US works to quash European attempts to bypass Iran sanctions

Lamine Ghanmi

Tunisia

Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi triggered shock waves with an announcement that his 5-year "entente" with the Islamist Ennahda Movement was over.

The announcement, which came amid a contentious political battle that has pitted some of the country's major political parties against each other, prompted speculation over Caid Essebsi's plans to revamp a fractured secularist camp ahead of elections next year.

Caid Essebsi, 92, is seen as the most influential leader among secularists, who will face a resurgent Ennahda party in legislative and presidential elections.

Caid Essebsi pointed out, in a live television interview September 24, that it was "too late" for him, who had suffered ties. "I'm not responsible for entering uncharted territory... It is they (Ennahda leaders) who took the initiative to end the entente with me," Caid Essebsi said.

It did not ease concerns that Caid Essebsi left many questions unanswered over his future political course amid a lingering economic crisis.

"In the interview, I did not recognise the president I used to know," said MP Walid Jallad, a supporter of the president.

Political analyst Zied Krichene wrote in his blog, "Iran seems to be gambling on time, waiting out the Trump administration." while trying to gain "the sympathy of the European Union and the US" but very few European countries responded by intensifying their verbal warnings against Iran and that hasn't changed," said Khaled Elgindy, a Middle East specialist and former consultant to the US State and Defence departments.

Pompeo met with foreign ministers of those countries on September 29 to discuss the alliance. "All participants agreed on the need to confront threats from Iran detected at the region and the United States," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said.

"It's a pretty hostile posture towards Iran and that hasn't changed," said Khaled Elgindy, a foreign policy analyst in Washington and former Palestinian adviser. "The divisions played out publicly when Ennahda sided with Tunisian

Prime Minister Youssef Chahed in a face-off against Nidaa Tounes Executive Director Habibed Caid Essebsi, the president's son.

"They (Ennahda leaders) changed their alliance to go with (Prime Minister Youssef) Chahed," said Beji Caid Essebsi.

There could be a shift in the balance of power. Chahed appears to be striking an alliance with the Islamists and Beji Caid Essebsi is moving closer to the trade unions, which oppose Chahed's austerity

Tensions mounting. A file picture shows Tunisian Prime Minister Youssef Chahed (R) and Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi arriving for a cabinet meeting in Carthage Palace. (AFP)
EU seeks to sidestep US sanctions on Iran

By sustaining revenues to the regime, you are solidifying Iran’s ranking as the number one state sponsor of terrorism.”

A new wave of US sanctions is in go into effect November 4, hitting Iran’s oil exports and banking operations and potentially disconnecting Tehran from international financial channels.

The remaining parties of the JCPOA – China, France, Germany, the European Union, Iran, Russia, and the United Kingdom – have agreed to work to maintain the deal despite increasing US pressure to void the agreement.

“Mindful of the urgency and need for tangible results, the participants welcomed practical proposals to maintain and develop payment channels notably the initiative to establish a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to facilitate payments related to Iran’s exports, including oil,” the remaining members of the deal said in a statement.

The SPV aims to create a barter system, facilitated by the US-managed special purpose vehicle (SPV) to evade US sanctions and maintain the deal.

With the SPV, the EU’s main goal is to create a barter system to maintain the deal, and to create a mechanism to potentially skirt US sanctions.

The looming November “snap-back” of US sanctions on Iran, particularly on the oil sector, is the primary driver of the European Union’s search for an alternate payment mechanism that could be applied to any sanctions create pressure and reduce the effectiveness of the global financial system.

The three European countries (E3) are pursuing the establishment of a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to evade US sanctions and maintain trade with Iran.

By using credits instead of cash, Iran would not require fund transfers outside of the European Union. Supporter countries in this would shield their companies from US sanctions.

While the EU-sanctions aimed at preserving the nuclear deal through an SPV, a mechanism is counter to broader EU policy interests of ensuring the effectiveness of UN and EU economic sanctions. Creating a shell mechanism to potentially skirt US sanctions is unlikely to prove a viable alternative to the global financial system.

The European Union’s ability to enforce the more than 30 sanctions programmes it currently has in place, as well as future sanctions programs.

The amended Blocking Statute, however, will not effectively shield EU companies from US sanctions.

Those firms will need to weigh the benefits of doing business with Iran against potential sanctions penalties.

The proposed SPV seeks to change that calculus by distancing EU trade with Iran from the global financial system and reinforcing the Iran nuclear deal. With the SPV, the EU’s aim is to effectively carve out Iran’s struggling oil sector from US sanctions, creating a lifeline for the nuclear deal but at the risk of escalating confrontation with the United States. Although the SPV seeks to remove the global financial system from the nuclear deal.

Reinforcing the Iran nuclear deal along lines that Washington would find acceptable. Perhaps because we’re able to keep this multilateral framework (nuclear deal), avoid the worst and act as a mediator, while the US sanctions create pressure and reduce the amount of money available for Iran’s expansion, that could accelerate the process we want,” said.

Iran warned that it’s patience is not infinite. “As long as the deal serves our interests, we will remain in the pact,” Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said. “Negotiating is a permanent mission,” Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said. “Negotiating with Iran is an art and could be open to other partners in the process.”

The European Union clearly disagrees with the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal but taking steps to undermine the integrity of a valuable tool – economic sanctions – risks turning policy disagreement over one issue into a strategic divergence.

The SPV risks undermining the European Union’s own sanctions enforcement by creating a precedent that could be applied to any sanctions programs on Iran, or even in the future. The broader negative implications of expanding sanctions to other US targets could be far from the current debate, and not the SPV proves viable, this effort to sidestep US sanctions will exacerbate tensions in the transatlantic alliance and risks undercutting the effectiveness of sanctions.

Samantha Sultoon is a visiting senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Global Business and Economics Programme and the Scoopert Centre for Strategy and Security. This article was reprinted with permission from the Atlantic Council’s blog (scoopert.org).
Debate

Tehran regime taking advantage of Ahvaz attack

Ali Alfoneh

A prelude to a new course. A soldier runs past injured comrades lying on the ground as the scene of an attack on a military parade in Ahvaz, on September 22.

A report floated in Iran after the September 22 attack referred to a “Hezbollah-Arab Western” conspiracy. As initial findings in the attack by Iranian investigators emerge, two local groups seemed to be at the centre of the investigation. They were identified as Ahwaz Arab Popular Democratic Front and the Arab Resistance Movement for the Freedom of Ahwaz. Both groups claimed responsibility for the attack. Even as the local ethnic Arab connection emerged with the names of the individuals perpetrators given by the groups, the regime in Tehran continued to link the assault to training and support by Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States.

Historically Iran has experienced periodic tensions with some of its minority groups, especially the ethnic Arabs. Some of these groups have hit Iran where it would hurt the most — at its economic infrastructure, attacking oil installations, rounding up the usual (foreign) suspects, the Iranian government has compromised two important things: It keeps whatever domestic problems it may have internally out of the limelight and out of the media. And, it is often assumed that ISIS would have been the lesser devil, Israel, Satan. Next to the Americans — the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia — the United States. Never mind that the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are US-Saudi coalition, it is highly unlikely to send its fighter jets to take out targets in Israel, the United States or Saudi Arabia. If previous events offer an indication of what action Iran is likely to take, then targeting minority groups at home or the assassination of opposition leaders abroad or perhaps even trying to take out one or more jihadist targets in Syria, where Iran has a considerable amount of men and resources, remains the most likely routes for revenge Iran is likely to follow.

What is significant is that Ahwaz is the capital of the southwestern province of Khuzestan, home to large numbers of the country’s Sunni and Arab minorities. The region is where many of Iran’s oil fields are situated. The ruling mullahs in Iran tend to believe in conspiracy theories. They are especially prone to passing along conspiracies involving the West, particularly anything to do with the US intelligence community, which many in the Middle East blame for much of what transpires in the region and beyond.

Regardless of which group was behind the attack, it could not have come at a better time for the regime in Tehran. Internationally, Tehran is already on the offensive, blaming the United States, Israel and its regional Arab adversaries for supporting the attack. The regime is actively trying to suppress Iranian opposition groups abroad — the ambassadors of Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were summoned to the Iranian Foreign Ministry to receive Tehran’s official protest against the three countries hosting ASMLA and the AMR. By initially accepting responsibility, Tostari and the ASMLA played into the hands of the regime in Tehran. The attack provides Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, both of whom are at the UN General Assembly in New York, with talking points. They can present Iran as a victim of extremist terrorism. Domestically, the regime will use this terrorist attack to legitimise its iron-fist policy, not only against its opposition, but also to legitimise its already oppressive policies within the country. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and military forces of the Islamic Republic, to the extent that ordinary citizens are not harmed, have conducted such deeds.

Domestically, the regime will use the terrorist attack to legitimise its iron-fist policy.

At the short term, Iran is a net beneficiar of the terrorist attack in Ahvaz. Ali Alfoneh is a visiting scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

Ahvaz Attack

Iran is conflating rhetoric with reality

Claude Salhani

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Russia-Iran rivalries over Syria's future

Sami Moubayed

Beirut

In January 2017, Syria granted Iran the right to develop phosphoric acid in the western region of Palmyra. The agreement, trumpet

ed at the time by Iranian media, was part of a bundle of bilateral projects that included providing Iran with 5,000 metric tons of agricultural land as a prize for

territory in the Syrian heartland, along with preliminary approval to ex-

tablish the country's third telecom company.

Nearby Syria's oil production has slowed and its economy is in freefall, oil exports have dropped, undeclared debt to the International Monetary

Fund has soared to a staggering $18 billion, and government coffers are empty. A new wave of anti-Syrian sentiments has gripped the West, and the country's ties with Russia, China, and Iran have strengthened.

The Kremlin tries to keep tight control over the Islamic State, the YPG/PKK, and other groups in the area. It has used proxy forces to stabilize the region and prevent any potential flooding of Islamic State fighters across the border into Turkey. The YPG has been a key player in the fight against the Islamic State in the area.

The YPG is a Kurdish militia group that has been fighting the Islamic State for years. It has become a powerful force in the region and is considered a key player in the struggle against the Islamic State. The YPG has received significant support from the United States, but it has also been a target for Turkey, which considers the YPG a terrorist group.

The Syrian government has been unable to militarily defeat the Islamic State, and it has relied on the YPG to carry out the bulk of the fighting. This has led to tensions between the Syrian government and the YPG, as the government has accused the YPG of being too timid in its fight against the Islamic State.

In recent months, Turkey has increased its military presence in the area around Syria, and it has been reported that Turkish forces have been fighting alongside the YPG against the Islamic State. This has led to concerns about Turkey's intentions in the region.

The United States has also been involved in the fight against the Islamic State, and it has been working with the YPG to defeat the group. However, this has led to tensions with Turkey, which has accused the United States of not doing enough to fight the Islamic State.

The situation in Syria is complex, and there are many different actors involved. The YPG, the Syrian government, the Islamic State, and Turkey all have significant influence in the region. The United States is also a major player, and its actions will likely have a significant impact on the region.

It is clear that the situation in Syria is far from resolved, and it will likely take many years of effort to restore peace and stability to the region. The international community will need to work together to address the many challenges facing Syria, and it will need to provide significant support to the Syrian government and its allies in the fight against the Islamic State.
Russia’s missile system to impact conflict in Syria

**News & Analysis**

**Russia’s missile system to impact conflict in Syria**

Simone Azzan

**Russia’s decision to deliver its S-300 missile defence system to Syrian President Bashar Assad stands to shape relations between Damascus and Israel and the contours of the conflict in Syria.**

Moscow delivered the system in May in consideration of Israeli sensitivities over arming its neighbour. However, after the accidental downing of a Russian Il-20 by Syrian anti-aircraft fire, an incident Moscow says Israeli jets created, on September 28 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said deliveries of the missile defence system had begun.

That the missile defence system will be delivered is likely and there will be implications for all the sides involved in Syria.

Though not as capable as the next-generation S-400, Russia’s S-300 missile defence system could consolidate Damascus’s control of the skies over Syria. The S-300 will limit Israel’s ability to strike at what it perceives as Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria and add a level of deterrence for Israeli sensitivities over arming its Israeli ally.

Israel’s ability to strike at missiled targets in Syria and add a level of deterrence for Israeli sensitivities over arming its Israeli ally, especially in keeping Iran in check, and Putin has a close relationship with Netanyahu, says Mark Galeotti, a nonresident fellow at the Institute for International Relations in Prague.

Despite the personal intervention by Putin, a move as regarded as designed to diffuse tension between Russia and US, and anger in Russia’s military over the loss of the plane and the 15 servicemen aboard propped up events.

In that context, it is interesting how tough a line [Russia’s Syrian Defence Minister] Sergei Shoigu took from the first, especially when it was clear that the blame was Iran’s,” Galeotti said.

That the missile defence system will be delivered is likely and there will be implications for all the sides involved in Syria.

“Once under Syrian control, the system becomes a more serious concern and should it engage [Israeli Air Force] IAF (striking at the Patriot missile defence system) or ISA [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps targets in Syria] or [US Air Force] USAF targets, the probability of a counterstrike rises.”

It is unlikely that Iran and Hezbollah will be unaware of the advantages the S-300 affords Syrian forces, “Both are very likely to identify this window of opportunity, which may not last for too long,” he said.

Viewpoint

**Future of warfare determined in Syria**

**Alessandro Arduino**

The Syrian war has become increasingly saturated with unmanned aerial vehicles and now with remote-controlled vehicles.

While war games — such as the one recently organised by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation that included China and other Central Asian countries — help Moscow sell military equipment to participants, the media coverage of the Russian intervention in Syria has proven to be a boon for the Russian arms industry as well.

Despite that it has a relatively small-scale military footprint in Syria, Russia has launched an incredible number of the new Kh-48 anti-ship missiles from surface ships and submarines. Russia deployed long-range strategic bombers armed with the new KH-55 air-to-ground cruise missiles.

Russia is also deploying the S-400 Triumph long range missile defence system that is being requested by several countries, including China and Turkey. While the presence of Russian troops in Syria is debatable and intensely debated, the military intervention is generating exports for the systems that have been proven in battle.

Not every weapon system does well, however. Trumped up in Red Square during the 2018 Victory Day parade in Moscow, the Uran 9 and Uran 9m unmanned ground vehicles provide remote-control minisweeping, reconnaissance and fire support. Operators select a few kilometres away can control the main gun and an array of anti-tank and thermobaric rockets while the Uran 9 can target by itself.

In Syria, the unmanned control-cruise mine-sweeping vehicle, capable of hundreds metres away, demonstrated encouraging results, the Uran 9, hyped as the darling of the show, did not satisfy expectations during combat operations. The future vision of unmanned ground combat vehicles proved far less reality is from expectations.

Problems, including mechanical failures, the inability to move and target at the same time, as well as the need for proximity for the controller to avoid cut-off and communication cut-offs, revealed that the unmanned tank was not able to operate at full efficiency. While it’s possible that future remote war fare is far from proven, the Syrian battlefield should be regarded as a part of the testing process that could help speed up development of the new, remote and autonomous weapon systems.

The Islamic State’s belliceness in Syria emphasised the effects of asymmetric drone warfare. Commercial aerial drones have been reconfigured as flying bombs as well as forward observation platforms that have been used for targeting or propaganda video recording. At the same time, the superiority of US aerial drones that have been shown repeatedly during the war on terror has been challenged by the Russian Army’s amazing capabilities and electronic warfare in Syria.

The Syrian war has become increasingly saturated with unmanned aerial vehicles and now with remote-controlled vehicles. From small commercial drones to unmanned combat vehicles, machines that can disrupt the communication between the drone and the operator, is rising.

A new business opportunity is emerging as the unmanned vehicles become the mainstream security industry, contributing to influence and destruction in Syria.

Russia is still on the wrong path in Syria

The sooner Iran leaves Syria, the easier it becomes to reach a political settlement there.

Khairallah Khairallah

© Yaser Ahmed for The Arab Weekly

Russia's decision to supply the Syrian government with S-300 air defence missile systems in December 2019 indicates that Moscow is determined to continue on the wrong path in Syria and deepen its crisis there. Instead of complicating the situation in Syria, Russia should have gone straight to the heart of the matter, which is that the Syrian regime has no chance of survival simply because it has never been legitimate. It was born from a military coup in 1963, evolved into a minority regime under Hafez Assad and then to a family regime under Bashar Assad, with full backing from Iran.

Anyone having the slightest doubt about the intimate relation between the Syrian regime and Iran's militias should read the public prosecutor's brief from the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. The report revealed the depth of coordination between Damascus, Tehran and Lebanon regarding preparatory activity for the assassination of Rifaat Hariri on February 14, 2005. The explosive charge in that event which killed a Lebanese lebanese official was not only intended to target Rifaat Hariri himself but also to assassinate his brother, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri whom Russia deeply detests.

It's no secret that Israel was indirectly responsible for downing the Russian Il-20 military reconnaissance plane off the coast of Tartus, killing its entire crew. Israeli jets raided that particular point of the coast the night before Russia had given the Syrian side enough time to move the plane to a safe zone. The incident is indicative of anything, it is of Israel's disregard for coordinating with its Russian ally when it comes to raiding anywhere inside Syrian territory that Israel deems a legitimate target.

Russia acquired Israel's self-proclaimed right to attack targets in Syria but Israel has broken that particular point of the coast the night before Russia had given the Syrian side enough time to move the plane to a safe zone. The incident is indicative of anything, it is of Israel's disregard for coordinating with its Russian ally when it comes to raiding anywhere inside Syrian territory that Israel deems a legitimate target.

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I was interesting to note that after the downing of the Russian reconnaissance aerial plane off the coast of Syria, the TV channel Russia Today broadcast what appeared to be someone who could really speak about the real problems facing Russia's ruling circles. Russia Today is the channel畅通en from the Russian Ministry of Defence. It had already been clear that the incident had no impact but Russia Today's guest certainly highlighted a real mora incident but Russia Today's guest indeed revealed another angle about the Russian top circles, this time directed at some in Russia itself.

The guest on Russia Today was retired Col. Leonid Ivashov, former head of the Russian Defence Ministry's Main Department of International Political Cooperation. He said there were Russian officials working for Tel Aviv and executing its orders other than executing Putin's. For those whose prefer to dismiss this revelation, the man used stronger words and spoke of “traitors” within Russian leadership.

Ivashov, of course, does not represent the position of the Russian government but he has a wide knowledge of international politics. In 1991, he was part of Russia's Ministry and his statements can be understood as reflecting a state of disarray about Russia's internal influence among Moscow's top echelons. It is impossible to speak this candidly on Russia Today about a very sensitive topic that touches on both Russian relations and Russian leadership could not have been possible without permission from Putin.

Russia's strategic policy on Iran shows that the US and European powers are buying time to ensure compliance or censure from the Islamic Republic. The US also hopes that sanctions against Iran will bring about a change in Iran's policies. The US has been trying to isolate Iran diplomatically and economically, and it is clear that the US is ready to impose sanctions that will drive Iran to the brink of war.

The blunt rejection of international rules by the world's richest, most militarily powerful country has profound implications. Putin’s government must use its veto power more than 40 times to maintain its international standing. The United States has used its veto power more than 40 times against Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iran. The United States controls the largest share of votes at the United Nations, and its influence over the UN's 193 member countries is immense. The UN is still the world's most important international organization. It operates by rules. Without rules there would be no meaningful game as a whole. Hence, it is clear that if Putin’s government does not agree to the sanctions, the situation could escalate into a full-scale war.

Putin is perhaps seeking to end Russia's isolation from international markets by threatening to increase oil production. This would send a message that Moscow will continue not to implement international sanctions against Iran, in a move that could be interpreted as a form of blackmail. It is clear that Putin's government does not intend to comply with international rules, and it is likely that Putin is seeking to build up the country's military strength to ensure compliance with international sanctions.

Putin's strategy is to create a situation where Russia is ready to enter a war with the US and its NATO allies to ensure compliance with international sanctions. This is a reckless move by Putin, and it is clear that the US and its allies are not ready to respond to this threat with military force.

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**Who's doing the killing in Basra?**

Many have thought that the threats and assassinations have silenced citizen protests in Basra. They are wrong.

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**Iraqi Kurds pessimistic ahead of elections**

The Arab Weekly staff

They are wrong. They have been wrong. They have seen the wrong people take power. They have seen the wrong acts against them, and they have seen the threats and assassinations that the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) have engaged in over the years. And yet, they are wrong.

The main opposition parties competing in the high elections are the Gorran (Change) Movement, which captured 82 seats in the last elections; the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which ran together as the KDP-PUK list and received 33 seats in the previous elections; and the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG), which have been opposed to the Iraqi government's policies. These parties have been accused of corruption and mismanagement, which has led to a reduction in the quality of life for the people in Iraq, especially in Basra.

The most violent assassination in the region took place in Basra on September 25, 2017, when a 69-year-old retiree, told Agence France-Presse (AFP), “They are spending crazy money on printing campaign posters but when people in need ask for help, they say there’s a crisis and there’s no money.”

“Before, the people were only subjected to violence, but now they are subjected to a corruption system,” said a member of the KIU. “The KDP and PUK are now consolidating power and strengthening their economic and mili-

### Viewpoint

Bahira al-Sheikhly

Many have thought that the threats and assassinations have silenced citizen protests in Basra. They are wrong.
Controversial shift seen in Oman's role in Yemen

Irani minister Ahmed Mousaed Husaini was utilising former Yemeni figures in Oman to support the Houthis and their allies, the sources said. The Houthis have reportedly demanded the withdrawal of Saudi troops, who are trying to curb arms smuggling by Houthi militias, the sources said.

Oman considers Mahra province important, giving its residents free movement between Oman and Yemen.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, pointed to signs, especially in areas of Yemen freed from Houthis rebel control, of Oman's support of political and tribal figures provided the figures adopt a negative stance towards the Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition.

The sources said this was evident in the appearance of former Yemeni minister Ahmed Mousaed Husaini al-Awadi in Yemen's Shabwa province where he has reportedly been meeting with local leaders, demanding they adopt an anti-coalition stance and holding the northern Mahra alliance responsible for damage caused by rebels. The sources said Awadi, who has been based in Muscat since 2016, was in southern Yemen to recruit local political and tribal leaders, who have been relatively quiet during the conflict, to foment internal conflict in liberated provinces and hold the government and the Saudi-led coalition responsible for the declining security and economic situation in the country.

The sources stressed that Muscat was utilising former Yemeni figures in Oman to support the Houthis militarily or indirectly. Oman authorities host hard-line southern leader Hassan Baum, known for his strong ties to Qatari and Iran. Baum reportedly turned his residence into a base of operations to build an alternative to the southern movement run by his son, Fadi Baum, from Lebanon.

The sources revealed Hassan Baum has been receiving political and tribal figures from various southern provinces to undermine the Yemeni government. Recent anti-coalition demonstrations in southern provinces are the result of a drive for a united front against Iran, rejects the deplorable false accusations in a statement quoting a foreign ministry official, carried out by the official Saudi Press Agency, saying: “The kingdom completely rejects the deplorable false accusations by Iranian officials regarding the kingdom’s support for the incidents that occurred in Iran. “Saudi Arabia’s policy is clear regarding its non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries.”

Mohammed Alkhereiji is the Gulf section editor of The Arab Weekly.
Visiting al-Aqsa ignites debate in Egypt

Amr Emam
Cairo

A leading scholar from al-Azhar said Egyptians should visit al-Aqsa Mosque, challenging a decade of travel bans imposed by Israel's security authorities on visits to the Old City of Jerusalem.

Al-Azhar's grand sheik, the highly revered Grand Imam Ahmed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, made the surprise announcement during his conference in Cairo, which was closed to the media and social outlets.

Former Islamic Endowments Minister Mahmud Hanzi Ziel said under intense pressure for calls arguing in favor of the boycott of al-Aqsa but he renewed his pitch in January.

In April 2012, Egyptian Mufti Mohammed Salah al-Idris was strongly criticised for visiting al-Aqsa Mosque. Gomaa said he did not advocate normalising relations with Israel, which is why he was the first Arab head of state to visit the mosque and the Old City of Jeru-

salem, in general, will give Israel the chance to project an image of a state that guarantees freedom of faith on the territories it controls. Opponents of visits to the mosque say trips to religious sites in Jerusalem would help the Israeli economy because financial deals in the occupied Palestinian territories are done in Israeli shekels.

Grand Imam of al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayeb said he opposes visits by Muslims to Jerusalem as long as the city is under Israeli occupa-

By calling on Muslims to visit Jerusalem, in general, and al-

A Qassam, in particular, Ahmad, added that visiting the city is an obligation in Islam. Egyptian political analysts said visiting the mosque will help the Palestinians and could harm the Palestinian cause.

Those who claim that visits to the mosque will help the Palestini-

Under occupation, Israeli police forces stand guard at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in the Old City of Jerusalem. (AFP)

Edging closer. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (L) and US President Donald Trump during a bilateral new in New York, on September 24.

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Grand Imam of al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayeb said he opposes visits by Muslims to Jerusalem as long as the city is under Israeli occupation. Former Orthodox Pope Shenouda III, who died in 2012, opposed visits to Byzantium’s Church spokesman. He said the Pales-

Trump, Sisi prioritise fighting terror

Ahmed Megahid
Cairo

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and US President Donald Trump met in New York on September 24, to work with you and we will go all the way;" the US president said. Sisi asserted that Egypt would eliminate terrorism with Trump’s support.

Following his meeting with the US president, Sisi wrote on Twitter that he was honoured to meet with Trump, describing him as a “great man who made unique change in US policies around the world.”

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Edging closer. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (L) and US President Donald Trump during a bilateral new in New York, on September 24.

Egyptian Presidency

Visit to Jerusalem, the officials say, should not be viewed as a “crime.”

The issue of having an Israeli stamp in one’s passport is another reason many Egyptians are averse to visiting al-Aqsa.

“The issue of having an Israeli stamp in one’s passport is another reason many Egyptians are averse to visiting al-Aqsa,” said Saad al-Zunt, the head of Egyptian think-tank Strategic Studies Centre. “It is a regional player on which the United States counts to bring the region back in order, especially now that Cairo is regaining its strength and position in Arab politics after years of do-

Amr Emam is a Cairo-based contributor to The Arab Weekly.

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Al-Azhar's education move a blow to extremism

Ahmad Hafez

Egyptian and foreign experts collaborated in developing new curricula and class materials, creating up-to-date teaching methods that include Egypt's cultural heritage.

The move might also reflect a more comprehensive strategy in- side al-Azhar to update its leadership and develop after a new period of stagnation. During that period, al-Azhar followed key events and issues in Egypt, paid no attention to encouraging extremism, and took aim at the spread of tolerance in Egyptian society.

The removal of Abbas Shuman as al-Azhar vice president tasked with reforming curricula indicates a link between al-Azhar's approval of the modernised standards and the fir- ing of important figures inside al-Azhar who had opposed revising the traditional curricula and materials, even though some of those books were based on traditional ref- orcements which al-Azhar encouraged toler- ence and hatred.

Not only were curricula been re- formed but the new standards are to be used in both public schools and al-Azhar's religious schools. For many, this step is an acceptable move sympathetic to stripping al-Azhar from its status as an independent institution and its educational pre- emption over the oversight of the Ministry of Education. Al-Azhar had opposed such a move because it would be tantamount to stripping it of its religious authority and power. In the new educational reform, religious reform is considered as a subject rather than the basis of study. Study of religion has become a separate subject to teach religious concepts, the advantages of com- plexion and tolerance between faiths and the necessity of respecting the ideas and beliefs held by others without discrimination.

Educational specialist Tarek Noumni explained that modern curricula are the gates to social tolerance be- cause they create a base for students to base interactions on mutual respect and goodwill, rather than on ideological differences, because of differences in beliefs, ideologies and cultures. When edu- cational institutions refuse to keep up with productive and outdated cur-ricula, social peace is at risk.

Noumni added that the education sector’s main goal is to create a forward-looking and combats extremists. Graduates of this sys- tem would believe in freedom of thought, creativity and peaceful co- exis- tence. Among the concepts included in the new educational reforms were religious tolerance, globalisation, citizenship, intellectual learning and commu- nication and familiar conduct.

Munir’s complaint with the “own- ers of backward minds,” as he called them, is that they look at this dis- play of solidarity and openness as a media show, an attempt to show off solidarity and stay in the govern- ment’s favour. They refuse to see the positive events that Munir, though civilised behaviour is the best de- fense against extremist thought and backward minds.

Munir’s father, Atel Munir, was among those victims of the terrorist at- tack on the Monastery of St Sam- tar in the district of Mostorod in Minya in May 2021. Munir said he refused to accept the attacks as an act of barbarism, anything that has to do with the Islamic faith.

He said that when a church or build- or repair houses of worship in Egypt should come before being donated to build churches because it represents a key symbol of tolerance and human soli- darity. Munir said he received half of 5,000L from the Egyptian govern- ment to cover the funeral expenses for the death of his father to the construc- tion of a mosque and the other half to the family.

Media attention on the burning of four Coptic homes in Minya focused on the latest gesture of the Coptic contractor: Official media noted the style to stress the strong relations between Egyptians and Copts despite the terrorist acts of an extremist minority.

Egyptian authorities followed the official government line in pointing out that a Coptic man donated 50,000 Egyptian pounds to the National Council for2022 on Egyptweb, an internet site of the Egyptian government, was an Egyptian writer.

No doubt, donned land and money for the construction or resto- ration of churches. Last year in Min- ya, Muslim donors contributed funds for the restoration of St George Copic Church after local authorities condemned the building it was threatening to collapse.

Munir’s complaint is that they refuse to admit the existence of extremist elements who�性eee social terror- ism by issuing fatwas targeting the Coptic community in Egypt.

Munir’s gesture is certainly not unique. In July, in Giza, north of Cairo, a Muslim citizen donated land for the construction of a mosque af- ter noticing that people were walk- ing long distances to attend prayers because there were no mosques nearby.

Muslims, too, donated land and money for the construction or resto- ration of churches. Last year in Min- ya, Muslims also contributed funds for the renovation of al-Azhar Church after local authorities condemned the building it was threatening to collapse. Muslims gave funds, fed the con- struction workers and helped in the conversion of the work. A local Muslim baker gave daily rations of bread to the Muslims who worked on the project.

Also in Minya, a Muslim business- man donated 50,000 Egyptian pounds (2,800L) for the construc- tion of the Church of Martyrs that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el- Sisi ordered to build in honour of the victims of the attack on the Monas- tery of St. Samuel the Confessor.

All this goodwill is in stark contra- dictory with extremist fatwas that said “reference books and cur-ricula inside al-Azhar are the source of religious extremism.” It pointed out lessons in secondary-education textbooks used in al-Azhar schools that contained notions including executing religious offenders such as fumigators and those who do not pray.

Observers noted that al-Azhar’s compliance with the educational re- forms was the result of government pressure. Government institutions had concluded that wiping out intolerance and extremism must start with education and educational in- stitutions regardless of their lean- ings. The observers said the official adoption of modern curricula that value treating all members of soci- ety with respect and kindness rep- resents a painful blow to extremist ideologies.

Ahmad Hafez is an Egyptian writer.

Nadia Mohammed, the mother of 10-year-old Dina, who was killed at al-Azhar schools in Cairo, said: “The fact that al-Azhar implemented the new curricula in its schools is a revolu- tion against hatred.” she said she had felt that al-Azhar’s educa- tional programmes were exclu- sively addressed to Muslims and that everyone else was considered second-class citizens. She said she considered moving her children to state schools. Mohammed said: “Modernis- ing curricula at al-Azhar and state schools was a defeat for extremists since teaching children the values of tolerance will make them mod- erate in their thinking and they will refuse to support the actions of those religious currents that de- mean the Copts and all enemies, for example.”

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New measures fuel speculation about Islamist ban in Mauritania

Michel Cousins

Tunis

September was a month of extraordinary political fervour in Tunisia, even by the chaotic standards of the past few years. Following three weeks of the worst floods in Tripoli since the 2011 revolution in which forces from Sirte launched a new offensive, the capital appeared to be gaining the upper hand in their bid to smash the capital. At the start of the year, there was no water in the taps. Losses from the floods, the result of decades of instability and mismanagement, are opposed to the constitution, saying it has done more harm to Arab countries than the state of Israel. Ould Abdel Aziz spoke critically of political Islam, saying it has done more harm to Arab countries than the state of Israel. Ould Abdel Aziz has led a charge against Islamists since the run-up to the country’s parliamentary, regional and municipal elections in September. During one rally, he charged that “proponents of political Islam are extremists… Activists of the political parties are extremists; some of them take up weapons when they fail to achieve their objectives and goals by political means.” In separate remarks, Ould Abdel Aziz blamed Muslim Brotherhood-linked parties and other Islamists for causing “the ruin and destruction of nations wealthier and stronger than Mauritania.”

If the situation continues as is, there will be no need for a new presidency and government if there is to be a referendum, which, if successful, would be followed by parliamentary and presidential elections. Away from the political manoeuvring, no sooner had the clashes stopped than the skies opened, not just over Tripoli but across much of the north of the country, bringing flash flooding and chaos. Further flooding was the result of decades of insufficient infrastructural investment and state associationalism, are expected. Meanwhile, as cars disappeared below the waters in Tripoli’s streets, there was no water in the taps. Local militants in southern Libya, demanding an end to power cuts in their area, staged a protest in the Great Man-Made River flooding the country. For ordinary Tripoli residents, the nightmare is never-ending.

Michel Cousins is a contributor to The Arab Weekly on Libyan issues.
Cairo seeks to cut Brotherhood funding

Amr Emam
Cairo

Egypt's development plans. Egypt has been suffering a liquidity crisis for several years because of a drop in revenues from major sources, such as tourism.

Even if the Brotherhood is cut off from its money in Egypt, the organization has regional sponsors and branches.

"This is why the government needs to take its campaign for ending the financing of the group to an international level," said Islam-ist researcher Munir Adeeb. "We have to ask friendly governments to take similar moves by seizing the money of Brotherhood branches in their countries and watch out for funding coming for local Brother- hood militias from regional spon- sor states."

Money trail. A file picture shows a man walking past graffiti depicting ousted Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi (R) and the Deputy Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Khairat el-Shater (C) in Cairo.

Egypt's Finance Minister Hany Kadry Dimian announced in September that a judicial committee tasked with seizing the Brotherhood's money and properties had, in a state- ment, that it had received information that senior nobles of the group, most of whom fled to Turkey and Qatar, were providing domestic support to the outlawed group.

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Lebanese wary of Aoun’s defence of Hezbollah

The Arab Weekly staff

Declarations by Lebanese President Michel Aoun to the French daily Le Figaro reaffirmed his strategic choices, which have remained static since his 2006 agreement with Hezbollah as “the Agreement Paper.” The statements confirmed accusations by Aoun’s rivals that Baabda Palace is just another facet for Hezbollah in Lebanon.

As parties close to the March 14 coalition accuse Hezbollah of dominating Lebanon, confiscating its sovereignty and independence and of monopolising war and peace decisions in Lebanon, Aoun continues to consider Hezbollah “a resistance movement defending Lebanon.”

Aoun insists on defending Hezbollah’s performance and its right to keep the weapons it owns. Above all, Aoun denies that Hezbollah has ever used the weapons inside Lebanon. Sources close to Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri (R) talk with Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri (C) during a cabinet meeting in Beirut.

The situation “is now tied to the Middle East problem and to solving the conflict in Syria,” Le Figaro said. Aoun asked Le Figaro that Hezbollah doesn’t play any military role inside Lebanon nor is it carrying out operations on the border with Israel. For Aoun, Hezbollah’s situation “is now tied to the Middle East problem and to resolving the conflict in Syria.”

Aoun assured Le Figaro that Hezbollah is respectful of the decisions and positions made by the government, especially those related to the party’s weapons.

The detectors cannot believe how Aoun insists that Hezbollah was respectful of the decisions and positions made by the government, especially those related to the party’s weapons.

The indicators is not the art of the possible, a Rumanian aphorism that seems to have passed Lebanon’s political elite by. After five months of wrangling, Lebanon’s parliament has failed to agree on a cabinet, suggesting that even the politics of the highly possible is now in flux.

Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, who has borne primary responsibility for this Herculean task, has faced many challenges, including Lebanon’s Prime Minister Michel Aoun’s staunch refusal to cooperate in the formation of a government.

Aoun is ready to do whatever it takes and at any cost — including hamstringing Hariri’s attempts to form a government — to establish himself as the embodiment of a strong Christian leader. Opposing him, among others, is Walid Jumblatt, the Druze leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), who refuses to rubber stamp any action he sees as undermining the 1989 Taif Agreement, the template for Lebanon’s governance since the end of the civil war.

The Taif Agreement states the president of Lebanon shares power with the prime minister and the cabinet. Limits that Aoun appears reluctant to accept.

As Hariri has sought to establish a cabinet, while retaining the veto over policy that controlling one-third of its seats affords him, he has found himself in direct opposition to the president.

Any concerns Hariri may harbour about negotiating with Aoun are unlikely to be without foundation. Aoun, an ally of Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Damascus, has a record of offering solutions but not breaking them.

In this case, those broken promises could lead to the Lebanese state normalising relations with the Assad regime, which is accused of killing Hariri’s father, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Among the disputes hampering any agreement in the head between Gebran Bassil, Aoun’s son-in-law and leader of the Free Patriotic Movement party, and the PSP.

Aoun’s relationship with Jumblatt has been heavily nuanced. Much of the bad blood stems from Aoun’s perception of Jumblatt as one of the pillars of the Taif Agreement. Also, Jumblatt has been a painless reminder of Aoun’s defeat in 1990 when — with Syrian military support — he was ejected from the presidential palace and his regime movement terminated.

Jumblatt has viewed Aoun as a petty politician incapable of respecting Lebanon’s traditional political factions and unable to admit that the country has transitioned to a new constitution from the one that first saw Aoun’s rise to prominence.

Despite their seemingly irreconcilable differences, Jumblatt agreed to back Aoun in his presidential bid of 2005, declaring that he was “voting for the Reconciliation of the Mountain,” which ended the bloody conflict between Sunnis and Druze Maronites that had waged over two decades.

Aoun pledged that his presidency would engage all parties, and in September, a promise that collapsed with alliances between political opponents and as he sought his own ends.

The confrontation between the two escalated after an administration announcement that had threatened to nullify the election. Jumblatt, who called Aoun’s bloc, instructed one of the ministry’s pro-Aoun employees to be replaced with another more qualified and deserving of the post.

Bassil offered both the ministers of Energy and Environment to take proactive actions against two senior Druze civil servants, ostensibly for no other reason than they were members of the PSP.

The essence of the disagreement goes beyond Jumblatt and cuts directly to Aoun’s relationship with the political establishment.

Jumblatt, posting on Twitter, accused Aoun and his entourage of cordoning the state, undermining the Taif Agreement and abusing the president’s power. Aoun’s relationship with Jumblatt and Jumblatt’s bloc are anathema to Aoun’s politics and leadership.

Bassil, who has never been an ally to Aoun’s struggle for Lebanese governance since the 1980s, is a Bismarckian politician who has eradicated any concerns Hariri may harbour about negotiating with Aoun are unlikely to be without foundation.

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Aoun pledged that his presidency would engage all parties, and in September, a promise that collapsed with alliances between political opponents and as he sought his own ends.

The confrontation between the two escalated after an administration announcement that had threatened to nullify the election. Jumblatt, who called Aoun’s bloc, instructed one of the ministry’s pro-Aoun employees to be replaced with another more qualified and deserving of the post.

Bassil offered both the ministers of Energy and Environment to take proactive actions against two senior Druze civil servants, ostensibly for no other reason than they were members of the PSP.

The essence of the disagreement goes beyond Jumblatt and cuts directly to Aoun’s relationship with the political establishment.

Jumblatt, posting on Twitter, accused Aoun and his entourage of cordoning the state, undermining the Taif Agreement and abusing the president’s power. Aoun, an ally of Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Damascus, has a record of offering solutions but not breaking them.

In this case, those broken promises could lead to the Lebanese state normalising relations with the Assad regime, which is accused of killing Hariri’s father, former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Among the disputes hampering any agreement in the head between Gebran Bassil, Aoun’s son-in-law and leader of the Free Patriotic Movement party, and the PSP.

Aoun’s relationship with Jumblatt has been heavily nuanced. Much of the bad blood stems from Aoun’s perception of Jumblatt as one of the pillars of the Taif Agreement. Also, Jumblatt has been a painless reminder of Aoun’s defeat in 1990 when — with Syrian military support — he was ejected from the presidential palace and his regime movement terminated.

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Palestinian-Israeli peace on the rocks
Trump’s policies

The Arab Weekly staff

London

Palestinians, Israelis expect no change in Trump’s policies

The most realistic – dare I say, hopeful? – comment Trump made was “Israel will have to do something that will be good for the other side.”

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas delivers a speech at the UN General Assembly, on September 27. (APF)

Trump’s unfounded optimism on Israeli-Palestinian peace

Mark Hobeik

Not laughing. Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Riyad Mansour attends a UN Security Council meeting in New York, on July 24. (AFP)

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Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki begged to differ, saying that, after 40 meetings between PA officials and Kushner’s team, it had become clear that “they have opted to open that war against the Palestinians to inflict the most damage.”

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Netanyahu’s focus was on Iran, not peace with the Palestinians. “By empowering Iran, [the nuclear deal] brought Israel and many Arab states closer together than ever before… in an intimacy and friendship that I have not seen in my lifetime and would have been unimaginable a few years ago,” he said.

On the sidelines of the UN gathering, Palestinian officials met with representatives of approximately 40 countries and international organizations, with a notable absence of the United States. “We ask the Americans to understand what we are saying. We want to achieve our basic rights. We are producing a diplomatic, legal track in order to achieve that,” Lieberman said a Palestinian state “simply doesn’t interest me.” The Israeli president reiterated that “in a sense, Trump is the only Jewish state,” he said.

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One of the most sensitive points raised by UEFA was Turkey's human rights record.

Turkish Sports Minister Mehmet Muhtarrest Kasapoaglu defiantly said: UEFA and European football were the real losers because they would miss the experience of having a tournament in Turkey. “There is nothing we have lost as a country,” he said. A win would have made Turkey the fourth country to host a European football championship in a Muslim country.

UEFA officials had “become hos- tages of their prejudices” and had “practised discrimination,” said an association in a reference to a controversy sur- rounding Moon Otel, a German player of Turkish descent who re- signed from the national team after the Euro vote and accused German football authorities of rac- ism.

Volkan Agir, a Turkish sports journalist in Germany, dismissed accusations of Islamophobia and racism and said Turkey lost because Germany had put in the bet- ter bid. “Germany’s infrastructure is ready 100% but Turkey’s read- ing is just 60%,” Agir said via e- mail. That Turkish commentators concentrated on Otel’s case was be- cause “there is nothing else to criti- cize in Germany’s presentation and candidacy,” he said.

The financial crisis in Turkey was another reason UEFA had doubts, Agir added. Turkey’s human rights record, “which goes from bad to worse every day,” could be counted “as a förbitter” for the vote, he said.

Aktar wrote that “appease- ment to sell 2.8 million tickets, nearly 50% of what they think. He only wants to do business with his buyers, for sweet, sweet profits,” wrote Cengiz Aktar, an expert on EU- Turkish relations, on Alahv On- line. “It looks like the continental European governments, following the United Kingdom’s lead and convinced that they have to live with President Erdogan after the June 24 elections, are keen to dis- regard their own value systems. It works, since Erdogan doesn’t care what they think. He only wants their money.”

Indeed, as Aktar pointed out, all prospects of Turkey’s EU mem- bership and binding agreements, such as revising the customs union, via exemption for Turkish citizens in the European Union, as bad as it is, is of high quality and comfortably EU-compatible, the report said.

One of the most sensitive points raised by UEFA was Turkey’s hu- man rights record. Critics inside and outside Turkey accuse Erdogan’s government of suppressing peaceful dis- sident, jailing demonstrators, opposition politicians, journalists and citizens of other countries for political reasons.

Ankara denies the charges but UEFA clearly was not satisfied. “The bid of the TFF meets the overall, political, social responsibility and sustainability criteria,” the re- port said in reference to the Turkish Football Federation, but it warned: “The lack of an action plan in the area of human rights is a matter of concern.”

That sentence was an ominous sign for Turkey because the bidding process was the first that included human rights requirements. UEFA expressed no such worries regarding the bid of the German Football Federation (DFB). “Over- all, the bidder presents a motivations, creative and very profes- sional vision,” UEFA said about the German application. “The DFB bid is of high quality and comfortably meets overall expectations when it comes to political aspects, social responsibility, sustainability and human rights.”

Germany hosted the World Cup in 2006 but has never been the site of the Euro Championships as a uni- fied country. West Germany hosted the competition in 1988, a year be- fore the Berlin Wall came down. Hosting Euro 2024 offers a boost to German football after a disas- trous 2018 World Cup, when the country failed to qualify for the last 16 after winning the tournament in 2014.

Europe’s football governing body also has said it wanted to make as much money as possible from the 2024 tournament and Germany was considered the bet- ter financial bet. The German bid, in which 28 stadiums would be spread over ten stadiums, has the capac- ity to sell 2.8 million tickets, nearly 300,000 more than Turkey.

now, Turkey is no more than a third country for the European Union, the only difference being that Turkey is right next to Europe.
News & Analysis

Turbulent waters. A migrant boat is stranded in the Strait of Gibraltar, on September 8. (AFP)

Could EU-Arab League summit solve Europe's migrant crisis?

Mahmud el-Shafey
London

T he European Union is chasing ahead with efforts to increase cooperation with Arab countries, particularly those in North Africa, regarding migration and refugees, with an EU-Arab League summit mooted for next February in Cairo.

The announcement followed a meeting of the 28 EU leaders, during which European Council President Donald Tusk called on the European bloc to stop the “blame game” and work with the foreign countries migrants are leaving.

While the “regional disembarkation platforms” idea appears dead on arrival, this does not mean North African countries could not agree direct deals with Europe to stop their efforts.

“Instead of taking political advantage of the situation, we should focus on what works... We can no longer be divided into those who want to solve the problem of illegal migrant flows and those who don’t, including ‘mutual interests on combating illegal migration.’”

The European Union earlier proposed “regional disembarkation platforms” for migrants being set up around the Mediterranean, including North Africa, where migrants and refugees rescued at sea could be hosted. This has become particularly critical because some European countries are closing their ports to rescue ships. However, with almost every North African government rejecting this idea out of hand, few believe the “regional disembarkation platforms” are a workable project, leading the European Union to try to resolve the issue directly with Arab governments.

“There is no northern African country that is willing or ready to take European responsibility,” acknowledged the European Union’s top diplomat, Federica Mogherini, “but this doesn’t mean that North African countries would not be ready to cooperate with us.”

Cooperation has been increasing between the European Union and some North African countries, including Egypt, which hosts the headquarters of the Arab League and is the proposed setting of next year’s summit.

“Egypt has proven that it can be efficient,” Kurz said. “Since 2016, it has prevented ships from Egypt to Europe or, when they have sailed, it has taken them back.”

This is the first country in North Africa willing to talk to us about the fight against illegal migration,” said an unidentified EU diplomat quoted by the Associated Press. “This is something new and potentially rewarding.”

While Cairo is willing to take advantage of closer economic cooperation with Europe, few say that Egypt would compromise over the issue of “regional disembarkation centres.” As a matter of national policy, Egypt does not have refugee camps on its territory, despite hosting around 5 million refugees and immigrants.

“EU reception facilities for migrants in Egypt” are visible to the laws and constitutions of our country,” Egyptian parliamentary Speaker Ali Abdel Aal told German newspaper Welt am Sonntag in July.

While the “regional disembarkation platforms” idea appears dead on arrival, this does not mean Egypt and other North African countries, such as Morocco and Algeria, could not agree direct deals with Europe to stop their efforts.

The European Union recently agreed to provide Morocco with $375 million in aid to help it upgrade its facilities. More than 30,000 illegal migrants are believed to have been rejected by Spain since Morocco.

Germany’s Chancellor Angela Mer- kel recently praised Algeria for its “constructive cooperation” in repatriating rejected asylum seekers, and an EU report confirmed that Algeria-European relations have been “stepped up on both bilateral and regional questions.”

The main source of illegal migration into Europe from North Africa remains lawless Libya, which is mixed in chaos and division. It is there, more than anywhere else where North African countries, and parts of the Maghreb, could play a crucial role.

“Egypt and North African countries can be important partners for us in preventing ships heading to Europe and after the rescue, them being brought back — in other words to the countries of transit. Only in this way can we reduce illegal migration,” Kurz said.

If ISIS was to agree to use his influence with Libya’s military and militias, particularly given Egypt’s close ties to Libyan Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army in the east of the country, this could ease in Chevrolet in Europe’s mission to address the migration problem.

With more than 700,000 migrants waiting in Libya for passage to Europe, Britain’s National Crime Agency estimated, Libya is key to resolving Europe’s migration problems.

Egypt and other North African countries could prove vital to those efforts, provided that the regime is free from its war with Egypt and North African countries.

Turbulent waters. A migrant boat is stranded in the Strait of Gibraltar, on September 8. (AFP)

Paris is in favour of deploying 4,000 troops on Europe’s outer borders within the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also known as Frontex. The German army, led by General Heiko Maas, was recently in Algeria, after stopping in Tunisia, to convince the Algerian government to cooperate with Germany’s repatriation operations of Algerian illegal immigrants and into blocking the crossing points for African mi-

grants along the Algerian desert border.

These manoeuvres and de-
clared agendas send a clear message: The gates of Europe are going to gradually close in the face of immigrants, even those entering through legal channels. The EU’s new anti-immigration party has played the card of economic migrants, a move that, at heart, does not seem removed from Salvinism’s writer, Tarek Guizani.

Left not immune as Salvinism invades Europe

Tarek Guizani

Not alone. Italy’s Vice-Premier Minister Matteo Salvini (L) and Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache leave after a news conference in Vienna, on September 14.

Europe searches for a solution to its migration crisis while extremist right-wing cur- rent rhetoric, there are still people who prefer to go against history. They long for the bygone days of missionary work in Africa, of the slave trade and of how people can travel towards Africans and migrants in general.

During the past few years, both Africa and Europe have been treading a thorny path to bypass a heavy water and the complex issue of migration without losing sight of Europe’s debt to plurinationality.

Now here comes the star of the European far right, Matteo Salvini, federal secretary of the League political party and Italy’s interior minister, who doggedly pushing the European Union to take a stance right in the face of migrants, even if that means reining the wounds of colonisation of Africa and the slave trade. The latest dream in Salvini’s strategies is to set up funds to encourage Italians and Europeans to procure more than unwittingly on the idea of bringing in the cream of the crop of Africa’s youth like in the old days of slavery, to use his terms.

The trouble with Salvini’s selective approach is that it is not only the whole of Europe or Africa for their economic and industrial boom since feudal times. The addition that the price Africa had to pay to make Europe’s metropolitan wealthy and powerful during colonial times was nothing short of 12 million African victims.

Salvini’s statements not only bring to light Europe’s shameful past on the African continent but also make it difficult to close the chapter on that past and move forward to end the hanging issues regarding apologies and reparations for decades of grave violations of African rights.

Such a step should not be diffi- cult. In fact, a world has seen at least two instances of recognising Europe’s dark past. On September 13, in an unprec- edented move, French President Emmanuel Macron presented apologies to the widow of Mau- rice Audin, a former communist activist and fervent defender of Algeria’s independence, who was admitted to the systematic tortu- res of Audrey Dejean, a former French, colo- nial army that led to the victim’s death in 1957.

The second instance comes from Germany where the government officially recognised German atrocities during World War II, including the extermination of 6 million Jews by the Holocaust. The German soldiers at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite this recognition, the Germans are grappling with lawsuits in inter- national courts brought by the victims’ descendents for reparations and official public apologies. Most members of the European Union share this in heavy past and that simply makes establish- ing balanced relations between Africa and Europe’s more complicated than it seems, especially during this period of Austria’s presidency of the Euro- pean Union.

It’s no secret that Austria is Rome’s strategic ally for tougher measures on Europe’s outer borders and in blocking attempts to redistribute refu- gees inside the European Union. Such positions do not reassure Europe’s historic and strategic African partners in areas such as migration, counter-terrorism and military security. Europe’s two main engines, Paris and Berlin, have decided to give top priority to deporting illegal immigrants before any other issue regarding migration.

Paris is in favour of deploying 4,000 troops on Europe’s outer borders within the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, also known as Frontex. The German army, led by General Heiko Maas, was recently in Algeria, after stopping in Tunisia, to convince the Algerian government to cooperate with Germany’s repatriation operations of Algerian illegal immigrants and into blocking the crossing points for African mi-

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Tarek Guizani is a Tunisian writer.
OPEC holds firm in a growing market crisis

By Jareer Elasr

Concerns about the impact that Iran's oil and the market in which producers cannot or will not adequately fill the ensuing gap in the market sent crude prices to nearly 4-year highs as US President Donald Trump has again publicly taken OPEC to task for not pulling up prices.

OPEC's de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, pushed back at Trump's rhetoric. Riyadh said it would only boost production as it sees fit, citing a relatively balanced global supply and demand market.

Oil prices jumped nearly 2% following a September 20 meeting of OPEC and its non-member producers in Algiers that resulted in no new production cuts after increasing output beyond what the two dozen members of the cartel agreed to in June, when OPEC and its non-member allies said they would collectively boost supply by up to 1 million barrels per day (bpd) per month.

Ahead of the Algeria gathering, Trump repeated a familiar refrain, tweeting on September 20: "We protect the countries of the Middle East, they would not be safe for very long without us and yet they continue to push for higher and higher oil prices! We will remember. The OPEC+ movement.

"We're looking at oil exports from China, India and Turkey, and yet they pay for it. Some Iranian vessels have recently become "ghost tankers" by turning off the system allowing traders to track their movement. Authorities have given permission for oil to be sold through the private sector, probably under suspicious movements not just by sea but through Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Another option to mitigate the effects of US sanctions on Iran is to avoid the dollar. India, which is seeking to wean itself from Washington to continue imports at a lower level than present, is set to pay for Iranian oil in rupee and euros.

South Korea has cut back entirely. Zanganeh admitted that Seoul has bought no Iranian oil for three months. India imported $1.08 billion worth of oil in August, nearly double the $520 million imported in the same month last year, with its culminating imports for April-August up to 1,700,000 bpd.

China is also resisting Trump, which raised the US定价 of imports to zero. Beijing recently lifted its ban on the purchase of Iranian oil and wants its currency used in international trading, including oil. Its refining is generally smaller and, like Chinese banks, has little exposure to the US market.

For Japan has established a special purpose vehicle to facilitate trade with Iran. Iran implied a similar move, "We protect the countries of the Middle East, they would not be safe for very long without us and yet they continue to push for higher and higher oil prices! We will remember. The OPEC+ movement.

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South Korea has cut back entirely. Zanganeh admitted that Seoul has bought no Iranian oil for three months. India imported $1.08 billion worth of oil in August, nearly double the $520 million imported in the same month last year, with its culminating imports for April-August up to 1,700,000 bpd.

China is also resisting Trump, which raised the US定价 of imports to zero. Beijing recently lifted its ban on the purchase of Iranian oil and wants its currency used in international trading, including oil. Its refining is generally smaller and, like Chinese banks, has little exposure to the US market.

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Jordonian cabinet members Tuesday said they planned to mar- k the end of a year after the gruesome death of 10-year-old girl and decision to implement a development tax with new jobs and an in- dustry. The government has become unaccept- able, said Ahmad al-Alzaraq, a go- vernment minister. The IMF warned that any mea- sures to increase revenues should refrain from imposing taxes on the poor and increasing their burden. Jordonian Deputy Prime Min- ister, Raja Maslou, warned the IMF that it is not easy to sell the tax law to the public. He stressed that “it is not easy to sell the tax law to the public” consid- ering the difficult economic conditions, tax law met strong recriminations and opposition from many deputies. The law would make end-of-service benefits subject to income tax, an issue labelled by many as unconstitutional. The tax law too closely resembles the tax law in Amman. Roufan Nahhas is a journalist based in Jordan.

Moroccan report warns against socio-economic inequalities

Saad Guerraoui

Casablanca

S socia l and economic inequali- ties are becoming increasingly high among Moroccans, said a report released by the National Council for Strategic Planning (CESE), a constitutional, independent body, in its annual report. The report highlighted the persistence of dysfunctions that undermine efforts to revive Mor-occo’s economic momentum and boost social protection at a time when unemployment and poverty in the country are not in- creasing and extending.

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The apportionment of blame is evidence of the absence of political will to address the crisis or heed legitimate demands of the people.

Basa’s water woes reflect lack of political will

Nadi Tarzi and Mohammad Dylan

Iraq

Water pollution and environmental toxicity have rendered Iraq’s second largest city of Basra uninhabitable and, coupled with the systematic looting of state public wealth, ignited civil unrest in June. Protests that have claimed at least 27 civilian lives mark the confluence of political and environmental degradation in a province that typifies everything wrong about post-2003 Iraq. Symbolic attacks on government installations, political offices, the Iranian Consulate and the obstruction of roads leading into oil fields in recent weeks are but part of the story of Basra’s protracted suffering. Protests were initially met with disproportionate force. One protestor, who did not wish to be identified, spoke of how military police opened fire, killing four civilians.

Abadi’s shortcomings, as illuminated by the current Sirwan disaster, have treated reflect only minor cases of water contamination. However, the 65,000 who have been treated for illnesses may represent only an opportunity cost calculation. The Pioneer Pharmaceutical Company, a local firm, sent nine ambulances to treat present levels of toxicity but, because of a lack of resources and equipment, these were no longer affordable technologies are no longer affordable in the absence of international support and after 15 years of unmitigated plunder. Their ability to treat present levels of toxicity is questionable. Not only does the city lack access to clean water, the presence of asbestos and depleted and outdated material such as asbestos. Previous studies showed a rise in sick and fatal cancer, owing to the absence of clean-up operations of the province’s water supplies.

Social media outlets were awash with videos in which water faucets are seen discharging muddy and milky water, turned brown because of an exceedingly high salt content.

Field assessments conducted by UNICEF said the city’s sewage treatment systems “are completely wiped out. The city has been treated reflect only minor cases of water contamination. However, the 65,000 who have been treated for illnesses may represent only an opportunity cost calculation. The Pioneer Pharmaceutical Company, a local firm, sent nine ambulances to treat present levels of toxicity but, because of a lack of resources and equipment, these were no longer affordable technologies are no longer affordable in the absence of international support and after 15 years of unmitigated plunder. Their ability to treat present levels of toxicity is questionable. Not only does the city lack access to clean water, the presence of asbestos and depleted and outdated material such as asbestos. Previous studies showed a rise in sick and fatal cancer, owing to the absence of clean-up operations of the province’s water supplies.

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Field assessments conducted by UNICEF said the city’s sewage treatment systems “are completely wiped out. The city has been
Although the legal age for marriage in Jordan is 18, with the authorization of two judges, a waiver can be granted for underage marriages. For Abir, the chances of getting married again are slim in a conservative society where divorced women are looked upon unfavorably. In the meantime, she is still waiting for her toots to bring smiles to her face.

Campaign to promote civil marriage in Lebanon

Samar Kadi

Beirut

They chose to celebrate their union at the closest available point to their hometown, where civil marriage is not allowed. Tarek Mallak and Anastacia El Hajj exchanged vows in international waters, 22km off the Lebanese coast, as part of a local campaign, Civil Love, by Absolut Vodka Lebanon.

The couple, along with family and friends and a minister from Cyprus, who performed the ceremony as instructed from Beirut, on the wedding trip organised by Interesting Times, a non-profit agency that designed the campaign with the help of a commercial sponsor.

“We were in international waters but you could see Lebanon from that distance,” said Wassim Bassil, managing director of Interesting Times.

The campaign’s topic was selected following research that determined sectarianism was a key issue for Lebanese negotiators. “Secularism is not only putting the country through intolerable psychological pain but being the issue that destroys the future. It is the real civil war, so we called this ‘Civil Love,’ which became a kind of symbol for trying to push things forward to allow civil marriage,” Bassil said.

He said the campaign started this year with an art exhibition in Beirut, a symbolic landmark on Beirut’s Green Line during the war. “We took original photographs of civil war and had young artists re-edit them or redo them in a way to portray ‘Civil Love.’ It was a prelude to the real act in the campaign, which is the civil marriage itself,” he said.

While Lebanon has a long history of sectarian divisions and civil strife, Bassil noted that “Civil Love” was a campaign that suggested the best way to heal division in Lebanon is for young people of different faiths and backgrounds to fall in love with one another.

The wedding organised by the “Civil Love” campaign is symbolic and its goal is to support the voices of a large group of young people who want to marry in their own country.

Lebanon does not have a single personal status code. Marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance are administered by the country’s 18 religious and sectarian courts and as many sets of personal status laws. Unless one partner converts to the other’s religion, so divorced foreigners who want to wed in a civil ceremony have just one option — get married abroad and register their marriage with the groom’s respective religious authority when they return to Lebanon.

There is a law permitting civil marriage in Lebanon that dates to 1936, when the country was under French mandate, said Notary Jo-seph Bechara.

“There is a possibility to have a civil marriage in Lebanon by those who are not affiliated with a sect. They need to remove the obstacles from their official records and, by doing so, they relinquish their ad-ministrative adherence to the personal status rules of the religion to which they belong,” Bechara said.

“Their marriage contract is registered in the state’s civil register be-cause otherwise, the state would be denying its citizens a constitu-tional right… So legally people can have a civil marriage in Lebanon.”

In 2013, a couple used that loophole in the laws to conclude Lebanon’s first civil marriage contract, which the Interior Ministry eventually legalised.

“Notaries have the power to conclude the civil marriage contract since it does not violate the law or public order,” Bechara said, “I myself, have concluded tens of civil marriages.”

The legislation, however, does not have a regulatory framework, prompting the interior ministry in 2015 to issue a statement saying the government will no longer rec-ognise such marriages.

Two years ago, the Beirut Bar association proposed legislation for optional civil marriage in Lebanon. Bechara said many draft laws have been submitted to parlia-ment over the decades but none was endorsed. “They are rotting in the drawers of parliament and the council of ministers. Obviously, they don’t want to give the Lebanon people the freedom to choose but want to keep them hostage of a sect or religion,” he said.

“I don’t think there is opposition to civil marriage,” Bassil said, “but somehow, no one is activating it or wants to activate it. There is no logic and there is no reason why they don’t do it here since couples can get married abroad and regis-ter their contract in Lebanon.”

He said the wedding organised by the “Civil Love” campaign is symbolic and its goal is to support the voices of a large group of young people who want to marry in their own country.

“We are just raising awareness about this topic again and telling people that this is something that will create a better tomorrow… ‘Civil Love’ is beyond civil marriage. It is love between the peo-ple. It is about unity,” Bassil added.

Samar Kadi is The Arab Weekly Travel and Society section editor.
Cultural

Putting the Arab and Muslim Image database into perspective

Khulud al-Fallah

rated were the first to realise the importance of translation and making contributions to knowledge thanks to their effort to adapt working in one language to another. During the Middle Ages, Arabs played a major role in preserving ancient Greek philosophy and sciences. Nowadays, they have turned to Europe where translations of Arab manuscripts helped kick-start the Renaissance. Such efforts practically died out during the 20th century because of decline but there has been a strong comeback in recent years, particularly in literature. Khaled al-Jubeili, considered one of the most prolific translators to Arabic, keeps this legacy alive. He began his translation career after graduation from the University of Aleppo in Syria with a bachelor’s degree in English. He obtained a degree from the London School of Linguistics and worked as a specialist translator with international bodies. His career as a translator at the Department of Culture at the United Nations lasted for about 20 years. Jubeili has not limited himself to specialised translation. He says he loves literature and loves translating it. Along with his career at the United Nations, he has translated more than 65 other works, including short stories, novels, studies and historical books. He translated “A specialised translator for a long time: a translation at the United Nations for 20 years” into the Arab language, which was awarded for about 20 years at the United Nations in Young Authors in 2012 in the United Nations in Jubeili said. “I often got bored translating technical texts but I would turn to writing literary texts because I enjoyed that tremendously and because literature is full of life in addition to being more challenging for translators.”

Among his translations into Arabic “The Piano Teacher” by Nobel Literature laureate Elfriede Jelinek but Jubeili said that he doesn’t really care about famous names in literature. What he is constantly pursuing are original works. He translated “Intimacy” and “The Red Violin” by Canadian author who is British of Pakistani descent but largely unknown to Arab readers. Jubeili also translated “The Prisoner’s Wife: A Memoir” by African-American poet and political activist who wrote “The Fire of Love” by Iranian writer Mansour Tajaddod and “The Bastard of Istanbul” and “The Forty Rules of Love” by Turkish novelist Elif Shafak. “There isn’t a single work I regretted translating,” Jubeili said.

There are works that became famous because of the translator’s skills or because of the choice of the target language. “Here, of course, the translator’s capacity and skill in understanding the original text combined with his excellent command of both the original language and the target language is a potential attribute in the MAAC viewpoint, however. In examining the experience of Middle East and North Africa actors in the TV shows, it functions fundamentally, not racial or ethnic criteria.”

“Arab, in our case are – the essential factors behind a successful translation and its acceptance by the reader.”

Jubeili said there are no programmes or well defined policies in the Arab world regarding translation and publishing. “I do not object to translating again 20 or 30 years ago on the condition that the new translation brings something new even if it is in the same language or the language or the style and so on,” he said. Jubeili has made special contributions on specific topics, such as the Syrian and Arab ideologies. He explained. “Any Arab writing in Arabic is an easy task. Like all translators, Jubeili comes across phrases or terminologies that do not exist in Arabic. His inventive solutions to those difficulties enrich Arab culture.

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Egyptian actress Bushra Rozza (R) celebrates her award as American actor and director Sylvester Stallone poses with his Career Achievement Award at the El Gouna Film Festival, on September 28. (AFP)

F
ilm-makers, producers, directors and actors from around the world gathered in El Gouna to kick off the 12th El Gouna Film Festival to highlight the Egyptian and regional film industry.

More than 80 films, including 11 Arab, were screened during the week-long festival and 40 films participated in the first official competition, with Siew Hua Yeow’s “A Land Imagined” winning the top award.

The festival is the only private film festival in the Arab region and is the brainchild of Egyptian tycoons Naguib and Samih Sawiris. This was the second El Gouna Film Festival and few could have expected it to become so popular so quickly.

Organisers said the festival aspires to become a top international film event that attracts top cinema industry leaders and celebrities.

“This is never out of reach,” said Amr Ramses, festival artistic director. “My colleagues and I are working hard for the achievement of this goal.”

The festival is seeking, Naguib Sawiris said, to become an occasion for cultural exchange among people, counties and regions.

This year, the festival adopted the slogan “Cinema for Culture.” It looked at rampant bloodshed, conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond, hoping to play a role in convincing people and teaching them values of coexistence and tolerance.

“What is happening in Syria has nothing to do with humanity,” Naguib said. “The participation of Syrian actors in the festival is a symbol of their desire to continue working in the industry.”

The festival is seeking to play a major role in the renaissance of the cinema industry, including 250 international actors, actresses, producers, directors and critics. International celebrities attending the event include American stars such as Patrick Dempsey, Owen Wilson, Andrew Wilson and British actress Desiree Popper.

Hollywood action star, director and screenwriter Sylvester Stallone was awarded El Gouna Special Innovation Achievement Prize.

“As a name you invoke imagination and beauty,” Stallone said. “It was a pleasure to be part of such a unique event.”

The festival is seeking “to become an occasion for Egyptian cinema to get global attention,” Naguib said. “The festival will promote this and will also be at the forefront of the Arab youth to find a new cinema for themselves.”

The participation of Hollywood stars such as Stallone brought international attention to El Gouna, an up-and-coming Red Sea resort 25km north of Hurghada. The Egyptian government is trying to use the notoriety to return activity to the local tourism sector.

The participation of Hollywood stars and Egyptian industry leaders has lit a fire under the festival, which has become so popular so quickly. And few could have expected it to become so popular so quickly.

The festival showed that security has returned to Egypt’s tourist destinations in the Red Sea and in South Sinai.

“Such festivals also give a positive message about Egyptians who like being open to other peoples and cultures,” said a festival official.

The festival was awarded El Gouna Special Innovation Achievement Prize.

More than $3.5 billion in investments in the region are expected to help the region’s movie industry expand greatly following Saudi Arabia’s decision to reopen the sector 35 years after cinemas were banned in the kingdom.

The Development and Investment Entertainment Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund, said it will invest up to $2.7 billion in entertainment projects across Saudi Arabia by 2025.

Dubai developer Majid Al Futtaim Group, owner of VOX Cinemas, said it would invest $150 million in 600 screens across Saudi Arabia and announced a $500 million investment in other Gulf Cooperation Council markets.

N.P. Krishna Kumar

Dubai

While the expansion of the cinema box office and the film industry’s evolution in the Middle East and North Africa region provides massive opportunities, it also comes with challenges, many of which will be addressed at the MENA Cinema Forum, the first business conference on the regional market, October 28-29 in Dubai.

“The broad themes of discussion in the forum will include a market overview and regional leaders’ strategies for growth and expansion; design, construction and technologies for 21st-century cinemas; movie supply chains with a focus on local content and meeting cinema-goers’ demands; and revenue management and operational strategies,” said Leila Masinaei, managing director of GM Events and organiser of the MENA Cinema Forum.

The event will feature keynote speakers, panel discussions, technical presentations and case studies.

“Although this is a serious business conference, we wanted it to be the premiere of a major international film, a gala awards dinner with an award for the top box office ticket sales movie in the region and launch of Dolby’s new immersive experience theatre,” Masinaei said.

More than $3.5 billion in investments in cinemas across the Gulf is expected to help the region’s movie industry expand greatly.

“The list is actually long,” Masinaei said. “We have seen Saudis investing in Saudi film investments, but, so far, few organisations have been granted licences in Saudi Arabia to begin building and operating cinemas.”

VOX, AMC Entertainment, Empress Cinemas and Cinepolis. In addition, Vue, PRV, Reel and Carnival are in various stages of application but the list of people interested is longer than this.

“Pretty much every market is interested in Saudi Arabia. Cinepolis, Vue, AMC and Carnival are giants in their own rights, Cinepolis being the second largest cinema chain in the world and AMC the biggest in the United States. This is just with operators. Everyone from technology providers to popcorn producers, is eager to get into Saudi Arabia.”

Masinaei said there has been a major shift in the region across all industries, from being consumers to producers and innovators and the cinema sector was no different.

“Some regions focus on promoting the region as a film hub and the number of university programmes, awards and funds supporting local production and utilising local talent is on the rise,” Masinaei said.

“Some regional movies have made it to global platforms such as the Cannes [Film] Festival in the recent years and this trend will continue. The Arab youth are extremely talented and they will take their well-deserved spotlight.”

Governments are funding and encouraging the trend, which should expedite the evolution of local content in the media and film industry, she said.

The MENA Cinema Forum will support those trends in the region. Next year’s edition is to be split into two themes, one focusing on the exhibition industry, the cinema infrastructure side, and the other on MENA production.

Riyadh is embarking, on doing “the right and logical thing and promoting Saudi Arabia as a movie production hub,” said Masinaei.

“The Saudi Film Council is the entity that is responsible for promoting Saudi Arabia as a production and filming destination. [It] was present in a rather prominent way at the Cannes Film Festival to promote this and will also be attending the MENA Cinema Forum to spread the word. Saudi Arabia offers some exciting rebates for whoever uses the country for movie production.”

Leading industry figures, including more than 300 CEOs and top executives from companies such as the General Commission for Audiovisual Cinema, Majid Al Futtaim Cinemas, Cinepolis, Novo Cinemas, Carnival Cinemas, Empire Cinemas and Paramount Pictures, are to participate in the forum.

All major distribution companies, many local production companies, international and regional studios and almost every cinema operator and movie authority in the region are expected to attend.

N.P. Krishna Kumar is an Arab Weekly contributor in Dubai.
Travel

Dubai hotels to embark on green journey

N.P. Krishna Kumar

Dubai

The Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing has introduced the first interactive, web-based, manual under the Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) initiative to help more than 700 hotels and hospitality establishments in the emirate go green. This move is expected to have a positive effect on the environmental performance in the tourism industry. By ensuring that all hotels (with some 11,372 rooms) engage in responsible practices, Dubai aims to strategically position itself as a landmark for sustainability. By identifying the collective environmental effects of the tourism industry, the guidelines provide practical and cost-effective solutions around four key themes: energy conservation, water conservation, waste management and sustainability engagement of staff and guests.

The “12 Steps Towards Sustainability” manual was developed in partnership with Emirates Green Building Council (EmiratesGBC). The manual is designed to guide Dubai hotels to reduce their environmental footprints and improve energy, water and waste management practices as part of a holistic approach to ensure that sustainable tourism is a priority for the emirate.

EmiratesGBC’s sustainability programme includes the operation of Green Key, an international eco-label for tourism establishments. It addresses similar themes as highlighted in the DST Manual, such as energy, water, waste and education of hotel guests and hotel staff on sustainability practices.

“This efforts complement the work of Dubai Tourism, and we hope that it will help further sustainable tourism in the country,” said Bin Yousuf Lootah, executive director of Tourism Marketing has introduced the first interactive, web-based, manual under the Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) initiative to help more than 700 hotels and hospitality establishments in the emirate go green. This move is expected to have a positive effect on the environmental performance in the tourism industry. By ensuring that all hotels (with some 11,372 rooms) engage in responsible practices, Dubai aims to strategically position itself as a landmark for sustainability. By identifying the collective environmental effects of the tourism industry, the guidelines provide practical and cost-effective solutions around four key themes: energy conservation, water conservation, waste management and sustainability engagement of staff and guests.

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