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By Razan Abdelhadi

Nidal Mansour, president of the Center for Defending Freedom of Journalists, told *Jordan News* that "the murder of Abu Akleh is the latest in a series of heinous



AMMAN (JNews) — Dozens of Jordanian journalists staged a solidarity sit-in on Wednesday in front of Al-Jazeera's offices in Amman to denounce the cold-blooded murder of the network's Palestine correspondent Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot dead by the Israeli occupation forces while she was covering a raid on Jenin. The journalists condemned Israeli crimes and the deliberate targeting of journalists and civilians. *(Photo: Ameer Khalifeh/JNews)*

Mansour stressed that "the occupation forces must be held accountable for these crimes and international institutions should form a fact-finding committee to

"An international investigation into the manner in which she was killed must be carried out and if it

"She was a hero and a wonderful journalist who was not afraid to tell the truth," she said.

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The Queen stated on Twitter: "Pal-

estinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh repeatedly put her life on the line to bring her people's stories to light. Her killing is a crushing blow to truth and justice, but no bullet can kill a cause or crush a people's spirit. May she rest in peace."

During a phone call, Safadi also checked on the health of the Quds reporter Ali Samoudi, who was shot



The minister also offered his condolences to the victim's family and Al-Jazeera channel and wished Samoudi a speedy recovery.

By Nesreen Ghassan

Both administrations want to "prevent the collapse of what is left of the PA," he said.

Jordan would expect Biden to reiterate support for the Jordanian historical role at Al-Aqsa at a time when the Israeli government is challenging it.

However, Biden has not shown a real interest in tackling the Palestinian issue since assuming office, according to Momani, and believed it is not as high a priority for the incumbent administration when compared to other regional issues such as the negotiations with Iran regarding the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and the war in Ukraine.

The expert sample was much more hawkish on Israel, with 87 percent naming Israel's presence the greatest regional source of security threats, and 76 percent naming it as the greatest global source. Twelve percent of experts named the US as the greatest global source of threats to Arab

In addition, 35 percent and 29 percent of the national and expert samples, respectively, rely on the Internet to get Jordan-related news, of whom 99 percent opinion leaders surveyed follow the Kingdom's foreign diplomacy news, the survey showed.

BRIEFS

Canada
commends
Jordan support
for Syrians

AMMAN (JNews) — Canada's International Development Minister Harjit Sajjan commended Jordan and other countries in the region for hosting Syrian refugees, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

"Canada is committed to continuing its work with the international community and the Syrian side to end this crisis through a sustainable political solution," Sajjan said in a statement released in the Canadian capital, Ottawa, on Tuesday.

Other nations Sajjan referred to included Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey, according to Petra.

He announced the allocation of \$229 million to fund humanitarian and development assistance to Syria and the region this year, explaining that \$196 million of the total will go for food, water, sanitation, hygiene and health services.

The remaining \$60 million will be spent on regional development, with a focus on empowering women, promoting gender equality, encouraging economic growth, and climate protection, he added.

Jordana marks 2
holidays in May,
July

AMMAN (JNews) — Jordan will mark two holidays in the next few weeks, Jo24 reported.

One is Independence Day on May 25, which falls on Wednesday, Jo24 said. It said the government is expected to announce a national holiday that day.

The other holiday is Eid Al-Adha, which is expected to be on Saturday, July 9.

Central Jordan
received bulk of
rainfall this year

AMMAN (JNews) — Rainfall was below seasonal average in the southern and eastern parts of the Kingdom this year, the Jordan Meteorological Department (JMD) forecast, according to Khabrni News.

While central regions, including the central parts of the Jordan Valley, recorded higher rainfall before the rainy season ended, JMD said.

It said rainfall in the northern region was modest, it said.

Despite the higher average in central Jordan, the rainy season in general remained weak this year, compared with the last 10 seasons.

Tourist flow
exceed
expectations

AMMAN (JNews) —The number of sightseers to Jordan jumped by 295.9 percent to 1,059,092 in the first quarter of the year, compared with the corresponding period in 2021, the Ministry of Tourism said.

A ministry statement Wednesday said the figure "exceeded expectations".

Overnight tourists in the first 4 months of 2022 totaled 902,426, which is 280.5 percent higher than in 2021, while one-day visitors also increased by 415.8 percent to 156,666 tourists, according to the statement.

A significant increase in the number of international tourists, totaling 278,888, was recorded in April, the statement said. It said that was a 290.5 percent rise compared to the same period last year.



An undated picture showing farmers on tractors in the Jordan Valley. (Photo: Ameer Khalifeh/JNews)

ACC interest-free loans
insufficient, farmer contend

By Batool Almasri

AMMAN — Famers will soon be able to apply for interest-free loans, each for a maximum of JD4,000, the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) said.

ACC Director-General Mohammad Dojan told *Jordan News* that farmers can apply for the loans by submitting applications to his agency.

According to ACC's website, the loans are classified as operational for vegetable farmers to assist them in projects that empower rural women, unemployed youth, and for livestock breeders to purchase fodder.

Dojan said the move is in line with the requirements of the National

Plan for Sustainable Agriculture 2022-2025, and the ACC's commitment to implementing a number of initiatives that will help develop the agricultural and rural sectors.

Part of the commitment is granting "direct loans to priority and important agricultural activities, especially in light of global and regional climate changes, energy prices, and the expected impact on agricultural produce and food security stocks, and an increase in unemployment," he said.

Mahmoud Al Oran, secretary-general of the Jordanian Farmers' Union said he backs steps that would help the agricultural sector, particularly small farmers.

Meanwhile, he questioned if ACC will oblige borrowers to produce new guarantees, "as the request for

new guarantees will create a difficulty for farmers and would thus contradict the facilities offered by the ACC".

Oran also said that loans of JD4,000 were insufficient in light of the rising cost of production, such as fertilizers and fodder, which doubled recently.

In light of the present-day costs, he maintained, "this amount is modest and may not be feasible for some farmers".

Regarding other loans, Oran believes that ACC should reduce interest rates and guarantees in order "for the loan to achieve its purpose". At the same time, given the weather conditions, which affected the agricultural sector, both plant and livestock production, ACC should exempt farmers from loan interests for

a period of two years, he added.

Adnan Al Khaddam, head of the Jordan Valley Farmers Union, said that while the ACC loan is a positive step, the amount must be raised and more facilities offered, "as the majority of farmers are already borrowers and are constantly burdened by mortgages and guarantees in exchange for these loans".

Khaddam pointed out that the current food crisis is global, and that "the need for a strong agricultural sector is extremely important today, so it would be useful for the government to provide an amount as a grant to farmers so that they can recover" difficulties they faced in the past two years.

Farmer Mutasem Abu Qamar told *Jordan News* that the interest-free loan is a "good gesture" the amount

is insufficient.

"The JD4,000 cap in the world of agriculture is a very limited amount that wouldn't solve our problems," he insisted.

Farmers in Jordan "need approximately JD10,000 to advance at least one step", he added.

Farmer Karam Habashneh said that the loan will enable him to improve his production "slightly" and compensate for some of the losses he suffered as a result of high production costs and low crop prices.

However, he said the amount was little for large production farmers.

"Food security is the most important goal the government must strive for, and this will not be achieved unless the agricultural sector is adequately supported", he concluded.

Careem drivers plan to strike

AMMAN (JNews) — Careem drivers plan a three-hour strike on Sunday to protest against deductibles from wages, AmmanNet reported.

During the 7-10am strike, the drivers will close the application, declining customer requests.

The strike is in response to Careem's failure to respond to the drivers' demands to reduce the deductible levied by the company from each trip from 20 to 15 percent, and to adhere to the pricing of the Land Transport Regulatory Authority, according to AmmanNet.

Another reason is to have the waiting period included in the pricing.

Currently, the waiting time is not calculated and many drivers, known as "captains" waste gasoline and time in traffic jams without getting paid, said Mohammed Abu Mushrarrif, a member of the Union of Captains of Smart Applications which includes Careem.

"The company is dealing with captains unjustly," he said, adding that was due to the absence of a "real authority that protects them and defends their rights".

Abu Musharraf explained to the "Jordanian Labor Observatory" that the drivers will stage another strike, next Tuesday, if Careem did not respond to their demands.

Many captains working on smart transport applications demanded the establishment of a special union for them in order to protect them from "app injustices" and defend their rights, especially in the absence of any role of the Ministry of Transport and the Land Transport Regulatory Authority.



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An unidentified businessman looks for a car using his mobile sharing app. (Photo: Envato Elements)

JHCO, Naua renew
charity partnership

AMMAN (JNews) — The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) and the Naua Platform, a Crown Prince Foundation initiative, signed a memorandum of understanding Wednesday, renewing their partnership in charitable and sustainable development projects to serve the local community and refugees across the Kingdom.

Under the memorandum, the JHCO and Naua will exchange expertise and knowledge and carry out training in various humanitarian fields, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Additionally, the memorandum sets the stage for joint coordination to prepare a database for target groups and provide the necessary information and reports to offer the appropriate services to beneficiaries, Petra added.

JHCO Secretary-General Hussein Shibli said the agreement "is part of the organization's efforts to reach new donors and expand the scope of its programs and projects according to the economic situation, as well as keeping pace with social developments."

For his part, Naua Executive Director Ahmed Zoubi described the partnership as "vital." He explained that the partners "implemented more than 21 joint projects and collected JD350,000 in donations, which enabled us to reach more than 25,000 beneficiaries across the Kingdom" last year.

He said "Their Day is on Us," a campaign which collected donations for daily workers during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, is one of the top joint projects, reaching 450,000 beneficiaries with nearly JD3 million.

US embassy,
United Airlines
salute new flight

AMMAN (JNews) — Representatives of the US Embassy, United Airlines and Jordan's transport and tourism sectors celebrated the launch of non-stop flights between Amman and the Washington DC launched last weekend, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

US Embassy Charge d'Affaires Mike Hankey told the gathering that the 12-hour direct flights will increase bilateral tourism, economic activity, and business connections, according to Petra.

US companies already invest more than \$156 million annually in Jordan, Petra said. Total bilateral trade is estimated at \$4 billion each year, which is expected to increase with the direct route, Hankey said, according to Petra.

"The United States and Jordan enjoy a longstanding partnership, and this route connecting our capitals is an important symbol of our relationship," Hankey said. He said the new route will "strengthen our deep ties and contribute to shared economic opportunity".

As for tourism, the new flights make it easier for more Americans to visit the Nabatean heritage site of Petra, a city carved in rose-red

stone and one of the world's Seven Wonders, the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth, and other tourist destinations.

The new route builds on the free trade agreement (FTA) between Jordan and the US, one of 20 agreements in the world enabling duty-free access to the US market. "The FTA is an enduring symbol of the close and continuing friendship between our countries," Hankey said.

Hankey maintained that the connection between the two capitals will consolidate Jordan's position as a regional gateway, considering its geographic location at a crossroads in the Middle East.

For his part, Emad al-Hijazeen, secretary-general of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, said the new route contributes to strengthening tourism, economic and social relations between the two countries, and brings the people of both countries closer culturally.

Hijazeen noted that there are 6 sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, including Petra, the Baptismal site, Qasr Umrah, Umm al-Rasas, Wadi Rum and, finally, Salt; "the city of tolerance and urban hospitality".

Restrictions under pandemic posed
challenges to QIZ factories

AMMAN (JNews) — Logistical impediments and restrictions in recruiting migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic posed "significant pressure" on hiring factories, prompting them to overwork their laborers, according to a periodic report by Better Work program on factories.

The program, implemented by the International Labor Organization in Jordan, said factories made laborers "work long hours", Al-Ghad News reported.

The report's outcome, announced Tuesday, was based on an

evaluation of 91 factories in Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ) in Jordan. The program noted difficulties in the hiring process, training schedules and management teams, while many factories failed to implement plans to improve conditions for their workers.

According to the report, the pandemic and relevant emergency laws prompted a state of "non-compliance".

Two factories with previous records of non-compliance, specifically related to sexual harassment, have not improved their status. Sur-

veys for three years showed concern of sexual harassment among 1 in 5 workers.

With regard to working conditions, the report said it monitored other aspects, such as benefits offered to migrant workers, including overtime, annual and sick leave, food and housing payments. "Non-compliance was relatively low last year," the report said.

Like in previous years, non-compliance in the occupational safety and health aspects in factories recorded the highest rates, the report maintained. But it added, there was

improvement issues related to labor housing, employment protection, and welfare.

As for forced labor, the report said the situation improved in many factories across Jordan in the last 10 years, although several violations were reported last year. That included unspecified "coercive practices" in 3 factories, the confiscation of workers' passports by a factory management, the prohibition of migrant workers to leave the QIZ, and denying workers the right to terminate employment contracts.

More women need to enter labor market, become ‘partners in economic process’

By Dana Al-Zyadat

AMMAN — Representatives of public and private sectors and of civil society institutions in Zarqa Governorate, on Monday discussed ways to encourage women to participate in the labor market, including by providing a proper work environment.

Organized by the National Association for Family Empowerment, the dialogue, running under the title “The reality and aspirations of women’s participation in the economic sectors”, came within the “Increasing women’s economic growth to reach permanent community peace and security” project, which is implemented by the association with the support of and funding from the Women’s Fund for Peace and Humanitarian Action in Zarqa Municipality.

Executive Director of the National Association for Family Empowerment Rania Hayouk stressed the importance of encouraging non-working women to participate in the labor market, where women make up only 14.8 percent of the working force, by providing a decent work environment and adequate standards of protection and safety that increase women’s participation and productivity in various sectors.

Hayouk said the association urged the government to provide a safe and modern transportation network to facilitate women’s access to places of work, activate existing laws, and introduce new legis-

lation to curb negative practices in the work environment, enhance decent work standards and practices, and promote equal pay, reduce discrimination against women, and protect working women.

Hayouk called for “intensifying monitoring of economic institutions, especially microfinance companies”, and for obliging companies to inform working women of their rights and duties before they sign a work contract.

Counselor for Solidarity Is Global Institute (Tadamon) — described on its site as an independent non-profit and developmental organization that seeks a society in which women fully enjoy human rights and participate in the decision-making process, on the basis of equality and non-discrimination — Enaam Al-Asha, told *Jordan News* that a decent work environment is an absolute requirement that many institutions still fail to provide.

Activist Nuha Al-Muhairiz said that adequate salaries and meritocracy constitute proper treatment of all workers, women included, adding that a safe environment for women and care for their children through the provision of nurseries would “make them partners in the economic process”.

At the same time, a harassment-free work environment, safe transportation, and flexible working hours “so that women can work according to their circumstances, role, and capabilities” would surely encourage more women to work, she said.

So far this year only 11% of the pledged funds for Syrian refugees have been received

By Sarah Abu-Saad

AMMAN — Funding of the regional plan to respond to the Syrian crisis and the countries hosting them has reached in the first five months of this year only 11 percent of the 6.4 billion euros pledged last year, raising concerns among most organizations working with these refugees.

According to the European Commission website, over 4.8 billion euros were pledged by the EU, with over 3.1 billion euros coming from the European Commission and 1.7 billion euros from the EU member states. EU countries have remained the largest donors supporting people in Syria and the region, having mobilized 27.4 billion euros overall since the beginning of the crisis in 2011.

“After 11 years of suffering, we cannot and will not forget the Syrian people. The humanitarian situation in Syria is only getting worse. Over 14.6 million Syrians need humanitarian assistance inside Syria alone, 1.2 million more than in 2021. Millions more need continued support in their host countries in the region as well. Despite the challenges, the EU continues delivering humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable Syrians and their host communities,” Commissioner for Crisis Management at European Commission Janez Lenarčič said.



UNHCR is requesting 9.95 billion euros to come to the aid of the 5.7 million Syrian refugees. (Photo: JNews)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa spokesperson Rula Amin was quoted by a local media outlet as saying that the funding so far represents “an unacceptable number”; she called for a “more significant and serious commitment to humanitarian funding operations to reach those in need”.

UNHCR is requesting 9.95 billion euros to come to the aid of the 5.7 million Syrian refugees who live in different host countries or are internally displaced, according to Amin.

As such, the amount donated thus far gives reason to worry. Still, according to UNHCR Spokesperson Lilly Carlise, who said the commission “was somewhat concerned about decreasing humanitarian funding, especially given all the other crises happening in the world, like in Ukraine and Afghanistan”, the level of funding

pledged at the Tuesday donors’ meeting “was not expected”.

“The pledge showed that the international community is still committed to Syrians inside Syria and in hosting countries like Jordan,” Carlise said.

She added that the 11 percent can be expected to increase “because some donor countries have committed to giving money later in the year”.

President of Jordan Red Crescent Society Mohammad Al-Hadid told *Jordan News* that the need is much higher than the support received and urged the international community to honor the pledges it made.

Jordan is carrying most of the burden, Hadid said, adding that it “cannot carry on hosting this large number of refugees since the Jordanian government is in a dire situation regarding finances”.

According to the director of Phoenix Center for Economic Studies, Ahmad Awad, funding is weak and expected to decrease further “because there are other priorities in Europe now in light of the Russian-Ukraine conflict”.

“We already witnessed the suspension of many refugee-related projects, with the funds donors allocated to these projects redirected to Ukraine,” Awad said.

“Our role is to focus on priorities, which are to improve economic growth and enhance the livelihood of Syrian refugees, improve the health and education sectors, and enhance the independence of local NGOs whose work is restricted, which affects the quality of their services,” he said.

Lawyer Wanted

A lawyer is required to work in a law firm in Amman. He/she must have a bachelor’s or master’s degree from Britain or the United States of America with a practical experience of no less than three years in the field of companies, preparing and reviewing contracts.

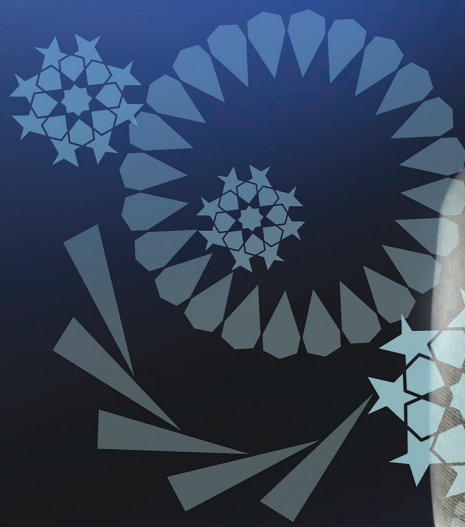
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ISRAEL KILLS JOURNALIST SHIREEN ABU AKLEH IN ‘COLD BLOOD’

JENIN, Palestinian Territories (AFP and Agencies) — Veteran Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead by Israeli occupation forces early Wednesday as she covered a raid on Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, the network said.

Al Jazeera said Abu Akleh, 51, a prominent figure in the channel's Arabic news service was shot "deliberately" and "in cold blood," by Israeli forces.

An AFP photographer at the scene said Abu Akleh was wearing a press flak jacket when she was shot.

Another Al Jazeera journalist, producer Ali Al-Samudi, was wounded in the incident.

'INTENTIONAL'

Al Jazeera called on the international community to hold Israeli forces accountable for their "intentional targeting and killing" of Abu Akleh.

"In a blatant murder, violating international laws and norms, the Israeli occupation forces assassinated in cold blood Al Jazeera's correspondent in Palestine," it said.

Israeli occupation forces confirmed it had conducted an operation early Wednesday in Jenin refugee camp, a stronghold of Palestinian armed groups in the northern West Bank.

It denied, however, that it had deliberately targeted journalists.

"There is an ongoing inquiry into this event. We offered and want to conduct a joint investigation with the Palestinians," Israeli forces said in a statement.

Israel said there was an exchange of fire between suspects and security forces and that it was "investigating the event and looking into the possibility that journalists were hit by the Palestinian gunmen."

However, a Palestinian human rights lawyer said Israeli authorities do not take investigations seriously, and there is little chance of holding Israel accountable for the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh, according to Al Jazeera.

"Every time that there are complaints about specific incidents about alleged war crimes, crimes against humanities, or violations against international law happening in the occupied territory, the Israeli army doesn't take the investigation seriously," Mounir Nesseba, who is also a professor of international law at Al-Quds University, said to Al Jazeera.

Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said it was "likely" that "armed Palestinians — who were indiscriminately firing at the time — were responsible for the unfortunate death of the journalist".

Defense Minister Benny Gantz later said that "the preliminary investigation conducted by the (army) in the last several hours indicate that no gunfire was directed at the journalist — however the investigation is ongoing."

However, Samudi said no Palestinian fighters were nearby, stressing that otherwise "we would not have gone into the area".

'STATE SPONSORED ISRAELI TERRORISM'

Qatar's assistant foreign minister, Lohwahn Al-Khater, said Wednesday that Abu Akleh was shot "in the face" while wearing a press vest and helmet. The minister also condemned "state sponsored Israeli terrorism" by stating on Twitter that "this state sponsored Israeli terrorism must STOP, unconditional support to Israel must end".

'TURNED IN PANIC'

Israeli occupation forces have stepped up operations in Jenin, a historic flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in recent weeks.

Several of the suspects blamed for deadly attacks on Israelis were from the area.

Majid Awais, a witness, told AFP that Abu Akleh "turned in panic" when she saw her colleague Samudi was shot, and that she was struck by the fatal bullet moments later.

Her death came nearly a year after an Israeli airstrike destroyed a Gaza building that housed the offices of Al Jazeera and news agency AP.

The Palestinian Authority called Abu Akleh's killing an "execution," and part of an Israeli effort to obscure the "truth" about its occupation of the West Bank.

An official of Islamist group Hamas, which controls Gaza, called the incident "a premeditated murder".

"Media and press institutions should move to expel Israel and consider it an enemy of the freedom of the press," said Ghazi Hamad of Hamas political bureau.



An image grab from footage distributed by the Doha-based Al Jazeera TV shows a reporter reacting (right) as the channel's veteran journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is seen on the ground after being shot in the face in Jenin in the occupied West Bank on May 11, 2022. (Photos: AFP)



Mujahed Al-Saadi, cameraman of Palestine Today, TV cries as he escorts the body of veteran Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh with other journalists.

Calls mount for probe into reporter's killing by Israel during raid

JENIN, Palestinian Territories (AFP and Agencies) — Calls mounted Wednesday for an independent investigation into the killing of veteran Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot dead as she covered an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank.

The EU urged an "independent" investigation into her death, while the US' envoy to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, called for the killing to be "transparently investigated".

The office of the UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said it was "appalled", and also called for "an independent, transparent investigation".

Asked about Israel's openness to an international investigation, army spokesman Amnon Shefler said the military's internal investigative systems were "robust" and

that it would conduct its own probe.

Shefler told reporters that Israel "would never deliberately target non-combatants," calling Abu Akleh's death "a tragedy that should not have occurred".

Israel has however publicly offered to participate in a joint investigation with the Palestinian Authority (PA).

According to Al Jazeera, The spokesman of the PA, Ibrahim Milhim, said his government rejects any role for Israel in an investigation into Abu Akleh's killing.

"Let me ask, when does the criminal have the right to take part in the investigation against his victim?" Milhim told Al Jazeera.

"We reject and refuse the participation of any Israelis in this kind of investigation. They have to be taken to the International Court. We call on the ICJ to open an investigation into the killing of Shireen and other

crimes committed against the Palestinians."

Milhim also urged the international community to stop the double standards when it comes to the Palestinian cause and the Israeli crimes.

The Israeli army released a video showing Palestinian gunfire in the Jenin camp early Wednesday, but not in the precise spot where Abu Akleh was killed, according to AFP.

An AFP photographer reported that Israeli forces were firing in the area, and that he then saw Abu Akleh's body lying on the ground, with no Palestinian gunmen visible at the time.

Amnesty International, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and Reporters Without Borders (RSF), all condemned the killing of Abu Akleh.

"The killing of veteran journalist Shireen Abu Akleh is a bloody reminder of the deadly system in which Israel locks Palestinians," said Saleh Higazi, Amnesty International's deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa, as carried by Al Jazeera.

"We are shocked and strongly condemn the killing of the prominent Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in the West Bank while doing her job and while clearly identified as a journalist," said CPJ Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator Sherif Mansour.

"We call for an immediate and thorough investigation into her killing. Journalists must be able to do their jobs safely and freely without being a target," he added.

Meanwhile, Christophe Deloire, secretary-general and director-general of RSF, wrote on Twitter that the killing of Abu Akleh "constitutes a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions that mandate the protection of civilians, and of UN Security Council Resolution 2222 on the protection of journalists". RSF also called for an independent international investigation.



Abu Akleh honored in Ramallah

RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — Palestinians carried the flag-draped body of veteran Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh as it is carried toward the offices of the news channel in the West Bank city of Ramallah, on May 11, 2022. In occupied East Jerusalem, Israeli occupation forces raided Abu Akleh's home, where many mourners were carrying Palestinian flags and playing nationalistic songs. Videos seen by Al Jazeera show friends and family members shouting at Israeli police to leave the house. (Photo: AFP)

A pioneering reporter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Shireen Abu Akleh, was among Arab media's most prominent figures and widely hailed for her bravery and professionalism.

In the hours after her death, young Palestinians described Abu Akleh, 51, as an inspiration, especially to women, many of whom were motivated to pursue journalism because of her.

"She never tired," Al Jazeera senior international correspondent Hoda Abdel-Hamid told AFP by phone from Ukraine. "She was always there whenever anything happened. ... She wanted to be there, to tell the story, constantly," she added.

In an interview shortly before her death, Abu Akleh, who was also a US citizen, described herself as a "product of Jerusalem", with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shaping much of her life.

She was born in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem to a Palestinian Christian family. Her mother was born in West Jerusalem, before the creation of Israel in 1948, and her father was from Bethlehem, in the occupied West Bank.

She graduated from university the year the Oslo peace accords were signed and then joined the nascent Voice of Palestine radio, before switching to Al Jazeera in 1997, where she went on to become an iconic personality in Arab media.

Journalist Muhammad Daraghmeh, a close friend who teaches at Birzeit

University in the West Bank, said Abu Akleh was "one of the strongest journalists in the Arab world".

Her prominence grew through her coverage of the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, from 2000 to 2005.

Al Jazeera's newsdesk told Shireen Abu Akleh they would keep a spot for her "at the top of the hour" after she said in an email she was going to cover an Israeli operation in the Palestinian town of Jenin.

"But she never turned up," said Moahmed Moawad, the Arabic channel's head of output regarding the final contacts with the veteran journalist on a typically risky mission.

"The last communication was 20 minutes before this heinous crime happened," Moawad told AFP shortly after staff held their own broadcast tribute to the 51-year-old.

Moawad said another journalist soon sent a message informing them she had died 3km from the edge of Jenin in the West Bank.

"We consider this something intentional because the bullet hit exactly the area below her ear where there is no cover," said Moawad, who added that "reckless" comments had been made in Israel about the killing.

Abu Akleh — the second journalist hired by Al Jazeera in the Palestinian territories — became the 12th journalist from the channel to be killed on duty since it started broadcasting.

Red paint thrown at Polish embassy in Moscow

MOSCOW (AFP) — Unknown assailants on Wednesday threw red paint at the Polish embassy in Moscow as Russia demanded a formal apology from Warsaw over what it said was an “egregious” attack on its envoy.

On Monday, the Russian ambassador to Poland was splattered with a red substance by pro-Ukraine activists in Warsaw when he tried to lay a wreath to mark Victory Day. This year’s events took place as Moscow’s military campaign in Ukraine enters its third month.

On Wednesday, the Russian foreign ministry summoned Poland’s ambassador Krzysztof Krajewski over the “egregious” attack and demanded an “official apology” from the country’s leadership.

“A decision on further steps will be made depending on Warsaw’s reaction to our demands,” the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

The same day, red paint was

thrown at the building housing the Polish embassy in Moscow.

“Mr Ambassador Krzysztof Krajewski confirmed that such an incident occurred,” Poland’s foreign ministry spokesman Lukasz Jasina told Polish news agency PAP. He added that the ambassador was waiting for the police to arrive.

Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Marcin Przydacz told reporters in Washington that if paint was indeed thrown at the Polish embassy then Poland expected Russia to clarify the matter and find the perpetrators.

Poland’s Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau on Monday called the spraying of the Russian ambassador with a red substance an incident that should not have happened.

Poland has accepted hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighboring Ukraine since President Vladimir Putin sent troops into the pro-Western country on February 24.

Civilian casualties halved since Yemen truce began — NGO

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AFP) — The number of civilian casualties in war-torn Yemen has dropped by over 50 percent since a two-month truce took effect in early April, an aid group said on Wednesday.

The Norwegian Refugee Council — which has been providing food, shelter, and other necessities to mitigate what the UN describes as the world’s worst humanitarian crisis — said civilian casualties totaled 95 in April, down from 213 in March, citing data from the Civilian Impact Monitoring Project.

“The figures provide clear proof of the benefits from the truce. During the last month, many families were spared from having their lives shattered by the loss of family members to a meaningless war,” NRC’s Yemen country director Erin Hutchinson said in a statement.

“For the sake of the Yemeni people and their future, we hope the parties to the conflict will extend the truce.”

The Yemen conflict pits the internationally recognized government, supported by a Saudi-led

military coalition, against Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

It has killed hundreds of thousands of people and pushed the Arab world’s poorest country to the brink of famine.

But a renewable two-month truce that took effect on April 2 has provided a rare respite from violence in much of the country.

The NRC said there had been a “significant reduction” in the number of people killed or wounded by air strikes, shelling and gunfire.

However, it added that despite a sharp reduction in violence, the number of casualties from landmines and unexploded ordnance remained the same or higher.

“We urge the warring parties to adhere to their commitments and work to find a peaceful resolution to this conflict, which has already killed and maimed thousands, and deprived millions of their livelihoods,” Hutchinson said.

“That people are still being injured and killed by landmines and improvised explosive devices shows the critical need for a long-lasting peace, so that these remnants of war can be removed and more lives saved.”



(Photo: Twitter)

UN urges crisis-hit Lebanon to ‘change course’

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon’s government and central bank are responsible for an unprecedented financial crisis that has impoverished the majority of the population, the UN said Wednesday.

The report, drafted by the UN’s special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, said that the crisis was “manufactured” by failed government policies and urged the country to “change course”, days ahead of parliamentary elections scheduled for May 15.

Since 2019, Lebanon’s currency has lost more than 90 percent of its value against the US dollar, prices have risen by more than 200 percent and the poverty rate has shot beyond 80 percent of the population.

“The misery inflicted on the population can be reversed with leadership that places social justice, transparency, and accountability at the core of its actions,” the report contended.

Special rapporteur Olivier De

Schutter visited the country last November to assess the impact of the economic crisis.

Nine in 10 people are finding it difficult to get by on their income and more than six in 10 would move abroad if they could, the report said.

“The economic crisis was entirely avoidable; indeed, it was manufactured by failed government policies,” the report said.

It accused the central bank of an “accounting sleight of hand regarding its losses... that covertly created a massive public debt... which will condemn the Lebanese for generations.”

The UN report comes as Lebanon readies for parliamentary elections on May 15, the first since the onset of the crisis.

While independent candidates are expected to improve slightly on their 2018 showing, experts believe the elections will largely consolidate the status quo in a country beholden to sectarian politics.

After Israel ruling, West Bank families fear evictions ‘at any time’

JINBA, Palestinian Territories (AFP) — The threat of losing his West Bank land has loomed over Ali Mohammed Jabbareen for more than two decades, but he now fears an Israeli court decision may finally force him to go.

Jabbareen, 60, lives in the Palestinian village of Jinba, part of the Masafer Yatta area in the Israeli-occupied West Bank that has been at the centre of a protracted legal battle.

In the early 1980s, the army declared the 7,400 acre area a restricted military area — calling it “Firing Zone 918”.

The army said it was uninhabited, and that anyone claiming to live there was doing so illegally.

The roughly 1,000 Palestinians who live there say Masafer Yatta was their people’s home long before Israeli soldiers set foot in the West Bank.

Israel’s top court ruled against the Palestinians last week, saying they had “failed to prove” their claim to permanent residence before its declaration as a military training zone.

The European Union condemned the decision on Tuesday, saying “the establishment of a firing zone cannot be considered an ‘imperative military reason’ to transfer the population under occupation”.

The ruling made no specific mention of evictions, which are usually followed by demolitions such as one carried out Tuesday at Silwan in annexed east Jerusalem.

But Jabbareen fears they could be carried out with little notice.

“We have no information about the demolitions,” he told AFP as he gazed through the open door of his one-room house at an Israeli military patrol stirring up dust on the unpaved road nearby.

Army units with clearance to destroy his home, “could come at any time,” he said.



Ali Mohammed Jabbareen, 60, walks at the Palestinian village of Jinba, part of the Masafer Yatta area in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on May 9, 2022, following an Israeli High Court decision that approved the eviction of roughly 1,000 Palestinian villagers to make way for a military training zone. Israel’s top court ruled against the Palestinians last week saying they had “failed to prove” their claim to permanent residence before its declaration as a military training zone. Masafer Yatta residents insist they lived in the area even as control of the West Bank changed hands — from the British mandate period through Jordanian rule from 1948 to 1967, the year the Israeli occupation began. (Photos: AFP)

West Bank’s “Area C” — which is under full Israeli control — and is more than an hour’s drive from the nearest paved road.

Few of the homes are connected to a water supply system or power grid.

Jabbareen built his house into a rocky outcrop in the heart of his farmland. It is currently home to 12 people, who scratch out a living raising sheep and growing vegetables.

“This is my land and they want to expel me from it,” he said.

Some residents of Masafer Yatta were first kicked out in 1999.

The following year, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) helped some of the families challenge their expulsion in court.

They secured a temporary reprieve that remained in force pending the high court’s final decision last week.

Roni Pelli of the ACRI said the verdict was “inherently flawed”.

“The villages in Masafer Yatta are the homes of the petitioners, and they have no other home.”

She insisted expelling them was “illegal,” and backed a long-standing allegation made by Israeli critics that the army uses the military zone designation as a pretext to grab West Bank land.

The Israeli human rights group Akevot, which specialises in state and military archival research, has obtained a document from 1981 in which then agriculture minister and future prime minister Ariel Sharon proposed to set up the firing zone.

Sharon, in the document, says the military zone declaration will ultimately make it easier to expel the Palestinian residents.

‘We are the opposite’

It was not immediately clear if the

residents have any further legal recourse to ward off evictions.

Inside Jabbareen’s house, where blankets are piled high against a wall, he gestured to a nearby Jewish settlement and reflected on what he termed grossly unequal treatment in the West Bank.

Some 475,000 settlers now live in the West Bank in communities considered illegal under international law, alongside some 2.7 million Palestinians.

They are frequently granted permission to build permanent structures with proper electrical connections, while many Palestinians are denied building permits and live under the threat of eviction, he said.

“They build with concrete,” he said of the settlers.

“They are provided with electricity and water. The army is guarding them, but we are just the opposite.”

Ferdinand Marcos Jr claims victory in Philippines election

MANILA (AFP) — The son of late Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos on Wednesday claimed victory in the presidential election, vowing to be a leader “for all Filipinos”, his spokesman said.

With an initial count almost complete, Ferdinand Marcos Jr, popularly known as “Bongbong”, has secured over 56 percent of the vote and more than double the tally of his nearest rival, liberal Leni Robredo.

In his first press conference, Marcos said that 31 million Filipinos had “voted for unity,” even as he waits for the vote counting to finish.

His win is an astonishing reversal in the fortunes of the Marcos family, who have gone from the presidential palace to pariahs and back again in the space of a few decades.

“To the world, he says: Judge me not by my ancestors, but by my actions,” spokesman Vic Rodriguez said in a statement.

Voters had been predicted to back Marcos by a landslide in Monday’s election, after relentless online whitewashing of the family’s past, the backing of powerful political dynasties, and public disenchantment with post-dictatorship governments.

For years, pro-Marcos accounts have flooded social media, leaving many young Filipinos believing his father’s rule was a golden period of peace and prosperity.

In reality, Marcos senior left the Philippines bankrupt and impoverished, and killed, tortured, and jailed tens of thousands of opponents during his corrupt dictatorship.

reporters at his campaign headquarters in Manila.

Marcos refused to take questions at the end of the press conference, which lasted less than five minutes.

He is waiting for all the votes to be counted before he declares victory, Rodriguez told reporters earlier.

The president-elect was greeted by a crush of supporters as he arrived at the headquarters before fronting the media.

The crowd erupted in cheers when Marcos grabbed a cardboard sign from a fan that read: “Thank you 31 million.”

“I am so happy, so overwhelmed,” said Joseph Bugayong, a 30-year-old gardener standing outside the building.

“I saw him in person and even shook his hand. My wait was worth it.”

The United States said it would seek close security ties with the Philippines under a Marcos government, but made clear it would raise human rights.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken sent a congratulatory message to Marcos, saying Washington looks forward to working with him to “strengthen the enduring alliance” between their countries.

“As friends, partners and allies, we will continue to collaborate closely with the Philippines to promote respect for human rights and to advance a free and open, connected, prosperous, secure and resilient Indo-Pacific region,” Blinken said.

“Our expectation is we’ll be able to continue to work closely,” said Kurt Campbell, the top White House official on Asia, acknowledging that there may be some “challenges in the communication.”

Questions over leadership style

The Marcos family’s astounding journey from ignominy back to political favor has overshadowed questions about what Marcos Jr’s administration would do.

There were few hints on the campaign trail after Marcos snubbed televised debates and largely avoided media interviews as he sought to avoid own goals.

Rights groups, Catholic church leaders, and political analysts fear the huge win could embolden Marcos to rule with a heavy fist and push through constitutional changes that could entrench his rule.

His running mate Sara Duterte, the daughter of the outgoing president, also won the vice presidency,

which is elected separately, in a landslide.

Their success at the ballot box means the two offspring of authoritarian leaders will hold the highest elected positions for the next six years.

In his first cabinet appointment, Marcos said Duterte would serve as education secretary.

The overwhelming win has devastated Robredo’s supporters, who saw the election as a make-or-break moment for the country’s fragile democracy.

Many of them went door to door across the vast archipelago in a months-long effort to convince voters to support the liberal candidate for the top job.

Robredo, a 57-year-old lawyer and the current vice president, has admitted “clear disappointment” about the result but vowed to continue the fight against poor governance.

Marcos will have to contend with this opposition that could congeal into a potent pro-democracy movement.

“I think they could still be in a position to check the worst instincts of the incoming Marcos and Duterte administration,” said political analyst Richard Heydarian.



Supporters of Philippine presidential candidate Ferdinand Marcos Jr celebrate outside his campaign headquarters after his landslide presidential election victory, in Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, on May 11, 2022. (Photo: AFP)

Of Google Maps and common sense



JEAN-CLAUDE ELIAS
TECHBIT

FIFTEEN YEARS ago, I took a trip to the US and drove 2,000 miles across three neighboring states: Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Before leaving Amman, a dear friend told me: "When you rent the car in the US, be sure to ask for a GPS, it will make your touring easier and more pleasurable." I argued that I did not really need what was back then new mobile technology, that I had an extensive experience in travelling and driving around the world, and that I would never lose my way.

Somehow, I ended up following my friend's advice, and paid \$35 more per day just for the GPS device rental option. The result, of course, was a memorable: a most enjoyable experience and precious time saved thanks to the technology. It let me discover the three beautiful American states without using any printed map or asking anyone for directions, as I used to do on previous trips, in the US or in Europe. In Jordan, I was wondering when we were going to have GPS.

Now Google Maps has become the norm, has wiped out most other GPS applications and is used by a large number of drivers in Jordan. We trust the app not just to find the destination we want to reach in an easy manner, but to know where there is a traffic jam and, possibly, avoid it, how long will it take us to get to a point, etc.

Although street naming and building numbering has received a major overhaul a few years ago in Amman, people now find it faster, easier, and more precise to indicate addresses by exchanging Google Maps' locations, instead of providing street name and house number. It is hard to believe that all this has happened and has become a must-have in only a couple of years or so.

However, perfect software has yet to be invented, and Google Maps, like any other application, and as good as it can be, is not flawless. From the biggest and most important (Windows, for example), to the simplest and humblest (weather forecast apps, online banking apps), software products do err, from time to time, to a lesser or more severe degree. The damage is variable.

I use Google Maps extensively in and around Amman. Not a single week passes by without at least one error occurring. Sometimes the system asks me to go around the roundabout ahead, whereas I should have taken the tunnel under it. At other times, it just misses the turnoff or the exit by a few meters or a few seconds — enough to make me waste 15 or 20 minutes to re-adjust the route, until the system does its recalculation. Other drivers, in other countries, sometime report more serious damage because of such navigation errors.

What does this tell us? Should we stop trusting or using Google Maps and the like? Of course not; the pros largely outbalance the cons. Applications' limited faults just tell us that while using and trusting software of all kinds is the only way to go, we should at the same time apply common sense, use personal judgment, and remember that we — not the application — should always make the final decision in the end.

The same dear friend who recommended I rent a GPS 15 years ago, and who happens to be a prominent lawyer, often tells me: "Before there was law there was common sense."

This is a key word here "common sense". I guess this should apply to practically everything we do, and to the ever-increasing number of automated actions we take every day, more particularly in the high-tech digital world.

Would you drive right into a concrete wall if Google Maps told you so? Would you send your bank account details if an incoming email asked you to, without checking and double checking who sent it to you? The answer is clear in both cases, and it is determined by common sense. These are only two examples. There will be countless other cases where blindly following the application would lead to serious damage.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is invading all kinds of software, to make it, well, more intelligent and smarter. It is the trend and it is only going to grow and change many aspects of our lives, from online medical diagnosis to self-driving cars. Whereas traditional software was never designed to make decisions for you, AI-driven programs are.

AI-driven algorithms are already invading major banks, large corporations and systems. As an example of application, they are hiring and firing employees without any human intervention. Harvard Business School management professor Joseph Fuller spoke at length about this very case on the French TV news series Tech 24.

Theverge.com has confirmed that Google Maps is using AI, expected from this major player in the high-tech game.

For the coming few years, we should perhaps learn how to develop and reach a new level of common sense, one that enables us to act quickly and choose in a split second if we go with the decision taken by the smart digital systems or switch to manual, and override the algorithm's decision to make our own.

Jean-Claude Elias is a computer engineer and a classically trained pianist and guitarist. He has been regularly writing IT articles, reviewing music albums, and covering concerts for more than 30 years.

Can Indonesia's Humanitarian Islam inspire a Hindu nationalist equivalent?



JAMES M. DORSEY

THERE IS a potential silver lining in Hindu nationalism's endorsement of Indonesia's Humanitarian Islam. That is, if the approval produces a Hindu equivalent.

At first glance, Hindu nationalist Ram Madhav's call on Indian Muslims to embrace this, probably the world's most moderate, expression of Islam, seems patronizing and out of step.

Madhav is a member of the executive of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an almost century-old militant right-wing Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer organization, former national secretary-general of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and a close associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In an essay published by Open, an Indian current affairs weekly, Madhav, widely viewed as a moderate among Hindu nationalists, called on Indian Muslims to adopt a moderate form of Islam propagated and practiced by Nahdlatul Ulama, the world and Indonesia's largest Muslim civil society movement.

Nahdlatul Ulama advocates reform of what it calls "obsolete" and "problematic" elements of Islamic law, including those that encourage segregation, discrimination, and/or violence toward anyone perceived to be a non-Muslim.

Humanitarian Islam further recognizes equal rights for Muslims and non-Muslims, unrestricted acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and interfaith relations based on shared common values.

If adopted by Madhav's RSS and BJP, it would be an approach that could contribute to the restoration of a semblance of societal harmony in India and help halt the backsliding of the country's democracy.

Several Nahdlatul Ulama-associated bodies welcomed Madhav's endorsement "as an opportunity to place humanitarianism at the heart of interaction between different faith groups — regardless of religion and across different sectors of society, ranging from mass organizations to governments — in order to promote peaceful coexistence and enshrine equal rights before the law".

Madhav's essay appeared against the backdrop of mounting Hindu-Muslim communal violence that critics believe is fuelled by the BJP and RSS' anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies. Muslims account for 14 per cent of India's 1.4 billion population.

Last week, the Delhi working-class neighborhood of Jahangirpuri witnessed some of the latest incidents. Riots erupted when participants in a Hindu procession allegedly brandished weapons and chanted anti-Muslim slogans as they passed through predominantly Muslim areas.

"There was chaos," said Sudarshan Prasad, a 71-year-old Hindu. I have always lived here in peace. This has not happened in the last 40 years."

Days later, authorities imposed a curfew and cut off internet connections in an area of Jodhpur, the capital of northern India's Rajasthan state, following altercations between Hindu and Muslim communities. The crackdown occurred as Muslims celebrated Eid Al-Fitr, the holiday at the end of Ramadan, and Hindus commemorated the festival of Parshuram Jayanti.

At about the same time, tension was building in the state of Maharashtra, home to India's financial capital Mumbai, after Hindu leaders demanded that Muslims remove loudspeakers from their mosques because the call to prayer constitutes noise pollution.

Bucking the trend, one Hindu village in the state gifted a loudspeaker to the mosque in a neighboring Muslim hamlet as a gesture of harmony.

In his essay, Madhav insisted that RSS had distanced itself from "violent language and talk of annihilation of an entire community" that he termed "un-Hindu".

Madhav went on to say that "the Indian social leadership needs to stand up to the forces of hatred and violence by invoking peace, inclusive and a nation-first narrative. India's narrative of the decade should be 'it's the economy, stupid'. The onus lies on all of us".

Madhav insisted that Hinduism was "very inclusive and very open". He asserted that no "ideological or philosophical movement that proclaims exclusivity" exists in Hinduism. He further argued that there was no difference between Hinduism and Hindutava, the Hindu nationalism of the BJP, and the RSS. However, he conceded that "when confronted with very hardline things like Wahhabi Islam, it created some kind of a reaction in some sections, possibly, but Hindutava is not about that. Hindutava is about core Hindu values".

Madhav acknowledged that Hindu-Muslim tensions would undermine Indian efforts to ensure that the country witnesses the kind of transformative economic growth that China experienced in the 1980s.

Asserting that the leadership of Indian Muslims, the world's third-largest Muslim community, adhered to Wahhabism, Madhav wrote that violent elements, whether "Muslim or Hindu, do not and should not represent our respective mainstream communities".

Madhav also suggested that the hijab, the head cover worn by a large number of non-Wahhabi Mus-

lim women, signalled belief in Wahhabism's purported purpose of pitting Muslims against non-Muslims.

"A more inclusive and humanitarian Islam on the lines of the one promoted by organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama... must be the way forward for them," Madhav wrote.

Many of Nahdlatul Ulama's women activists and followers wear hijab while embracing the concept of humanitarian Islam.

Some European and American officials privately hope that increased engagement with India in response to the war in Ukraine and big power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific will strengthen the hand of the more moderate wing of the BJP and the RSS.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz invited Modi to attend a G7 summit in June in the Bavarian Alps. The group includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain, and the US.

Madhav's embrace of Humanitarian Islam and Nahdlatul Ulama's engagement hark back to notions of an Indianized civilizational sphere that encompassed South and Southeast Asia for nearly fifteen centuries before the arrival of China, Europe, and Islam in the region.

In a gesture at a time when religious and cultural sites have been at the centre of disputes and conflict in India and elsewhere, Indonesia agreed in February to open Prambanan Temple and Borobudur Temple in Java to worship by Hindus and Buddhists. The sites had been mainly closed for decades for worship.

Madhav said he wished to avoid "loaded phrases" like an Indosphere stretching across Asia's parts. However, "I would say that Eastern civilizations (and) Eastern religions all share the same civilizational value system".

He referenced Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, and "an Islam with an Eastern value system like Indonesian Islam".

Madhav suggested that "maybe we all can stand up and talk about these values... commit ourselves to those values, including respect for pluralism, inclusivity, and commitment to the nation-state idea, (and) patriotism ... If something can be worked out jointly, we would be definitely happy to do that."

The writer is an award-winning journalist and scholar, a senior fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and adjunct senior fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and the author of the syndicated column and blog, The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer.

Aqaba has the potential to become a regional digital hub



HAMZEH S. AL-ALAYANI



(Photo: Shutterstock)

helped the services business sector to grow.

Data centers represent add to the economic growth through the digital economy, and generate employment.

According to the research firm RTI International, for one data center five jobs are being supported elsewhere in the economy. For example, technology giant Google's data centers have generated \$1.3 billion in economic activity, provided 11,000 jobs throughout the US, and generated \$750 million in labor income. In 2020, the company announced plans to invest more than \$10 billion in offices and data centers across 11 US states.

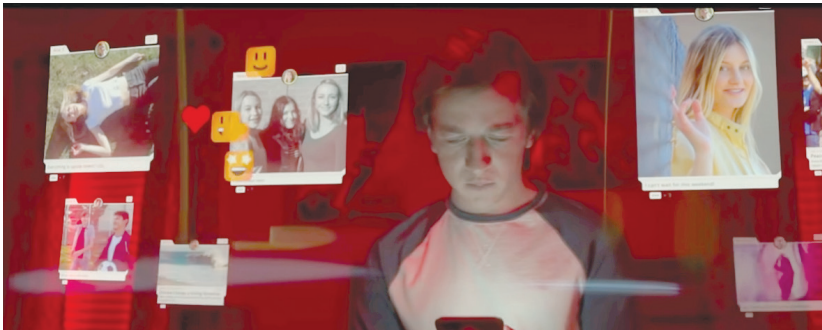
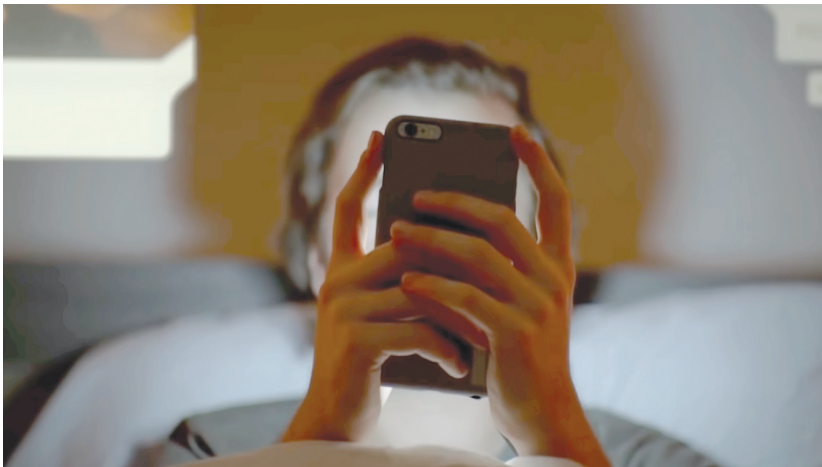
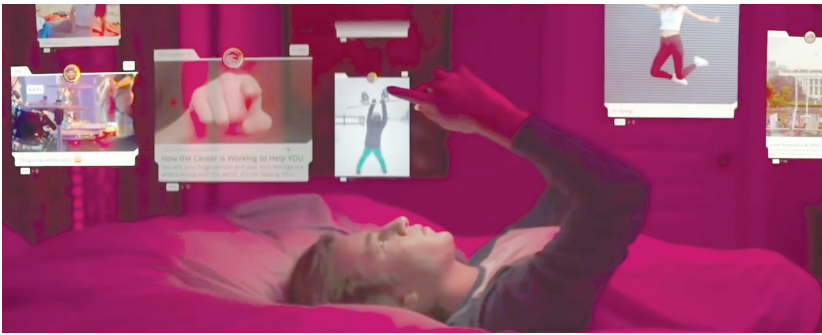
Aqaba could be the most prominent location for data center investment in the Middle East. Robust network connectivity, inexpensive renewable energy, skilled IT employees, and rapid growth in

the adoption of cloud, big data, and Internet of Things services have been solid enablers of growth of the Jordanian data center industry.

The digital transition should bring Aqaba closer to becoming a regional digital leader and a competitive regional logistics hub. This transition should help the outstanding infrastructure to localize services and attract other digital investments, such as fintech, cloud service providers, gaming publishers, video streaming service operators, and content delivery networks.

The writer is general manager at Edgo, worked with Petrofac, an international EPC energy company, in the Middle East, North Africa and UK, and he is a regular commentator on regional energy and industrial matters.

A shocking documentary on the dangers of social networks



The various testimonies in the documentary reveal the hidden mechanisms of social networks that can endanger internet users by affecting their psychology. (Photos: Royal Film Commission)

By Israa Radaydeh

THE DOCUMENTARY "The Social Dilemma", directed by Jeff Orlowski, denounces the dangers and negative consequences using the internet can have on our daily lives.

The documentary follows the story of a family whose members use social networks and reveals the worst consequences they can have on a person: invasion of privacy, manipulation, suicide, hate speech; all the dangers are discussed and highlighted.

Friday's screening of the film is organized by the Royal Film Commission and UNESCO, and coincides with World Press Freedom Day.

The movie is built around interviews with former decision makers from Facebook, Pinterest or Google, men and a few women who have contributed significantly to the development of these platforms and who now warn against the effects of their creations on the mental health of users and the very foundations of society.

Orlowski decided to make this documentary after meeting people who deny the existence of climate change. He wanted to understand why and how these people got to be convinced of this theory, and quickly realized that social networks had manipulated them.

The underlying idea of the documentary is clear: there is an assumed desire to manipulate the behavior of users.

The various testimonies in the documentary reveal the hidden mechanisms of social networks that can endanger internet users by affecting their psychology.

The staging of the repentant

Former engineers, computer scientists, and managers of financial optimization who left the houses whose power they had helped to manufacture – Google, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat – are beating their guilt by saying that they had created the devil and are sincerely sorry. It would now be up to us, simple users, to unplug these machines on which we would have become dramatically dependent.

But what exactly do they blame social networks for? For having become, over the years, a huge enterprise of surveillance and control in the service of an ever more voracious capitalism. Everyone's online activities are observed, tracked and measured, while algorithms exploit users' cognitive biases to increase their consumption times, obtain more money and/or personal information, guide their choices and ensure the success of advertisers.

Surveillance capitalism

In the field of internet video games, the so-called "Free to play" game has established itself. However, the "free" does not remain free for long. Algorithms of which the player is unaware manipulate his choices in such a way as to make him play always longer, spend always more money and bring always more monetizable personal data to the platform that hosts his game.

In addition, this new game model gives a central place to the visibility of the player, in particular through platforms like Twitch, in such a way that the power of social networks, which is the quest for visibility, is also widely exploited there.

Digital collapsoylogy

But is it really the algorithms that drive us, or the humans that manipulate them? To believe these penitents, the algorithms they made would now work on their own. In reality, they function only at the cost of a mass of miserable employees spending their time correcting their inevitable faults. Like any learner, algorithms make mistakes that humans must constantly correct and put back on the right track.

The algorithms that direct us

Everything we do online is tracked and analyzed. What image holds our attention, for how long, what content we subscribe to, what links we click on. ... Little by little, the system identifies our personality, our interests, our behavior and even our neuroses. Thus, it can not only predict, but also influence our reactions with increasing precision, turning users into easy prey for advertisers and propagandists, whether private or state-owned.

The film depicts how algorithms use psychology to keep us addicted to our screens, according to techniques studied and taught by the Persuasive Technology Lab at Stanford University: "A friend just tagged me. I have an alert! Ah, Facebook just invited me to an event. ..."

So many "intermittent positive reinforcements" that keep us checking our phones repeatedly, like a compulsive gambler hoping for the jackpot at a slot machine.

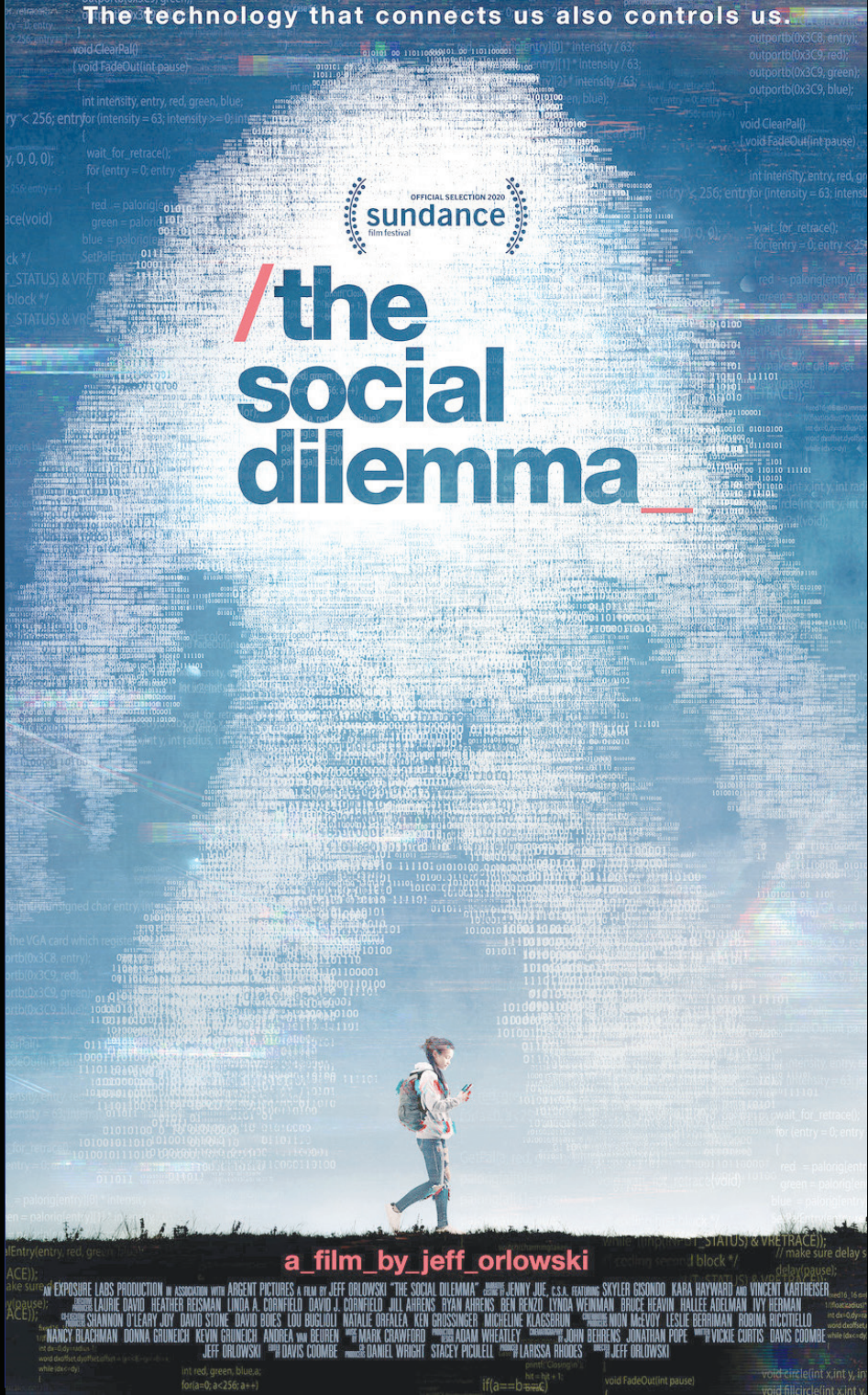
The manipulation of our behavior by predictive artificial intelligence in order to keep us online as long as possible, the collection of our data and their sale to the highest bidder, "The Social Dilemma" confirms that all this was wanted and encoded with Machiavellian precision.

Political radicalization and loss of self-esteem

The analysis is not in itself a great revelation, but the comments made are all the more credible as they come from the designers of these algorithms. Former employees of Facebook, Google, Instagram and Pinterest deliver exciting elements. Some say they were not always aware of what they were doing. One, who worked on the implementation of likes on Facebook, specifies that he only wanted to bring love. Cruel irony when we know that this feature is today criticized for its consequences on the mental health of adolescents.

Very well designed, "The Social Dilemma" alternates between documentary and fictional scenes that show the consequences of social networks on an American family. We can see to what extent these can be a real problem in the formation of an adolescent, or even lead to political radicalization for some.

The whole is therefore overwhelming for the web giants. Several stakeholders nevertheless remain hopeful. Indeed, it seems that good regulation is still possible and allows the positive effects of the platforms to be maintained, while repelling the negative effects. Others, on the contrary, advocate very vigorous measures, a dismantling, even a ban, and do not believe for a second that the solution can come from large companies busy accumulating profits.



GOOD FOOD

L'ETO: A definite must-go

By Zeid Odeh

With Ramadan over and life going back to normal, I decided to check out this restaurant that popped up on Instagram a couple of times. The moment I saw it was in the Abdali Boulevard area, I thought of the traffic and parking, which are always a hassle. Still, I wanted to give this place a shot, seeing all the pictures they had posted.

L'ETO is an international franchise restaurant that just opened its newest branch in Amman. It combines warm hospitality, intricate details, and alluring aspects, and creates a journey of discovery with each visit, enticing the explorer within.

Prior to visiting it, I assumed that it was a dessert place; I was surprised that it offers breakfast and lunch menus, as well as beverages, both hot and cold.

The interior is absolutely breathtaking; it makes you feel like you stepped into a coffee house somewhere in Europe.

I thought I would pick out a few dessert pieces, yet, when I saw that they serve breakfast and lunch, I decided to go for the full experience. I ended up ordering the Greek salad, scrambled eggs on sourdough, wild mushroom risotto, and a club sandwich, which I am a sucker for.

The Greek salad, even though it is a pretty simple dish, was elevated here. Seasonal tomatoes were used, which are very similar to heirloom tomatoes. Heirloom tomatoes have not been crossbred or hybridized for at least 40 years. They are an

open-pollinated, no-hybrid cultivar of tomato whose seeds will produce plants identical to the parent. They come in different shapes, sizes, and colors.

The feta cheese in the salad was slightly seared, giving it extra crispy sweet flavor.

The wild mushroom risotto was perfectly cooked, with just the right bite to it, which can be quite challenging to find that in Amman. The mix of different mushrooms brought the earthiness flavor to this dish, a definite umami experience for the palate.

Even though scrambled eggs on sourdough sounds like a simple dish, you can always judge the chef by his ability to cook eggs perfectly. If you are looking for a light option for breakfast, this is definitely worth the try. The eggs were neither grainy nor overcooked, and it was all beautifully seasoned and topped with cheese. It was elegant, simple, and delicious.

(The restaurant) combines warm hospitality, intricate details and alluring aspects, and creates a journey of discovery with each visit, enticing the explorer within.



I loved two things about the club sandwich. Firstly, it was filled with layers of grilled chicken, fried eggs, beef bacon, lettuce, tomato, and delicious smashed avocados. Secondly, every single layer of that sandwich was seasoned. Often restaurants forget to season the vegetables in the sandwich. The sandwich was pretty big, it got a little messy, but I had no regrets about just digging in completely, leaving my table manners on hold for that plate.

After this unexpected lunch, I was even more excited about dessert. I always say dessert goes straight to the heart. I asked for dessert recommendations and we got their signature saffron Dulce de Leche, honey cake, and raspberry tart.

I did not have to push through for the desserts, they were very well executed. The honey cake was not as sweet as I would have imagined, so it was perfect for someone who wants something on the lighter side.

The raspberry tart with the creamy custard was spot on with the contrast of the sweet custard and sour raspberries. However, the highlight dessert for me was the saffron Dulce de Leche; it was legendary.

Talking to the friendly staff working there, I had the chance to meet the talents behind the food and operation. Assuming that this international restaurant would have foreigners in the higher management, I was surprised to see that they were all Jordanian, from the operational front of house to the kitchen and back of the house. That itself was a breath of fresh air and a milestone for the food and beverage industry in Jordan.

Chef Hala Jbour, the talented pastry chef at L'ETO Amman, briefed me on the dessert menu that changes continuously and told me that the dessert display is made on daily basis. She said the quality of food items is all up to international standards of the chain and that she pays attention to the tiniest details in every single pastry item that makes its way to the display counter.

The overall experience was different from that in restaurants I would usually go to for a breakfast or brunch experience. The details were well thought of throughout the journey. The value for money was met by the quality and quantity of items ordered and the amiable service. Even though the Boulevard can be a hassle when it comes to parking, I will go back for another bite of the saffron cake and that club sandwich.

The details were well thought of throughout the journey.



Assuming that this international restaurant would have foreigners in the higher management, I was surprised to see that they were all Jordanian, from the operational front of house to the kitchen and back of the house. (Photos: Zeid Odeh/JNews)



TRAVEL

In London, a Platinum Jubilee and ‘Bridgerton’ events await visitors

(NYT) — London is springing back to life. Heathrow Airport reported that March 2022 was its busiest month since the start of the pandemic, with passenger travel from North America, in particular, increasing by more than 60 percent from January 2022.

The uptick is linked to the British government's recent elimination of coronavirus restrictions, a welcome move for many travelers eager for their fill of British culture, including once-in-a-lifetime Platinum Jubilee events and experiences based on “Bridgerton,” the heady hit show from Netflix.

Some city stalwarts closed their doors during the pandemic. Among them: Cafe de Paris, a cabaret venue in the West End since 1924; Le Caprice in St James', once a favorite spot of Princess Diana; and the physical locations of Debenhams, the 242-year-old department store. But throughout London, other cafes and shops bustle, scads of new bars and restaurants have opened, and city squares teem with everyday life. Many of the Royal Parks are ablaze in daffodils and brimming with picnickers, while live theater is back in the West End.

The return of in-person events lends to the buoyancy of the Platinum Jubilee “Central Weekend” in June, when public celebrations will mark Queen Elizabeth's 70-year reign.

Here's more on what is new and noteworthy in London.

The latest in restaurants

It's a testament to London's vitality that new restaurants managed to open and even thrive during the pandemic. One of the buzziest spots is Sessions Arts Club in Clerkenwell, a reimagined 18th-century courthouse where artwork and crumbling, dramatic décor lend a fanciful patina to fare from chef Florence Knight. Dishes like sea bream with parsley and eel with creme fraiche are delightfully British with whiffs of France and Italy (entrees range from around \$13 to \$32).

Another new hit is KOL, Britain's first Michelin-starred Mexican restaurant, where chef Santiago Lastra turns out items like pork belly carnitas with cabbage purée. On the ground level is The Mezcaleria, which serves kicky, mezcal-focused cocktails (six or nine-course tasting menus cost between \$111 and \$155, without wine or mezcal pairings; cocktails at Mezclaria are around \$20).

Vegans and meat-eaters alike might be delighted with the restaurant Gauthier Soho's pivot from classic French gastronomy to plant-based fine dining. One dish, rice with truffle “cream,” delivers the richness of dairy through a potato-and-lentil starch combination (the tasting menu starts at around \$60, without wine pairings).

When Leroy in Shoreditch adopted rotisserie chicken takeaway as a pandemic survival maneuver, the Michelin-starred restaurant might not have imagined the side hustle would evolve into a stand-alone eatery. Now, Royale sells whole or half cornfed Anjou chicken, sides like leeks vinaigrette, and a hazelnut parfait dessert (whole chickens cost around \$37, sides about \$12).

New cocktails

At his 1970s-inspired, Thames-facing bar Lyaness, bartender Ryan Chetiyawardana crafts cocktails around offbeat ingredients. A

spring drink called the 21st Daisy blends vodka, passion fruit, and crystallized verberna with a homemade “Green Sauce Liqueur,” but this South Bank location also serves a weekend “Spirited Tea.”

Brown's clocks in as the oldest hotel in London, opening its doors in 1837, but the bartender Salvatore Calabrese devises fresh ways to revisit the property's history through cocktails. The First Call honors Alexander Graham Bell (who famously made the first phone call from Brown's) with Elephant gin, pistachio pesto, verjus, coconut syrup, egg white, and white port.

Another drink, the Winston — as in Churchill — is whisky-based and spiked with coriander, lime juice, and a swirl of smokiness.

New hotels and lodging

In Covent Garden, the New York-based design company Roman and Williams has transformed a 19th-century Magistrate's Court into the first European Nomad Hotel. The selected art and textured materials imbue spaces with a contemporary edge and the restaurant is housed within a three-story glass atrium (rates from \$505).

Two interconnected Georgian homes are now the 14-suite Beaverbrook Town House in Chelsea,

where interiors designed by Nicola Harding offer vibrant color combinations, lively prints, and tassel-fringed upholstery inspired by London's grand theaters (rates from \$610). Hotel guests can access the leafy, residents-only Cadogan Gardens as well as enjoy “Bridgerton”-themed experiences with the sister property Beaverbrook Estate in Surrey.

Kingsland Locke has unveiled 124 sleek apartment-style rooms in East London's Dalston neighborhood, with a coffee shop, microbrewery, and kebab restaurant on the ground floor (rates from \$151).

West End offerings

Lights are back on in the West End with blockbuster musicals like “Moulin Rouge! The Musical” and “Six,” a modern chronicle of the fate of Henry VIII's wives. For those seeking plays, there is “Much Ado About Nothing” at The Shakespeare Globe (through October 23) and the West End openings include “The Glass Menagerie” starring Amy Adams (from May 23 to Aug. 27) and “Prima Facie” with Jodie Comer of “Killing Eve” fame (through June 18).

Ticket prices range for various shows, from \$6 (standing room only) to around \$111, and may be sold out for popular shows. Week-

night tickets and matinees are cheaper and the TKTS booth in Leicester Square offers discounted day-of tickets. Note that some theaters have their own vaccine requirements, so double check to see what documentation is required for entry.

Museum exhibits

“Surrealism Beyond Borders” at the Tate Modern explores the global reach of the surrealist movement with works by lesser-known artists from Osaka, Japan, and Bogotá, Colombia, juxtaposed with paintings by Dalí, Miro, and Magritte (free and ticketed admission to the museum and advance bookings are recommended).

The Platinum Jubilee and other live events

Britain is celebrating the Platinum Jubilee, marking Queen Elizabeth II as the first British monarch to spend 70 years on the throne, all year. But from June 2-5, events like “Trooping the Color,” a ceremonial parade featuring 1,400 soldiers, 200 horses, and 400 musicians, will be held. The parade will march from Buckingham Palace down the Mall with members of the royal family; among the other festivities that weekend are a concert at Buckingham Palace and a series of street parties.

Hotels are also celebrating. The Jubilee edition of the Berkeley's “Prêt-à-Portea” features Her Majesty's most iconic looks in petit fours and other pastries (around \$97 per person, available from May 30 to June 12) and on June 5, the Connaught will throw a Jubilee street party, with an English brass band, bunting and family-style tables offering tea sandwiches.

Other non-royal, high-profile events welcoming spectators once again are the Chelsea Flower Show, (May 24-28); the Royal Ascot horse racing (June 14-18), and Wimbledon (June 27-July 10).



Royal culture, historic sites, and traditional British experiences are catnip to those who have missed traveling across the pond. (Photos: NYTimes)

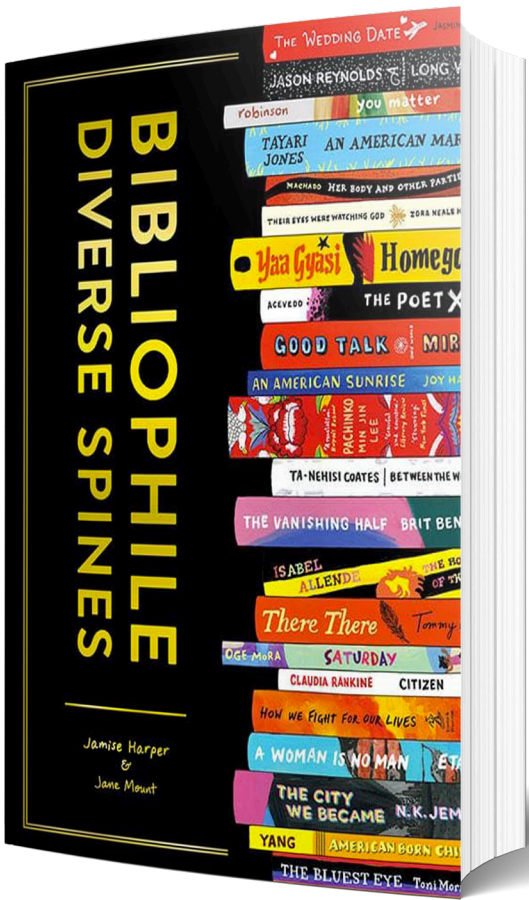
READERS BOOKS

An expansive celebration of literature

It's time to diversify your reading list. This richly illustrated and vastly inclusive collection uplifts the works of authors who are often underrepresented in the literary world. Using their keen knowledge and deep love for all things literary, coauthors Jamise Harper and Jane Mount collaborated to create an essential volume filled with treasures for every reader: The book includes dozens of themed illustrated book stacks of classics, contemporary fiction, mysteries, cookbooks, and more. All with an emphasis on authors of color and authors from diverse cultural backgrounds Beyond the content, the book is also easy to gift. It is a portable guide packed with more than 150 colorful illustrations and is a perfect gift for any booklover. The textured paper cover, gold foil, and ribbon marker is an added aesthetic bonus to the purchase. The authors dive deep into a wide variety of genres, and offer endless themed book stacks and reading suggestions from luminaries of the literary world. Your to-read list will thank you.

Perfect for: bookish people; literary lovers; book club members; Mother's Day shoppers; stocking stuffers; followers of #DiverseSpines; Jane Mount and Ideal Bookshelf fans; Reese's Book Club and Oprah's Book Club followers; people who use Goodreads.com; readers wanting to expand/decolonize their book collections; people interested in uplifting BIPOC voices; antiracist activists and educators; grads and students; librarians and library patrons wanting to expand/decolonize their book collections.

Review "If you love reading, reveling in ideas, any and everything about books ... if you love hanging out with people who love to read too, this book is for you. Jamise Harper and Jane Mount have given



us a gift. Grab a nice glass of wine and enjoy every page. And my writing space is in this book!" — Eddie S. Glaude Jr, author of the New York Times bestseller Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own "Perfect for guiding book clubs or anyone looking to read more inclusively." — The Library Journal "Jamise Harper and Jane Mount have curated an important resource for educators, librarians, and book lovers everywhere. With Bibliophile: Diverse Spines, readers can find books that center both unfamiliar experiences and their own

reflection on the page." — Melissa Rivero, author of The Affairs of the Falcóns.

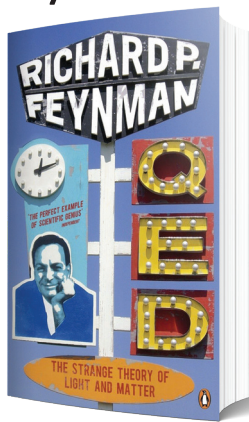
"Bibliophile: Diverse Spines is a glorious, expansive celebration of literature. This rich collection of BIPOC books and bookstores and authors and booksellers and bookstagrammers highlights the vibrant work that is happening across genre, across publishing, and across the world. This is an essential reference guide for anyone who wants to know what the future of books looks like." — Emma Straub, author of the New York Times bestseller All Adults Here and owner of Books Are Magic

About the authors Jamise Harper is the creator of the #diversespines hashtag and the Diverse Spines book community on social media, which highlights literature by Black women and women of color. She also created the Spines & Vines, a blog dedicated to book and wine pairings. She lives in the Washington, DC, metro area. Jane Mount is an illustrator, designer, writer, and thingmaker particularly for people who love books. She is the founder of Ideal Bookshelf and the author and co-author of Bibliophile: An Illustrated Miscellany (Chronicle Books, 2018). She is also the illustrator and co-author (with Jamise Harper) of Bibliophile: Diverse Spines (Chronicle Books, 2021) and My Ideal Bookshelf (Little, Brown, 2012). She lives in a log cabin on Maui with her husband, three weird cats, and a speckled dog.



Insight on the theory that won a Noble

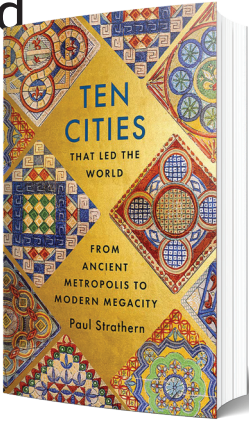
In QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter Richard P. Feynman explains, in his lucid and witty style, the revolutionary scientific theory that won him the Nobel Prize. Quantum electrodynamics (QED) is the theory that explains how light and electrons interact, and in doing so illuminates the deepest and most complex mysteries of the world around us. Thanks to Feynman and his colleagues, who won the Nobel Prize for their groundbreaking work in this area, it is also one of the rare parts of physics that is known for sure — a theory that has stood the



test of time. In entertaining segments, Feynman uses clear everyday examples to provide the definitive introduction to QED.

On how urban centers led civilization forward

Great cities are complex, chaotic, and colossal. These are cities that dominate the world stage and define eras. We journey back to discover Babylonian mathematics, Athenian theatre and intellectual debate, and Roman construction that has lasted millennia. We see Constantinople evolve into Istanbul, revolutionary sparks fly in enlightenment Paris, and the railways, canals, and ships that built Imperial London. In Moscow men build space-ships while other men starve, New York's skyscrapers rise up to a soundtrack of jazz, Mumbai becomes home to immense wealth and poverty, and Beijing's eco-



nomie transformation leads the way. Through 10 unique cities, Paul Strathern explores how urban centers lead civilization forward, enjoying a moment of glory before passing on the baton.

GAMES & HOROSCOPES

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HOROSCOPES



ARIES Your social skills might actually be more obvious when you are working behind the scenes. Trying to charm your way into financial success is unlikely to be a successful strategy — a partner or loved one might set you straight.

CANCER A mix of business and pleasure might be what a business contact has on their mind. Maintain a dignified attitude and think with your head rather than your heart. A close friend might need your support.

LIBRA You may belong to a club or organization that expects you to make a donation or contribute your time to an upcoming event. Overcome any social anxiety to welcome someone new who may become a fixture in your life.

CAPRICORN Things should shift for the better, and you may want to take some time to contemplate spiritual rather than material needs. Plans that were launched jointly with a partner have an opportunity to fulfill their promise.

TAURUS Be sure you share similar values with your peers before putting cash on the line. You could go overboard to impress people with your business insights. Focus on long-term rewards and results rather than instant profits.

LEO Create a mutual admiration society. Say good things about someone to be supportive and hopefully they will reciprocate when your reputation could use a little polishing. Be direct and sincere to win over a skeptical person.

SCORPIO Be at peace with yourself. Even if you hesitate to compete against others right now, you are still making connections and plans that will pay off later. Break out some quiet time for spiritual connection.

AQUARIUS A love of quality might mean you would rather pay more for the best and have it last. Forgo competition with others and replace it with self-care and pride in your authentic self. Get busy on that to-do list.

GEMINI You could put too much faith in something that is not genuine. Rely on familiar coworkers or long-time friends to steer you in the right direction. The future looks brighter when you look at it with a positive attitude.

VIRGO Make lasting decisions and choices. This may be the perfect time to focus on creating principled policies that can go the distance. Collaborate with a partner or loved one and draw up plans while you are in perfect agreement.

SAGITTARIUS Family members might greet you with a smile on their face and offer unconditional love. A business partner, however, may expect you to pitch in and work a little harder to produce a substantial result.

PISCES Do your best to live up to your ideals. Accept your current position in the grand scheme of life and figure out how to move forward from here. A permanent improvement in one area of your life relieves you of a burden.

GOREN BRIDGE

BY BOB JONES

SUIT PREFERENCE

Neither vulnerable, West deals

NORTH
♠ 8 6 3
♥ 10 4 2
♦ A 9 8 6 4
♣ K 2

WEST
♠ K
♥ A 9 9 8
♦ K 10 3
♣ A 9 8 6 5

EAST
♠ 9 4 2
♥ K 3
♦ Q 7 2
♣ J 10 9 7 3

SOUTH
♠ A 9 J 10 7 5
♥ J 7 6 5
♦ J 5
♣ 4

The bidding:

| | SOUTH | WEST | NORTH | EAST |
|----|-------|------|-------|----------|
| 1♣ | Pass | 3♣* | 3♠ | All pass |
| 4♣ | | 4♣ | Dbl | |

*Pre-emptive

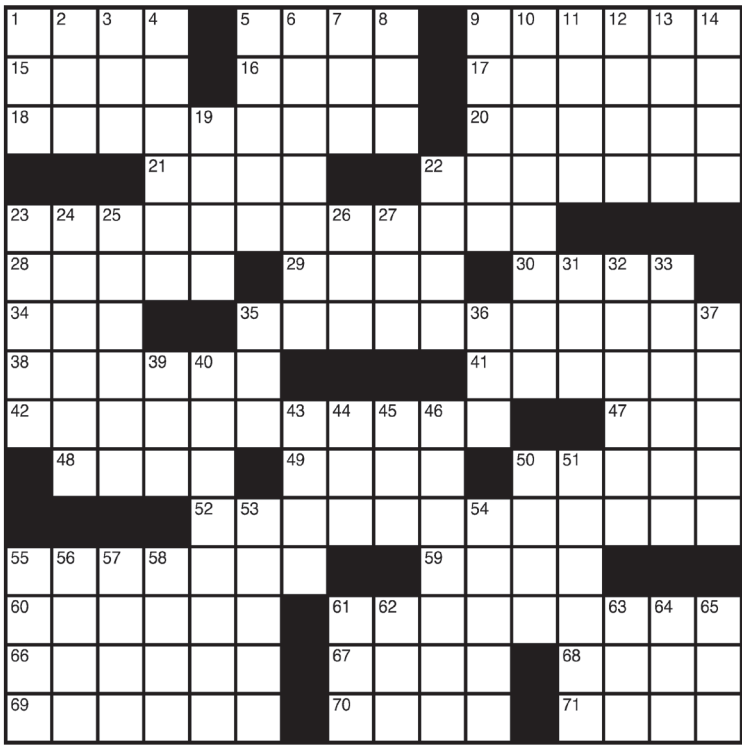
Opening lead: Ace of ♣

tude — an encouraging or discouraging card in the suit of the signal. Second priority is count — usually high to show an even number or low to show an odd number. When a defender's attitude and count are both known, or not relevant, the card played becomes a suit-preference signal. A high card shows a preference for the higher-ranking of the two remaining suits, excluding the suit of the signal and the trump suit. A low card asks for the lower ranking. East's pre-emptive raise pressured South into making an overall that he didn't have the values to make at the three level. North, expecting more, raised to game. East's double seems a little greedy, but East-West needed to compensate for the value of the four-club contract that they would surely have made. After partner's ace of clubs lead and the sight of dummy, East's attitude and count in the club suit were both irrelevant. He played the jack of clubs as a suit-preference signal for hearts. West led a low heart to East's king, won the heart return, and cashed another heart. A fourth round of hearts was ruffed with dummy's eight and over-ruffed by East for a two-trick set. Declarer dropped the king of spades off-side, but plus 300 was a great result. Well done!

CROSSWORD

BY JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS AND RICH NORRIS

- Across**
- 1 South America's westernmost mainland point is in it
 - 5 Not that
 - 9 James of "The Blacklist"
 - 15 "Sign me up!"
 - 16 Call at third base
 - 17 Printing mistakes
 - 18 Remark that may elicit "None taken"
 - 20 Line dance step
 - 21 Coffee dispensers
 - 22 Garnish for a margarita
 - 23 Ride with wooden horses
 - 28 Singer with numbered albums
 - 29 Advance to repay
 - 30 Check no.
 - 34 Drips changed by RNs
 - 35 "Let's share the subject"
 - 38 Network with science shows, familiarly
 - 41 Listened to, as advice
 - 42 St. Patrick's day shout
 - 47 Clean-up hitter's stat
 - 48 Walgreens product
 - 49 Gaseous: Pref.
 - 50 Short
 - 52 Without a care in the world
 - 55 President Hoover
 - 59 Company that's "calling"
 - 60 Picture next to a username
 - 61 Intermediary ... or a hint to 23-, 35-, 42- and 52-Across
 - 66 Poet Pablo with a Nobel Prize
 - 67 Real hassle
 - 68 Wheel shaft
 - 69 Formal, as an affair
- Down**
- 1 Wrestling win
 - 2 Moody genre
 - 3 Carnival city
 - 4 Roll out, as a flag
 - 5 Former LPGA #1 golfer Yani —
 - 6 Jabba the Hutt foe
 - 7 Conditions
 - 8 "Understand?"
 - 9 Take effect
 - 10 High school corsage wearer
 - 11 Greek war god
 - 12 Facts and figures
 - 13 List-ending abbr.
 - 14 Unable to look away
 - 19 Boots brand
 - 22 Ladder step
 - 23 Stephen King's home state
 - 24 "The Scream" artist Munch
 - 25 Mix again
 - 26 Harry's pal Weasley
 - 27 Cheerios bit
 - 31 Michael of "SNL"
 - 32 ___ the Entertainer
 - 33 Beloved "Jeopardy!" host
 - 35 ___-uop music
 - 36 "I get it now"
 - 37 Enlighten
 - 39 Wildest
 - 40 Brainiacs
 - 43 Protestant denom.
 - 44 Dem.'s foe
 - 45 Suffix with custom
 - 46 Data transfer measure
 - 50 Inky stain



Yesterday's Solution

51 Model's sashaying path
53 Wide assortment
54 Appliances that may be Dutch
55 "Give me a ___": "Help!"
56 At any time
57 Like many collectibles
58 A/C units
61 3.0, e.g.: Abbr.
62 Rowing tool
63 Prefix with skeleton
64 Deer in a lodge logo
65 Hillary Clinton, ___ Rodham



SUDOKU

LEVEL 1 2 3 4

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, please visit sudoku.org.uk

Yesterday's Solution

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| 8 | 6 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| 4 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 2 |
| 9 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| 6 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 1 |
| 1 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| 5 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 9 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5 | | | 7 | | 9 | | |
| 8 | | | | 2 | | | | |
| 6 | | | 3 | 5 | | | | |
| | | | | | | 4 | 7 | |
| 3 | | 5 | | 1 | | 9 | | 2 |
| 2 | 9 | | | | | | | |
| | | | | 2 | 1 | | | 4 |
| | | | 7 | | | | | 9 |
| | 2 | | 5 | 6 | | 8 | | |

BRIEFS



(Photo: Jordan Motorsport)

Jordan to host 4th round of the Middle East Rally Championship

By Khaled Al-Omeri

AMMAN — Jordan Motorsport announced the participation of 26 competitors in the fourth round of the Middle East Rally Championship, the Jordan Rally.

The event will be held from May 19 to 21 in the Dead Sea. The 26 competitors include

participants from Palestine, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Italy and Andorra, along with Jordan, the host country.

The Jordan Rally will include competitions for the second round of the Jordan Local Rally Championship, and the rally will start on Thursday May 19 from the Royal Automobile Museum.



(Photo: Jordan Basketball Federation)

Junior Falcons aim to renew chances at Asia Cup final qualification

By Khaled Al-Omeri

AMMAN — The national U-16 basketball team, the Junior Falcons, wants to renew their chances at getting one of the two qualification tickets for the Asian Cup finals during their

match against Iraq at 7pm on Thursday at Prince Hamzah Hall in Al-Hussein Youth City.

This match is part of the third round of competitions from West Asian Championship, which concludes on May 14.

Also on May 14, Iran and Lebanon will play at 5pm.

Miami, Phoenix back on track with blowout wins

MIAMI, United States (AFP) — Top seeds Miami and Phoenix moved to within one win of the NBA conference finals on Tuesday after scoring blowout victories against Philadelphia and Dallas.

In Miami, Jimmy Butler scored 23 points in a balanced offensive effort as the Heat thrashed the Philadelphia 76ers 120-85 to seize control of their best-of-seven Eastern Conference playoff series.

It was a similar story in Phoenix, where the Suns overwhelmed the Mavericks to score a 110-80 win in the Western Conference playoffs.

Both Miami and Phoenix now lead their respective series 3-2, needing just one win from their final two games to advance to the conference finals.

Dallas had roared back into contention to level the series at 2-2 on Sunday after dropping games one and two in Phoenix last week.

But normal service resumed as Phoenix reasserted themselves emphatically in front of their home fans on Tuesday.

Devin Booker led the Phoenix scoring with 28 points while Deandre Ayton had 20 points with nine rebounds.

Dallas had led by as much as eight points during an even first half that saw the Suns lead by three at the break.

But Phoenix erupted in the third quarter, outscoring Dallas by 33-14 to take a stranglehold on the contest.

Luka Doncic led the Mavericks scorers with 28 points and 11 rebounds with Jalen Brunson providing support with 21 points.

Sixers outplayed

In the Eastern Conference, Miami look poised to punch their ticket to the next round after dominating a subdued Philadelphia.

Few would bet against Miami closing out the series in game six on Thursday against a Philadelphia team who were outplayed in every department.

Butler was one of seven Miami players who finished in double figures, with Max Strus contributing



(Photo: Jimmy Butler Facebook)

19 points and 10 rebounds and Gabe Vincent adding 15 points. Victor Oladipo added 13 off the bench while Bam Adebayo had 12.

Philadelphia meanwhile struggled to get going at any stage, with Joel Embiid, wearing a protective facemask once more to shield a fractured orbital bone, clearly not firing on all cylinders.

Embiid finished with 17 points to lead the Sixers scoring, while James Harden had just 14. Overall Philadelphia shot just 31 of 85 from the field.

"We did what we were supposed to do once again, we won at home," Butler said.

"We're a different team when we make shots. But I don't like that, I

want us to get stops no matter what and then worry about making shots."

Asked what it will take to clinch the series in game six on Thursday, Butler replied: "Us to continue to play basketball the right way, us to get stops and not rely on making shots."

"I promise you if we don't give a damn about making shots and just concentrate on defense, we will win."

Sixers coach Doc Rivers was at a loss to explain his team's failure to show up.

"They were just so much more engaged, more physical," Rivers said of Miami.

"There's a lot of disappointment from all of us tonight."

"We played at a snail's pace, had

just 85 shots, turned the ball over. Everything they did tonight was harder and better than us."

"Their energy was better, their toughness was better."

Asked what aspects of the game had gone wrong, Rivers replied: "I'll have to watch the tape — or burn the tape. Probably watch it because I have to, and then I'll burn it."

"But we'll be ready next game because we have to be."



MORE SPORTS
ONLINE
jordannews.jo

EA Sports to end FIFA video-game partnership after three decades

NEW YORK, United States (AFP)

— The wildly popular FIFA video-game series will be rebranded EA Sports FC next year, its publisher Electronic Arts said on Tuesday, ending a three-decade relationship with football's governing body.

Launched in 1993, a generation of millions of football fans and gamers across the globe grew up playing the game and it became a huge money-spinner.

But "months of tense negotiations" between California-based Electronic Arts (EA) and governing body FIFA failed to end in an agreement to extend the partnership, the New York Times reported.

FIFA reportedly wanted the \$150 million it gets annually from EA to be increased to \$250 million or more.

The game has more than 150 million player accounts, according



(Photo: EA Origin Store)

to EA, and the New York Times said it had generated more than \$20 billion in sales over the past two decades.

No major changes to how the game plays are anticipated and EA said that it has retained relationships with other leagues and associations, such as UEFA, the Premier League, and Spain's La Liga.

However, FIFA events such as the World Cup will not feature.

"Our vision for EA Sports FC is to

create the largest and most impactful football club in the world, at the epicenter of football fandom," said EA chief executive Andrew Wilson.

"For nearly 30 years, we've been building the world's biggest football community with hundreds of millions of players, thousands of athlete partners, and hundreds of leagues, federations, and teams.

"EA Sports FC will be the club for every one of them, and for football fans everywhere."

FIFA swiftly responded by saying that it will launch "new football video games developed with third-party studios and publishers".

"I can assure you that the only authentic, real game that has the FIFA name will be the best one available for gamers and football fans," said its president Gianni Infantino.

NBA great Lanier dies at 73

LOS ANGELES, United States (AFP)

— Basketball Hall of Famer Bob Lanier died on Tuesday after a short illness, the NBA said. He was 73.

Lanier, who spent 14 seasons in the NBA until his retirement in 1984, averaged 20.1 points per game across 959 appearances.

The towering 6ft 10in center spent the first decade of his career with the Detroit Pistons before joining the Milwaukee Bucks for the 1979-1980 campaign, where he would play five seasons.

"Bob Lanier was a Hall of Fame player and among the most talented centers in the history of the NBA, but his impact on the league went far beyond what he accomplished on the court," NBA commissioner Adam Silver said in a statement.

Lanier served as an NBA global ambassador following his retirement and was chairman of a league-backed initiative that encouraged children to stay in school.

He was enshrined in the Naismith Hall of Fame in 1992, while his number 16 jersey has been retired by both the Pistons and the Bucks.



Lanier signing autographs for USS Nimitz sailors in 2003. (Photo: Wikipedia)

"It was a labor of love for Bob, who was one of the kindest and most genuine people I have ever

been around," Silver added. "We send our deepest condolences to Bob's family and friends."

Haaland satisfies Man City's need for a striker and status

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom (AFP)

— Manchester City are still licking their wounds from another painful Champions League exit, but by winning the race to sign Erling Haaland they have established themselves as a go-to destination for Europe's top talent.

The 21-year-old goalscoring phenomenon had his choice of the continent's top clubs thanks to a reported buyout clause of 60 million euros that will see him leave Borussia Dortmund well below his market value.

Real Madrid wanted to pair the Norwegian with Kylian Mbappe at the Bernabeu next season, Barcelona sought him as a successor to Lionel Messi, while Bayern Munich again aimed to swoop on their Bundesliga rivals.

Haaland, however, will instead line up in City blue next season, just as his father Alf-Inge did between 2000-2003 during a very different era for the club.

The arrival of petrodollars from Abu Dhabi has long since transformed City's fortunes, with Pep Guardiola's men now on the brink

of a fourth Premier League title in five seasons.

But Haaland is the man City

need to fill a void if they are to reach the next level — a superstar striker.

City have played the best part of two seasons without a recognized number nine.



Manchester City said Tuesday, May 10, they had reached an agreement in principle with Borussia Dortmund to sign striker Erling Haaland. (File photo: AFP)

An attempt to land Harry Kane as Sergio Aguero's successor fell short last summer and it may have cost City another shot at Champions League glory.

Despite beating Real Madrid 4-2 in the first leg of their semi-final, Guardiola's men missed a series of sitters to put the tie to bed.

That came back to haunt them last week as Real miraculously hauled themselves off the floor to score twice in the final seconds of the second leg and set up a final against Liverpool, City's nearest challengers for the Premier League trophy.

Haaland, however has scored 23 goals in just 19 Champions League appearances for Salzburg and Dortmund.

City future-proofing

What remains to be seen is how well he can be embedded into Guardiola's system.

League titles won with Samuel Eto'o at Barcelona, Robert Lewandowski in his time at Bayern Munich and Aguero in his early years at City dispels the notion Guardiola's

football cannot accommodate a number nine.

But the recent story of City's success under the Catalan coach has been one of collective brilliance.

Riyad Mahrez is their top scorer with 24 goals in all competitions this season, ahead of Raheem Sterling (16), Kevin De Bruyne (15) and Phil Foden (14).

Not all superstar signings have gone as planned for Guardiola in the past.

Haaland's arrival has sparked comparisons with Zlatan Ibrahimovic's ill-fated season at Barcelona in 2009/10.

And Jack Grealish, despite costing City £100 million to make him the most expensive player in English football history, has spent much of this season on the bench.

But by landing one of Europe's hottest properties, City are also looking to a future beyond Guardiola, whose current contract runs out in 2023.

Now they will have at least one season together to try to satisfy City's desperate desire for a first Champions League title.

BeReal is the right kind of boring

(NYT) — If social platforms can be said to have had good old days, it's when people were still signing up to see if their friends were there, and to figure out why — those early moments when their potential was felt but not yet described. That's what's happening now on BeReal, a new platform where people post photos for their friends, with a few crucial twists.

Once a day, at an unpredictable time, BeReal notifies users that they have two minutes to post a pair of pictures, one from each phone camera, taken simultaneously. The only way to see what other people have posted that day is to share your own. You can post after the two-minute window closes, but all your friends will be notified that you were late; you can retake your day's photo, but your friends will know that, too. Your friends can respond to your posts with a "RealMoji," basically a selfie reaction, visible to all of your connections. All of the photos disappear the next day.

Other platforms experiment with manipulative gamification. BeReal is a game. Though its rules are simple

— post, now — the message is mixed. Don't be too hard on yourself, just post whatever, it suggests, clock ticking. And then in a whisper: But don't be a try-hard. (BeReal did not respond to email or Twitter requests for comment.)

As a result, the typical BeReal feed features photos taken in class, at work, while driving, or getting ready for bed. There are lots of people making funny or bored faces while doing fun or boring activities. It's nice! Or at least not miserable, which is worth a lot these days.

Right now, BeReal feels more like a group activity than a full-fledged social platform, a low-stakes diversion that, despite its direct demands, doesn't ask for much. It's a randomly scheduled social break from your day but also from your other feeds, where scrolling and posting have drifted from leisure to labor or worse, as The Wall Street Journal reported last year in a story about the toll Instagram has taken on teenage mental health.

One of BeReal's founders is a former GoPro employee, and it markets its experience as a return to



Once a day, at an unpredictable time, BeReal notifies its users that they have two minutes to post a pair of pictures, one from each phone camera, taken simultaneously. (Photos: NYTimes)

rawness and authenticity, but, at least to this user, it can feel more gauzy and nostalgic, like a reproduction of the experience of joining one of the dominant social networks when they all still felt like toys. Look, there are my friends, this is sort of fun, we're doing this specific thing together. What could go wrong?

Posting like there's no tomorrow

BeReal, which is based in Paris, was founded in 2020, and by this April had been installed an estimated 741 million times, according to Aptoopia, an analytics firm. The app has been covered over the last several months in student newspapers, which have noted its aggressive use of paid campus ambassadors; in March, Bloomberg reported that the app was "trending at colleges."

The company raised about \$30 million in venture funding last year, according to Pitchbook, and a recent report from Insider said the next round of funding is expected to be much larger.

"Posting on Instagram these days, there's such a process," said Brenden Koo, an undergraduate at Stanford. His parents follow him on Snapchat, which he suggested had "reached its peak." He joined BeReal in December after hearing about it from a friend. He appreciates the fact that it's temporary, low effort, and "situational." It's less of a replacement for anything else than a social media extracurricular.

"Even college students find it to be a little kitschy," Koo, 21, said.

His classmate Oriana Riley, 19, agreed that the app asks less of her than others.

"I think the once-a-day aspect of BeReal makes it feel a lot healthier than other social media use," Riley said. "It feels less entrapping than other social media does."

The comfort of close friends

BeReal is absolutely not an anti-social-media project — it's a commercial-social photo-sharing app that is attempting to gain a critical mass of users within a largely familiar paradigm. Most apps expect users to produce revenue eventually, through advertising, commerce and other forms of engagement.

BeReal is currently ad-free, and its terms of use prohibit users from posting their own. But it is a startup, and one that has raised funds from some of the same firms that invested more than a decade ago in Facebook and Instagram — another app that tapped into hazy nostalgia, only by giving users filmlike photo filters instead of taking them away.

What BeReal offers now is a fresh version of an experience that has been tainted or worn out elsewhere. But most social apps want to be the next big thing, not a tribute to the last one. The cozy new app that Riley describes as helping her feel "close to her friends" is its investors' next hope for a big payday.

'The Rock' diamond goes under the hammer

GENEVA, Switzerland (AFP) — "The Rock", the biggest white diamond ever to be sold at auction, will go under the hammer in Geneva on Wednesday and could fetch up to \$30 million — or more.

The 228.31-carat stone, larger than a golf ball, is "a truly exceptional pear-shaped diamond", said Max Fawcett, head of the jewels department at Christie's auction house in Geneva.

It is "the largest white diamond ever to be offered at auction", he told AFP at a preview.

The Magnificent Jewels auction at the luxury Hotel des Bergues in Geneva begins at 1400 GMT.

The Rock, currently in the hands of an unnamed owner from North America, is lot 26 in the sale and could break records at the sale.

"It's perfectly symmetrical and is estimated at \$20 to \$30 million — and I expect there to be fireworks" at the auction, Fawcett said.

The equivalent in euros is 19 to 28 million.

The expert said that there were only a handful of diamonds of similar size and quality to The Rock. The Christie's record for a similar white diamond is \$33.7 million, fetched in Geneva in 2017 for a 163.41-carat gem.

The large diamond was extracted from a mine in South Africa in the early 2000s and has been shown in Dubai, Taipei, and New York ahead of the sale in Geneva.

Russia restrictions

Several other diamond rings, necklaces, and bracelets could fetch over \$1 million at the auction.

Also being sold is a tiara that belonged to princess Irma of Furstenberg (1867-1948), a member of one of the most pre-eminent aristocratic families in the Habsburg Empire.

It is estimated to go for 400,000 to 600,000 Swiss francs.

"The diamond market at the moment is very, very strong," said Fawcett.

He said rising demand, supply constraints due to "geopolitical issues" and inflationary pressure on commodities, including precious stones, was pushing the market to highs not seen since its 2013-2014 peak.

The Russian invasion in Ukraine has had a major impact.

More than 40 percent of the world's diamonds are mined in Russia, including the famous Alrosa mine, but international markets no longer have access to Russian gems, said Fawcett.

The supply constraint has created major price hikes and with the sanctions imposed on Moscow following the February 24 invasion, "prices will only continue to increase", he said.

Red Cross gem

The Rock is up for grabs alongside a historic intense yellow diamond associated for more than a century with the Red Cross, which will receive some of the profits from its sale.

The Red Cross Diamond is a cushion-shaped, 205.07-carat canary yellow jewel, which has a price estimate of seven to 10 million Swiss francs (\$709 to \$10.13 million).

"I expect that it will achieve much more on the day of sale," said Fawcett.

A large chunk of the proceeds will be donated to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is headquartered in Geneva.

The original rough stone was

Tokyo's stylish toilets inspire director Wim Wenders

TOKYO (AFP) — From American road trips to modern dance and the pope, German director Wim Wenders' films are nothing if not eclectic, and his latest inspiration is Tokyo's public toilets.

The giant of European cinema is making a film about an urban renewal project in which top architects are transforming 17 dingy downtown loos into works of art.

They include one toilet with colorful see-through cubicles that turn opaque when the door is locked and another with wooden panels by Olympic Stadium designer Kengo Kuma.

All of the eye-catching new facilities in the capital's Shibuya district are free, wheelchair-accessible, and kept sparklingly clean by a team of maintenance workers.

"There is something very Japanese about the idea, about the whole setting. And I almost think it's a utopian idea," Wenders said at a press conference on Wednesday.

"Because a toilet is a place where everybody is the same. There's no rich and poor, no old and young, everybody's part of humanity,"

Wenders, 76, has built a cult following with his arthouse films including "Wings of Desire," "Buena Vista Social Club" and "Paris, Texas".

The director said he was ap-

proached by the organizers of the renovation project, called "The Tokyo Toilet", who inspired him to make the film featuring four short stories and starring actor Koji Yakusho as a cleaner.

"I love architecture. In another life, I'd certainly want to be an architect," Wenders said.

He said he is particularly happy to be working with renowned architect Tadao Ando, 80, whose gleaming circular toilet has thin slats that let in fresh air as people wash their hands.

"I was so glad when I saw his toilet the other day, and saw how he worked with the light ... I thought, 'this is a precious place.'"

It is not Wenders' first time in Japan: his 1985 film "Tokyo-Ga" is a homage to the city of cinematic master Yasujiro Ozu, and he made a documentary in the late 1980s about fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto.

So far, 12 of Tokyo's 17 new toilets have been finished and are in use, mostly in parks and next to stations.

Ando told reporters that in many countries, "public toilets are not considered something beautiful."

"So, I thought that these magnificent toilets could convey a sense of Japan's beauty to people from around the world."



Japanese architect Tadao Ando poses in front of a public toilet designed by him ahead of "The Tokyo Toilet art project with Wim Wenders" event in Tokyo on May 11, 2022, to announce launching a film about an urban renewal project involving top architects to renovate toilets in downtown Shibuya. (Photo: AFP)

Elon Musk says he would lift Twitter ban on Trump

SAN FRANCISCO, United States (AFP) — Elon Musk said on Tuesday that as owner of Twitter he would lift the ban on Donald Trump, contending that kicking the former US president off the platform "alienated a large part of the country."

Musk's endorsement of a Trump return to the global messaging platform triggered fears among activists that Musk would "open the floodgates of hate."

"I would reverse the permanent ban," the billionaire said at a Financial Times conference, noting that he doesn't own Twitter yet, so "this is not like a thing that will definitely happen."

Trump has stated publicly that he would not come back to Twitter if permitted, opting instead to stick with his own social network, which has failed to gain traction.

The Tesla chief's \$44-billion deal to buy Twitter must still get the backing of shareholders and regulators, but he has voiced enthusiasm for less content moderation and "time-outs" instead of bans.

Trump was booted from Twitter and other online platforms after supporters fired up by his tweets and speech alleging election fraud attacked the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 in a deadly bid to stop Joe Biden from being certified as the victor in the US presidential election.

"I think that was a mistake because it alienated a large part of the country, and did not ultimately result in Donald Trump not having a voice," Musk said.

Musk maintained that permanent bans undermine trust in Twitter as an online town square where everyone can be heard.

"Elon Musk would open the floodgates of hate and disinformation on Twitter," said Media Matters for America president Angelo Caru-sone.

"Whether Elon Musk is a fully red-pilled right-wing radical or just someone very interested in enabling right-wing extremists, the result is the same."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), however, backed Musk's perspective.

"Elon Musk's decision to re-plat-

form President Trump is the right call," said organization director Anthony Romero.

"Like it or not, president Trump is one of the most important political figures in this country, and the public has a strong interest in hearing his speech."

Romero pointed out that some of Trump's controversy causing tweets have wound up being evidence in lawsuits against the former president by the ACLU and others.

Musk reasoned that permanent bans at Twitter should be rare, and reserved for accounts that are spam, scams or run by software "bots."

"That doesn't mean that somebody gets to say whatever they want to say," Musk said.

"If they say something that is illegal or otherwise just destructive to the world, then there should be a perhaps a timeout, a temporary suspension, or that particular tweet should be made invisible or have very limited attraction."



Ad boycott?

Activist groups have called on Twitter advertisers to boycott the service if it opens the gates to abusive and misinformative posts with Musk as its owner.

"Under Musk's management, Twitter risks becoming a cesspool of misinformation, with your brand attached," said an open letter signed by more than two dozen groups including Media Matters, Access Now, and Ultraviolet.

Twitter makes most of its revenue from ads, and that could be jeopardized by advertisers' reaction to content posted on the platform, the San Francisco-based tech firm said in a filing with US regulators.

"We believe that our long-term

success depends on our ability to improve the health of the public conversation on Twitter," the company said in a regulatory filing.

Efforts toward that goal include fighting abuse, harassment, and spam, Twitter told regulators.

"Elon Musk owes the world a better explanation of how the platform will deal with the likes of Trump than an edict that his ouster was wrong because it proved unpopular in some places," said Suzanne Nossel, chief of human rights nonprofit PEN America.

The Knight Foundation said that a survey it commissioned found that only 41 percent of adults in the US believe Trump was deprived of free expression rights by social media platforms that banned him.

"People died because of Donald Trump's Twitter account," said Muslim Advocates senior policy counsel Sumayyah Waheed.

"I'm terrified of what else would be allowed under Musk's watch."



(Photo: AFP)