Ahmet Davutoglu.

While prime minister from 2014 to 2016, Davutoglu accused Russia of attempting "ethnic cleansing" with its airstrikes in northern Syria. Broader relations between Ankara and Moscow also plummeted in late 2015 after Turkey shot down a Russian warplane on its border with Syria, with Ankara insisting the plane was targeted because it had trespassed into its airspace, which Moscow denies.

So, decision-makers across the world will therefore closely watch these elections. One reason why the outcome remains unclear at this stage is the possibility of further surprises in the coming days. Amid this uncertainty, there are at least four key scenarios that could help illuminate — rather than exactly predict — what might happen.

For governments and organizations, including corporations, this exercise can help to build preparedness by stress testing against a range of plausible developments to help

mitigate risks. It can also allow them to seize possible opportunities to drive their competitive advantage in a fast-changing landscape.

While a significant number of commentators are predicting the end of the Erdogan era, the incumbent president is resilient and another victory cannot be ruled out, possibly in combination with legislative gains for the opposition, which could see his AKP party lose control of the chamber. Overall, this outcome — which might be termed the "Erdogan's political challenges grow" scenario — would probably be neutral to negative for the economy.

In this future, Erdogan could be hobbled

from day one of his new term. While he would remain the biggest political beast in Türkiye, his power would wane and he may lose the opportunity to define his succession.

With the economic outlook potentially deteriorating significantly, Erdogan is likely to consider serious macro adjustments, including to monetary policy, toward a more orthodox stance. However, he may well lack the power to do so, especially at the speed and to the degree that he might have done with a stronger political mandate.

With the electoral outcome on a knife-edge, it also remains highly plausible that Erdogan narrowly loses the presidential race to Kilicdaroglu. This could be the worst-case scenario for many businesses operating in the nation. This is because it could lead to Erdogan disputing the outcome in a similar style to Donald Trump in the US since November 2020, which could make it very difficult for

Kilicdaroglu to hit the ground running.

This scenario — which might be called "Erdogan's shadow looms large" — will probably be negative for the economy and the new president would likely lack the power to deliver on his goal of returning to a parliamentary political system, with control of economic and governmental activities stemming from the legislature.

While variants of these two futures are the most likely ones to play out, there are other less likely outcomes that would even more radically reshape the nation.

The first — which might be called the

"Erdogan triumphant" scenario — would see him winning big in the presidential election and his party earning a majority in the legislature too. This could herald a huge change in economic policy, with relatively radical measures brought in, including much tighter monetary policy.

However, the best-case outcome for the economy

is the most unlikely one: An unexpectedly large win for the opposition in both the presidential and legislative elections — what might be called the "new political era" scenario.

The improvement in investor confidence, buoyed by a potential deal with the International Monetary Fund, would likely be reinforced by a foreign policy shift toward the West.

This is why Sunday's elections will frame Türkiye's future for years. While elections are always important, these will be more pivotal than most, with the future of the two-decade-long Erdogan era on the ballot.

Another key international implication of the elections is the looming renewal of the Black Sea grain deal

While many are predicting the end of the Erdogan era, the incumbent president is resilient and another victory cannot be ruled out

Syria reconstruction would bring huge benefits for the region

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH



Dr. Majid Rafizadeh is a Harvard-educated Iranian-American political scientist. Twitter: @Dr_Rafizadeh

Extended domestic conflicts can have a devastating impact on a country's infrastructure, economy, safety and the living standards of its people. Often, once the conflict finally ends, it can still take many years to rebuild the affected nation, its economy and its infrastructure. One example is Syria, which is currently suffering one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time.

The February earthquake, which inflicted an estimated \$5.1 billion of damage in Syria, has further exacerbated the situation caused by more than 12 years of civil war. Even before

that disaster, more than two-thirds of the Syrian population needed humanitarian assistance, according to UNICEF, due to the "worsening economic crisis, continued localized hostilities, mass displacement and devastated public infrastructure."

UNICEF stated last month: "Now, the country is also grappling with severe human and material damage from catastrophic earthquakes and aftershocks ... that have left families in urgent need of food, water, shelter, and emergency medical and psychosocial assistance. Around 90 percent of families in the country live in poverty, while more than 50 percent are food insecure. The economic crisis is worsening negative coping mechanisms and particularly affecting female-headed households while contributing to the normalization of gender-based violence and child exploitation."

The estimated reconstruction cost for Syria is up to \$1 trillion. The longevity of the conflict

has played a critical role in imposing significant damage on the country's infrastructure and economy. Several concentric circles of violence were also occurring at the same time, prolonging the conflict. Many rebel groups were not only fighting the government, but also each other, and some proxy and militia groups from other countries became engaged in the domestic war. Meanwhile, there was a global stalemate on reaching a resolution between the US and other Western countries on the one hand and Russia and China on the other. In addition, global terror groups such as Daesh gained prominence at different points during the conflict.

But after more than a decade of turmoil, it is now important, for several reasons, that the international community focuses on measures that can help rebuild Syria.

First of all, it is important to point out that, when a country's economy is impacted to such a significant level, it also has negative effects on other countries in the region. As the World Bank reported in 2020, the conflict in Syria has imposed "a heavy economic and social toll on the country's neighbors in the Mashreq region. From 2011 onward, average annual gross domestic product growth rates were reduced by 1.2 percentage points in Iraq, 1.6 percentage points in Jordan, and 1.7 percentage points in Lebanon in real terms solely because of the conflict in Syria. Cumulatively, these reductions correspond to 11.3 percent of the combined pre-conflict (2010) GDPs across the three countries."

It added: "The fallout was transmitted through multiple channels. With decreasing

transit trade through Syria and stalling service exports like tourism, the marginal effect of the trade shock on GDP reached -3.1 percentage points in Jordan and -2.9 percentage points in Lebanon."

In other words, moves to reconstruct and rebuild Syria would not only help improve the living standards of the Syrian people and address the widespread poverty across the country, but they would also assist neighboring countries, particularly Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan, in improving their economic outlook.

Secondly, there may be some concerns that financial assistance or loans diverted to Syria may not end up being utilized for the recon-

struction of the country. But this issue can be resolved if global financial institutions were to monitor the situation and cooperate with the private sector. One important step would be to help expand the private sector in Syria.

Before the conflict erupted, the World Bank Group provided "support to Syria through its technical assistance and advisory services on private sector development, human development, social protection, and environmental sustainability. Following the onset of the conflict in 2011, all World Bank operational activity and missions to Syria were halted. Nonetheless, the World Bank monitors the impact of the conflict on the Syrian people and the economy in consultation with other members of the international community. This helps inform international thinking on Syria from an economic and social perspective and build preparedness for post-agreement recovery efforts, when and if mandated."

Thirdly, rebuilding Syria would help promote security in the country, due to the fact that poverty and conflict-stricken states can often be ripe locations for terror and militia groups to grow, gain power and inflict damage on the country and broader region.

Finally, if the international community were to concentrate on rebuilding Syria, it would also indirectly help to resolve the Syrian refugee crisis. After more than 12 years of conflict, Syria remains the largest refugee crisis in the world. The UN Refugee Agency reported in March that more than "14 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety. More than 6.8 million Syrians remain internally displaced

in their own country, where 70 percent of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance and 80 percent of the population live below the poverty line."

Helping resolve this issue would also have a tremendous positive impact on countries such as Lebanon, Türkiye, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq. As the UN

Refugee Agency stated: "Approximately 5.5 million Syrian refugees live in the five countries neighboring Syria ... Germany is the largest non-neighboring host country with more than 850,000 Syrian refugees."

In a nutshell, the international community ought to focus on measures that can help rebuild Syria's infrastructure in order to address the widespread poverty and humanitarian crisis, the nation's crippled economy, and its security. Such measures would also have positive impacts on neighboring countries' economy and security, and thus help stabilize this volatile part of the world.

The longevity of the conflict has played a critical role in imposing significant damage on the country's infrastructure and economy

If the international community were to concentrate on rebuilding Syria, it would also help to resolve the Syrian refugee crisis

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Business



There would be very serious repercussions not only for the US but also for the global economy should there be a US debt default.

Julie Kozaak
IMF communications director



Chinese oil demand is now expected to rise by 800,000 bpd, OPEC said, up from the 760,000 bpd forecast last month, adding to a recovery after strict COVID-19 curbs were scrapped. Reuters/Flp

FORECAST

World oil demand to rise by 2.33 mbpd in 2023

OPEC raises its forecast for Chinese oil demand growth this year

Reuters London

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' global oil demand forecast for 2023 was held steady for a third month on Thursday, with the producer group citing the potential Chinese growth to be offset by downside economic risks elsewhere such as the US debt ceiling.

World oil demand in 2023 will rise by 2.33 million barrels per day, or 2.3 percent, OPEC said in a monthly report. This was virtually unchanged from 2.32 million bpd forecast last month.

"Minor upward adjustments were made due to the better than expected performance in China's

economy, while other regions are expected to see slight declines due to economic challenges that are likely to weigh on oil demand," OPEC said in the report.

A new round of oil output cuts announced on April 2 by some members of OPEC+, which comprises OPEC, Russia and other allies, has failed to boost oil prices that have been hit by further interest rate hikes and concern over the US debt ceiling.

This is the last monthly OPEC report before OPEC+ holds its next policy meeting on June 4.

Chinese oil demand is now expected to rise by 800,000 bpd, OPEC said, up from the 760,000 bpd forecast last month, adding to a recovery after strict COVID-19 containment measures were scrapped.

The global growth figure,

HIGHLIGHTS

• A new round of oil output cuts announced on April 2 by some members of OPEC+ has failed to boost oil prices that have been hit by further interest rate hikes and concern over the US debt ceiling.

• The report also showed OPEC's oil production fell in April, reflecting the impact of earlier output cuts pledged by OPEC+ to support the market as well as some unplanned outages.

however, was unchanged for a third straight month and OPEC left its 2023 economic growth forecast at 2.6 percent, citing potential downside risks such as inflation and increasing debt payments from higher interest rates.

"In addition, the US debt ceiling issue has so far not been resolved, a matter that could have economic consequences," OPEC said.

Oil fell on Thursday, with Brent crude trading below \$76 a barrel.

Lower output

The report also showed OPEC's oil production fell in April, reflecting the impact of earlier output cuts pledged by OPEC+ to support the market as well as some unplanned outages.

For November last year, with prices weakening, OPEC+ agreed to a 2 million bpd reduction in its

output target — the largest since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The April 2 voluntary cuts add to this total.

OPEC said its April output fell by 191,000 bpd to 28.60 million bpd, with declines in Iraq and Nigeria. Iraq's northern exports were halted while some of Nigeria's exports were disrupted by a labor dispute.

The report kept its forecast that non-OPEC supply would rise by 1.4 million bpd in 2023 and flagged factors that could limit or curb supplies, such as investment levels and the war in Ukraine.

While overall investment levels in non-OPEC supply in 2023 are expected to be just above pre-pandemic levels, they are still short of a \$747 billion high reached in 2014 as oil companies focus on capital discipline, OPEC said.

MARKET

Saudi stocks edge up; trading volume touches \$1.6bn

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index gained 99.6 points, or 0.88 percent, to finish at 11,392.78 on Thursday, as 155 of the 224 stocks closed in the green and 54 in the red.

While the parallel market Nomu edged up 0.53 percent to close at 21,263.79, the MSCI Tadawul Index dropped slightly by 0.03 percent to close at 1,520.50.

The total trading turnover of the benchmark index on Thursday was SR6.16 billion (\$1.64 billion).

Tihama Advertising and Public Relations Co. was the top gainer of the day, as its share price soared 8.09 percent to SR19.50.

FASTFACTS

• The parallel market Nomu edged up 0.53 percent to close at 21,263.79.

• The MSCI Tadawul Index dropped slightly by 0.03 percent to close at 1,520.50.

Savola Group and Etihad Etisalat Co. also saw gains, with their respective share prices rising by 4.67 percent and 4.45 percent.

The worst performer was Salama Cooperative Insurance Co., which dropped 3.15 percent to SR21.24.

On the announcements front, Etihad Etisalat Co. also known as Mobily, reported a 45.77 percent increase in net profit to SR465 million during the first quarter of 2023 from SR389 million in the year-ago period.

The company also reported a 6.3 percent increase in revenues to SR4.05 billion between January and March of 2023 from SR3.81 billion during the same period last year.

The increase in Mobily's revenue was mainly driven by growth in the business and consumer segments. Its share price closed higher at SR46.90.

In a statement to Tadawul, Halwani Bros. Co. also reported a sharp decline in net profit to SR1.64 million in the first quarter of 2023, down 91.65 percent from SR19.65 million in the same period last year.

Its revenues declined 15.36 percent to SR301.53 million during the period under review.

RENEWABLES

KSA, Netherlands sign MoU to collaborate on green energy

Arab News Riyadh

Green hydrogen production has received a boost as Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum of understanding with the Netherlands on Thursday to cooperate in developing the clean gas and expediting the global pursuit to reduce the carbon footprint.

The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the World Hydrogen Summit in Rotterdam.

During the event, Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said that the Netherlands could be the primary destination for transporting hydrogen from renewable energy sources from the Kingdom to Europe.

The minister also added that Netherlands and Germany would be Saudi Arabia's "natural partners" in the green hydrogen

trade. "You are putting facilities on the ground, you are building storages and pipelines, you have a plan," said the minister, Reuters reported.

Green hydrogen is expected to play a crucial role in catalyzing the ongoing energy transition, and it is necessary to achieve a green gas-neutral economy by 2050, helping to combat global warming.

Saudi Arabia is currently developing a \$5 billion green hydrogen project in NEOM, powered by renewable energy, to supply 650 tons of carbon-free hydrogen daily. The plant will see its first production in 2026.

The project will export hydrogen in the form of liquid ammonia to the world market for use as a biofuel that feeds transportation systems.



Saudi Arabia is taking steps to become a leading supplier of green hydrogen. Flp

BACKGROUND

• Green hydrogen is expected to play a crucial role in catalyzing the ongoing energy transition, and it is necessary to achieve a green gas-neutral economy by 2050, helping to combat global warming.

• Saudi Arabia is currently developing a \$5 billion green hydrogen project in NEOM, powered by renewable energy, to supply 650 tons of carbon-free hydrogen daily. The plant will see its first production in 2026.

• The project will export hydrogen in the form of liquid ammonia to the world market for use as a biofuel that feeds transportation systems.

Earlier in April, the Saudi minister met with Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra to discuss the possibility of making the port of Rotterdam the gateway for clean hydrogen exports from Saudi Arabia to Europe.

The meeting also touched on the Kingdom's efforts in clean energy and climate change through its local and regional frameworks — the Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative.

Affirming its progress in renewable energy production, Saudi Arabia's SABIC Agri-Nutrients, in May, exported its first shipment of low-carbon ammonia to India.

According to a Saudi Press Agency report, the firm has shipped 5,000 tons of low-carbon ammonia to India, in line with the firm's long-term cooperation with the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Ltd.

Business Saudi Arabia

GROWTH

Saudi Arabia's industrial production index rises 4.1%

Surge in production in mining and quarrying pushed up output volume: GASTAT

Arab News Riyadh

High production in mining, quarrying and manufacturing helped deliver a 4.1 percent year-on-year rise in Saudi Arabia's industrial output volume, according to the latest report from the General Authority for Statistics.

The authority noted that mining and quarrying grew by 1.6 percent in March 2023, compared to the same period last year, while the Kingdom increased its oil production to more than 10 million barrels per day in March.

Besides the year-on-year increase, March's Industrial Production Index was 6 percent up on the previous month.

The increase in mining output comes as Saudi Arabia aims to transform the sector into the third pillar of the national industry and utilize the Kingdom's wealth valued at around SR5 trillion (\$1.3 trillion) under Saudi Vision 2030.

"Relative weights of the mining and quarrying, manufacturing, and electricity and gas supply sectors in the IPI are 74.5 percent, 22.6 percent, and 2.9 percent, respectively. Thus, the trend of the industrial production index in the mining and quarrying sector dominates the trend in the general IPI," GASTAT said in the report.

According to the report, the overall IPI climbed by 0.2 percent in February 2023 due to increases in production in the three sub-sectors — mining and quarrying, which climbed 0.1 percent; manufacturing, with a rise of 0.3 percent; and electricity and gas supplies, which increased by 1.9 percent.

The Kingdom has 35 locations with specific geological formations, called mineral belts, that contain abundant mineral deposits.



The increase in mining output comes as Saudi Arabia aims to transform the sector into the third pillar of the national industry and utilize the Kingdom's mineral wealth valued at around SR5 trillion (\$1.3 trillion). File

As of 2022, these belts represent 14 percent of the Kingdom's size and cover 305,000 sq. km. The ministry added that the mineral deposits of these belts are around 75 percent of the Kingdom's total mineral deposits, which have a projected value of SR5 trillion (\$1.3 trillion).

Around 94 percent of the mineral belts are located in the Arabian Shield, which spans over 622,00 sq. km.

The belts are spread over the

FASTFACTS

● Mining and quarrying grew by 1.6 percent in March 2023, compared to the same period last year, while the Kingdom increased its oil production to more than 10 million barrels per day in March.

● Compared to the same month last year, manufacturing activity climbed by 10.5 percent and gas and electricity supplies rose by 16.6 percent.

country's administrative regions, also led by Makkah which contains nine belts, revealed the ministry data.

The remaining 26 belts are located around the Kingdom — seven in Asir, six in Riyadh, five in Tabuk, four in Madinah, two in Baha, and one each in Qassim and Najran.

Most of the mineral belts contain gold and sulfides, where the former has 16 and the latter 15. In addition, there are three belts

for nickel and one belt for zinc.

The ministry upgraded its mining investment law in 2020 to develop the mining sector and designed a long-term integrated mining system aimed at protecting both employees and the environment.

Compared to the same month last year, manufacturing activity climbed by 10.5 percent and gas and electricity supplies rose by 16.6 percent.

Saudi Arabia's IPI turned

positive in May 2021 and has been steadily increasing since then. This improvement follows poor trends in 2019 and 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

IPI is an economic indicator that indicates the relative changes in industrial output volume. It is calculated using data from an industrial production survey.

After reaching a 26.7 percent year-on-year growth in April 2022, the Kingdom's growth has slowed for 11 consecutive months.

COOPERATION

Saudi Arabia, Oman explore investment opportunities

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's industry and mining sectors are set to benefit from bilateral ties with Oman as their ministers met in Muscat to discuss industrial cooperation and investment opportunities, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

On Wednesday, Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Alkhorayef met with Omani Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al-Yousef to improve collaboration in the industry and mining sectors.

The meeting explored investment opportunities available within the framework of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and the Oman Vision 2040, forging a path of economic prosperity between the two nations.

Alkhorayef also met with Ali bin Masoud Al-Sunaidi, the president of Oman's General Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zone, to enhance cooperation in developing industrial and economic cities.

The minister's visit also included his participation in the 50th



Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Alkhorayef met with Omani officials in Muscat to explore investment opportunities for both sides. SPA, SPA

meeting of the Industrial Cooperation Committee of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

In 2022, the Saudi Industrial Development Fund financed two joint projects with Oman, with a capital amounting to SR90.7 billion (\$24 billion).

The Saudi minister has been touring the world, building partnerships in the mining space.

Earlier this month, Alkhorayef concluded an official visit to Switzerland to enhance cooperation in the industrial and mining sectors and increase trade exchange and non-oil exports.

He held talks with Swiss State

Secretary for Economic Affairs Helene Budliger Artieda and the executive president of Swiss Export Credit Agency, Barbara Huiz.

They discussed ways to collaborate with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 in diversifying the economy and taking advantage of the investment prospects offered by the National Industrial Strategy.

This move comes as the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources aims to shield the mining sector and maximize its value in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and the National Industry Development and Logistics Program.

LOGISTICS

First dedicated e-commerce global distribution center to be built in KSA

Arab News Riyadh

A first-of-its-kind dedicated e-commerce logistics facility will be built in Saudi Arabia to target the Middle East.

The global distribution center will be constructed by South Korean firm CJ Logistics, according to a press release.

Expected to be completed in 2024, the facility will be located in Riyadh's Special Integrated Logistics Zone.

The Saudi government established the zone at the King Khalid International Airport to serve as a testament to the Saudi Aviation Strategy under Vision 2030, positioning the Kingdom as a global logistics hub.

"We will spare no effort for state-of-the-art logistics technology and infrastructure so that the GDC can become a logistics hub that leads the Middle East e-commerce market," said Kang Sin-ho, CEO of CJ Logistics.

He added: "The Saudi e-commerce market has the richest growth potential in the Middle East and the geographical advantage of connecting Africa and Europe."

FASTFACTS

● Expected to be completed in 2024, the facility will be located in Riyadh's Special Integrated Logistics Zone.

● The global distribution center will be constructed by South Korean firm CJ Logistics.

● The facility will have a gross floor area of 18,000 sq. meters and a daily throughput capacity of 15,000 boxes.

The company and the Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation held a ceremony to officiate the launch on May 10 in Riyadh.

Commenting on the issuance



of the license, GACA President Abdulaziz Al Duaeij said: "On behalf of the GACA, I am delighted to be issuing CJ Logistics with a license to operate today, which marks an important milestone for Riyadh Integrated — Saudi Arabia's Special Integrated Logistics Zone. We look forward to CJ Logistics having a strong presence in the Kingdom, with this global distribution center being their main hub in the region."

A state-of-the-art modern logistics center, the facility will have a gross floor area of 18,000 sq. meters and a daily throughput capacity of 15,000 boxes.

Prior to establishing the GDC, CJ Logistics agreed to an eight-year contract with iHub, one of the major online retailers of health and wellness products. The new center will provide international delivery of iHerb products to the Middle East.

The zone, strategically positioned to serve billions of potential clients in Africa, Asia, and Europe, aims to significantly increase Saudi Arabia's cargo capacity to more than 4.5 million tons per year.

Business News



Emirates has committed \$200 million to fund research projects focused on reducing the impact of fossil fuels in the commercial aviation sector. Reuters/Flia

WARNING

Aviation sector likely 'to miss net-zero targets'

Emirates chief calls for increased research to introduce sustainable practices

Arab News Riyadh

The aviation industry will miss its net-zero target unless it boosts research around sustainable practices, the president of the UAE flag carrier Emirates has warned.

In 2021, the International Air Transport Association passed a resolution committing airlines to achieve net-zero carbon emissions from their operations by 2050.

Yet the head of Emirates — one of the largest airlines in the world — believes the biggest impediment for the sector to reduce its environmental impact is the fuel being used.

Speaking as he announced Emirates had committed \$200 million to fund research and development projects focused on reducing the impact of fossil fuels in the commercial aviation sector, Tim Clark said: "We looked long and hard at the reality we face in commercial aircraft and engine technology, fuel supply chain, and our industry's regulatory and

eco-system requirements.

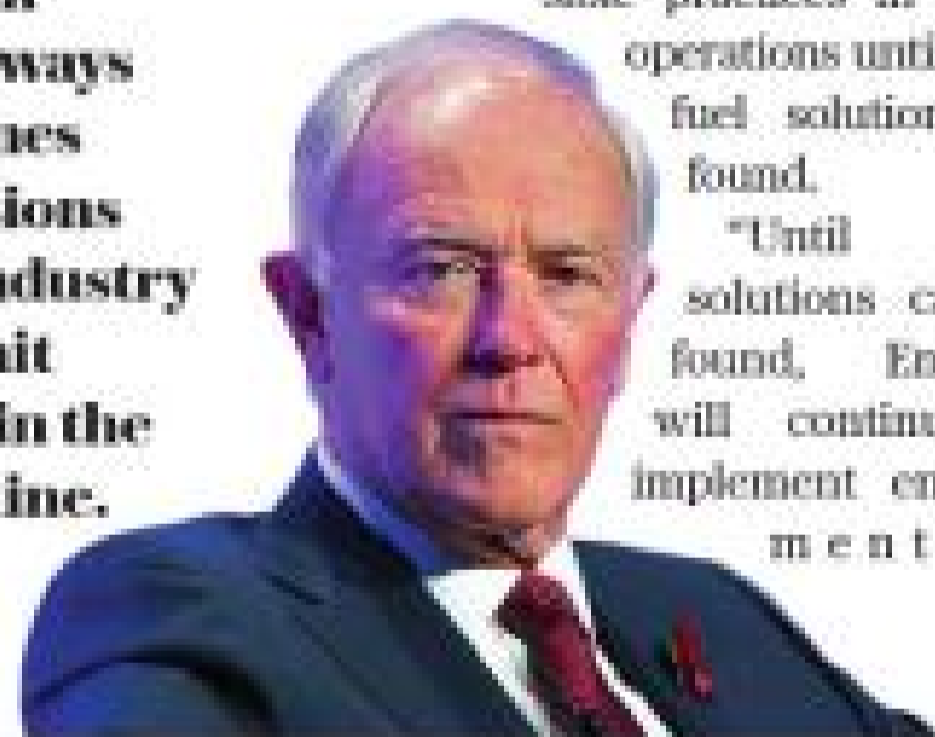
He added: "It's clear that with the current pathways available to airlines in terms of emissions reduction, our industry won't be able to hit net-zero targets in the prescribed timeline."

The designated fund of \$200 million will be disbursed over three years, and Emirates will identify partnerships with organizations working on fuel and energy technologies.

According to the IATA, the production of sustainable aviation fuel is estimated to meet just 2 percent of

It's clear that with the current pathways available to airlines in terms of emissions reduction, our industry won't be able to hit net-zero targets in the prescribed timeline.

Tim Clark
Emirates, president



the sector's needs by 2025.

SAF is produced in tiny quantities from feedstocks such as cooking oils and animal waste and costs two to five times more than traditional jet fuels.

Clark further noted that Emirates aims to "contribute meaningfully to practical solutions for the long-term sustainability of commercial aviation."

He pointed out that the \$200 million is earmarked exclusively for research and development and will not be used for operating expenses, including the purchase of SAF.

Reaffirming the airline's commitment toward sustainability, Clark added that Emirates would continue embracing environmentally responsible practices in all its operations until other fuel solutions are found.

"Until viable solutions can be found, Emirates will continue to implement environmentally

responsible practices throughout our business, including uplifting SAF where feasible, ensuring efficient fleet operations, and inducting modern aircraft into our fleet," he said.

Earlier in January, Emirates completed the first 100 percent SAF-powered demonstration flight in partnership with Boeing and General Electric.

In April, Brendan Sullivan, IATA's head of cargo, said that governments need to incentivize the production of SAF to create a "clear tipping point" for the sector's net-zero ambitions.

"SAF is being produced. And every single drop is being used. The problem is that the quantities are small. The solution is government policy incentives," said Sullivan.

He added: "Through incentivizing production, we could see 30 billion liters of SAF available by 2030. That will still be far from where we need to be. But it would be a clear tipping point toward our net-zero ambition of ample SAF quantities at affordable prices."

AVIATION

Saudi Arabia, UAE airports to drive passenger traffic recovery in Middle East

Nour El-Shaerl Cairo

Key aviation hubs in Saudi Arabia and the UAE are predicted to drive full recovery of passenger traffic in the Middle East in 2024, with the region set to grow by 4.2 percent annually through 2040, speakers at the Global Airport Leaders Forum said.

Industry leaders discussed the probability of the region spearheading the global aviation market in terms of passenger traffic recovery, fueled primarily by aviation hubs like Dubai, Abu Dhabi and key cities of Saudi Arabia.

The Middle East is currently leading the traffic numbers in terms of global recovery with 93 percent of pre-COVID levels, said Kashif Khalid, regional director of the International Air Transport Association, during the forum.

On May 9, Dubai Airports, which owns and manages the operation of both Dubai International and Dubai World Central airports, revised its 2023 forecast upward to 83.6 million passengers.

Dubai's main airport DXB registered a 55.8 percent increase in passenger traffic in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period of last year, reaching 95.6 percent of 2019 levels.

The operator said it welcomed around 21.3 million passengers in the first three months of 2023.

The UAE welcomed around 31.8 million passengers across all airports in the first quarter of this year, an increase of 11.48 million passengers compared to the same period last year.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah alone handled

over 2 million passengers since the beginning of Ramadan.

This came after the Kingdom witnessed a 82 percent surge in passengers to 88 million in 2022 compared to the previous 12

FASTFACT

Dubai's main airport DXB registered a 55.8 percent increase in passenger traffic in the first quarter of this year compared to the same period of last year, reaching 95.6 percent of 2019 levels.

months, according to the General Authority of Statistics.

The Jeddah airport emerged as the busiest airport in Saudi Arabia in 2022, as it handled 32 million passengers.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Decision

Norway postpones onshore wind power tax

The Norwegian government said on Thursday it was postponing plans to introduce additional taxes for onshore wind power operators by a year to 2024 amid industry concern it may derail renewable energy expansion.

The government in September proposed the introduction of a ground resource tax for existing and new onshore wind farms, which it said would benefit local and state finances.

The new tax was expected to generate about 2.5 billion Norwegian crowns (\$238.36 million) in tax revenue, starting with the 2023 tax year.

A consultation process drew strong criticism from stakeholders, questioning the legality of the rapidly introduced proposal.

The government now aims to put forward a parliamentary bill in the autumn, to take effect for the income year 2024, a Finance Ministry statement said. **Reuters**

Climate

Swedish greenhouse gas emissions dip 3%

Swedish emissions of greenhouse gases fell 3 percent in 2022 compared to 2021, preliminary statistics showed on Thursday, with decreases for car transportation and the manufacturing and energy industries driving the decline.

Emissions of carbon dioxide equivalents decreased by 1.5 million tons to 49.5 million tons last year compared to the year before.

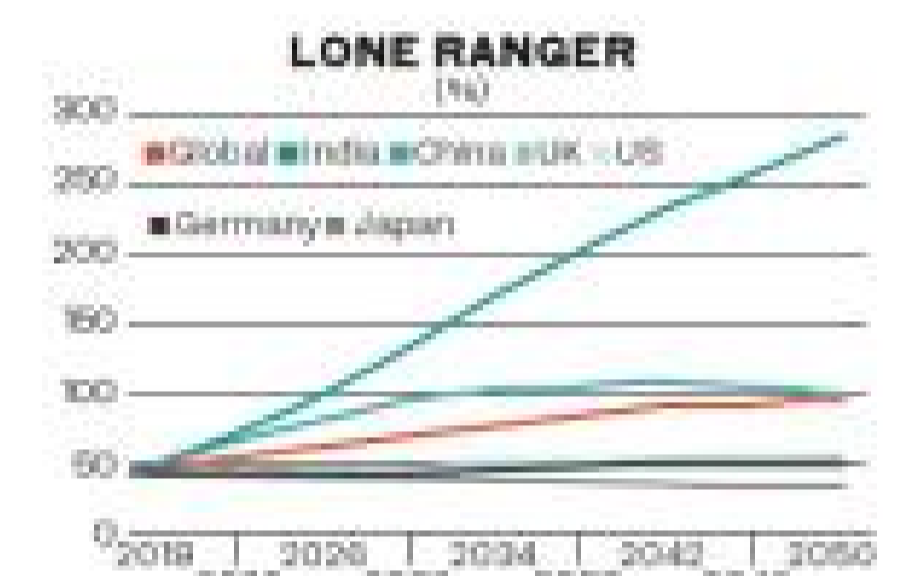
"The reduction in emissions 2022 can be seen in almost all industries, except from the transport industry where we still have a certain increase," Statistics Sweden said in a statement, referring to the broader transport sector, including trucks and other heavy transports.

Sweden's gross domestic product rose 2.6 percent during the same period. "That means that emissions of greenhouse gases per crown produced in the economy is decreasing," it said. **Reuters**

Chart of THE DAY

One who acts alone and without consultation or the approval of others broadly.

Source: Bloomberg



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

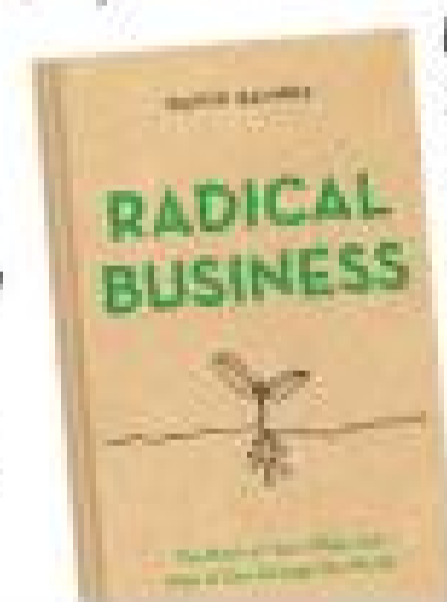
Radical Business

DAVID GAINES

"Radical Business" is a blueprint for business owners and businesses ready to usher in a newer, practical form of doing business, says a review published on goodreads.com. By learning more about what a "social enterprise" is and how it can apply to any business, employee, activist, consumer, or

citizen, we can use the golden rule as a catalyst for a different mindset.

David Gaines provides real-life business insight by going into depth about how businesses interact with their supply chains, employees, customers, competitors, community, and environment.



Legislation

EU lawmakers agree tougher draft AI rules

European lawmakers came a step closer to passing new rules regulating artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, following a crunch vote on Thursday where they agreed tougher draft legislation.

The EU's AI Act looks set to be the world's first legislation governing the technology, with new rules around the use of facial recognition, biometric surveillance, and other AI applications.

After two years of negotiations, the bill is now expected to move to the next stage of the process, in which lawmakers finalize its details with the European Commission and member states.

Dragos Tudorache, one of the parliamentarians charged with drafting the laws, said: "It is a delicate deal. But it is a package that I think gives something to everyone that participated in these negotiations." **Reuters**

Bullion

Gold continues to slide on stronger US dollar

Gold prices extended losses to a second session on Thursday as the dollar advanced, while markets assessed US inflation data to gauge the Federal Reserve's next policy move.

Spot gold fell 0.1 percent to \$2,026.99 per ounce by 1033 GMT, while US gold futures ticked down 0.2 percent to \$2,033.30.

The annual increase in US consumer prices slowed to below 5 percent in April for the first time in two years. Although, month-over-month CPI in April rose 0.4 percent after gaining 0.1 percent in March.

The US inflation data is still "way above the comfort zone of the Fed" suggesting the central bank may not change its rate hike course soon and that has hit gold, said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo. "Near-term debt ceiling talks and US macro data will influence the gold price" Staunovo added. **Reuters**

Jon Pike's Cricket Weekly



ANALYSIS

Why fast bowling remains one of cricket's most exhilarating spectacles

In addition to technique, bowlers also display ability to swing ball in air, make it deviate off pitch

Jon Pike London

There is no more exhilarating sight in cricket than that of a fast bowler running in to deliver the ball, except, that is, if you are the person holding the bat.

In my youth, I faced one of England's fastest bowlers of the time. I barely saw the ball, let alone possessed the hand-eye coordination to make a proper reaction to play an intended shot. It is, therefore, unimaginable what it would have been like to face the fastest bowler ever recorded. In 2002, Shoab Akhtar, known as the Rawalpindi Express, became the first bowler to break the 100 miles per hour barrier, equivalent to 161.3 kilometers per hour. His achievement still stands.

A radar gun has been used since 1989 to calculate bowling speeds in international matches and some first-class matches.

A gun is mounted on a pole located next to the sight screen behind the boundary and behind the bowler. It measures the speed of the ball from one end of the pitch to the other, in comparable manner to how the speed of a motor vehicle is calculated. Speeding tickets were first introduced in the late 1940s in the US, but it was some time before speed-gun technology arrived in sport.

Technology

First it was baseball in the 1970s, to measure speed of pitch, then tennis in 1989, to calculate the speed of service. It was another 10 years be-

fore cricket adopted the technology.

The gun transmits a microwave beam toward the entire distance of the pitch and detects the movement of any object along with the pitch. Spectators, coaches, analysts, and players can see the ball-speed calculation displayed on screen.

Sceptics are apt to point out that the speed gun is not 100 percent accurate, suggesting that Akhtar may not have achieved 100 mph. He said: "It doesn't matter to me whether somebody recognises the speed gun or not. For me, it's satisfying that I have bowled the fastest-ever delivery."

It is, however, the case that the gun is accurate to within 1 mph up to 60 mph and within 3 percent over this. The laser could be 27 mph out at 90 mph. Generally, bowlers are categorised as slow, if delivering the ball between 40 mph and 60 mph, medium pace between 60 mph and 80 mph, and fast over 80 mph.

Bowling technique

The characteristics which determine which bowlers fit into which category are complex. These relate to technique, physical condition, mental strength, and aptitude for practice. There are five stages in bowling technique — run-up, pre-delivery stride, delivery stride, ball release, and follow through. In the case of fast bowlers, the run-up assumes increased importance.

This needs to be at a level appropriate to produce high linear velocity while still allowing the bowler to perform the bowling action properly. Every bowler has a different body shape, so each one

has a separate way of generating acceleration in the run-up. Foot contact on the ground is also important, as ground reaction forces are used to generate both pace and deceleration in the delivery stage.

One of the great fast bowlers, Michael Holding of Jamaica, had such a smooth, silent, run-up that he was nicknamed Whispering Death. Another great, Australia's Dennis Lillee, appeared from the distance, almost back to the sight screen on some grounds, in menacing fashion. During his furious sprint to the wicket, his mane of hair would blow in the wind, his moustache bristle, while his unbuttoned shirt revealed a bouncing gold chain.

Delivery

In the pre-delivery stage, the bowler leaps into the air to allow the body to be organized for the delivery. This means that the lower body is decelerated, and the upper body of hips, shoulders, and bowling arm are accelerated.

In the delivery stage, the back foot contacts the ground first, exerting pressure on the spine. When the front foot contacts the ground, there are forces up to nine times the bowler's body weight relying on the front leg to keep the body stable.

Prior to delivery, the upper body is driven forward, pivoting on the front knee. At the point of ball release, the position of the bowling arm in relation to the front foot impacts on ball speed. The faster bowlers tend to delay delivery.

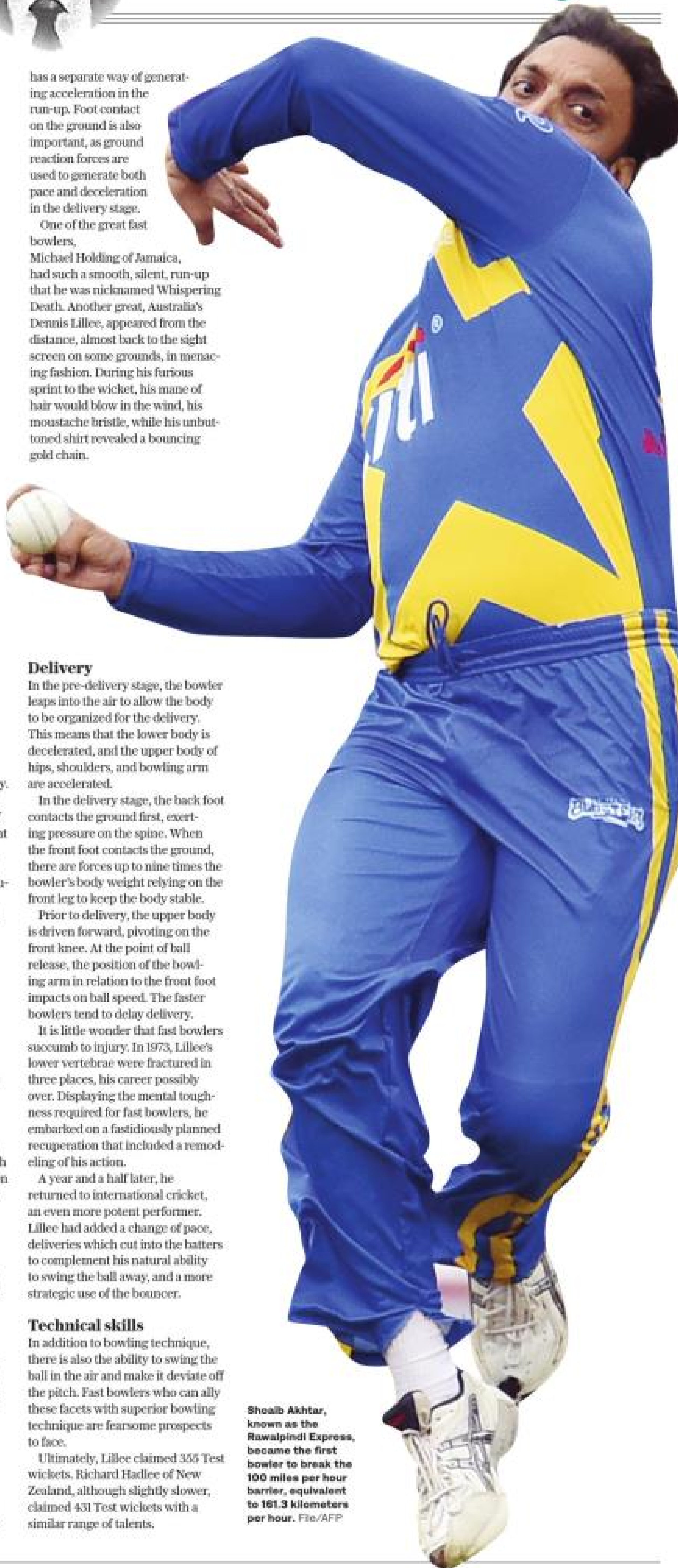
It is little wonder that fast bowlers succumb to injury. In 1973, Lillee's lower vertebrae were fractured in three places, his career possibly over. Displaying the mental toughness required for fast bowlers, he embarked on a fastidiously planned recuperation that included a remodeling of his action.

A year and a half later, he returned to international cricket, an even more potent performer. Lillee had added a change of pace, deliveries which cut into the batters to complement his natural ability to swing the ball away, and a more strategic use of the bouncer.

Technical skills

In addition to bowling technique, there is also the ability to swing the ball in the air and make it deviate off the pitch. Fast bowlers who can ally these facets with superior bowling technique are fearsome prospects to face.

Ultimately, Lillee claimed 355 Test wickets. Richard Hadlee of New Zealand, although slightly slower, claimed 431 Test wickets with a similar range of talents.



Shoab Akhtar, known as the Rawalpindi Express, became the first bowler to break the 100 miles per hour barrier, equivalent to 161.3 kilometers per hour. File/AFP

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Since Messi adió

Barcelona look to clinch first league title

Barcelona can clinch the Spanish league title this weekend and finally start moving past the exit of Lionel Messi three years ago.

The club need only two of the remaining 15 points in play to win their first domestic league since 2019. Their first chance at securing the title is on Sunday when they visit Espanyol.

Barcelona are 13 points ahead of Atletico Madrid, and Xavi Hernandez's team hold the head-to-head tiebreaker. Real Madrid, last year's champion, are 14 points back in third. AP

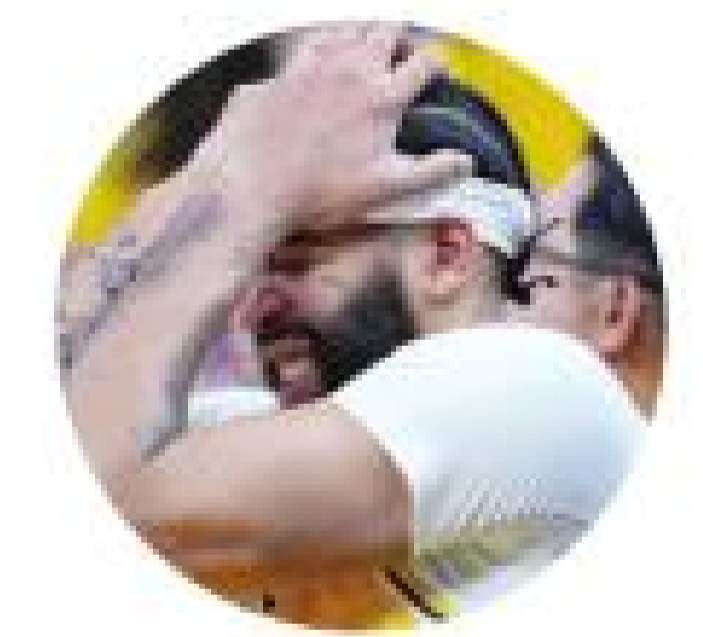
NBA

Lakers center Davis injured late in Game 5 loss

Lakers center Anthony Davis injured his head in what appeared to be an inadvertent hit by Golden State's Kevon Looney midway through the fourth quarter of the Warriors' 123-106 Game 5 victory in the Western Conference semifinals Wednesday night.

Davis grabbed at his head grimacing on the bench before going to the locker room following the play with 7:43 remaining. He and Looney were battling for positioning in the paint on a driving layup by the Lakers' D'Angelo Russell.

Davis' status for Game 6 on Friday night back in Los Angeles is unclear but coach Darvin Ham was encouraged afterward without providing details on what evaluation — such as concussion testing — the big man went through once in the locker room. TNT reported Davis required a wheelchair to go to the locker room. AP



Golf

Tiger out, Spieth in doubt as field for PGA event set

Tiger Woods was confirmed out for next week's PGA Championship following right ankle surgery while injured Jordan Spieth, chasing a career Grand Slam, was on the entry list released Wednesday.

The field of 156 for next week's showdown at Oak Hill also includes 18 players from the Saudi-backed LIV Golf League, among them Masters runner-ups and multiple major winners Phil Mickelson and Brooks Koepka.

Woods, a 15-time major champion and a four-time PGA Championship winner, underwent his latest operation last month after withdrawing in the third round of the Masters. AFP

HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE FIGHTS ON CARDS

WWE superstar matchups take shape for Night of Champions

Arab News Riyadh

The first matchups inside the Kingdom's Jeddah Superdome are being scheduled as WWE Night of Champions, on Saturday, May 27, edges closer.

Enigmatic superstar Seth Rollins has been confirmed as the first wrestler to battle for the coveted WWE world heavyweight championship.

Rollins defeated Finn Balor on Monday Night Raw earlier this week to earn his spot in the title fight for the championship belt.

His opponent will be an illustrious one of championship pedigree, with Rey Mysterio, Edge, Bobby Lashley, Austin Theory, Sheamus and AJ Styles facing off on Friday Night SmackDown to determine the final slot in the championship fight.



Seth Rollins

Elsewhere, the first official match for WWE Night of Champions has been confirmed after a record-breaking WWE Backlash concluded in San Juan, Puerto Rico. In a clash of the titans at the highest-viewed Backlash in event history, Cody Rhodes took down Brock Lesnar in a dramatic battle after recent run-ins following Lesnar's return.

The duo had been set to take

on Roman Reigns and Solo Sikoa in a tag team matchup before Lesnar turned on Rhodes to shock the WWE universe. Following a redemptive victory at Backlash, an incensed reaction from "The Beast" triggered a rematch between the two with sparks set to fly in Jeddah.

Fans in the Middle East can secure their seat in Jeddah with tickets available at <https://www.ticketm.com>.

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

Joey Jung stars with Jackie Chan in 'Ride On,' now in GCC cinemas.



Weekend Lifestyle, Art & Culture



CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Egyptian filmmaker Haya Khairat's 'turning point'

Khairat will be awarded the Angénieux Special Encouragement Award at Cannes this month



Rawan Talass Dubai

For emerging Egyptian director Haya Khairat, it was too good to be true. One day in February, an email arrived from none other than the organizers of the Cannes Film Festival. She was going to be the recipient of the Angénieux Special Encouragement Award at the movie industry's most prestigious festival. Khairat ignored the message.

She thought it was just spam, she explains. But when the team contacted her again through her Instagram account, she finally believed the news.

"Honestly, in that minute, I was super-overwhelmed and scared. It was big. I needed to think about it. I was thinking, 'Why are they awarding me?' It's going to open many doors for me," Khairat tells Arab News. "It's going to be a turning point."

The award was launched in 2019 to support young filmmakers with the potential to excel in the industry. It is named after the French company Angénieux, a manufacturer of top-quality camera lenses (some of which it will provide to Khairat for her upcoming projects). She is reportedly the first Arab to receive



(Above right) Egyptian filmmaker Haya Khairat. (Top) A still from the award-winning short film 'Dark Chocolate,' for which Khairat was director of photography. (Above) A still from Khairat's 'Safe Kids,' a short film created for the mental health service Safe Egypt. Images supplied

this prize and will be attending Cannes for the first time this month, something that she says has been a dream of hers since childhood. And, she notes: "You're not just on the red carpet, but you are being recognized."

Khairat says she was born with a love for images and cinema. Her father had no artistic background, but he consistently supported his daughter's passion.

Every Sunday, when she was still a young child, he would take her on photography tours of Cairo. On their way home, they would patiently wait for her pictures to be developed at a studio.

When it comes to cinema, Khairat — who was born in the Nineties — cites Arab screen legends Soad Hosny, Mona Zaki, and Nadine Labaki as her biggest inspirations. She also had a soft spot for Alfonso Cuarón's 1995

Oscar-nominated film "A Little Princess" — a tearjerking story of a girls' boarding school in the First World War.

"I was different from the other kids in school," she says. "The one thing I always daydreamed about was going home and watching all the different series and music videos (on television)."

She would save up money given to her by her family to buy small digital cameras, and began taking commissions — portraiture, weddings, proms, and more — when she was 16. She graduated from The High Cinema Institute of Cairo, and her first big break was as director of photography for a major tourism campaign — "This Is Egypt" — in 2016.

Three years later, she started directing advertisements for clients including Vodafone, Panadol, Emirates NBD Bank, Cadbury, and Emaar. She also worked on Arabic TV series, and as DOP on 2019's "Dark Chocolate," a short film about a girl who is searching for her missing boyfriend, while uncovering secrets of the Zamalek island in Cairo, where the protagonist lives. It was a winner at the Cairo Film Festival.

Khairat's style of visual storytelling is concise and uncomplicated, making it all the more powerful. She's interested in exploring human

emotions. Her award-winning work for brands' CSR campaigns has covered themes including breast-cancer awareness, the challenges of motherhood, and shielding little girls from abuse and forced or early marriage. They are a self-described "wake-up call" and "injection" that is quickly effective. "If I can make you feel something, then I've won," she says.

Khairat believes a person needs to have certain qualities to be a successful director. "Being socially and politically smart is a key point," she says. "Being a team player is also important. It's an individual career, but it requires a capacity to hear out other people." As for the industry itself, in Egypt and elsewhere, she believes that priorities have shifted. "In the old days, they cared about the quality of a movie more than personal gain," she says.

The Cannes award is a great honor, but of course there is a lot more that Khairat would like to accomplish, including having her films recognized internationally. She is already thinking of the legacy she hopes to create for herself.

"I'd like not to be remembered as physically 'me,' but for my name to be remembered in the industry," she says. "I'd like people to say: 'She made us feel something with that film.'"

Screen Scene

WHAT'S ON IN CINEMAS



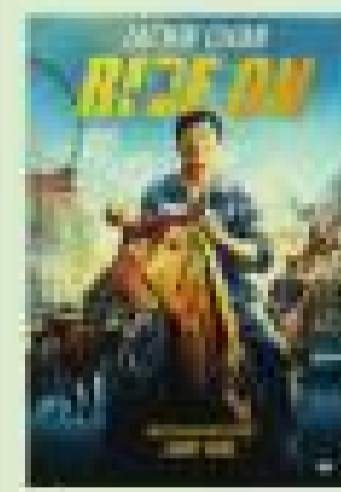
The Pope's Exorcist

Starring: Russell Crowe, Daniel Zovatto, Alex Essoe

Director: Julius Avery

Crowe plays

Father Gabriele Amorth, a Catholic priest and the pope's personal exorcist who wrote the two books on which this screenplay is based. Amorth must battle a powerful demon who threatens to destroy the Church.



Ride On

Starring: Jackie Chan, Liu Haocun, Guo Qilin

Director: Larry Yang

Chinese action-comedy about a veteran stuntman (Chan) whose favorite horse — Red Hare — is at risk of being auctioned to pay off debts. He enlists the help of his estranged daughter, Xiao Bao — a law student, to save his loyal companion.



BlackBerry

Starring: Jay Baruchel, Glenn Howerton, Mike Lazaridis

Director: Matt Johnson

Comedy-

drama about

the spectacular rise and (equally spectacular) fall of the BlackBerry — the world's first mass-produced smartphone — from its origins as a scrappy underdog taking on multinational giants to its ruthlessly orchestrated demise.



Harley

Starring: Mohammed Ramadan, Mai Omar

Director: Mohamed Samir

Egyptian action

movie. The

eponymous hero is a talented mechanical engineer who has returned to Egypt from the Gulf to complete his university studies. After graduating, his intelligence and skill on a motorbike gain him a job with a local crime syndicate.



My Fairy Troublemaker

Voice cast: Jella Haase, Lisa-Marie Koroll

Director: Caroline Origer

This animated adventure-comedy for kids tells the story of Violetta, a spirited young fairy who gets lost in the world of humans. To get back to her own world, she joins up with a 12-year-old girl, Maxie, who helps Violetta discover her true potential.

The Breakdown *Sandra Boutros — 'The Calligrapher's Chessboard'*

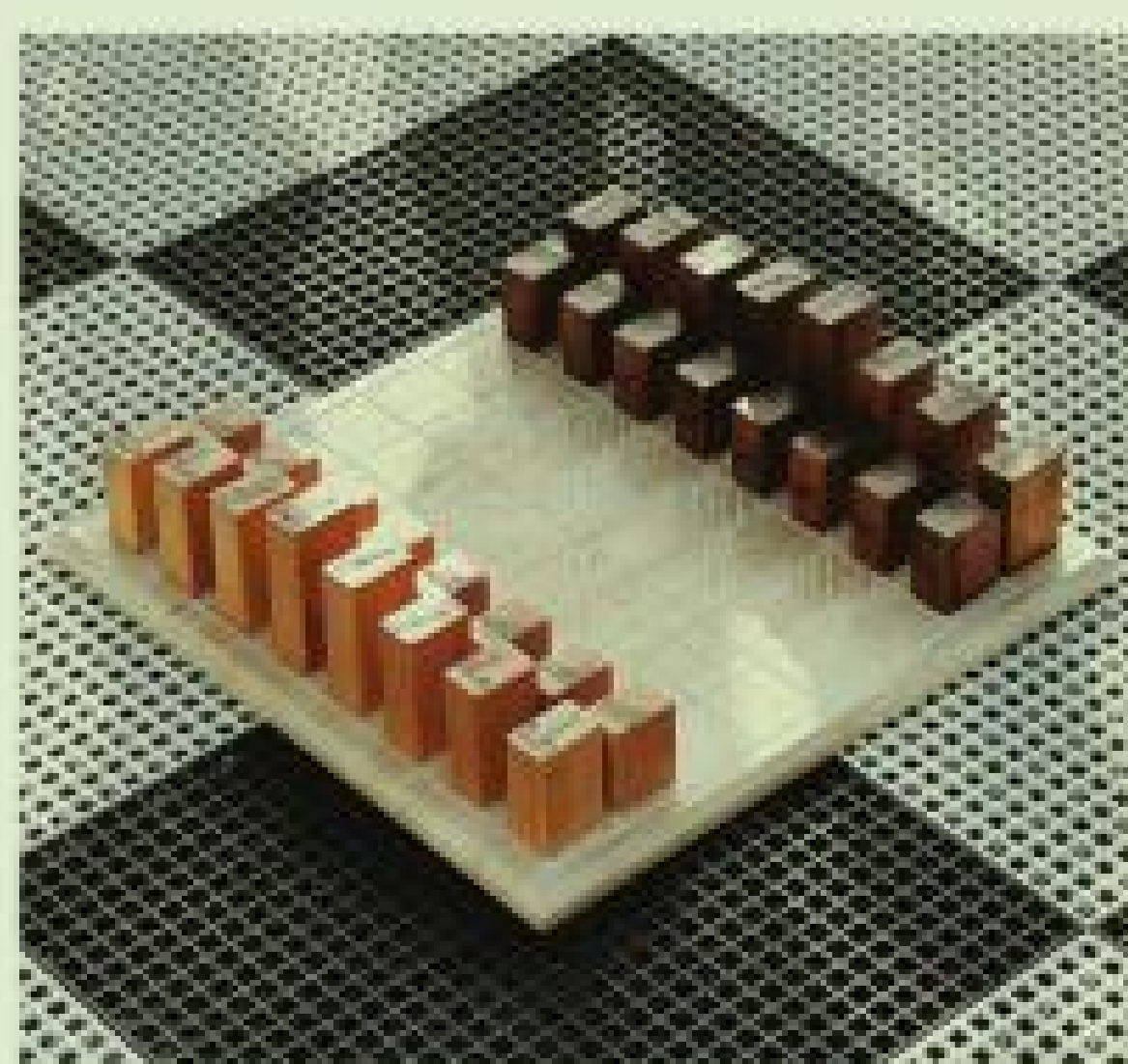
The Syrian designer discusses her wooden chess set, featuring elements inspired by Arabic calligraphy and architecture.

Before I started producing this piece, I was walking around in Old Damascus when I came across a tiny wood workshop. I went in and asked the carpenter if we could work on a design I had in mind. While doing the handwork, I realized how beautiful it was working with wood. It gave us so many possibilities and so much

depth to the piece. I felt it was a really authentic and fluid material; its veins and colors just complimented the artwork. When you work with metal, it's much easier to get it heated and get the curves. But with wood, it's much harder to get this fluidity.

As a child, I played a lot of chess. I find the game interesting in general and it requires a lot of thought. I was thinking about the typical chess sets. There are modern designs, which I like and respect, but, for me, chess is really an Arabic game. I always played it using Arabic terminology. So I thought, "Why not combine

Byrian designer Sandra Boutros' 'The Calligrapher's Chessboard.' Image supplied



language and design, just to add another layer of complexity?"

Since I come from an architecture background, I tried to connect the hierarchy of the chess characters, which are made of beech wood, with building heights. I needed to keep the linear form, that's why I tried to relate it to skyscrapers. For the Arabic names of each character, I designed and engraved them in an abstract form that isn't easy to read.

I wanted the board itself to have some earthy material — as if the characters are emerging from the earth. That's why I chose travertine stone. I had different forms of

travertine — some had less holes and were perfectly made, but I wanted natural-looking ones with all their imperfections.

I designed this piece less than two years ago. I started with sketches and then I made a 3D model and finalized the size of the font. Then, we jumped into production, which happens sometimes in Damascus and sometimes in Dubai. The first set was made in Damascus. I enjoyed it a lot, because we really have to give back to our community. I really appreciate the handicrafts that we have in our region and, unfortunately, they're not always valued.

Weekend



Hend Sabri stars in Kaouther Ben Hania's 'Four Daughters,' one of five Saudi-backed films screening at Cannes this year.

CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Saudi Arabia's growing movie-industry impact on show at Cannes

The lowdown on the five Saudi-backed movies screening at this year's festival, which begins May 16

William Mullally Dubai

At the latest edition of the Cannes Film Festival, the most prestigious event in world cinema, Saudi Arabia plays a greater role than ever before, with five films backed by the Kingdom's Red Sea Film Fund making the official selection.

It's an already-historic collection of titles, featuring the festival's first-ever film from Sudan as well as a number of groundbreaking efforts from both first-time filmmakers and some of the most acclaimed directors originating from the Arab world.

'Four Daughters'

Starring: Hend Sabri, Nour Karoui, Ichraq Matar
Director: Kaouther Ben Hania

Some directors find it hard to follow an Academy Award nomination. Tunisian filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania, who is coming off the huge global success of her 2020 film "The Man Who Sold His Skin," the first Tunisian film to secure a nod for Best International Feature Film,



is seemingly undeterred, with "Four Daughters" looking like her most ambitious film to date. A hybrid of fiction and documentary, the film follows

Olfa, a Tunisian mother of four daughters, two of whom mysteriously disappear. Chronicling 10 years of Olfa's life from 2010 to 2020, events

get increasingly harrowing as it's revealed that the two missing teenagers have been radicalized and have joined Daesh in Libya. Some of the Arab

world's biggest stars, including Hend Sabri, Nour Karoui and Ichraq Matar dramatize the events that Ben Hania couldn't capture in real life. Bringing to

mind groundbreaking Middle Eastern classics such as Abbas Kiarostami's "Close-Up," Four Daughters is shaping up to be Ben Hania's masterpiece.



'Les Meutes'

Starring: Ayoub Elaid, Abdelatif El-Mansouri
Director: Kamal Lazraq

The Moroccan filmmaker returns to Cannes 12 years after his short film "Drari" won second prize in the Cinéfondation category with "Les Meutes" (which translates to 'Hounds' in English) — a harrowing crime story set over a single night with an irresistible hook. The film follows father and son Hassan and Issam, petty criminals working for the local organized-crime syndicate in the suburbs of Casablanca. While they're carrying out a supposedly routine kidnapping, things go awry, and the two face a dilemma: either dispose of the body, or go to prison for the rest of their lives.

The film is the feature debut for Lazraq, who hasn't directed since his 2014 short "The Man with a Dog," which followed a man whose yellow Labrador was stolen while he was swimming who will stop at nothing to retrieve his pet. According to a recent conversation that Lazraq had with Bref Cinéma magazine, "Les Meutes" is a "spiritual sequel" to that short, a deeper exploration of both desperation and the strange things that one may encounter wandering the streets of his country at night.

'The Mother of All Lies'

Starring: Asmae El-Moudir
Director: Asmae El-Moudir

Another innovative documentary, "The Mother of All Lies" is the latest release from Moroccan filmmaker Asmae El Moudir. Her previous effort, 2020's feature-length doc "The Postcard," found her diving into her family's past as she journeyed to the small village in which her mother was raised. There, she attempted to personally connect to the circumstances she would have found herself growing up in had her family never left the remote locale.

"The Mother of All Lies" finds the director exploring her own childhood more directly. While her previous film took inspiration from a postcard photograph of her mother's

village that she had found, this film begins with El-Moudir rediscovering a photograph she had always been told was of herself as a child, but, she finds out, is not of her at all. This propels her into an investigation of all the untruths she'd been told by her family, leading to some startling revelations.

Challenging conventions has been El Moudir's intention since she began as a filmmaker more than 10 years ago. In 2012, she told the "African Women in Cinema" blog in 2012: "I work from a particular perspective, with a desire to break conventions. Indeed, to be in front of the camera is the dream of many women, but to tell stories about these characters is another pleasure, and why not do it from behind the camera? What is important for me is that I have a feeling for what I do."



'Banel & Adama'

Starring: Khady Mane, Mamadou Diallo, Binta Racine Sy
Director: Ramata-Toulaye Sy

Senegalese filmmaker Ramata-Toulaye Sy has done what few

others have done before, landing a spot for her feature directorial debut in competition for the prestigious Palme d'Or, the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival. While she'll be up against tenured luminaries such as Wim Wenders,

Ken Loach, Hirokazu Kore-eda and Wes Anderson, the 36-year-old is inspired by the chance to show the film to the biggest names in the business.

"I'm scared and I'm very excited. Two thousand people in the room, with the press, with the jury. That's going to be something — it makes you dream," Sy recently told CNN.

Set in a remote village in northern Senegal, the region in which her parents were born, "Banel & Adama" follows a young couple whose romance is put in jeopardy when the village council voices their disapproval for the pairing, sending the entire village into chaos.

"It's a tragedy," Sy explained to CNN. "At first, 'Banel & Adama' feels like a classic love story, (but) little by little, we realize that this love story focuses more on Banel than Adama, and it turns into the story of a woman trying to fulfill herself."

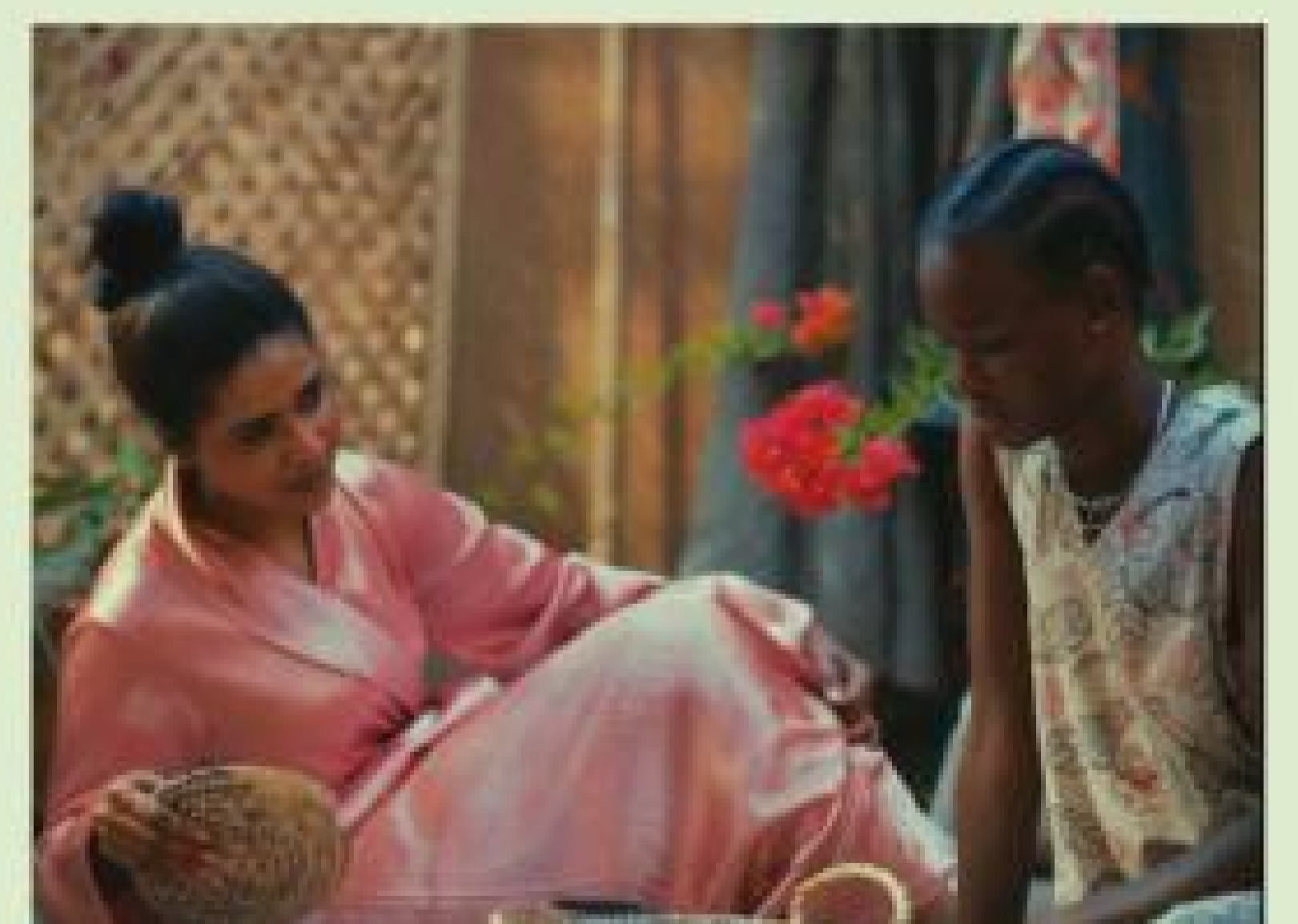
'Goodbye Julia'

Director: Mohamed Kordofani
Starring: Eiman Yousif, Siran Riak, Nazar Goma, Ger Duany

Sudanese cinema continues its resurgence with "Goodbye Julia," the debut feature from Mohamed Kordofani and the first from the country to be selected for Cannes. Screening in the midst of another painful divide now happening in the capital city of Khartoum, the film jumps back to the time before Sudan was split into two countries in 2011, dramatizing another traumatic event in the country's history.

"Being part of the first-ever official selection of a Sudanese film in Cannes is heartwarming and very promising for this new wave of cinema," Kordofani recently told Screen Daily.

The film follows two women from the north and south of the country respectively, one



a retired singer racked with guilt for causing a man's death, another the widow of that man. The singer offers the widow — who doesn't know about the singer's involvement in her late husband's death — a job as her

maid in an effort to atone for her secret misdeeds.

"I consider 'Goodbye Julia' a call for reconciliation and a spotlight on the social dynamics that led to the separation of the South," Kordofani said.