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ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

DIPLOMACY

Saudi-US deal on ties with Israel 'very close'

Agreement dependent on clear
path to viable Palestinian state

Arab News Riyadh

Normalization in ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel depends on a clear pathway to a Palestinian state, top US and Saudi diplomats agreed on Monday at talks in Riyadh.

An accord between Washington and Riyadh over normalization was "very, very close," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said after a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

"Most of the work has already been done," he said, but a roadmap toward a viable Palestinian state was "the only way it's going to work."

Blinken said the US and Saudi Arabia had done "intense work together" over the past few months toward a normalization accord between the Kingdom and Israel.

"The work that Saudi Arabia and the US have been doing together in terms of our own agreements, I think, is potentially very close to completion," he said.

"But then in order to move forward with normalization, two things will be required — calm in Gaza and a credible pathway to a Palestinian state."

Washington has hoped to use the prospect of Saudi ties to encourage compromise by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is a longtime opponent of a Palestinian state but who is also desperate for a political victory in building relations with the Arab world.

The secretary of state was in Riyadh for a special meeting of the

World Economic Forum, and separate discussions with GCC foreign ministers on security. He also held talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Blinken told the Gulf ministers that recent tit-for-tat attacks by Israel and Iran "highlight the acute and growing threat from Iran but also the imperative that we work together on integrated defense." He said the US would hold talks in the coming weeks with the GCC on integrating air and missile defense and boosting maritime security.

Blinken said the region had a choice on its future, including "one

FASTFACT

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US would hold talks in the coming weeks with the GCC on integrating air and missile defense and boosting maritime security.

ridden with divisions and destruction and violence and permanent instability," Gulf Arabs, through their meeting with the US, were choosing "greater integration and "greater peace," he said.

Opening Monday's meeting, Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, said the "international community's failure to find a solution to the Palestinian cause" was one of the most significant challenges to regional security.

Blinken told the ministers he would press for a Palestinian state and more humanitarian access into Gaza.



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman receives US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Riyadh on Monday. They discussed the urgent need to reduce regional tensions. SPA

SPECIAL MEETING

EU members 'ready to recognize an independent Palestinian state'

World's top ministers hold talks in Riyadh on ending the war in Gaza



Nada Alturki Riyadh

Several EU member countries are ready to recognize Palestine as an independent state within the next month, the bloc's foreign policy chief revealed on Monday.

Josep Borrell said Europe was divided on the issue but "if the Arabs put a proposal on the table, the Europeans will have to consider overcoming their division. Someone has to spark

the movement. We need someone who catalyzes the process."

Borrell was speaking at a special meeting in Riyadh of the World Economic Forum, with the Gaza war high on the agenda.

"This is the core of this conference today: to reaffirm the two-state solution, to reaffirm that this is the end game," he said.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday urged Hamas to swiftly accept an Israeli proposal for a truce in the Gaza war and the release of Israeli hostages held by the Palestinian militant group.

Hamas negotiators met Qatari and Egyptian mediators in Cairo on Monday to deliver a response to the phased truce proposal

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which Israel presented at the weekend.

"Hamas has before it a proposal that is extraordinarily, extraordinarily generous on the part of Israel," Blinken said. "The only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire is Hamas. They have to decide and they have to decide quickly. I'm

hopeful that they will make the right decision."

Britain's Foreign Secretary David Cameron also described the Israeli proposal as "generous."

It included a 40-day pause in fighting and the release of potentially thousands of Palestinian prisoners as well as Israeli hostages, he said.

"I hope Hamas do take this deal and frankly, all the pressure in the world and all the eyes in the world should be on them today saying 'take that deal'," Cameron said.

Cameron is among several foreign ministers attending the forum in Riyadh, including those from the US, France, Jordan and Egypt, as part of a diplomatic push to bring an end to the Gaza war.

The Brief

MADINAH FESTIVAL

The 12th Cultures and Peoples' Festival, organized by the Islamic University of Madinah, brings together students from 95 countries, providing them with a platform to display their cultures, customs, and traditions. **P4**

DJIBOUTI PLAN

Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Djibouti's minister of foreign affairs, intends to stand for election to the African Union Commission. **P7**

HOSPITALITY SHOW

A new wave of technological innovation takes the spotlight during the Future Hospitality Summit in Riyadh. **P14**

SAFETY FIRST

Brace yourself ... here come the thunderstorms again

Weather chiefs warn of more torrential rain and high winds throughout the Kingdom

Rashid Hassan Riyadh

Saudis were warned on Monday to expect more torrential rain, high winds and thunderstorms before the end of this week.

The National Center of Meteorology Monday forecast rain in the Madinah, Makkah, Jeddah, Baha and Najran regions, accompanied by high winds, hail and thunder.

Saudi Arabia's General Directorate of Civil Defense also issued severe weather warnings accompanied by safety instructions as the country braces for heavy rainfall in the coming days.

Civil Defense said that most parts of the Kingdom would experience moderate-to-torrential thunderstorms, accompanied by strong winds, until Friday.

Regions to be affected include Asir, Baha, Makkah, Madinah, Jazan, Qassim, Jof, Hail, Tabuk, Northern Borders, Riyadh and the Eastern Province.

Civil Defense has urged people to take precautions, remain indoors during stormy weather, and adhere to its instructions.

Schools in Jeddah, Makkah and Madinah regions switched to online classes through the Madrasati remote-learning platform on

BACKGROUND

Regions to be affected include Asir, Baha, Makkah, Madinah, Jazan, Qassim, Jof, Hail, Tabuk, Northern Borders, Riyadh and the Eastern Province.

Monday after authorities warned of storms and possible floods this week.

King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, the University of Jeddah, the University of Taif, and Umm Al Qura University in Makkah were closed on Monday and postponed scheduled exams until

further notice. Taibah University in Madinah and Saudi Electronic University's branch in Jeddah also suspended in-person classes on Monday, and switched to remote learning.

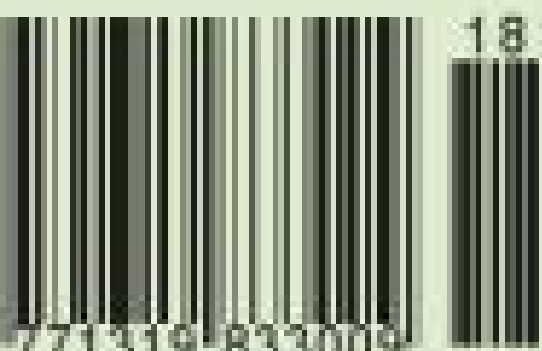
Jeddah Municipality implemented a field plan to deal with the weather conditions, and urged residents to show caution and stay away from flooded areas.

Bandar bin Saleh Al-Hadiya, director of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture branch in the Northern Border region, inspected dam safety in Arar ahead of the rain.

Riyadh was also hit by a heavy

sandstorm and high winds on Sunday night, leaving the city skyline enveloped in dust. On Monday, weather chiefs issued a red alert for dust storms in parts of the Riyadh region, including the capital.

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We aim to increase the tourism sector impact to over \$80 billion, continuing our commitment under Saudi Vision 2030 to develop new, appealing destinations that attract tourists worldwide.
Ahmed Al-Khateeb
Saudi tourism minister



Rad ar

KSA today



Diriyah Kids Daftar Tour

Let your little ones embark on an adventure with the Kids Daftar Tour, curated by the Diriyah Biennale Foundation just for younger art enthusiasts. Visit biennale.org.sa for registration and more information.



Dhahran Material world

The Material Library Experience at Ithra Center is a family-friendly activity that allows participants to explore the extensive library of innovative materials and offers access to advanced technologies. Find more details on the Ithra app.



Al-Ahsa Pottery

Join a pottery workshop where you can learn to shape clay into mugs and add flair to your creations. For more information, visit experiences.suplift.com.



Riyadh Opera

Enjoy a captivating opera experience with “Zaqqa Al-Yamama,” a show that weaves together ancient Arabian tales with music and talented performances to create an immersive theatrical journey. For booking details, visit riyadh.sa.

The Register

THE PICTURES THAT MARK THE DAY



Saudi Arabia's minister of state for foreign affairs, and climate envoy, Adel Al-Jubeir held talks with the EU's special representative for the Gulf region, Luigi Di Maio, during the World Economic Forum Special

Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development in Riyadh on Monday. They discussed regional issues of common interest, the Foreign Ministry said in a message posted on social media platform X.

Meanwhile, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan met the high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy, Josep Borrell. Di Maio was also present during the meeting.

Today's Number

1m

The Taif Rose Festival being held in Al-Rudaf Park showcases a 5,206-square-meter flower and rose carpet made up of 1,026,491 roses and flowers of various shapes and colors prepared by the Taif municipality. The artistic designs on the carpet are inspired by the Taif governorate's heritage and old palaces, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Who's Who



Omar Alsheikh

Omar Alsheikh is the chief governance, risk and compliance, and legal officer at the Sports Boulevard Foundation, where he plays a key role in overseeing the organization's strategy and operations in the sector.

His leadership has been critical in establishing the GRC function at the Sports Boulevard Foundation, including the development and improvement of legal operations, and the establishment of a new governance and compliance department, risk management department, cybersecurity department, and data management office.

Alsheikh has developed three-year GRC and cybersecurity strategies and operating models, and has since implemented these functions within the foundation.

Before joining the Sports Boulevard Foundation, he held senior GRC roles in several organizations, including senior director of compliance at real estate developer HOSHN, and general manager of governance, risk, and compliance at Saudi Information Technology Co.

In these roles, he was responsible for developing and implementing GRC policies and procedures, managing compliance risks, and providing GRC advisory services to business units.

Alsheikh has more than 15 years of practical experience in GRC and legal operations. His expertise has helped organizations establish robust compliance programs and effectively manage risks.

Throughout his career, Alsheikh has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring full compliance with regulatory requirements, and promoting a culture of integrity and transparency within organizations.

He holds a bachelor's degree in law from King Saud University and is a certified GRC professional.

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



NEW MUSIC Seventeen

K-pop boy group Seventeen celebrated nine years together by dropping a new album titled “17 Is Right Here” on Monday.

The megastar band also released the music video for the title track “Maestro,” one of 33 tracks in the album that includes two CDs — one containing four new singles, the other the rest of the songs the members have self-produced since their debut in 2015.

“The album depicted everything about Seventeen since its debut,” member Mingyu said during a press conference. “It chronicles the group's musical journey and marks a new beginning.”

Member Jeonghan said that the album is more than just a collection of hit songs they have worked on. “The album aims to depict the group's thoughts, aspirations, and the future it wants to create together with Carat (fandom name),” he said.

Carats rushed to X, where #Seventeen Is Maestro and its members' names trended globally, to express their excitement after watching and listening to “Maestro.” @leeseokminized posted: “I can't get over 'Maestro' ... a 9-year-old idol group still releasing title tracks with insane choreography ... I love you, you're always working hard.” @wonuoiawoo posted: “Seventeen never disappoints when it comes to releasing new music. Almost 10 years in this industry yet every release is always something new, unique, and powerful. Seventeen, you never fail to amaze me.”

'SHE CHANGED THE GAME' Candace Parker

Three-time WNBA champion and two-time Olympic gold medalist Candace Parker has announced her retirement from basketball after 16 seasons.

“The competitor in me always wants one more, but it's time,” Parker wrote in a post on Instagram. “My heart and body knew, but I needed to give my mind time to accept it.”

In November, the athlete told The Associated Press that she would love for her physical health to improve so that she could play another season, but her foot injury, which kept her off the court the previous season, would not allow her to.

“I promised I'd never cheat the game & that I'd leave it in a better place than I came into it ... I always wanted to walk off the court with no parade or tour, just privately with the ones I love,” she wrote. “What now was to be my last game, I walked off the court with my daughter. I ended the journey just as I started it, with her.”

Parker played with the Los Angeles Sparks in her first 13 seasons. She won her first title while still with the Sparks in 2016. She won the second title in 2021 with Chicago Sky and won the third last season with the Las Vegas Aces.

The 38-year-old won Rookie of the Year in 2008 and league MVP in the same season. She earned her second MVP in 2013. She is now the only player in the league's history to win a championship with three different teams.

“It's tough, it's bittersweet for myself because I would have loved to have her with us this year. On the other hand, I know exactly what it feels like when it's time, it's time. The body tells you. It's not what your mind or your heart is saying. It's your body,” Aces coach Becky Hammon said.

“She changed the game. She changed what it meant to be a positional basketball player. She played all positions. She's the one when you talk about people that are now playing and coming up, they practiced Candace Parker's moves,” the coach added.



The Region

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

• Comedian Imran Al-Arabi is returning for a night filled with jokes and laughter. The show promises Al-Arabi's blend of humor, observational comedy and insightful reflections on everyday life. Held at the InterContinental Regency in Manama, Bahrain, on April 30 from 6:30 to 10 p.m. More

details on calendar.bh.

• The Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2024, which started April 29, includes sessions on culture, creative arts, education for children and youth, professional development, and discussions on the latest initiatives in publishing. It takes place until May 5 at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre from 9 a.m.

to 10 p.m. For more details, visit adbookfair.com.

• Comedy lovers in Amman are promised a night filled with fun stories and jokes performed by the Lebanese standup comedy group 3a Ka3ba. Anthony Hamwi, Fouad Yamin, Jad Boukaram and Tony Dagher will perform on May 2 at Dunes Club in Amman, Jordan. For more details, check calendar.jo.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

April 30	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Maghreb	Isha
Makkah	4:30	5:50	12:18	3:40	6:46	8:16
Madinah	4:24	5:47	12:19	3:47	6:51	8:21
Riyadh	3:56	5:19	11:51	3:19	6:23	7:53
Abha	4:25	5:44	12:08	3:22	6:31	8:01
Dammam	3:36	5:03	11:37	3:08	6:11	7:41

Syria remains the world's largest forced displacement crisis.

Matthew Saltmarsh
UNHCR spokesman



Spotlight

RESEARCH & STUDIES
THE MIDDLE EAST, BETTER EXPLAINED

ARAB NEWS



UN experts believe the only way to end the Syrian conflict, which began in March 2011, is through a political process involving the regime and other armed factions. However, intra-Syrian talks have long been in deep freeze. AFP

MIDDLE EAST

The forgotten wars in Syria

With Gaza and Ukraine dominating the global agenda, continued violence in Syria has faded into the background

Anan Tello London

More than 13 years have passed since the onset of Syria's brutal civil war, with millions of Syrians continuing to endure displacement, destitution, and even renewed bouts of violence, with no political resolution in sight.

And yet, with the world preoccupied with simultaneous crises in Gaza and Ukraine, Syria's plight seems to have faded into the background, becoming a mere sideshow in Iran and Israel's escalating confrontation.

Omar Al-Ghazli, an associate professor of media and communications at the London School of Economics, believes "the scale of killing in the genocidal war on Gaza has sadly raised the bar of reporting on human suffering, particularly in Arab countries."

"News media are so saturated with stories of human suffering in Gaza that wars in other countries, such as Syria and Sudan, get much less coverage," he told Arab News. "This shows how mass killing in Gaza cheapens human life everywhere."

Israel's military campaign in Gaza, launched in retaliation for the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack on southern Israel, has killed more than 34,000 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and displaced more than 90 percent of the enclave's population.

Nanar Hawach, a senior Syria analyst at International Crisis Group, concurred, saying that "international reporting on the Middle East is focused on the Gaza war and its spillover to regional countries, which has further reduced the visibility of the Syrian conflict."

"A status quo has prevailed in Syria since 2020," he told Arab News. "With frozen front lines and a stalled peace process, there is little progression or change to draw renewed attention."

Since Oct. 7, media attention has focused almost exclusively on Israeli attacks on Syrian targets, including Iran's interests in the country.

One recent Syria-related incident



that gripped the world's attention was the suspected Israeli strike on the Iranian Embassy's annex in Damascus, which killed Quds Force commander Mohammad Reza Zahedi and his deputy.

"In terms of geopolitics, the status quo in Syria seems to have settled on a hum of internal warfare," said Al-Ghazli. "News media are only interested in the Syria story if it affects the stand-off between Iran and Israel."

"There are also regional and international actors who are interested in portraying Syria as a safe

FASTFACT

Some 107 civilians, including 11 children and 14 women, were killed last month, five of them from torture, according to The Syrian Network for Human Rights.

country for the resettlement of refugees, which may also explain the lack of appetite in covering ongoing warfare there."

There are currently more than 5 million Syrian refugees living outside the country, while at least 7.2 million others are internally displaced, according to UN figures.

Neighboring host countries, including Türkiye, Lebanon and Jordan, have been pushing Syrian refugees to return, claiming the war has ended and that their areas are now safe. Others have normalized relations with the Bashar Assad regime.

But the reality on the ground is grim, offering little hope for safe repatriation.

Anti-government protests in

the southern Druze-majority city of Suweida have been ongoing since August due to deteriorating economic conditions, with smaller demonstrations also taking place in Daraa.

Syria has also been "facing a massive upsurge in violence" on several fronts since September last year, according to Louis Charbonneau, the UN director at Human Rights Watch.

In an interview last month with Irbil-based media agency Rudaw, Charbonneau said that Syria has seen "a severe increase in attacks on civilians."

In late April, Syrian regime forces clashed with what the country's Defense Ministry referred to as a "terrorist group" that attempted an attack on a military post near Idlib in the country's opposition-held northwest.

Meanwhile, a senior official at a Russian center in Syria, Rear Adm. Vadim Kulit, told news agencies his country's aircraft destroyed "two sites serving as bases for fighters taking part in the shelling of Syrian government forces. More than 20 terrorists were liquidated."

Kulit also said Syrian regime forces lost a soldier a day earlier when they came under fire from militants in Latakia.

In the southern governorate of Daraa, where the uprising against the regime began in 2011, a series of explosions has kept residents in a constant grip of anxiety.

The most recent of these took place in early April, when an explosive device "planted by terrorists" in the city of Sanamayn killed seven children, according to state media. Local militia leader Ahmad

Al-Labbad was accused of planting the bomb, with the explosion sparking clashes the following day between rival armed groups in Daraa.

Twenty people were killed in the subsequent fighting, including three of Al-Labbad's family members and 14 of his fighters, according to the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

In northern Syria, the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army militia and its Military Police have been accused by Human Rights Watch of committing human rights abuses in the areas under their control.

The SNA invaded the Afrin and Ras Al-Ain regions, territories that had previously been a part of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

Noting the "clear, intentional demographic changes in Afrin," Charbonneau said in his interview with Rudaw that the SNA has been "removing Kurds who are living in these areas and then replacing them with Arabs who were living in other parts of Syria."

A report published in March by the UK-based Syrian Network for Human Rights also claims that the US-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have been targeting areas in the Aleppo governorate with "indiscriminate and disproportionate shelling" in "a clear violation of international humanitarian law."



The conflict, involving multiple armed groups, bottom, across Syria's fractured territory, has left more than half a million dead, far left, 7.2 million internally displaced, left, and 5 million displaced abroad. AFP

hosting pro-regime Iranian militias, the report added.

Camille Alexandre Otrakji, a Syrian-Canadian analyst, believes the violence in Syria has slipped from global attention because "many media organizations prioritize what is best for Israel."

"Unfortunately for Syrians, Israel's interests align with the continuation of conflict in their country," he told Arab News. "Raising awareness of their suffering can exert pressure on the international community to actively pursue negotiated compromises to end the conflict, which is not in Israel's interest."

"Western media rarely exhibited an interest in outcomes other than victory for the side they supported and championed." However, "as that side has largely dissipated, only a disparate collection of unattractive armed groups remains, challenging their common portrayal as the 'good side.'"

He added: "The novelty and intensity of a conflict influences perceptions of its newsworthiness. The 13-year conflict in Syria peaked years ago, leading to coverage fatigue and a general sense of Syria fatigue among both audiences and activists. Charitable organizations are also experiencing a noticeable decline in donations for Syria."

Moreover, as social media activists "have realized that their activism or influence does not translate into tangible gains on the ground," their motivation to continue covering the conflict in Syria "has dramatically declined."

UN experts believe the only way to end the Syrian conflict is through a political process. But for more than a year, "the intra-Syrian political process has been in deep freeze," UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen said in August.

"A continued stalemate is likely to increase international disengagement," Hawach of the International Crisis Group told Arab News. "Without significant concessions from Syrian actors and the involved external parties, the Syrian issue risks becoming a forgotten case."





Prince Salman bin Sultan, the governor of Madinah, toured the pavilions of the participating countries. SPA

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultures from 95 countries on display at Madinah festival

Event fosters communication and unity among nations

Arab News Riyadh

Prince Salman bin Sultan, the governor of Madinah, on Monday inaugurated the 12th Cultures and Peoples' Festival, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The governor toured the pavilions of the participating countries, learning about the festival's goals, which are to foster communication, unity and understanding among people.

The festival, which also encourages teamwork and promotes Islamic values, supports dialogue, coexistence and peace among nations, and strengthens communication between university students and the local community,

The event, organized by the Islamic University of Madinah, runs until May 6.

During the inauguration ceremony, the acting president of the university, Hassan Al-Oufi, said that over 100,000 students from more than 170 countries have graduated from the university, contributing significantly to the

HIGHLIGHT

The festival, which also encourages teamwork and promotes Islamic values, supports dialogue, coexistence and peace among nations, and strengthens communication between university students and the local community.

development of their societies and homelands.

Al-Oufi said that the festival brings together students from 95 countries, providing them with a platform to display their cultures, customs, and traditions.

"The festival creates a harmonious and cooperative environment where the East and West unite on the university's premises," he said.

Representatives from various countries present more than 40 activities and events for families, children, and the community.

Festival events and activities include celebrations of Saudi coffee, Arabic poetry, tea, and the Year of the Camel 2024. There are also entertainment, educational and cultural sections that offer enriching experiences for visitors.

HAJJ 2024

Over 65,000 Pakistani pilgrims to utilize Makkah Route this year

Salma Shabbir Islamabad

Over 65,000 Pakistani pilgrims are set to benefit from Saudi Arabia's Makkah Route Initiative during this year's Hajj pilgrimage, Pakistan's religious affairs secretary said on Monday, compared with the 26,000 pilgrims who used the facility from the Pakistan capital in 2023.

Pakistani officials confirmed last week that Saudi authorities have approved the Makkah Route Initiative's expansion to the airport in Karachi, the country's most populous city.

Launched in 2019, the initiative was initially extended only to the airport in Islamabad.

The Makkah Route Initiative allows for the completion of immigration procedures at the pilgrims' country of departure, making it possible to bypass long immigration and customs checks on reaching Saudi Arabia.

The facility significantly reduces waiting times, and makes the entry process smoother and faster.

Islamabad had asked Saudi authorities to extend the facility to

other airports in the country.

"A total of 65,000 Hajj pilgrims will utilize the Route to Makkah facility at Karachi and Islamabad airports this year," Syed Atta ur Rehman, Pakistan's religious affairs secretary, told a media briefing.

Breaking down the numbers, Rehman said 41,000 of the 65,000 pilgrims will make use of the

HIGHLIGHT

Pakistan will launch Hajj 2024 operations from May 9 in eight airports across the country till June 9. This year's pilgrimage is expected to take place from June 14-19.

facility under the government's Hajj scheme, while the remaining 24,000 will rely on private tour operators.

"Specifically, 29,500 pilgrims will use this facility from Islamabad, while 35,500 will do so from Karachi airport," Rehman said, thanking the Saudi government for expanding the

initiative to Karachi.

Pakistan will launch Hajj 2024 operations from May 9 in eight airports across the country till June 9. This year's pilgrimage is expected to take place from June 14-19.

The official said a total of 69,000 pilgrims will perform the pilgrimage under the government scheme this year. Of these, 64,000 pilgrims will perform under the general scheme, while over 5,000 will perform the pilgrimage under the sponsorship scheme.

The sponsorship Hajj scheme was introduced by the government last year, allowing overseas Pakistanis to apply for the pilgrimage or sponsor someone in Pakistan for the journey by paying in US dollars. In return, applicants would not have to participate in the balloting process for the pilgrimage.

Rehman said the remaining number of pilgrims will perform Hajj on the private scheme. However, he added their exact number is yet to be determined as bookings for the pilgrimage are still underway.

TheSpace

How Saudi investment is shaping the world

ABDULELAH S. AL-NAHARI



A new energy is surging through Saudi Arabia, one that goes beyond oil and into the boundless realm of ambition. The World Economic Forum's special meeting in Riyadh was more than just a gathering of minds; it was a powerhouse for ideas and partnerships. As a Saudi citizen, I see this surge as proof of our nation's determination to fuel not only our own prosperity, but also inspire a brighter global future.

Guided by the visionary blueprint of Vision 2030, the Kingdom's determined journey toward economic diversification holds the potential to create a more robust and sustainable Saudi economy, while also setting an inspiring example for emerging nations worldwide. This plan prioritizes investment in non-oil sectors, tourism, technological innovation and the empowerment of our human capital — driving forces behind a secure future.

The World Economic Forum's presence in Riyadh was not merely symbolic — it was a strategic move by both sides. Saudi Arabia aimed to showcase its advancements, attract investments that aligned with its diversification objectives, and establish its position as a key participant in discussions about energy transitions and international cooperation. It was a bold gamble on the global stage, and from my perspective, the Kingdom is playing a winning hand.

For too long, Saudi Arabia's economic might was synonymous with oil. While our energy resources remain important, Vision 2030 dares to envision a future where innovation, tourism and a multitude of sectors drive our prosperity. The rise of NEOM, our futuristic megacity, symbolizes the bold, innovative thinking at the heart of Vision 2030.

There are challenges, of course. Bureaucracy, lingering dependence on oil and global economic shifts are hurdles to overcome. Yet, the potential is undeniable. Our youthful population, strategic

location and ambitious drive make me optimistic about achieving the targets laid out in Vision 2030.

Traditionally, we may have been seen as a developed economy. Now, we are doing something more exciting: creating a hybrid of established power and emerging market dynamism. This unique position allows us to not only build our own future, but also offer guidance to other nations seeking to diversify their economies. The lessons we learn, both from our triumphs and our stumbles, can serve as a blueprint for the world.

Diversification is easier said than done. Sadly, factors like political instability, corruption and inadequate infrastructure cripple the aspirations of many nations. Yet, the path to diversification is strewn with obstacles. Take the issue of



While the road ahead will not be without challenges, I firmly believe that Saudi Arabia's transformation is not only good for us, but also a harbinger of positive change for economies around the world.

infrastructure. While Saudi Arabia benefits from substantial investment in roads, ports and digital networks, many developing nations lack the resources for such fundamental building blocks. This is where collaboration becomes vital.

By sharing expertise and potentially partnering on infrastructure projects through initiatives like the Belt and Road, the Kingdom can play a significant role in unlocking

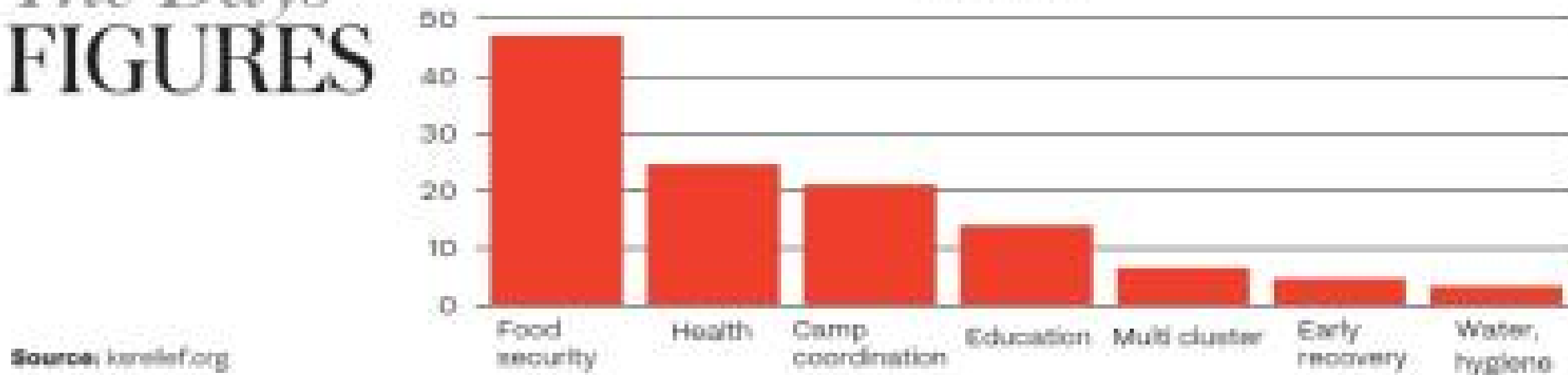
the economic potential of less-developed regions. It is about recognizing that progress is not a zero-sum game; a more interconnected and prosperous world ultimately benefits us all. Saudi Arabia is fortunate to be navigating this journey with resources and relative stability. Yet, our success does not happen in a vacuum. By building partnerships, sharing knowledge and championing responsible development, the Kingdom can help create a world where the benefits of economic transformation do not stop at our borders.

Abdulrahman S. Al-Nahari is a business and MacCom partner at a marketing solutions firm and leads strategic growth initiatives in line with Saudi Arabia's digital-first vision. He has multi-sector awareness, strategic digital foresight and a range of industry experience. For full version, log on to www.arabnews.com/thespace

The Day's FIGURES

KSRELIEF PROJECTS IN PALESTINE

March 2024



Source: ksrelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Youth empowerment Saudi leadership council honors new graduates

The latest graduates of Saudi Arabia's Leaders 2030 program and the Misk Fellowship program were honored during the first annual meeting of the Saudi Leadership Society Council in Riyadh.

The graduation ceremony for the third and fourth groups to complete the Leaders 2030 program took place during the meeting, along with the announcement that they will join the council, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Monday.

The aim of the council is to assemble an exceptional community of ambitious future leaders and harness the diversity of its members to foster cooperation, drive growth and make a significant impact on the country and the world.

The council is also dedicated to creating new opportunities for sustainable growth and other positive effects. **AN Riyadh**

Sustainable development KSA discusses cooperative sector at Jordan forum

Soltan Al-Jurais, acting deputy minister of human resources and social development, is leading the Saudi delegation at the 11th Asia-Pacific Cooperative Ministers' Conference, taking place in the Dead Sea region of Jordan from April 28-30.

Al-Jurais emphasized the vital role of the cooperative sector in developmental and economic aspects, especially in achieving sustainable development goals.

Al-Jurais emphasized Saudi Arabia's efforts to support socially vulnerable groups through economic empowerment, involving public-private partnerships to create cooperatives aimed at generating jobs and boosting production in specific sectors.

He also reviewed recent Saudi initiatives aimed at accelerating the growth of the cooperative sector in the Kingdom. **AN Riyadh**

Innovation & creativity Jeddah college launches fashion hackathon

The Technical Female College in Jeddah launched a three-day Fashion Technology Hackathon on Monday to promote innovation and creativity in the fashion industry.

Afra Al-Layati, dean of the college, highlighted the hackathon as a pioneering initiative designed to unite trainees, graduates, and students who share a passion for fashion and technology. Participants work in an environment that fosters creativity, focusing on developing innovative concepts and models.

The hackathon has three tracks: sustainability, technical solutions, and traditional clothing. It targets Saudi trainees or graduates specializing in fashion design, manufacturing, computer science, software engineering, and other technology-related fields in the fashion industry. **AN Riyadh**



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MARINE CONSERVATION

'Beneath the Surface' dives deep into world of corals

Documentary depicts resilience of Red Sea corals in face of climate change, says environmentalist Salma Shaker

Nada Hameed Jeddah

A documentary on the plight of coral reefs, "Beneath the Surface: The Fight for Corals," presented by Red Sea Global in collaboration with Warner Bros. Discovery, was recently screened for an audience of ocean enthusiasts in Jeddah.

The 45-minute documentary released on Earth Day follows Saudi free diver and environmentalist Salma Shaker on a journey of discovery and hope, in the process highlighting the unique resilience of Red Sea corals and their potential contribution to global coral health.

Currently airing on the Discovery channel in over 130 countries, viewers are taken on a journey into the depths of the sea where these vibrant underwater ecosystems are found.

At its core, "Beneath the Surface" aims to shed light on the undiscovered treasures of the Red Sea's coral reefs, highlighting their biological diversity and vital role in sustaining the global ecosystem.

"The coral reefs in the oceans are the backbone of the planet's entire ecosystem on which humans survive," the documentary says. "However, pollution and climate change are threatening their survival."

Shaker is portrayed in the documentary as a Saudi youth role model, inspiring others to prioritize the protection of the Red Sea's ecosystem and its coral reefs.

The documentary delves into her relationship with her father, who has been a pivotal figure in shaping her connection to the sea. A marine geologist, fisherman, and diver himself, he instilled in her and her siblings a deep love for the ocean.

She told Arab News: "The core concept of the movie revolves around how the resilience of Red Sea corals in the face of climate change can offer hope for coral reefs worldwide. Without giving too much away, the movie explores this idea in depth, and I believe the message will resonate strongly with viewers."

She added that she has visited Red Sea Global many times, and seen the corals' "awe-inspiring" beauty.

"The untouched and protected corals create an underwater paradise that feels like stepping into an aquarium. Every aspect, from the marine life to the vibrant



'Beneath the Surface' sheds light on the undiscovered treasures of the Red Sea's coral reefs, highlighting their vital role in sustaining the global ecosystem.

Right: The documentary follows Saudi free diver and environmentalist Salma Shaker on a journey of discovery and hope. Supplied



colors, is simply breathtaking," she noted.

Red Sea Global's commitment to marine environment protection is evident throughout the film, underscored by its dedication to sustainable development practices as the bedrock of its mission.

Raed Albasseet, group chief environment and sustainability officer at Red Sea Global, told Arab News: "Partnering with Warner Bros. to produce this film is an additional step we've taken. Our primary objective is to deliver the highest quality content to the broader public, including the Saudi population and especially the youth."

"We aim to showcase the beauty of these coral reefs, their significance to the economy, and their



The breathtaking beauty of Saudi Arabia's marine ecosystem is a gift that must be showcased and shared with the world.

Omar Al-Attas
Head of environmental protection and regeneration, Red Sea Global

importance to humanity as a whole. Through this film, we hope to inspire individuals to take an active role in preserving and enhancing these invaluable ecosystems for future generations."

Since around 2016 and 2017,



Red Sea Global has collaborated extensively with various platforms within King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, he added.

Speaking about these environmental efforts to protect coral reefs, Albasseet explained: "Working with scientists, we've documented the environmental significance of our development sites, guiding master planning and project development. Leveraging this expertise, we've implemented long-term programs to protect corals during development and operations, aiming to enhance coral growth."

They have also launched pilot projects for coral enhancement across ambitious regenerative tourism destinations The Red Sea and AMAALA, facilitating future coral growth. "Beneath the Surface" documents the company's unveiling of Corallium, the new brand for its Marine Life Centre in AMAALA, at COP28 last November in Dubai.

"Our Corallium project in AMAALA underscores our commitment to coral preservation and growth," he added.

Omar Al-Attas, head of environmental protection and regeneration at Red Sea Global, told Arab News: "The breathtaking beauty of Saudi Arabia's marine

FAST FACTS

● 'Beneath the Surface' highlights the unique resilience of Red Sea corals and their potential contribution to global coral health.

● Saudi free diver Salma Shaker is portrayed as a Saudi youth role model, inspiring others to prioritize the protection of the Red Sea's ecosystem.

● The documentary delves into her relationship with her father, who has been a pivotal figure in shaping her connection to the sea.

ecosystem is a gift that must be showcased and shared with the world. It's a shared responsibility for us all to focus on protection, conservation, and enhancement efforts."

Speaking about the documentary, Al-Attas added: "In addition to raising awareness through this film, we want to shine a spotlight on the comprehensive initiatives undertaken by Red Sea Global to preserve, conserve, and enhance the environment. As the saying goes, 'You can't clap with one hand' — success requires collective effort. Together, we can create a success story to inspire and educate the world."

Through its Coral Gardening Pilot Project, Red Sea Global is monitoring around 300 reef sites, testing coral farming techniques, and establishing several floating marine nurseries to conserve and grow rescued coral populations, with a success rate of about 97 percent.

The multi-project developer is keen on utilizing the latest technologies in coral cover monitoring, employing robots and adopting machine learning approaches, capturing three-dimensional images and assembling them into digital twins. This enables scientists to identify potential negative events and respond to and solve them rapidly, such as coral bleaching and the arrival of invasive species.

PROTECTING OUR PLANET

Saudi Arabia, UNEP launch World Environment Day campaigns

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia and the UN Environment Programme have announced campaigns to combat desertification, restore ecosystems, and strengthen drought resilience ahead of World Environment Day celebrations on June 5 in Riyadh.

The announcement was made at the opening of Saudi Arabia's Environment Week on Sunday, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

Saudi Minister of Environment, Water, and Agriculture Abdulrahman Al-Fadhli inaugurated the annual event that aspires to raise awareness of the importance of environmental protection.

During the event, Deputy Minister for Environment Osama Faqeha emphasized the shared

responsibility in addressing land degradation and combating desertification. This responsibility extends to policymakers, the private sector, and civil society organizations globally, who must work together to restore agricultural areas, rehabilitate land, and tackle desertification and drought, he said.

Faqeha noted that on the occasion of World Environment Day, Saudi Arabia will shed light on the urgent need for global investments in conserving nature, restoring lands, and working toward sustainability.

He highlighted the importance of uniting national and international efforts to safeguard and rehabilitate ecosystems across the globe, aiming to fulfill sustainable development objectives.

"Without action, 95 percent of land on Earth could be degraded within the next 30 years, which could spell disaster for humanity and the planet," said Elizabeth Mrema, deputy executive director of UNEP, launching the global campaign at a Saudi Environment Week event in Riyadh.

"We have seen how previous campaigns have catalyzed climate action across the globe. This year, we are calling on people — from the grassroots to governments — to help tackle the climate and extinction crisis we face by restoring the ground we depend on for survival," she added.

Countries worldwide have committed

This year, we are calling on people — from the grassroots to governments — to help tackle the climate and extinction crisis we face by restoring the ground we depend on for survival.

Elizabeth Mrema
Deputy executive director, UNEP



to restoring 1 billion hectares of land, aiming to protect 30 percent of land and sea for nature and restoring 30 percent of the planet's degraded ecosystems.

Supporting the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, World Environment Day 2024 will boost climate action efforts by gathering support for ecosystem restoration.

At the opening event of Saudi Environment Week, Al-Fadhli emphasized that achieving the goals of environmental protection and conservation of the Kingdom's natural resources requires active engagement from governmental and private sectors, as well as individuals.

He stressed the significance of adopting eco-friendly behaviors in daily routines and applying these practices across different sectors

to reach sustainable development objectives.

"The continuation of this national event annually in the Kingdom reflects our wise leadership's dedication to environmental protection and commitment to sustainable development, in line with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030," Al-Fadhli said.

Moreover, the Kingdom's dedication to environmental protection is evident at national, regional, and international levels. This is demonstrated by Saudi Arabia's active participation in numerous environmental agreements and organizations, as well as its ... initiatives like the Middle East Green Initiative and other significant global environmental efforts under the G20 umbrella," he added.

CENTCOM ALERT

Suspected Houthi missiles hit commercial ship in Red Sea

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

Missiles thought to have been fired by Houthi forces in Yemen targeted a commercial ship in the Red Sea on Monday as the US military destroyed a new barrage of Houthi drones.

UK Maritime Trade Operations said that it received an alarm about an explosion in the proximity of a commercial ship 87 km north-west of Yemen's western town of Al-Mokha, but that the ship and the crew were safe.

"Vessels are advised to transit with caution and report any suspicious activity to (us)," UKMTO said on X.

Ambrey, a UK maritime security service, identified the target ship as a Malta-flagged cargo vessel that was hit by three missiles while traveling from Djibouti to the Gulf.

The Houthis did not immediately claim responsibility for Monday's strike, although they often only take credit several hours, sometimes even days, after an attack.

Since November, the Houthis have seized one commercial ship, sunk another, and launched hundreds

of drones, ballistic missiles, and remotely operated and explosives-laden boats at commercial and navy vessels in the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait.

The Yemeni militia claims that the assaults are aimed only against Israel-bound and Israel-linked ships to push Israel to allow humanitarian supplies into the Gaza Strip.

In response to the Houthi's ship campaign, the US formed a coalition of marine forces to protect critical maritime channels off Yemen and began strikes on Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

The US Central Command said that its forces on Sunday intercepted five drones launched by the Houthis over the Red Sea that were aimed at the US, its allies, and international commercial and naval ships.

"These actions are taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for US coalition and merchant vessels," CENTCOM said on X on Monday morning.

At the same time, the Houthi-run Saba news agency reported that the group's armed forces carried out



more than 83 strikes on 103 ships affiliated with Israel and its allies, as well as shooting down three US military MQ-9 Reaper drones between November 19, 2023, and April 26, 2024.

In a 39-page report on the campaign against shipping in the Red Sea, the Houthis claimed that their strikes killed two American

Markus Werne from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs or OCHA visits a camp for internally displaced people on Monday in Yemen's Khokha district, south of Hodeida. AFP

marines, two Filipinos, and one Vietnamese sailor while injuring four marines from the US-led marine task force.

During the campaign, the Houthis captured one ship, set fire to four, sunk two others, and damaged scores more, according to the report.

Despite a recent escalation in the

number of strikes, since late last month the Houthis have drastically curtailed missile and drone attacks on ships.

The decrease in assaults has caused US military generals and analysts to surmise that the Houthis may have run out of weaponry and that the US-led air campaign reduced their military capabilities.

BEIRUT TALKS

French foreign minister in Beirut submits new peace proposal

'We are working to avoid Lebanon being ravaged by a regional war,' says Stephane Sejourne

Najla Houssari Beirut

The French foreign minister has submitted a new peace proposal in Beirut to end months of violence between Hezbollah and Israel.

Stephane Sejourne met officials in Beirut on Sunday, calling on the warring parties to abide by UN Resolution 1701.

After the talks, he said: "War exists even if not explicitly named. Civilians are paying the price, and no one is interested in the continuing escalation. This is the message I conveyed here, and this is the message I will convey on Tuesday to Israel."

The minister discussed an amendment to a proposal Paris had presented to Lebanon for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict.

UN Resolution 1701, which brought an end to the brutal Israel-Hezbollah war in 2006, is widely viewed as the most suitable framework for ending the latest conflict.

However, Hezbollah has persisted with linking its strikes on Israel to events in the Gaza Strip, while the Lebanese state has reminded Israel of its obligation to Resolution 1701 following repeated violations.

On Monday, reports said that a French technical team would bring the revised French initiative to Lebanese authorities within 48 hours. Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri was notified by Sejourne about the update.

The proposal will be delivered to Lebanon through diplomatic channels, said the French minister, who left Lebanon on Sunday night following his visit.

The revised version of the French initiative contains several pillars, including the cessation of hostilities between Hezbollah and the Israeli army under UN Resolution 1701.

It also calls for the safe return of Israelis to northern settlements and Lebanese citizens to border towns in the south.

Additionally, the initiative calls for deploying more Lebanese military forces across border areas and strengthening the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon, UNIFIL.

The earlier version of the French peace plan, sent to Lebanon in mid-March, called for Hezbollah and its allies to retreat 10-12 km from the border. It also urged Israel to avoid "air violations."

While in Beirut, Sejourne



Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati receives French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne in Beirut on Sunday. Reuters

advised Berri to prioritize the election of a president before finalizing negotiations on the situation in the south.

Establishing a governing authority and ensuring presidential involvement in negotiations with Israel was "important," he said.

Berri presented Sejourne with a map from the Scientific Research Institute that detailed the extensive damage and losses caused by Israeli military operations in southern Lebanon.

The map said that Israeli

phosphorus bombings had affected "an area of 10 million sq meters."

In addition, since the low-level conflict began last October, 1,000 housing units have been destroyed and thousands partially damaged.

Israeli operations have caused "significant harm to the environment and agriculture," an infographic said.

After his talks in Lebanon, the French foreign minister said: "The crisis has lasted a long time. We are working to avoid Lebanon being ravaged by a regional war."

"We call on all parties to exercise

restraint, and we reject the worst scenario in Lebanon, which is war."

The UNIFIL operational region in Lebanon saw no activity on Sunday morning, after months of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel in the area.

It coincided with Sejourne's visit to UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura, where he was briefed on the border situation by commander Gen. Aroldo Lazaro.

Sejourne also inspected the work of French peacekeepers serving with UNIFIL.

Meanwhile, Israeli military drones launched two missiles toward Aita Al-Shaab on Monday.

Other Israeli military drones raided Khiam, following a night of heavy shelling on Lebanese border villages, including Aita Al-Shaab, Klarkila, Tayr Harfa, Naqoura and Jabal Blat.

Hezbollah said it targeted "a gathering of Israeli soldiers in the vicinity of the Ruwailat Al-Alam

site with artillery shells."

Residents in southern Lebanon have claimed that the Israeli army is deploying "a new type of heavy artillery."

One resident told Arab News: "The whole region shakes and the ground trembles under our feet from the border until Nabatieh as if they were using seismic, thermo-baric missiles."

The morning Israeli strikes were a response to the interception of "over 30 missiles launched from southern Lebanon toward the Galilee panhandle and the upper Galilee," according to Israeli media.

The Al-Qassam Brigades — the military wing of Hamas — said in a statement that its Lebanon branch had targeted the headquarters of Israel's 769th Eastern Brigade.

The group launched a salvo of rockets from southern Lebanon, describing the attack as a response to "Israel's massacres in Gaza and the West Bank."

SOLIDARITY

World Central Kitchen resuming Gaza work after 7 staff killed

AFP Washington

The World Central Kitchen nonprofit, which supplied meals in Gaza until seven of its aid workers were killed by an Israeli strike nearly a month ago, is to resume operations, its CEO said.

The US-based charity founded by celebrity Spanish American chef Jose Andres provides food to communities facing humanitarian

crises and disasters.

On the night of April 1, seven of its workers were killed in three air strikes over four minutes by an Israeli drone as they ran for their lives between their three vehicles, the Israeli military has said.

The deaths — of an Australian, three Britons, a North American, a Palestinian and a Pole — triggered renewed levels of global outrage over Israel's military operations.

"We continue to grieve and mourn the loss of seven of our friends and colleagues who were killed in an IDF attack in Gaza," the nonprofit's CEO Erin Gore said in a statement on Sunday.

She added that the World Central Kitchen was "resuming operations in Gaza."

Gore noted the organization had 276 trucks, equivalent to almost eight million meals, ready to enter through the Rafah Crossing.



EMBASSY OF INDIA, RIYADH

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Scope of work and other details are available on CPP portal (<https://eprocure.gov.in/epublish/app>) and Mission's website (www.eoiriyadh.gov.in). Last date for submission of bids is 21 May 2024 and may be addressed to Head of Chancery, Embassy of India Riyadh, B-1, Diplomatic Quarter, P.B. No.94387, Riyadh 11693.

For any clarification, please contact Attache (Administration) on 011-4810745 or email ID: adm.riyadh@mea.gov.in

FOR GREATER INTEGRATION

Djibouti foreign minister to stand at African Union Commission elections

Mahamoud Ali Youssouf calls for resolution of conflicts in Sudan, Gulf of Aden and Gaza

Samia Haniffi Riyadh

Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, the minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation of the Republic of Djibouti, intends to stand for election to the African Union Commission.

The commission is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Its main functions are to represent the AU and defend its interests under the authority and mandate of the assembly and executive council.

The minister said the main objectives of the commission are to promote integration, economic and social development, peace, security and human rights on the continent. It also aims to strengthen continental and international cooperation.

Tradition dictates that the president of the commission should be elected for a renewable four-year term, and should obviously be African, especially as the next session will be chaired by the East African Community, which includes Djibouti among its members.

The diplomat believes that winning these elections will contribute greatly to strengthening integration between the countries of the continent, as well as to reinforcing African relations with various other geographical groups, given the international and regional acceptance and respect enjoyed by Djibouti thanks to its balanced foreign policy.

Youssouf said he had been encouraged to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming elections by the respect and diplomatic appreciation that Djibouti possesses, highlighting also his long personal experience in the diplomatic field as an ambassador and then as minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation since 2005, and his in-depth knowledge of the work of the AU.

He said a good knowledge of continental affairs is essential to occupy such an important position, adding that such an organization needs experienced leaders and diplomats to effectively promote continental and international cooperation given the continent's current circumstances.

"The only thing we know for sure today is that the next president will come from an East African country. It will then be up to the member states to decide on the day of the vote," he said.

Youssouf said that if elected, he will focus, in the interests of the African people, on three important areas: strengthening cooperation and economic integration between the countries of the continent; developing continental and international cooperation; and cooperation with international and regional



Djibouti Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf addressing the UN General Assembly in New York last year. File photo/UN

organizations such as the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League.

In early January, the Somaliland region signed an agreement with Ethiopia granting it a maritime opening to the Gulf of Aden. This treaty led to a political crisis between Ethiopia and neighboring Somalia, which promptly cancelled the memorandum, calling it illegal.

Youssouf said Djibouti currently chairs the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and that Somalia and Ethiopia are members, along with other

organizations such as the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League. forgotten crisis, especially when it comes to refugees and population displacement. He said over 6.5 million Sudanese have been forced to leave their homes, with over a third of them displaced outside the country, and the proliferation of ethnically based militias in the current conflict is equally alarming.

As Sudan is a founding member of IGAD, he said Djibouti is making intense and continuous efforts in coordination with the other member states and the international community, notably the US and Saudi Arabia, to find a solution to the ongoing conflict in this brotherly country.

He also said his country had already received representatives of the parties responsible for the crisis in Sudan to listen to their points of view and their vision for a solution. It should be noted that all have affirmed their desire to put an end to the war, and hope these efforts will lead to a permanent and unconditional ceasefire, Youssouf said.

Recently, attacks on ships in the Red Sea have intensified, targeting vessels and disrupting this most important maritime passage. Youssouf said Djibouti is following these developments with great concern, specifying that the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait, overlooked by Djibouti, is considered an international passage of extreme importance from a political and economic point of view.

A good knowledge of continental affairs is essential to occupy such an important position.

countries in the region, which gives it an additional responsibility in mediating between the two. He said settlement efforts are continuing with Djibouti and Kenya mediating, with hopes that the two parties will reach an agreement soon.

He said Djibouti, through its current presidency of IGAD, is very interested in seeing diplomatic relations between Somalia and Ethiopia return to what they were before the signing of the MoU.

Youssouf maintains that other crises in the world have distracted attention from Africa's bloodiest conflict in Sudan, calling it the most

ASSISTANCE

UAE field hospital in Gaza provides prosthetics for wounded Palestinians

Arab News Riyadh

A UAE field hospital in Gaza has begun providing prosthetics for Palestinians who lost limbs during Israel's war on the enclave, Emirates News Agency reported.

There will be 61 prosthetics provided in addition to physical and psychological rehabilitation.

Established last December, the

UAE field hospital in Gaza has a 200-bed capacity and operates with a medical team of 98 volunteers from 23 countries, including 73 men and 25 women.

The hospital has conducted 1,517 major and minor surgeries for 18,000 people. Services include first aid, intensive care and ongoing medical consultations and support.

The UN insists that an increase

in the flow of humanitarian aid by land is needed to help a starving population facing shortages of medical supplies. Israel's air and ground war has devastated much of the Gaza Strip and uprooted most of its 2.3 million people.

Israel's military operation has killed at least 34,488 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Health Ministry in the territory.

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Students organized by the Jawaharlal Nehru University Student Union gathered to protest over an event involving the US Ambassador to New Delhi Eric Garcetti on Monday.

TAKING A STAND

Indian students protest US envoy's campus talk over Gaza war

Student-led protest led to university canceling an event involving US ambassador

Sanjay Kumar New Delhi

Students at one of India's most prominent universities gathered in protest over an event involving the US ambassador to New Delhi on Monday, as they stood up against American support for Israel's war on Gaza.

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti was invited for a talk on US-India ties at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi on Monday afternoon, which would take place amid protests on American campuses demanding their universities cut financial ties with Israel over its military offensive in Gaza, which has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians.

At the university's convention center, over 100 students organized by the Jawaharlal Nehru University Student Union protested the invitation of Garcetti, calling out his complicity "in the genocide Israel is currently doing in Palestine."

JNUSU President Dhananjay told Arab News: "By calling such a person in the university ... who is supporting the genocide, we want to tell them that JNU is not silent on this issue and we want to speak up."

"We are protesting against the US support for the genocide in Gaza committed by Israel."

Hundreds of US college students have been arrested and suspended as peaceful demonstrations calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and divestment from companies linked to Israel spread across American campuses.

The student-led movement comes after nearly six months since Israel began its onslaught on the Gaza Strip, which Tel Aviv said was launched to stamp out the militant group Hamas.

Hundreds of thousands of housing units in the besieged territory have either been completely or partially destroyed, while the majority of public facilities, schools and hundreds of cultural landmarks have been demolished and continue to be targeted in

intense bombing operations.

JNU student leaders said they stood in solidarity with the protesting students in the US.

"We are students, and we need to ask questions. If some atrocities are taking place and there are mindless killings going on, speaking out

FASTFACT

Indian students say they stand in solidarity with students protest across US.

against this should be the responsibility of all sections of society," Dhananjay said.

"The visuals that we see make us shiver and shake our conscience. If we don't speak up, then I don't think we have a right to be a social being."

At the JNU campus on Monday, the student protest led to a cancellation of the event involving the US envoy.

"We feel happy that we forced the administration to cancel the talks by the ambassador," JNUSU Vice

President Avijit Ghosh told Arab News.

Despite India's historic support for Palestine, the government has been mostly quiet in the wake of Israel's deadly siege of Gaza.

When Indians went to the streets in the past months to protest and raise awareness on the atrocities unfolding in Gaza, their demonstrations were dispersed by police and campaigns stifled.

Members of Indian civil society have since come together to challenge their government's links with Tel Aviv and break Delhi's silence on Israel's war crimes against Palestinians, reflecting similar concerns that some university students also felt.

"The US is supporting Israel in the killing of Palestinian people in Gaza. It's also suppressing students in its country who are raising voice against the genocide in Gaza," Ghosh said.

"We are agitated that India is being a mute spectator and not taking a clear stand against the ongoing genocide in Gaza."

SERIOUS CONCERN

Sweden PM concerned by reports of police leaks to gangs

AFP Stockholm

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson on Monday admitted he was concerned about "very serious" reports of police employees leaking information to gang members with whom they had been romantically involved.

Sweden has struggled to contain a surge in violence in recent years as criminal gangs feud for control of drug markets, with bombings and shootings recorded weekly.

Kristersson's comments followed a report by newspaper Dagens Nyheter that claimed to have found multiple instances of police employees leaking sensitive

information about ongoing investigations to criminals.

In some cases, the police employees allegedly were in intimate relationships with gang members to whom they leaked information.

According to DN, which published the report over the weekend, in four cases the leaks — which included information about enemies of the gang member involved in the relationship — preceded revenge attacks, including murders.

At least 30 employees had for different reasons been considered

FASTFACT

In some cases, the police employees allegedly were in intimate relationships with gang members to whom they leaked information.

"security risks" and either resigned or were forced to quit, the newspaper reported.

DN said that in several cases, criminals had begun "sexual relations with strategically selected police officers."

Kristersson on Monday told

news agency TT that it was "very concerning information."

"There are many great risks and one is that trust in police declines, that one gets the idea that mafia-like methods are used to infiltrate law enforcement," the head of government said.

"It is very serious and we need to address it," he continued.

Kristersson said that purely based on the initial report he could not say whether it constituted a threat to national security or not.

"But the mere suspicion of these types of connections are damaging," he told the news agency.



Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Cooperation

Indonesian and Singaporean leaders hold annual talks

Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Indonesian President Joko Widodo on Monday celebrated the countries' continued cooperation at their seventh and final Leaders' Retreat in Jakarta, an annual meeting between the two Southeast Asian leaders that was also attended this year by their successors. Lee's visit to Indonesia is one of his last working trips before he hands over the reins of his administration to a new leader. The eldest son of Singaporean founding father Lee Kuan Yew announced his resignation earlier this month after two decades at the helm. His deputy prime minister and finance minister, Lawrence Wong, will succeed him in May.

Widodo, Indonesia's first president from outside the traditional Jakarta elite who is widely known by the nickname Jokowi, will be succeeded by Prabowo Subianto, who takes office in October. All four top officials met Monday at the colonial-style Presidential Palace in Bogor, just outside Jakarta, as the retreat became a passing of the guard for both countries. **AP**

Partnership

Giant pandas to travel from China to San Diego Zoo

A pair of giant pandas will soon make the journey from China to the US, where they will be cared for at the San Diego Zoo as part of an ongoing conservation partnership between the two nations, officials said Monday.

The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance said its caretakers recently visited China to meet the giant pandas, Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, ahead of their planned trip to Southern California. An exact date for the handoff hasn't been set.

Yun Chuan, a mild-mannered male who's nearly 5 years old, has "deep connections" to California, the wildlife alliance said. Xin Bao is a nearly 4-year-old female described as "a gentle and witty introvert with a sweet round face and big ears."

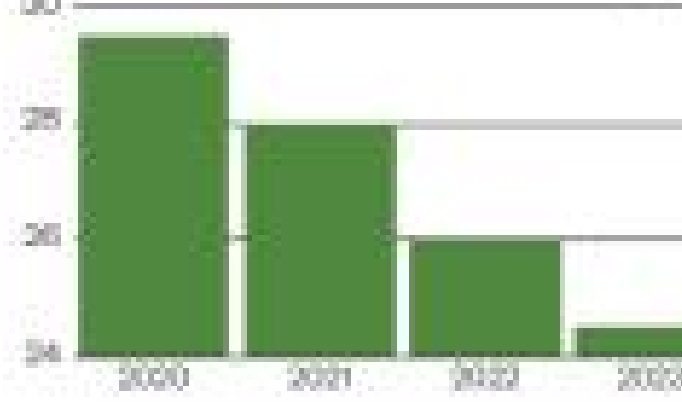
"Our conservation partners in China shared photographs and personality traits of Yun Chuan and Xin Bao, but meeting them in person was so special," said Dr. Megan Owen, the alliance's vice president of conservation science. **AP**

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista

BARBADOS:

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)



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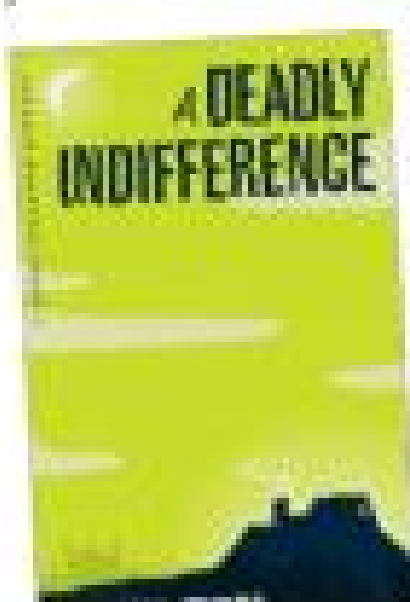
FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

'A Deadly Indifference'

MARSHALL JEYONS

Harvard professor Henry Spearman—an ingenious amateur sleuth who uses economics to size up every situation—is sent by an American entrepreneur to Cambridge, England. Spearman's mission is to scout out the purchase of the most famous house in economic science: Balliol Croft,

the former home of Professor Alfred Marshall, John Maynard Keynes's teacher and the font of modern economic theory.



After a shocking murder, Spearman realizes that his own life is in danger as he finds himself face-to-face with the most diabolical killer in his career.

Politics

Solomon Islands PM not standing for new term

Solomon Islands' incumbent pro-China Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare said Monday he would not stand for a new term following inconclusive April 17 elections. The outgoing leader said his party had chosen foreign minister Jeremiah Manele as its parliamentary leader — in effect its candidate for the Pacific country's premiership.

Sogavare said he was confident his Ownership Unity and Responsibility Party had secured enough support from coalition partners to give it a slim majority of 28 MPs in the 50-seat parliament.

He also took a parting shot at his critics, saying his family and children had been subjected to "unprecedented verbal abuse."

"I've been accused of many things. But not a single one of these accusations have been proven," Sogavare told a news conference. **AFP**

Threat

Nine face trial in Germany for alleged coup plot

The first proceedings in a sprawling multipart trial against members of an alleged far-right plot to attack the German parliament and overthrow the government began in Stuttgart on Monday. Nine members of the group led by the minor aristocrat and businessman Prince Heinrich XIII Reuss will take the stand in the southwestern city. They included, among others, a special forces soldier, a former far-right MP, an astrologer, and a well-known chef. Prosecutors accuse them of preparing a "treasonous undertaking" to topple the German government.

The affair is the most high-profile recent case of far-right violence, which officials say has grown to become the biggest extremist threat in Germany. The alleged putschists are said by prosecutors to have espoused a mix of "conspiracy myths" drawn from the global QAnon movement and the German Reichsbürger scene. **AFP**



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الإساءة ضد الإحسان، يُمَنَّان الأفعال والأقوال،
فإذا رَسَخَ اعتيادهما استمَلا خلقين
(أبو حيان التوحيدي)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

Harm runs opposite to benevolence, but both dominate deeds and words; and when they become habits, each will later develop into a second nature.

Abu Hayyan Al-Tawhidi
(10th-century intellectual)

Opinion

The fight for justice ignites elite university campuses

BARIA ALAMUDDIN



Baria Alamuddin is an award-winning journalist and broadcaster in the Middle East and the UK. She is editor of the Media Services Syndicate and has interviewed numerous heads of state.

For full version, log on to www.arabnews.com/opinion

Long-running pro-Palestine demonstrations at some of the most prestigious universities in the US, including Yale, Columbia and Princeton, have given way to mass sit-ins and demands for a halt to investments in Israel and in arms manufacture. Protesters at Columbia declared: "We will not rest until Columbia divests from apartheid Israel, Palestinians are free, and liberation is achieved for all oppressed people worldwide."

Hundreds of students and academics have been arrested at campuses throughout the US for peacefully exercising their democratic freedoms. State troopers in riot gear swarmed through the University of Texas, arresting dozens on the orders of far-right Gov. Greg Abbott, who declared: "These protesters belong in jail." A police purge against Columbia University's "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" on April 18 inspired a host of copycat sit-ins elsewhere. "The irony is that in trying to quiet things down and assert control over the encampment, the administration unleashed this firestorm," one professor remarked. Parallel protests are springing up in France, Britain, Germany, Austria, Canada and elsewhere.

These students' passion and the impact of their demonstrations prompted an unnerved Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to take a brief break from plotting mass murder to angrily denounce the protests as "reminiscent

of what happened in German universities in the 1930s." US Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is Jewish, forcefully hit back: "Do not insult the intelligence of the American people by attempting to distract us from the immoral and illegal policies of your extremist and racist government ... It is not antisemitic to hold you accountable for your actions."

Media commentators have patronizingly derided students as naive and misled, with political views shaped by TikTok. Others glibly portrayed demonstrations as fronts for "radical Islamists." But these Ivy League students are defined by disproportionate intelligence, with attitudes toward Palestine shaped by intense, conscientious debate. With the death toll of Palestinians in Gaza heading toward 40,000, the real question is why would anybody not be out protesting?

When I was a high school and university student in Beirut, many of the most defining and empowering moments of my adolescence were spent protesting about the full spectrum of global causes: I probably spent more time marching in the streets than in my classes. Participation in these events cemented my views on the importance of freedom of speech, assertively putting ourselves on the right side of history. Students may have an evolving comprehension of global politics, but they habitually possess an enviably precise moral compass in defining right from wrong.

Students' ability to exploit technology and social media to mobilize and disseminate their message confounds the reactionaries who seek to silence them.

Demonstrations are denounced by right-wingers as antisemitic, but this ignores the substantial Jewish contingent within these protest movements. Intimidation of both Jewish and Muslim students has been regrettably frequent, but there are countless examples of students banishing those using antisemitic slogans, counterpointed with countless examples of pro-Israel agitators provoking violence and disruption. At Boston's Northeastern University, the media widely reported a chant of "kill the Jews" — until video evidence showed that the offensive chant emanated from pro-Israel provocateurs.

Observers carp that student activism is unlikely to improve anything in Gaza, but historians say these protests are among the most consequential of modern times, comparable to the civil rights movement and student activism of the 1960s. Student-led protests have shaken the planet in the past, from Tiananmen Square to the Arab world, from Latin America to apartheid-era South Africa. Nobody should be writing off these protests as irrelevant.

Yale, Harvard and Columbia are a conveyor belt into the top levels of US politics, the civil service, business and the legal profession, and campaigners from these top-ranking global

universities are the elites of tomorrow.

Seven months into the Gaza conflict, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators continue to turn out on the streets of London, Paris, New York and elsewhere. Despite constitutionally enshrined freedoms being a central tenet of European democracies, right-wing politicians have sought action against what they demonize as "hate marches." But the right to debate and protest must be protected for all, including pro-Israel voices.

Vested interests, partisan voices and entrenched elites have always hated student protests because they relate directly to what is right and what is wrong — impassioned young people acting upon their consciences, short-circuiting convenient desires to stifle the cries of oppressed peoples. Justice and human rights are universal; they cannot be monopolized by one party in a conflict.

What we are witnessing around the world is nothing short of a battle of good vs. evil and justice vs. injustice, as students, workers, lawyers, educators and civil servants rediscover political engagement. After decades in which students were routinely accused of being apathetic and apolitical, we can be deeply proud of this generation — our leaders of tomorrow — as they risk arrest, blacklisting and expulsion from academia in order to stand up for the rights and common humanity of those facing genocide, oppression and injustice.

What we are witnessing around the world is nothing short of a battle of good vs. evil and justice vs. injustice



The political proximity between Washington and Tel Aviv has always been a policy question for the Palestinian leadership

US policy toward the Israel-Palestine conflict needs rebalancing

DR. MOHAMMED AL-SULAMI



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Official support for a two-state solution has been the cornerstone of US diplomatic engagement in the Middle East since the 1990s and the beginning of the so-called peace process. Nevertheless, since Oct. 7, 2023, American political influence on Israel has been limited.

There is an apparent contradiction between the US support of the Israeli government's military operation in Gaza, on the one hand, and the official policy of supporting a two-state solution on the other. In other words, how can one justify US political support to an Israeli government that opposes a two-state solution? This political contradiction is also apparent in the policies of other states, such as the UK, France, Australia, Canada and Egypt. While Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has always been an opponent of a two-state solution, he is still able to receive support from many countries that officially back this political solution to the Palestinian question.

The Israeli prime minister's display of strength to impose his own political agenda on his Western allies can be best explained by the limited objective of US and European policies toward the Middle East conflict. The first dimension of Netanyahu's strategy is to

take advantage of Washington's objective of pursuing an Israeli-Arab normalization process without pursuing an agenda of a just peace to end the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The second dimension is to use the US objective not to be involved in any Middle Eastern conflict and to pivot to Asia. As President Joe Biden explained in his State of the Union address last month, "no US boots will be on the ground" to support Israeli war efforts in Gaza.

The focus of US-Israeli discussions has switched from a political solution to the Palestinian issue to the management of the military escalation in the context of the war in Gaza.

The humanitarian catastrophe can only be addressed if the root cause of the conflict is discussed. For now, humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza has become a bargaining chip to release hostages. The inability of the US to prioritize the end of famine, the risk of spreading diseases and the end of death and destruction in Gaza is first and foremost the result of a securitization of the US diplomatic approach toward the Palestinian issue. The securitization of the US approach is still the main driver of Biden's policy.

In this context, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's announcement that the State Department will conduct a review and present policy options on possible US and international

recognition of a Palestinian state after the war in Gaza will have limited effect. Indeed, there is no US political path to solving the Palestinian issue. Since the 1980s, US policy has constantly been to oppose the recognition of a Palestinian state both bilaterally and in UN institutions. On the contrary, it has always underlined that Palestinian statehood can only be realized through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

This diplomatic approach of promoting direct negotiations between Israel and the PA failed at the beginning of the 2000s with the end of the peace process. Many factors explain this failure, such as the refusal of Israel to consider the existence of a Palestinian partner and the weakening of US diplomatic credibility because of an unbalanced policy between the two camps. Indeed, the political proximity between Washington and Tel Aviv has always been a policy question for the Palestinian leadership, which has struggled to see the US as an honest broker in the negotiation process.

Today, the Biden administration is still facing the legacy of the failure of the two-state solution. To overcome this US deficit of credibility, the Biden administration is trying to link a possible normalization process between Israel and Saudi Arabia to the creation of a pathway for the establishment of a Palestinian

state as part of its postwar strategy. Despite this US diplomatic maneuver, a two-state solution is now further away than it has ever been, with some even proclaiming it "dead."

Beyond the US' difficulty in recognizing the existence of a Palestinian state, 139 members of the UN have done so, even if the governing bodies in the West Bank and Gaza (the PA and Hamas, respectively) do not have control over their own security or borders.

The US president could recognize a Palestinian state with immediate legal effect. To do so, he would not need permission from the US Congress or Israel, even though Israeli troops remain in control of most Palestinian territory. Netanyahu is against US calls for a path to a Palestinian state. The official justification of the Israeli refusal to compromise on the question of Palestinian statehood is the result of decades of securitization of this question.

Netanyahu in January explained that he would not "compromise on full Israeli security control over all territory west of the Jordan River." This Israeli security strategy will probably prevent the US from presenting a credible diplomatic framework to advance military de-escalation in Gaza. Only a rebalancing of US policy between Arab and Israeli interests could pave the way for the end of the Gaza war and the relief of the suffering of the Palestinian people.

GLOBAL PROSPERITY

WEF meeting in Riyadh vital to build ‘trust’ in global systems, institutions

WEF’s Mirek Dusek says Saudi Arabia has critical role to play in the region and globally

Tarek Ali Ahmad Riyadh

The World Economic Forum’s Special Meeting in Riyadh is a critical gathering needed to help address global wars and financial crises, says the WEF’s managing director.

Speaking to Arab News on Sunday, Mirek Dusek said the issue of rebuilding trust in institutions and systems continues the theme of the recent WEF meeting in Davos.

The erosion of trust has not only been the result of the COVID-19 pandemic or the military conflicts worldwide, but also goes back “all the way to the financial crisis.”

“There is a lot of research now, sociological and economic, looking at what it has done to society, in developing and in developed economies,” he added.

“What is also important is that you’re not rebuilding trust for a system of the past,” he continued. “You need to make sure that as you do those things, it’s really with the view for the future.”

“We would term it intelligent economies ... we live through this age of all these revolutions.”

“So, it’s not only AI revolution, it’s also the biotech revolution, the energy transition revolution etc. and so, obviously, there are huge opportunities, but are we really equipped?”

Dusek explained that while AI comes with risks that can seriously impact societies, it also offers significant opportunities, particularly in terms of productivity.

He pointed out that the Riyadh meeting’s agenda seeks to “shape and build intelligent economies that are inclusive, sustainable and, obviously, dynamic.”

On the role of Riyadh in conflict resolution, Dusek said that as a G20 country with the region’s biggest economy, Saudi Arabia “is very visible on the international scene — on behalf also of the whole region.”

Dusek said “working on peace, security, and stability in this region is in the interest of the international community at large.” He added that the participation in Riyadh of



The WEF’s Special Meeting in Riyadh attracted around 1,000 leaders from 92 countries. AN photo/ Abdulrhman Bin Shalhoub

many foreign ministers, including from the G7 Plus nations and Syria, as well as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, is “symptomatic of the fact that people, again, are paying attention.”

“We are, of course, dealing with the war in Gaza and the terrible humanitarian situation in Gaza, but I think it is a larger issue of how important it is to keep investing diplomatically in issues that may have been underinvested in the previous years,” he added.

Mirek Dusek, Managing Director at the World Economic Forum. AN photo/Abdulrhman Bin Shalhoub



He described this as “a big turning point in terms of where the regional security and stability picture will go.”

Dusek said holding the WEF’s Special Meeting in Saudi Arabia was an “important milestone” that fits the global conversation and agenda of Davos.

“If we just look under the hood of what intelligent economies mean, it is not only being able to really deploy some of these cutting-edge technologies in industry and in society, but it’s also figuring out how to have

a more inclusive economy (and) labor force.”

“It is figuring out the whole triangle of the energy transition — security, sustainability, and access.”

He said that the erosion of trust has deepened inequality within societies and in certain economies, and “intelligent economies” seek to address this growing gap.

“We are seeing the need to not only have outcomes that are medium- to long-term and look at the big picture.” He added: “So, if you look at intelligent economies, it is the big picture systems view. And we continue to do that because it is important, but, of course, you also need to be able to see what are the

FASTFACTS

- Global wars, financial crisis and AI were key points of discussion.
- Erosion of trust has deepened inequality and slow global economy.

solutions for the here and now and for the near term.”

He explained that for this reason, the WEF works closely with labor unions “not only in Davos or other meetings, but also in our ongoing work” to find ways to deliver to the most vulnerable and to fragile communities within each society.

He said a great deal of work is

being done with organizations including the World Bank, and that the WEF continues to explore ways to “make sure that you finally figure out, for example, how to bring in more private capital into fragile markets, and crowding private capital for climate finance, for energy finance, etc.”

He added: “I think leaders and overall organizations are fully cognizant of that (of) moving in that direction. Is it enough? Obviously, we are seeing that particularly in terms of the statistics within societies.”

He pointed out that this awareness may have also been “triggered by some of these (global economic) shocks, but (there is) a clear realization that more needs to be done.”

GAZA WAR

Blinken ‘hopeful’ of Gaza ceasefire deal

Rommer M. Balaba Riyadh

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he is hopeful Hamas will accept an “extraordinarily generous” ceasefire offer to stop Israel’s devastating Gaza offensive in return for the release of hostages.

“Hamas must decide, and decide quickly, whether to accept the extraordinarily generous offer for a ceasefire. I am hopeful they would make the right decision, and we can make a fundamental change in the dynamics,” the US official told a World Economic Forum panel in Riyadh.

A high-level Egyptian delegation flew in to Israel for talks last Friday amid a new diplomatic push for a truce in the six-month hostilities and the release of Israeli hostages held by the Palestinian militants.

The conflict in Gaza, which began following the Hamas-led assault on southern Israel on Oct. 7 last year, has resulted in the deaths of almost 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and reduced 75 percent of the besieged enclave into rubble according to authorities in the enclave.

“We are working with partners trying to bring the conflict to an end, trying to ensure it does not spread and all of it is a collective effort. The quickest way bring the Gaza conflict to an end is to get to a ceasefire and the release of hostages,” Blinken said, as he thanked Egypt and Qatar for their instrumental role in pushing for a truce and the release of hostages.

Blinken also reiterated US opposition to an impending Israeli military operation in Gaza’s southernmost city of Rafah in the

absence of a plan to ensure civilians will not be harmed.

“We have not yet seen a plan that gives us confidence that civilians can be effectively protected,” Blinken said.

Israel has for weeks threatened to launch an all-out offensive in Gaza to destroy Hamas’s remaining forces.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who spoke during a WEF panel a day earlier, said the US “was the only country capable” of preventing Israel’s long-feared invasion of Rafah, where more than 1.5 million Palestinians are currently living.

Only a “small strike” on Rafah would force the Palestinian population to flee the Gaza Strip, and the “biggest catastrophe in the Palestinian people’s history would then happen,” Abbas said.

Blinken said there was a “need

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in conversation with WEF’s President Borge Brende. WEF



to be ready for a day-after plan for Gaza to include what is to be done about security, governance and administration and humanitarian and reconstruction needs.

“A lot of work has been done on that, more work needs to be done,” he said.

Blinken also said that the “single biggest rebuke to both Iran and Hamas would be Israel having normal relations with every country in the region and the realization of the Palestinian state.”

“The US and Saudi Arabia have done intense work together over

the past months to focus on the Saudi-Israeli normalization agreement. I think it is is potentially close to completion,” he said.

“But for the normalization to move forward ... two things would be required: calm in Gaza and a credible pathway to a Palestinian state.”

Blinken earlier joined the opening of a US-Gulf Cooperation Council meeting, where he told the region’s foreign ministers that the best way to ease the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza would be to negotiate a ceasefire agreement that would release hostages held by Hamas.

The top US diplomat met separately with Saudi Prince Faisal bin Farhan, minister of foreign affairs, where they reviewed ways to strengthen bilateral relations and joint cooperation in various fields, the Saudi Press Agency said.

POLIO FIGHT

Gates Foundation partners with KSrelief to eradicate polio, strengthen primary healthcare

With \$500 million pledged, this is the biggest contribution that a sovereign country has ever given to the polio eradication program

Nada Alturki Riyadh

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Saudi aid agency KSrelief have announced a joint push to eradicate polio, improve global health, and alleviate poverty.

At the World Economic Forum's special meeting in Riyadh, Anita Zaidi, president of the foundation's gender equality division, told Arab News: "This is a really momentous occasion for us to really expand our partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

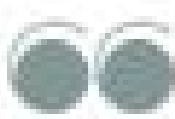
"It's the biggest contribution that a sovereign country has ever given to the polio eradication program, and it's really a signal for how governments in the Middle East, like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, are really stepping up to play their part in global health and development."

Saudi Arabia will contribute \$300 million to support the Lives and Livelihoods Fund, the largest multilateral development initiative in the Middle East. The fund aims to lift the poorest people out of poverty in 33 Islamic Development Bank member countries through investments to strengthen primary healthcare, eliminate preventable infectious diseases, support smallholder farming and rural

agriculture, and improve basic infrastructure.

Both parties are also allocating \$4 million as a relief grant in response to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which is profoundly affecting women and children. The grant, to be distributed through UNICEF, aims to provide health interventions and access to basic water and sanitation services.

Saudi Arabia has pledged \$500 million over the next five years to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which will help to deliver



We really need to invest in training and retention of the frontline health workers around the world.

vital health services and polio vaccines to underserved populations through the World Health Organization and UNICEF. The Kingdom and the Gates Foundation have pledged \$3 million and \$15 million respectively over three years to support the Polio Legacy Challenge administered by the IsDB, with contributions from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar under the patronage of the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean's subcommittee for

polio eradication and outbreaks.

To implement the programmes, the Gates Foundation will establish a regional office in Riyadh — in Mohammed bin Salman Nonprofit City — in partnership with the Mohammed bin Salman Foundation to support youth engagement and effectiveness of the third sector.

The partnership between Saudi Arabia and the Gates Foundation has been in the works for several months, and as the WEF meeting takes place outside Davos, the urgency of announcing the cooperation became evident, Zaidi said.

The announcement also coincides with the IsDB's 50th anniversary this week. This new commitment from Saudi Arabia is the largest multi-year pledge by a sovereign donor to the current GPEI strategy, ensuring that essential health services are provided to hundreds of millions of children each year.

When Africa became free of wild polio in 2020, it left Pakistan and Afghanistan as the only countries where wild polio is endemic.

"There is a special relationship between these countries and Saudi Arabia, so that thought partnership and those relationships, (you ask) how do you work with these countries? How do you partner more deeply? All of that is important for polio eradication," Zaidi said.

The direct engagement of



Anita Zaidi, president of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Gender Equality Division. AN photo/Abdulrhman Bin Shalhoub

countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, has helped drive the number of polio cases in those countries down from more than 300 in 2014 to 12 in 2023. The GPEI will continue to need resources until polio case numbers reach zero and the world is certified polio-free.

Global health is hugely reliant on women, who comprise 70

percent of the sector's workforce. But women in senior roles, those who have worked on the ground to understand the eradication process of such diseases, are still lacking.

"We are really trying to change, to hear more women's voices," Zaidi said. "And that was part of the program in Pakistan where, for the first time, we surveyed the frontline health workers and asked: What is it that you face in your daily work that is keeping you from doing your best work? What ideas do you have for convincing people whose families

are refusing polio vaccination? How do you best communicate the message? All of that has really led to so many better changes in the program," she added.

One of the foundation's key focuses is the lack of progress in women's health, including stagnant maternal mortality rates in the past 10 years — 200,000 women die every year as a result of childbirth. The foundation funded a McKinsey report published at January's WEF session that highlighted the economic cost of women in poor health.

GULF ECONOMY

Malaysia targeting Gulf trade and tech ties at WEF, minister says

Arab News Riyadh

Malaysia is looking to partner with Gulf-based companies on renewable energy, the country's minister of investment has said.

Speaking to Arab News at the two-day World Economic Forum meeting in Riyadh, Tengku Zafrul Aziz said that about 50 Malaysian companies are in discussions to invest in renewable energy and share technologies.

"There is a lot of demand now for green renewable energy. We want partners who can not only go by funding, as we have funding capabilities, but also more in terms of technology and know-how," he said.

"Many GCC companies who have already invested in this area are willing to share technology pools and invest with our funds, our companies, and our sovereign wealth fund."

Malaysia is also exploring investment and technology-sharing deals in artificial intelligence and the digital economy.

"We also got interest from GCC companies on that matter and they have invested a lot in this technology. Now we want to learn

and partner, so that the infrastructure that we build using digital platforms can be applied using applications that some of these companies already have."

The World Economic Forum meeting in the Saudi capital is focusing on global collaboration, growth and energy for development — themes that the Malaysian minister said were "apt" given the geopolitical challenges in the region.

"This is a platform where we can share ideas about how we can improve the standards of living for all and not just focus on issues that may benefit a few," he added.

"We want to see growth, especially in terms of trade and economy,

Tengku Zafrul, Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry of Malaysia. WEF



and that must be beneficial to all. We want to see growth that is sustainable and equitable — growth that is inclusive. This is an opportunity to strengthen trade and investment linkages between the GCC and Southeast Asia.

"We need to strike the right balance when we talk about the quantity of the growth vs. the quality of that growth."

Aziz said that parties are also exploring new multilateral trade agreements between the ASEAN union and the GCC, in an effort to launch a more comprehensive economic partnership agreement.

"This will deepen the relationship between countries in terms of economy, which will bring about peace. Malaysia is an open economy," he said.

"While we continue to engage China as Malaysia's largest trade partner, we are looking to engage other countries in constructive ways."



SSA's CEO Mohammed Al-Tamimi together with WEF's managing director Jeremy Jurgens during the presentation. AN photo/Abdulrhman Bin Shalhoub

SPACE

Global 'Center for Space Futures' announced at World Economic Forum

Nada Alturki Riyadh

The World Economic Forum and the Saudi Space Agency signed an agreement to establish the Center for Space Futures, a Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Hosted by the SSA, the center is expected to open later this year and will be the first in the C4IR network to focus exclusively on space. It will operate alongside the existing national center, C4IR Saudi Arabia, to advance Saudi Vision 2030.

Jeremy Jurgens, the WEF managing director, told Arab News: "Historically, many people assume that space is the exclusive domain of a few

countries that have a fully integrated space technology stack. What we've seen over the last few years is that space is something that should be available to the whole globe.

"By launching the Center for Space Futures here in Saudi Arabia, we're actually demonstrating that space is something for all humanity, and that we can actually unlock those benefits and use them anywhere and everywhere."

The center aims to facilitate public-private discussions on space collaboration, incorporating best practices from the WEF and its communities into the global space sector, and generating contributions

to accelerate space technologies.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Tamimi, CEO of the SSA, told Arab News: "This center is part of a global platform that will engage everyone to make sure that we'll be activating public and private discussions, especially in this era." As the world experiences a shift from a government-centered space sector to a private-centric sector, Al-Tamimi said that the center offers "great potential to collaborate and engage more with the private sector and government initiatives."

The officials said they are committed to harnessing the vast opportunities of the space industry and creating a sustainable economy globally through best practices, governance, policies, innovation and valuable technologies to encourage further cross-sector engagement.

Mishaal Ashemimry, managing director of the Center for Space Futures, told Arab News: "Space generally has seen no boundaries when it comes to development, and you need the input of international countries with their expertise, their backgrounds, their achievements in space, to work together, whether it's towards a mission or achieving governance policies... space cannot move forward without international collaboration."

The center will join 19 others that make up the C4IR network, a platform for multistakeholder collaboration, bringing together public and private sectors to maximize technological benefits to society while minimizing the risks.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Global collaborations crucial to address pressing challenges, says Saudi official

Ammar Nagadi, vice minister of economy and planning, talks to Arab News on the sidelines of WEF meeting in Riyadh

Mohammed Al-Kinani Riyadh

Global collaborations are a crucial element in efforts to tackle economic and social challenges, especially given the current state of the world, a leading Saudi official said.

In an interview with Arab News on the sidelines of the two-day World Economic Forum Special Meeting on Global Collaboration, Growth and Energy for Development, which concluded on Monday in Riyadh, the Kingdom's vice minister of economy and planning, Ammar Nagadi, spoke about the important role such gatherings can play in advancing economic cooperation to address global challenges.

He believes the world is going through a "unique" time, with economic and social challenges worldwide and human development at a critical stage.

"Because of this, global collaboration and the world convening together becomes more and more important," Nagadi said.

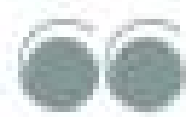
"We have seen that over the last few years Saudi Arabia is becoming a platform that brings together different people from different parts of the world to discuss challenges and to address these challenges" and the World Economic Forum special meeting is a continuation of that process, he added.

"We have more than 1,000 leaders today from different sectors (attending the meeting). We have heads of states, private sector and public sector leaders, and entrepreneurs from more than 70 countries across the globe.

"I think this diverse group, coming together to discuss and address global challenges is a unique opportunity and we are very happy to



Left: The entrance to the WEF Special Meeting at King Abdulaziz International Conference Center in Riyadh. Below: Saudi vice minister Ammar Nagadi. AN photo/ Abdulrhman Bin Shahouh



Because of this, global collaboration and the world convening together becomes more and more important.



have it here in Riyadh today."

Describing the economic landscape in the Kingdom, Nagadi said the Saudi economy is going through a very strong period of transformation that is reflected in the progress the country has made in terms of growth and diversification.

"Last year, Saudi Arabia's non-oil activities grew by 4.4 per cent but I think the most important thing to realize is that non-oil activities, as a percentage of total gross domestic product, have reached, for the first time in history, 50 percent of the total GDP," he added.

This represents a significant

milestone that reaffirms the progress made in efforts to diversify the national economy, he added, which has created numerous benefits, including investment opportunities and improved job prospects for Saudis.

"If I take one example, you will see that unemployment last year in the last quarter has reached an all-time low of 7.7 per cent and we hope to see that momentum continuing," Nagadi said.

He believes this momentum will also continue in terms of growth and diversification.

"We target to grow around 5 per cent for non-oil activities this

year but we have seen recent forecasts by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) where they're expecting Saudi Arabia to further grow in 2025 by around 6 per cent," he added.

Saudi Arabia is also making progress toward achieving sustainability goals, which Nagadi said is another important topic.

"What we have today is Vision 2030, which is very ambitious, and sustainability is an integral part of that vision," he added.

"We have economic goals, social goals, environmental goals. If I were just to take the environmental part of the sustainable

development goals, you will see that Saudi has put in a lot of efforts as part of Vision 2030."

The Saudi Green Initiative, announced in March 2021, is a great example of what the Kingdom is doing not only to drive economic growth but also protect the planet, Nagadi said.

"The aim is to achieve net-zero emissions by 2060, and the goals are to increase the renewable energy mix to 50 percent of the total energy mix and plant 10 billion trees by 2030 as well as protecting land and sea," he said, adding that 50 million trees have already been planted.

SAUDI-UK RELATIONS

Saudi-UK economic symphony hits high note with Vision 2030, says Lord Mayor of City of London

Mohammed Al-Kinani Riyadh

Business and investment between Saudi Arabia and the UK are flourishing under the "amazing" Vision 2030 reform plan, with expectations for further collaborations on the horizon, the Lord Mayor of the City of London told Arab News in Riyadh.

Michael Mainelli said of the business and investment connections between Saudi Arabia and the City of London: "The Gulf is our fourth-largest trading partner with about £65 billion (\$81.47 billion) in trade every year, and Saudi is the largest chunk of that to well over £17 billion, so trade is very good."

Saudi investment in the City of London has always been "very, very strong, and British investment in Saudi has also been strong. I don't think there's anything other than growth, and with the amazing changes under Vision 2030, we're anticipating yet more investment both ways," he added.

"The great thing about Vision 2030 is that it's almost like a pyramid, with the entire nation working together toward a whole series of goals."

The UK is "the world's premier professional financial services sector, so there will always be opportunities for us to collaborate with Saudi Arabia" in this field, Mainelli said. "I think less appreciated is our recognition of Saudi intellect."

He said he is "trying to make connections" in Riyadh, adding that Saudi academia, science, technology and research "are growing very well."

Mainelli outlined three main avenues of Saudi investment in the City of London: property development, operational businesses, and science and technology. He added that Saudis are also investing in areas such as media distribution and packaging.

"I'm looking forward to a tremendous amount of Saudi investment in science and technology, particularly in areas like hydrogen, where Saudi Arabia is very strong, as well as in desalination and biotech," he said.

Emphasizing initiatives to bolster economic cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the UK, he said: "The British government is hosting a two-day conference here in



With the amazing changes under Vision 2030, we're anticipating yet more investment both ways.

Michael Mainelli, Lord Mayor of London, at the event. AN photo/ Abdulrhman Bin Shahouh

Riyadh from May 14 to 15. We're bringing over about 400 to 500 British firms to look at areas where they're looking at technology.

"Equally, in June we have our

Net Zero Delivery Summit, where Saudi Arabia will be present, and on June 24 the UK-Saudi infrastructure meeting, where we'll discuss infrastructure

projects both ways."

Providing insight on how the UK can further strengthen economic relations with Saudi Arabia, especially after having left the EU, Mainelli said: "The Brexit vote was over eight years ago, and in the City of London we've grown from 525,000 workers to 615,000 workers — a net gain of 90,000."

"Also, assets under management globally have increased from just over 12 percent to about 15 percent of global assets. So the City of London has been doing very well post-Brexit."

Mainelli highlighted the value of conferences such as the World Economic Forum in Riyadh, which he attended, as catalysts for business deals, often beginning with conversations between individuals.

"It's great to have this event. It focuses very much on cooperation, particularly in the energy sphere, which is fundamental to economic growth," he said.

"Britain is a petrostate in its own right, not as strong as Saudi Arabia. Both countries have to work on what's their energy transition going to be in a net-zero world."

Besides geopolitical tensions, trade restrictions pose significant barriers to global collaboration, Mainelli said.

"These are present in both goods and services, particularly in professional services, and the way to address them ... is through standards. These are ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards, which I'm promoting for artificial intelligence and space sustainability, for example," he added.

"These are mutual recognition standards for professionals working, so a Saudi accountant could work in Britain and vice versa, and similarly for lawyers etc. "The third area concerns governance standards and how organizations are managed. So I believe probably the biggest thing to constantly work at is standards."

Mainelli stressed the need to address geopolitical tensions, "but as a business community we're not deeply involved in those negotiations, decisions or military actions, so it's important for us to understand how we should be reacting to and how we can support peace through trade."

NEW PLAYER

Luxury lifestyle brand to enter Saudi hospitality market by end of 2025

Wyndham is poised to capitalize on the burgeoning extended stay segment, top executive tells Arab News

Reina Takla, Miguel Hadchity Riyadh

HQ, the new hotel brand launched by Wyndham Hotels & Resorts and renowned hotelier Sam Nazarian, is set to arrive in Saudi Arabia by the end of 2025, Arab News has been told.

Dimitris Manikis, president of Europe, the Middle East, Eurasia, and Africa, at the hospitality group, unveiled the company's ambitious plans for the Kingdom — including the launch of HQ — at the Future Hospitality Summit in Riyadh.

Speaking to Arab News, Manikis shared insights into Wyndham's steadfast commitment to Saudi Arabia's flourishing hospitality landscape, saying: "We are very serious and very bullish about our presence in the Kingdom."

He added: "We're excited to bring this new brand into Saudi Arabia as well because it's about smart luxury. It's about F&B, entertainment, music, and it's about smart hospitality as well."

Manikis went on to say: "In the next 18 months, you're going to have the first HQ brand in Saudi Arabia."

Citing Nazarian's track record of success with brands like Mondrian, Delano, and SLS, Manikis said: "Sam is notoriously famous for bringing up new concepts and ideas. So when I asked him: 'What exactly is HQ and why would you call it brand HQ?' he said: 'I want the brand to be the headquarters of your life.'"

The president added: "I have no doubt whatsoever that HQ will be an amazing brand to grow in the GCC, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular."

Manikis reflected on Wyndham's impressive footprint across the Kingdom, which includes a robust pipeline of 20 upcoming projects. Notable among these ventures are the imminent openings of the Ramada hotels.

Additionally, the introduction of Wyndham Garden last year marked a significant milestone in the company's strategic expansion efforts.

The optimism surrounding Saudi Arabia's tourism prospects was palpable in Manikis' remarks, citing the Kingdom's remarkable achievement of surpassing the Vision 2030 tourism target of 100 million visitors in 2023.



Industry leaders are in Riyadh to discuss sustainable development, investment prospects, entrepreneurship, and human capital, as well as gain insights into the continued expansion of Saudi Arabia's hospitality and tourism sectors. AN photo by Huda Bashatah

HIGHLIGHTS

• Wyndham has an impressive footprint across the Kingdom, which includes a robust pipeline of 20 upcoming projects. Notable among these ventures are the imminent openings of the Ramada hotels.

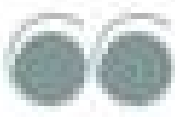
• Manikis praised the Kingdom's remarkable achievement of surpassing the Vision 2030 tourism target of 100 million visitors in 2023.

"The bar has gone to 150 million tourists," he remarked, highlighting Saudi Arabia's accelerated progress toward becoming a global tourism destination.

However, he cautioned against neglecting the crucial role of infrastructure development in sustaining this growth momentum.

"Infrastructure, planes, airports, railways, roads, highways," Manikis said, stressing the necessity of robust infrastructure to accommodate the influx of tourists.

Commending the government's proactive measures, including the launch of a new airline and airport



We're excited to bring this new brand into Saudi Arabia as well because it's about smart luxury.

Dimitris Manikis
Wyndham Hotels & Resorts regional president

expansions, he expressed confidence in Saudi Arabia's readiness to meet escalating demand. "I do believe



that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is going to fulfill the promise. And they're going to have an amazing Expo (2030). I don't think there's going to be any doubt about that," he said.

As anticipation mounts for marquee events like the Expo and the FIFA World Cup in 2034, Manikis underscored the importance of post-event planning.

"It's not just about the event, it's about what you do after," he cautioned, advocating for sustainable strategies to

leverage event infrastructure effectively beyond the festivities.

In addition to the HQ brand, Wyndham is poised to capitalize on the burgeoning extended stay segment.

"We are very bullish on an extended stay," Manikis stated, recognizing its potential to cater to a diverse clientele, including families, business travelers, and digital nomads.

He added: "We added 11 beautiful luxury, extended stay products. And hopefully, we're going to extend the extended stay concept here in the Kingdom as well."

TECHNOLOGY

Concierge robots set to become reality in the hospitality sector

Reina Takla, Nour El-Shaerl Riyadh

A personal robot concierge is set to become a reality as a new wave of technological innovation takes the spotlight during the Future Hospitality Summit in Riyadh.

In an interview with Arab News during the event, Janet Adams, chief operating officer of global artificial intelligence company SingularityNET, shared details about a new humanoid robot expected to revolutionize the hospitality sector.

"One of our projects which we are pioneering right now is the development of a new class of humanoid robots specifically designed for the service industries," Adam told Arab News.

"Imagine going to stay in a hotel where you've connected with your robot before you go there. They know everything you want. They can greet you at the door because you've been chatting as an avatar," she said.

"And then after you leave, they can



FAST FACT

The company is working with Zaqqa, a Middle Eastern AI firm part of SingularityNET's ecosystem, to significantly improve AI language models.

Desdemona, a humanoid robot, expected to revolutionize the hospitality sector.
AN photo by Huda Bashatah

stay in touch with you and they can be like a loyalty ambassador, robotic avatar, friend for life who understands your needs, who understands what you enjoy, who makes everything perfect for you in your stay in the hospitality industry," Adams added.

She further explained that the development, known as the Mind Children project, will roll out its pilot in early 2025.

Furthermore, Adams shared that the company is working on a new breed of technological advancement for AI in language models in the Middle East.

The company is working with Zaqqa, a Middle Eastern AI firm part of SingularityNET's ecosystem, to significantly improve AI language models.

"What we're doing is we're taking the best of today's large language model technology, and we're infusing it with the best of tomorrow's artificial general intelligence technology, because we're leaders

The company is working on a new breed of technological advancement for AI in language models in the Middle East.

Janet Adams
SingularityNET COO

in the field of artificial general intelligence," Adams explained.

"And sometime within the next 12 to 24 months, we expect to see enormous breakthroughs where the limitations of today's language models are overcome, where we can bring human level reasoning or human style reasoning into our robots and therefore give them the capability to

be creative, to understand their environment, to really, truly contribute as a, for example, to hospitality services," she added.

During the event, SingularityNET also showcased Desdemona, a humanoid robot and the lead vocalist of the Jam Galaxy Band.

"She runs up a huge array of advanced artificial intelligence models. She's working with vision, with speech processing. We work with toxicity filters. We work with emotion recognition, facial recognition. We have a variety of AI models, including Markov decision-making and generative adversarial networks," she explained.

"And a bunch of the most advanced AI that's available on the planet. Together. All work together in this, in what looks like a seamless operation of multiple modules working together. She's truly a highly advanced miracle of modern AI," Adams added.





It's a source of great pride to be a part of the Chelsea family — literally because my sons are here,

Thiago Silva
Chelsea player

KSA FOOTBALL

Champions Al-Nassr end women's Premier League season on a high

Madeh Sharifi Riyadh

Al-Nassr women's football club, winners of the 2023-2024 Premier League, ended their season on a high with a 1-0 victory over Al-Ittihad on Sunday night.

Al-Awwal Park Stadium was lit up with fireworks as Al-Nassr were crowned champions for a second year in a row, having already won the title last

Al-Nassr and their triumphant women's Premier League campaign in style, beating Al-Ittihad 1-0 in the finale. AN photo by Laila Ekekiwy



HIGH LIGHT

Celebrations included fireworks display after 1-0 win over Al-Ittihad in Riyadh.

month against Al-Hilal.

Al-Nassr midfielder Lina Boussaha scored the winning goal in the second minute.

Members of Al-Nassr men's team Otavio and Alex Telles were spotted cheering from the sidelines as the team secured the league win.

Fans enjoyed a half-time show with prizes including signed Al-Nassr football shirts.

ELECTRONIC CAR RACING

Evans and Cassidy give Jaguar a 1-2 finish in Monaco E-Prix

- Duo recorded the team's second such triumph in Formula E history
- Evans broke a streak of four previous misses where he led but did not secure a win in the principality

Arab News Monte Carlo

Mitch Evans claimed victory in the 2024 Monaco E-Prix, breaking his streak of four prior misses where he had led but failed to win.

Leading his Jaguar TCS Racing teammate Nick Cassidy, Evans executed the team's strategy flawlessly, securing a dominant 1-2 finish for the British team. Their tactics, including strategic use of ATTACK MODE boosts, propelled Evans to his first Monaco win and Jaguar TCS Racing's second 1-2 finish in Formula E.

"It feels mega, and a lot of relief to finally get that first win here," said Evans after his win. "It feels like it should have come a few years earlier, but finally got it done today. Extra special as it's my first win of the season as well here. Hopefully, this is a turning point for me and I can start to consistently get big points. I've been chipping away at it but nothing too crazy, so it's come at a crucial time. It just feels amazing, and a massive team effort with Nick today to get a Jaguar 1-2 here in Monaco."

With this victory, Evans bumps himself up to fifth in the drivers' standing and solidifies his position as a championship frontrunner for Season 10, while Jaguar TCS Racing maintains its impressive lead in the Teams' running.

Behind the top three, Stoffel Vandoorne's teammate Jean-Eric Vergne was close behind in fourth. Pascal Wehrlein of TAG Heuer Porsche finished fifth, while Oliver Rowland of Nissan Formula E Team crossed the line sixth. Seventh place went to Antonio Felix da Costa of TAG Heuer Porsche, followed



by Nissan's Sacha Fenestraz of Nissan Formula E Team. Captain of consistency, Maximilian Gunther of Maserati MSG Racing, took ninth place securing more points for the Monaco-based outfit, while Norman Nato of Andretti Formula E rounded out the top 10.

As the season progresses, the stage is set for further excitement and fierce battles on the track, with the next rounds scheduled to take place in Berlin for the next double-header on May 11 and 12.

"It's an unreal feeling, it's been

Jaguar TCS Racing team celebrate victory at the Monaco E-Prix, Formula E

an epic day," Cassidy said. "Last year, we were 1-2 as well so it's pretty cool actually that it's the other way around. I'm really happy for him. We can be really proud of our effort today and it's a great result for Jaguar TCS Racing."

Away from the on-track action, British boxing champion Anthony Joshua also stole the show, engaging with drivers

and dropping hints about his upcoming fight. Amid the buzz of the pre-race media activities, Joshua revealed the date for his next match at Wembley Stadium in London.

Sharing insights from his illustrious career, Joshua drew parallels between boxing and motorsport, emphasizing the importance of teamwork for success. As the crowd eagerly awaited news of his next opponent, Joshua tantalized with names like Filip Hrgovic, Daniel Dubois, and Deontay

Wildes, hinting at a potential showdown with Tyson Fury.

With royalty in attendance, including Prince Albert II and Princess Charlene of Monaco, the event culminated in the presentation of trophies to the podium-sitters, marking yet another thrilling chapter in Monaco's motorsport history.

The next race in the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship is the 2024 Berlin E-Prix double-header on Saturday and Sunday, May 11-12.

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Euro football

Thiago Silva to leave Chelsea at end of season

Brazil defender Thiago Silva will leave Chelsea at the end of the season after four years at the club.

The 39-year-old Silva made the announcement on Monday, saying he is leaving the door open for a return to Chelsea "in another role."

"Goodbyes are for those that leave and don't come back," he said in a message to Chelsea's fans.

Silva joined Chelsea in 2020 after his contract at Paris Saint-Germain expired.

He continued playing for the team after winning the Champions League at the end of his first season there. Now his sons are playing in Chelsea's youth teams. **AP**



Tennis

Jabeur wants more respect for women

Tunisian tennis star Ons Jabeur on Monday called out organizers of European tournaments for failing to "respect" women players by giving preferential treatment to men at combined events after she swept into the quarterfinals of the Madrid Open.

Jabeur dismissed ninth-seeded Jelena Ostapenko 6-0, 6-4 to reach the last eight along with top seed Iga Swiatek who eased past home favorite Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-1, 6-0.

But Jabeur, the 2022 Madrid champion, later took a swipe at tournament organizers, telling reporters she believes tennis still has a way to go to achieve gender equality, despite it being the leader in women's sport.

"Definitely tennis is a sport that I'm proud to play in as a woman," said the world No. 9, who next plays either Coco Gauff or Madison Keys for a place in the semifinals. **AFP**

After title win

Mbappe and PSG have sights set on treble

Paris Saint-Germain are hoping their latest Ligue 1 title, secured on Sunday with three games to spare, will be just the first leg of a historic treble with a Champions League semifinal to come and the French Cup final to look forward to as well.

It is PSG's 12th French title, at least two more than any other team, and it is also their 10th in 12 seasons, which goes to show how the footballing landscape in the country has been transformed since the Qatari takeover of the club in 2011. **AFP**

BASKETBALL

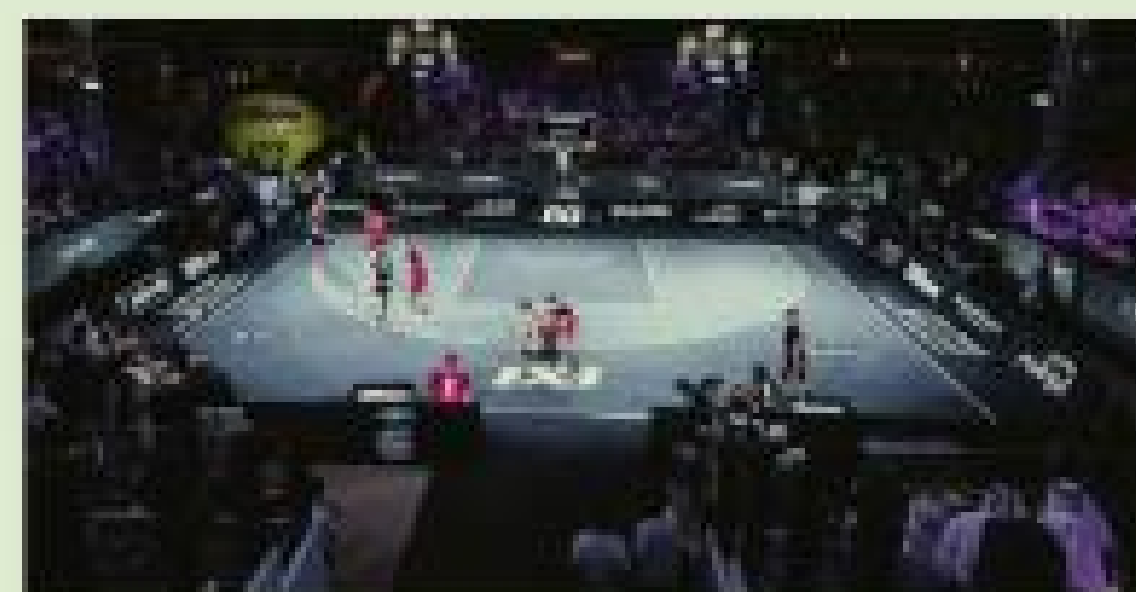
Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan added to FIBA 3x3 World Tour

Arab News Riyadh

The International Basketball Federation has announced Almaty (Kazakhstan) and NEOM (Saudi Arabia) as the latest additions to the 3x3 World Tour.

The 13th edition of the FIBA 3x3 World Tour — the top competition on the 3x3 pro circuit — will take place in 18 cities around the world.

Almaty will host the first-ever visit of the World Tour to Kazakhstan, while NEOM, in hosting the event for the first time, will build upon its established track record of



holding a Super Quest in 2022 then a Challenger in 2023.

3x3 will be part of the NEOM Beach Games, a major international sports event in the heart of the city,

NEOM, in hosting the event for the first time, will build upon its established track record of holding a Super Quest in 2022 then a Challenger in 2023. Supplied

Updated 2024 season

Utsunomiya Opener (April 27-28); Marseille Masters (May 31-June 1); Ulaanbaatar Masters (June 8-9); Chengdu Masters (June

22-23); Edmonton Masters (July 6-7); Almaty Masters (July 13-14); Lausanne Masters (Aug. 16-17); Debrecen Masters (Aug. 31-Sept. 1); Shanghai Masters (Sept. 21-22); Wuxi Masters (Oct. 6-7); Amsterdam Masters (Oct. 12-13); Macau Masters (Oct. 19-20); Abu Dhabi Masters (Oct. 26-27); Manama Masters (Nov. 1-2); NEOM Masters (Nov. 7-9); Shenzhen Masters (Nov. 16-17); Hong Kong Masters (Nov. 23-24); World Tour Final (December)

The location and dates of the FIBA 3x3 World Tour Final will be announced at a later stage.

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Iranian actor Amir Jadidi will play celebrity tennis player Mansour Bahrami in an upcoming biopic directed by French auteur Romuald Boulanger.



Finally

CLOSE UP

Nadine Labaki joins Cannes Film Festival jury



Arab News Dubai

Lebanese filmmaker Nadine Labaki will serve as a jury member at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, running from May 14–25, jury president Greta Gerwig announced.

Other members of the jury include Turkish screenwriter and photographer Ebru Ceylan; US actress Lily Gladstone; French actress Eva Green; Spanish director, producer, and screenwriter Juan Antonio Bayona; Italian actor Pierfrancesco Favino; Japanese director Kore-eda Hirokazu; and French actor-producer Omar Sy.

The jury will take on the job of bestowing the coveted Palme d'Or upon one of the 22 films in competition.

Labaki, recipient of the Jury Prize at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival for "Capernaum," shares a long history with the festival.

Labaki began her relationship with Cannes in 2004, writing and developing her first feature, "Caramel," at the Cinéfondation Residency before showcasing the film at the Director's Fortnight in 2007. Both of Labaki's subsequent films — "Where do We Go Now?" in 2011 and "Capernaum" in 2018 — debuted at the festival, each in increasingly competitive categories.

Nadine Labaki, right, is set to be part of the Cannes Film Festival's jury, while Asmaa El-Moudir, left, will serve on the Un Certain Regard jury. Getty Images

"I feel like I'm their baby, in a way. With a baby you start watching their first steps, see them grow, protect them, push them ... They've accompanied me in this journey, and recognized and encouraged me. It's great — I really love this festival. I think it's the best festival in the world," Labaki told Arab News in an earlier interview on the sidelines of the Cannes Film Festival in 2019.

"Capernaum" also went on to be nominated for both a Golden Globe and an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, with Labaki becoming the first woman from the Arab world to receive that honor.

This won't be the first time Labaki is serving on a Cannes jury either. In 2018, she was the president of the Un Certain Regard jury, the first Arab to do so.

"I don't watch films as a filmmaker. Never," she said at the time. "I watch the film as a human being ... I don't like the word jury. I don't like to judge because I've been there. I've been in those very difficult situations, very fragile situations, where you're making a film, where you're doubting, where you don't know, where you don't have enough distance with what you're doing, and you don't have the right answers and you're not taking the right decisions."

Meanwhile, Moroccan director, screenwriter and producer Asmaa El-Moudir will be part of the Un Certain Regard jury at the festival this year.

She will be joined by French Senegalese screenwriter and director Maimouna Doucouré, German Luxembourg actress Vicky Krieps and American film critic, director, and writer Todd McCarthy.

Xavier Dolan will be the president of the Un Certain Regard jury.

The team will oversee the awarding of prizes for the Un Certain Regard section, which highlights art and discovery films by emerging auteurs, from a selection of 18 works, including eight debut films.



Ryan Reynolds

STAR POWER

Ryan Reynolds named Abu Dhabi's Yas Island ambassador

Arab News Dubai

Unmasked as the mystery skydiving celebrity who appeared in a recent teaser campaign for the Abu Dhabi location, Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds is Yas Island's newest "Chief Island Officer."

The "Deadpool" actor takes up the role after US actor Jason Momoa, who in turn took over from US comedian Kevin Hart.

In the new promotional video, Reynolds is seen parachuting onto the Yas Marina Circuit, missing his intended landing spot at the W Abu Dhabi.

"I've been an actor, a producer, a Welsh football club owner and I could go on. So I will ..." begins Reynolds, but the rest of his speech is drowned out by the roar of F1 cars as they zoom around the circuit.

The trailer also features the actor enjoying the sights and sounds of Yas Island, as he zooms down water slides at Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi, explores Gotham City and takes roller-coaster rides at Warner Bros. World.

"With the appointment of Ryan Reynolds as our latest chief island officer of Yas Island Abu Dhabi, we continue the tradition of excellence established by Kevin Hart and Jason Momoa. Reynolds brings his own unique blend of charisma, energy, and enthusiasm to the role, promising to elevate the Yas Island experience to even greater heights. We're thrilled to embark on this exhilarating journey with him, inviting fans worldwide to be part of the legacy," said Liam Findlay, chief executive of Miral Destinations.

TheSix

Pool day

With summer headed our way, a cool dip in the pool is the perfect plan for a day out.



Shaza Afiya Wellness Centre

If you're looking to combine a daycation and spa experience, along with some pool time, this is the place to go in Riyadh. The space offers luxurious pools that draw inspiration from Moroccan hammams.



Burj Rafal

The pool at Riyadh's Burj Rafal is reserved for women only every day from morning to early afternoon. Escape the hustle and bustle of the city as you swim your laps and take breaks in the relaxing cabanas.



Al Faisaliah Spa by ESPA

The 13-meter-long pool located in the heart of Riyadh and open only to women — includes a swan neck fountain massage, vitality whirlpool and heated loungers.



Dana Beach Resort

Located in Alkhobar, the beach-front resort offers breathtaking views of golden sands and the sparkling azure sea of Half Moon Bay. Visitors can access the private pools with day passes.



Banyan Tree AlUla

Elegantly carved out between imposing rocks, the Banyan Tree pool is the perfect spot to gaze out at the horizon.



Rosewood Jeddah

The pool deck, reserved for men only, promises serene, panoramic views of the city and Jeddah's Red Sea on the private rooftop.

INTERVIEW

Istituto Marangoni Dubai director sheds light on strategic new courses

Hanadi Merchant-Habib Dubai

As the fashion sphere in the Gulf continues to grow, international fashion schools are making it their mission to cement their status in the region through bricks-and-mortar branches.

Prestigious Italian fashion institution Istituto Marangoni just announced it's first-ever branch in Riyadh, two years after their location in Dubai opened its doors. Here, Roberto La Iacona, director at Istituto Marangoni Dubai, speaks about their expanding curriculum and the creative scene



Istituto Marangoni Dubai Director Roberto La Iacona, pictured on the far right. Supplied

in the Middle East.

"The Middle East is a fascinating region — it's host to exceptional artists, designers, artisans and many young creative talents with Dubai being a strategic hub. People from different cultures and styles are contributing to the creation of a distinctive identity for the city, and this diversity is Dubai's unique strength," La Iacona said.

The outpost offers higher education in various realms of fashion and design, including styling, fashion and accessories design, interior design and even product design. With campuses across the globe

in major cities like Paris, Florence, Milan and Mumbai, Istituto Marangoni has established itself as one of the leaders in fashion education since its inception in 1935.

The Dubai campus is currently attended by students of 45 nationalities, according to La Iacona.

The institute recently expanded its curriculum; their latest offering includes courses in fragrance and cosmetics. Elsewhere, professionals can opt for a professional Metaverse and Web3 course to increase their knowledge in the field. La Iacona explained that the school identified a gap in education

in emerging areas like Web3, the Metaverse, AI, AR, VR, NFTs, virtual prototyping, 3D avatars, 3D modeling through CLO3D, and digital and motion graphics for virtual fashion.

"That's why we launched two new professional courses in Virtual Fashion and Metaverse and Web3 at the Dubai campus. These courses are designed for working professionals and entrepreneurs seeking to acquire new knowledge and prepare for the future challenges and changes that the creative industries are facing," he said.