

ARAB NEWS

The Voice of a Changing Region

SINCE 1975

FAST FACT

An Israeli strike on a southern village killed four family members, with Hezbollah fighters announcing rocket fire in retaliation.

Protesters attend a pro-Palestinian rally at Sydney's Hyde Park on Sunday. AFP



FRANKLY SPEAKING

Malaysia condemns 'hypocrisy' of West over Gaza

Arab News Dubai

Malaysia has condemned the "sheer hypocrisy" of Western countries over the Israeli killing of Palestinian women and children in Gaza, and warned that failure to prevent genocide there could foster extremism.

"Whatever your political position is, I don't believe ... we can condone these sort of inhuman, barbaric acts against fellow human beings," Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim told Katie Jensen, host of the Arab News current affairs program "Frankly Speaking."

"And it's sheer hypocrisy for countries, some countries in the West, including the US, to deny these continued killings of children and women and civilians."

"And we don't want this to prolong, because it will only lead groups to foster fanatic extremist or terrorist action."

Anwar said he would support calls for the arrest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant if the International Criminal Court ruled that genocide was taking place in Gaza.

"I don't believe that any reasonable person could dispute the incontrovertible effects adduced to support the allegation that genocide has been committed," he said. "Once it is established that genocide happened, then of course the warrants have to be issued."

Anwar said no country had the right to deny Palestinian statehood. "There are 139 countries that have given recognition to the state of Palestine," he said. "Now, why must one or two countries consider themselves above all these considerations and refuse to accept this?"

"To my mind, it is dishonorable to deny the right, not only of Palestinians but of the international community when they decide after years or decades of deliberations, looking at the facts, at historical decisions, at the precarious position now of the security of the region."

Interview Page 3

Gaza aid curbed as Hamas rockets hit key border crossing from Israel

• Three Palestinians killed in counterstrike • Israel shuts down Al Jazeera broadcasts

Arab News Jeddah

Hamas fighters fired a barrage of rockets that hit the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza on Sunday as hopes dimmed for a truce agreement at talks in Cairo.

Israel's military said 10 rockets were launched toward the crossing from Rafah in southern Gaza, and Kerem Shalom was now closed to aid trucks entering the enclave.

Hamas said its attack had targeted an Israeli army base near the crossing.

A retaliatory Israeli airstrike on a house in Rafah killed three people.

The Israeli military said the counterstrike struck the launcher from which the Hamas rockets were fired, as well as a nearby "military structure."

A spokesman said: "The launches carried out by Hamas adjacent to the Rafah crossing ... are a clear example of the terrorist organization's systematic exploitation of humanitarian facilities and spaces, and their continued use of the Gazan civilian population as human shields."

Israel has said it will launch a ground offensive in Rafah but has faced mounting international pressure to hold because an attack might derail fragile humanitarian efforts in Gaza and endanger many more civilian lives.

NUMBER

34,683

Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip during more than six months of war between Israel and Hamas.

Sunday's attack on Kerem Shalom came as hopes dimmed for ceasefire talks underway in Cairo. Hamas repeated its demand for an end to the war in exchange for the freeing of hostages, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flatly ruled that out.

Netanyahu said Israel was will-

ing to pause fighting to secure the release of hostages still being held by Hamas, believed to number more than 130.

"But while Israel has shown willingness, Hamas remains entrenched in its extreme positions, first among them the demand to remove all our forces from the Gaza Strip, end the war, and leave Hamas in power," he said. "Israel cannot accept that."

The Hamas delegation said it would leave Cairo truce talks on Sunday night to consult with its leadership. "If Netanyahu doesn't change his mind, there will be no reason to stay. They can always reconvene if that changes," a Palestinian official said.

Meanwhile Israeli authorities

raided a hotel room in occupied East Jerusalem used by the Qatari TV network Al Jazeera, confiscated equipment and closed down the channel's local operations. Israeli satellite and cable television providers immediately suspended Al Jazeera broadcasts.

Netanyahu described Al Jazeera as an "incitement channel" that threatened Israeli national security. Al Jazeera said the accusation was a "dangerous and ridiculous lie" that put its journalists at risk, and it reserved the right to "pursue every legal step."

• Opinion by Ray Hanania
• Yassar Yakis Page 10
• Related reports Page 6

The Brief

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Saudi Arabia's commitment to occupational safety and health has seen a 30.07 percent drop in work-related injuries, compared to the figures of past few years. **P4**

INDIA ELECTIONS

Manipulated videos are taking center stage as campaigning heats up in India's election, with fake clips involving top aides of the premier triggering police investigations and arrests. **P8**

INVESTMENTS

Hong Kong and Chinese firms are gearing up for substantial investments in the Saudi market, marking a significant step toward strengthening economic ties. **P11**

Elie Aben Mando

Tourism chiefs in the Philippines are targeting more visitors from the Gulf states as the region's biggest travel expo gets underway in Dubai.

More than 2,300 exhibitors and delegates from over 165 countries are taking part in the annual Arabian Travel Market, which begins on Monday, and the Philippines is sending a high-powered delegation.

"We look forward to these opportunities to share the Filipino story with the rest of the world ... and to reinforce the Philippines' position



White sandy beaches in the Philippines are the main attraction for tourists. Reuters

as a preferred destination and top-of-mind choice for travelers," Secretary of Tourism Christina Garcia Frasco said.

Tourism is a key sector in the

Philippines economy, contributing nearly 13 percent, or about \$44 billion, to its gross domestic product.

The country has welcomed more than 2 million international

travelers since the beginning of the year. This includes a 10 percent increase in visitors from Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

"There's been a remarkable surge in outbound tourism from the Middle East, particularly from GCC countries," said Maria Margarita Montemayor Nograles, chief operating officer of the Philippines Tourism Promotions Board.

"We see a growing appetite for international travel among GCC citizens and we see this trend continuing to rise in the coming years."

"This is one of the major reasons

why we are doubling down on our efforts to maintain and enhance our presence in the Middle East. With our continued participation at the Arabian Travel Market, we aim to position the Philippines as a top-of-mind destination in Asia."

2 Riyals • Vol. XLIX
No. 152 • 16 pages



9 771319 833061

At the Sixth Saudi Global Conference for Occupational Safety and Health we discussed ways to adopt modern technologies that keep pace with developments and contribute to achieving a sustainable work environment.

Majed Al-Hogail
Saudi minister of municipal and rural affairs and housing



Radar

KSA today



Jeddah Fishing trip

Have a great relaxing time surrounded by the sound of waves while fishing. The equipment, starting from rods to lures, are included. Check the Hala Yalla app for booking and more information.



Diriyah LomoMod workshop

Participants at this workshop will build their own camera from scratch — crafting the LomoMod N1 from sustainable cardboard and a liquid lens. Book your seat for Monday through biennale.org.sa.



Jeddah Create memories

Enjoy horseback riding along the beach, plus a photo session, time to relax, delicious food and games. For more details or to book, use the Visit Saudi app.



Abha Crochet workshop

Learn how to make dolls, pushies, and flowers at a crochet workshop with Aisha Al-Shihry on Monday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. The women-only session can be joined via experiences.suplift.com.

The Register

THE PICTURED THAT MARK THE DAY



Secretary-General of the Islamic Military Counterterrorism Coalition Maj. Gen. Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghiedi recently met with Chief of Defense Staff of the Gambia Maj. Gen. Mamat O. Cham at the Islamic

Summit Conference in Banjul, Saudi Press Agency reported on Sunday.

The two men discussed bolstering cooperation between the Islamic coalition and the Gambia. Cham reviewed the Islamic coalition's

ideological, media, military and counterterrorism initiatives. He praised its efforts in combating terrorism and highlighted the Kingdom's efforts in supporting the coalition since its establishment.

What's Trending

Today's hot topics explained by Nada Jan



'TEN YEARS' Martin Kemp

English musician and actor Martin Kemp revealed that he thinks he has one decade left to live as a survivor of a brain tumor.

On the first episode of Kemp and his son Roman's podcast "FFS My Dad Is Martin Kemp," the actor opened up about the health scare he had in the 1990s and how he thought he would die soon, but fortunately, lived a long and successful life.

The 62-year-old talked about his mindset after being diagnosed with two benign brain tumors and undergoing radiotherapy and surgery to have the masses removed, which resulted in him suffering from epilepsy as a side effect.

"I spent two years of my life thinking I was going to die," Kemp told his son, 31.

"And I think, after that, everything else, every day, every year, every month that I've lived, every experience that I've had has been a bonus," he continued. "I was practically resigned to the fact that I was going to die, but I was quite happy with my lot, because I had lived the most incredible experiences."

When Roman asked him how long he thinks he would live, the former Spandau Ballet musician answered, "I'll be really honest with you, 10 years," he added, "I would be happy if I got to 80, that gives me 18 years!"

Kemp had previously reflected in 2022 on the time he was cast on "EastEnders" and how everyone tried to stop him from proceeding with his acting career because of the side effects he experienced while recovering from his brain surgery.

MASSIVE CROWD Madonna

American singer-songwriter Madonna completed her latest tour with a free concert on Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, with a reported 1.6 million fans attending.

The singer transformed the sandy carpet of the beach into a massive dance floor for the final stop on her "The Celebration" tour that kicked off in London last October.

The 65-year-old's fans were scattered everywhere, from the beach and boats to apartments and hotel rooms overlooking the area.

She started the night with her 1998 hit "Nothing Really Matters" with the loud buzzing of the crowd dancing and singing along. The list of the songs performed included "Like A Virgin," "Hung Up," and "Like A Prayer."

During a little break between performances, Madonna told the crowd:

"Here we are in the most beautiful place in the world," and pointed at the ocean, the mountains, and the statue of Christ the Redeemer overlooking the coastal city. "This place is magic," she added.

Madonna paid tribute to Michael Jackson during her performance of "Like a Virgin," displaying pictures of them together on the huge screens of the stage and two black silhouettes representing her and Jackson dancing together.

At the end of the performance, the title "Never Can Say Goodbye" appeared on the screen while the shadows hugged before parting.

She also paid tribute to people who died of HIV/AIDS and sang "Live to Tell" with photos of victims flashing on the screens behind her.

The concert is Madonna's biggest ever in her career following a 1987 show which welcomed 130,000 fans at Paris' Parc des Sceaux.



Today's Number

4.2m

The Prophet's Mosque in Madinah received over 4,202,793 worshippers and visitors to perform the daily prayers during the past week, Saudi Press Agency reported. The General Authority for the Affairs of the Prophet's Mosque noted that 13,604 elderly and disabled individuals benefited from specialized services during the week.

Who's Who



Abdullah Al-Ajmi

Abdullah Al-Ajmi is the space business development director for Lockheed Martin in Saudi Arabia. He is responsible for coordinating and bolstering the Kingdom's space efforts.

In addition to fostering strategic cooperation between government and commercial enterprises, Al-Ajmi oversees the facilitation of scientific experiments and international research collaborations, as well as the administration of future space-related missions.

A retired brigadier general of the Royal Saudi Air Force and Ministry of Defense, he has a wealth of expertise and experience in remote sensing and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and space systems.

He has also served as the ministry's satellite directorate director and participated in several space committees facilitated by the Kingdom and the Gulf Cooperation Council for almost two decades.

With an illustrious career spanning over two decades, he has contributed significantly to a range of committees and projects. He served on the RSAF intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and space committees and was also part of the F-15SA RSAF program under the RSAF and US Air Forces partnership.

In his previous roles, he demonstrated exceptional leadership as the head of the technical group for several ISR and space systems. Throughout his career he has been actively involved in the RSAF UAV committee, the Saudi-French Space Technical Group, Saudi/UK reconnaissance projects and the Saudi-US Armament committee.

Al-Ajmi holds a bachelor's degree in mass communication from King Saud University. He then graduated as a military officer from King Faisal Air Academy and earned a master's degree in military use of remote sensing from Oklahoma State University in the US.

TheRegion

The Middle East Roundup

Arab News Jeddah

- The Gas and Oil Technology Showcase and Conference will be held at Dubai World Trade Centre from May 7-9. The event brings together decision-makers, government representatives, professionals, manufacturers and other stakeholders to exchange ideas and raise awareness about current trends in the oil and gas sector. For

more details, visit dwtc.com.

- Discover the fascinating world of spider silk at the Golden Spider Silk Exhibition, which explores the rare material produced by Madagascar's indigenous golden orb-weaver spiders. The exhibition delves into its remarkable properties and history while showcasing four works created using the silk. Held at the Museum of Islamic Art

in Doha, Qatar, the exhibition will run until July 6. Check mia.org.qa for more information.

- The Ramp Rush will be held at the Mall of Qatar until May 9, starting at 5 p.m. The audience will enjoy an exciting display of skateboarding skill, with flips, twists and jumps that seem to defy gravity and push the boundaries of what is possible. More details on mallofqatar.com.qa.

Prayer Times in Saudi Arabia

| May 6 | Fajr | Sunrise | Dhuhr | Asr | Maghreb | Isha |
|---------|------|---------|-------|------|---------|------|
| Makkah | 4:25 | 5:47 | 12:18 | 3:38 | 6:48 | 8:18 |
| Madinah | 4:19 | 5:43 | 12:19 | 3:45 | 6:54 | 8:24 |
| Riyadh | 3:50 | 5:15 | 11:50 | 3:17 | 6:26 | 7:56 |
| Abha | 4:21 | 5:40 | 12:07 | 3:20 | 6:33 | 8:03 |
| Dammam | 3:32 | 4:58 | 11:37 | 3:07 | 6:15 | 7:45 |

“**FRANKLY
SPEAKING**
with Katie Jensen

The Interview



ANWAR IBRAHIM
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

How are Saudi-Malaysia relations faring?

PM Anwar lauds 'phenomenal advance,' discusses
friendship with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman,
highlights alignment of Madani economic
framework and Saudi Vision 2030

Arab News Dubai

Saudi-Malaysia bilateral relations have experienced "phenomenal advance" over the past decade in terms of trade and investment, resulting in a "win-win" for both countries, Anwar Ibrahim, the prime minister of Malaysia, has said.

Speaking to Katie Jensen, host of the Arab News current affairs program "Frankly Speaking," during a visit to Riyadh for a special meeting of the World Economic Forum last week, Anwar said he would like to see accelerated deepening of ties.

Even compared with six months ago, when he attended the Gulf Cooperation Council's joint summit with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Riyadh in October, Anwar said the "two-way traffic" of investment had advanced.

"It was a phenomenal advance and improvement in terms of trade, investments, not only in oil and gas by Aramco, but also by leading Saudi companies," he said in a wide-ranging interview covering development, diplomacy and the fight against corruption.

"A lot of Malaysian companies, too, are involved here, of course, in a smaller scale, in many of NEOM's and in some of the energy transition programs. And I'm pleased that this two-way traffic is advancing."

"In my discussions with the crown prince, I would like to urge that this be further accelerated because that would be a win-win for both countries."

Anwar's personal friendship with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman is part of the reason for this burgeoning bilateral relationship, which has in turn bolstered the GCC-ASEAN partnership.

"I must say that I'm fortunate because Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman considered me as a friend," said Anwar, who met the crown prince during his visit for the World Economic Forum.

"We do exchange notes from time to time and he personally requested me to be present, and gives me a good opportunity to express some of the concerns and more so to be focused on economic development, on the relationships that it covers, particularly in terms of trade and investments."

"And I think he's very forthcoming, he's serious, he's very determined and he's tough. And that is to me a credit, particularly when it comes to bilateral relations. Enough rhetoric, enough pious

platitudes. We want action and effective economic programs among our countries and the region, which include, therefore, ASEAN and the GCC."

Saudi Arabia and Malaysia also share much in common in terms of their respective economic development programs, which Anwar says are closely aligned.

While the Kingdom recently celebrated the eighth anniversary of its social reform and economic diversification agenda — Vision 2030 — Malaysia is likewise making strides with its own development plan — the Madani economic framework.

Launched in July 2023, less than a year after Anwar became prime minister, the framework aims to position Malaysia among the world's 30 largest economies, its top 25 least corrupt countries according to the Corruptions Perceptions Index, top 12 in the Global Competitiveness Index and top 25 in the Human Development Index. Malaysia also aims to raise its female labor force participation rate to 60 percent and lower its fiscal deficit to 3 percent and lower. To succeed in this reform agenda, Anwar intends to weed out corruption, implement good governance, boost foreign and domestic direct investment, and raise wages.

"I studied Vision 2030



(Main and above) Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim told Jensen he would like to see accelerated deepening of ties between Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. AN photos

**WATCH
FRANKLY
SPEAKING**

Find the full interview at
arabnews.com/FranklySpeaking

Scan this code to visit



extensively," said Anwar. "And during the session we had during the World Economic Forum, we had an opportunity to engage with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for an hour asking questions on how he then sees this vision coming."

He added: "We are now moving ahead to deal with issues that would affect the future of the world, particularly the emerging economies ... dealing with energy, with digital, with technology, with quality education, with good public health service, with AI."

"And I think this is the direction which is consistent with the Madani, because we also talk about civilization and values and integrity

and, more importantly, the issue of good governance."

A shared economic trajectory is not the only thing Saudi Arabia and Malaysia have in common. Both nations have also pursued their own independent foreign policy, without submitting to the demands of powerful allies or choosing sides in superpower rivalries.

"Firstly, we are not tied to this xenophobic view of viewing China in a negative sense," said Anwar. "As a neighbor, we have not encountered problems with them."

"Of course, there are teething issues which we do encounter with all our neighbors and countries, but we maintain excellent relations, which would enormously benefit Malaysia as an emerging economy: investments, trade and even cultural exchanges."

"And we also have a very strong presence of the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. And I think to deny them a right of engaging would be futile."

"At the same time, as I have said earlier, cumulatively, the US remains the most important trading partner. And we are comfortable with it. We have benefited from its training, the technology transfer and also the workforce."

"Now there's a continued presence of European countries, including Germany. And I think, why can't we be just friends and engage with everybody? And

those who are having problems should not impose and dictate their policies to the smaller economies, because we cannot afford to have that. "There's no reason whatsoever for us to be involved in that sort of a trade war, or bifurcation or tense relations between these countries."

On the domestic front, Anwar has been true to his word on combating corruption. The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission has confirmed it is investigating former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in connection with a case involving his sons, Mirzan Mahathir and Mohzani Mahathir, who have been ordered to declare their assets.

Mahathir is a vocal critic of Anwar, who served as his deputy during the 1990s before being jailed. Anwar has denied accusations of using his anti-corruption drive to settle an old political score.

"We cannot deny the fact that any effective measure to combat corruption would invite some negative political remarks," said Anwar. "So, are we suggesting that effective anti-corruption moves should avoid dealing with past corrupt leaders? Of course, the answer is no, because then the public would think that if you belong in a certain level, then you should be safe, excluded from these operations."

"So, I leave it entirely to the Anti-Corruption Commission. They do not consult me. My instructions are clear: We must stop the rot. It does not matter what the position, present or past. If you find basic reasons to suggest that investigations must be conducted fairly and professionally, please do so, because you cannot be selective, whether they are in the government or opposition, whether present leaders or past leaders."

"Otherwise, leaders like me will take the opportunity. You amass wealth as much as possible, quietly, and then later I'll be safe because past leaders should not be touched. I think this is not the position that we take."

"I started this administration with clear calls. Good governance to rid the country of the scourge of corruption, which has led to so much waste. The endemic corruption is a scourge because it has condemned the society and the poor have suffered due to this. And many of our programs have been somewhat scuttled."

"So, we will proceed regardless. And it does not bother me in terms of the political reaction, because the Anti-Corruption Commission must remain independent and professional."

Dominican Republic's envoy visits Arab News' HQ



The Dominican Republic's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Andy Rodriguez Duran visited the headquarters of Arab News in Riyadh. He met Editor-in-Chief Faisal J. Abbas and the team, and the parties discussed changes in Saudi Arabia, bilateral relations, and Duran's efforts as new ambassador.

AN photo

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY

Kingdom sees 30% drop in work injuries

Saudi human resources minister launches platform for reporting and investigating workplace incidents

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's commitment to occupational safety and health has seen the rate of work-related injuries in the Kingdom drop from 416 to 288 injuries per 100,000 workers, over the past few years, marking a notable 30.7 percent decrease.

At the same time, the compliance rate among establishments with occupational safety and health standards has risen to 71.27 percent.

This progress was highlighted by Saudi Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Ahmed Al-Rajhi as he inaugurated the sixth Saudi Global Conference for Occupational Safety and Health in Riyadh on Sunday.

Al-Rajhi, who is also the chairman of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, highlighted the remarkable progress Saudi Arabia has made in the OSH sector in recent years. He attributed this success to the collaborative programs and initiatives launched in conjunction with Saudi Vision 2030, aimed at creating a vibrant society and building a diverse and sustainable economy.



Saudi HR minister Ahmed Al-Rajhi inaugurated the exhibition accompanying the conference and toured various partner pavilions, sponsors, and participating entities. SPA

HIGHLIGHT

The forum, which runs until May 7, covers five main topics: sustainability, corporate safety, technological transformation, cultural awareness, and occupational health.

Al-Rajhi noted that through the national policy on occupational safety and health, the Kingdom aims to strengthen and develop the OSH sector, promote and protect workers across various workplaces at the national level, in line with local regulations and international treaties and agreements, and implement the best global practices suitable for the labor market.

The minister launched the official website of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, and mentioned the e-training platform for OSH, as well as the platform for reporting and investigating work-related accidents, injuries, and occupational diseases.

Al-Rajhi praised the council for its dedicated efforts and the collaborative contributions of various sectors within the council and the broader OSH system.

Al-Rajhi inaugurated the exhibition accompanying the conference and toured various partner pavilions, sponsors, and participating entities. Among these were the pavilions of the General Organization for Social Insurance and Saudi Aramco.

minister of culture and chairman of the Saudi National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

The Kingdom intends to play a more active role in regional organizations like ALECSO, helping to contribute to its mission while supporting education, culture and science within Arab societies, the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The 121st meeting of the Executive Council is scheduled for May 14-15, while the 27th General Conference will be held on May 17.

Organized by the Kingdom's National Commission for Education, Culture and Science,

more than 145 representatives from Arab countries and related organizations are expected to participate in the meetings.

The General Conference will hold working sessions aimed at improving ALECSO's programs and initiatives. This approach will seek to empower Arab societies by fostering scientific, educational, cultural, and communication projects that nurture a new generation of Arabs embracing their identity, language, and heritage, while aspiring toward a more innovative and sustainable future, the SPA added.

TheSpace

Why non-oil GDP growth is essential for Kingdom's economic sustainability

MAJED NEZAR AL-QATARI



Saudi Arabia primarily relies on its oil resources for economic growth and development. However, in recent years, the Kingdom has been moving toward diversification of its economy, and away from oil dependency to maximize the handling of underlying economic risks. In 2023, Saudi Arabia reached the significant milestone of attaining a non-oil gross domestic product share of 50 percent. Such economic progress highlights Saudi Arabia's successful diversification efforts.

Non-oil GDP represents the economic output from sectors other than oil, such as agriculture, tourism, manufacturing, technology, and telecommunications. This shift is crucial because oil prices are highly volatile, leading to economic instability.

By focusing on non-oil sectors, Saudi Arabia aims to shield its economy from global oil price fluctuations. Non-oil commodities generally maintain stable prices, unlike crude oil. Thus, the growth of non-oil GDP indicates that Saudi Arabia is making significant strides in diversifying its economy.

Saudi Arabia's transition toward a non-oil GDP involves policies and strategies aimed at supporting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, as well as the National Investment Strategy. Schemes like the Kafala program reflect the government's approach to funding SMEs to boost the non-oil economy. The National Investment Strategy further supports this transition by fostering innovation, promoting private sector growth, and setting targets for key industries. Together, these initiatives demonstrate Saudi Arabia's commitment to diversifying its economy away from oil.

Saudi Arabia's diversification of its economy offers several benefits, including protection against oil price fluctuations, increased local job opportunities, and enhanced economic growth

and sustainability. By reducing oil dependency, Saudi Arabia is less vulnerable to price swings and other shocks related to global oil markets. This is crucial as studies suggest that countries heavily reliant on oil revenue could face declines due to the rise in renewable energy or unforeseen events like pandemics.

Another advantage of diversification is the expansion of local job opportunities. New industries drive demand for local labor, leading to a more robust jobs market. This contributes to a stable economy and boosts the private sector, fostering growth and innovation.

Economic diversification also lays the groundwork for sustained economic growth by

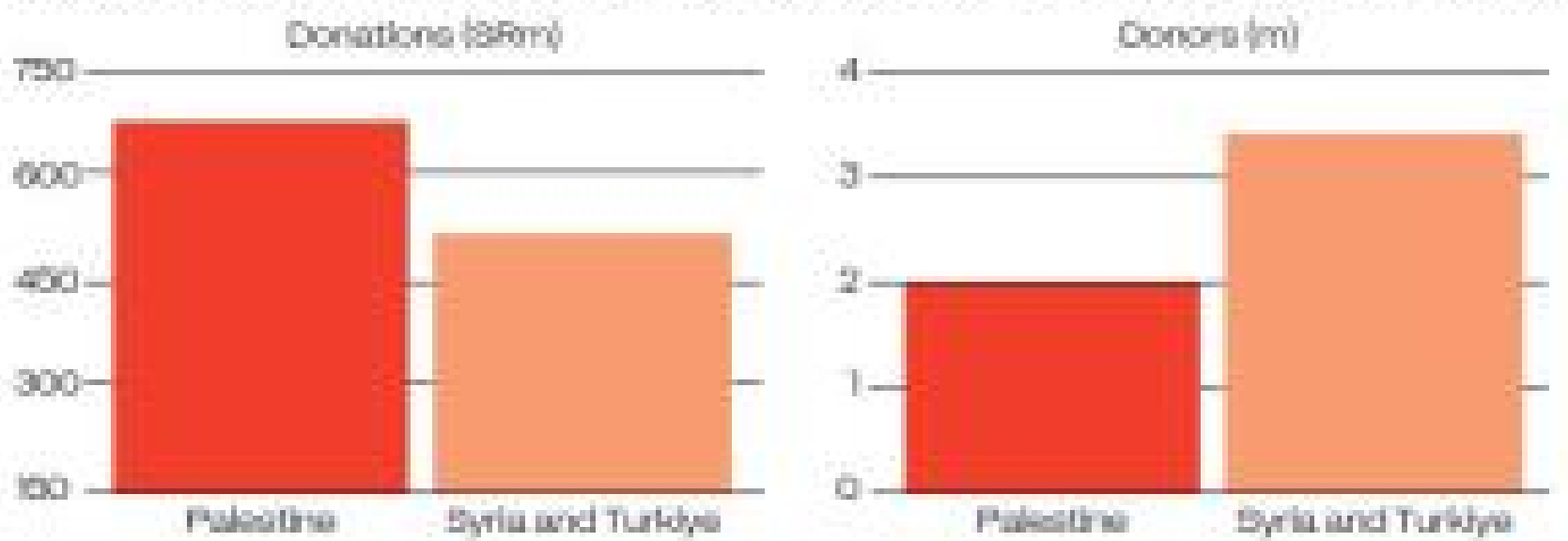
promoting a broader range of exports and encouraging per capita income growth. For example, Saudi Arabia's focus on non-oil industries helped it achieve a record \$84.4 billion in non-oil exports, with manufacturing and services sectors growing by 15 percent in 2022. This diversification underscores Saudi Arabia's efforts to protect its economy from oil-related risks, stimulate local employment, and create a more stable and sustainable future.

A key challenge in Saudi Arabia's economic transformation is attracting foreign investors. The country still has room to improve in terms of foreign direct investment and achieving the investment scale needed for economic diversification. Saudi Arabia is addressing this by initiating private and public-private partnership programs. The Saudi privatization program aims to boost private sector involvement in the national economy, enhancing efficiency and productivity.

Majed Nezar Al-Qatari is a sustainability leader, ecological engineer and UN youth ambassador with experience in advancing environmental, social and corporate governance and sustainability goals in corporate businesses, nonprofit organizations and financial institutions. For full version, log on to www.arabnews.com/thespace

The Day's FIGURES

SAUDI FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS ON KSRELIEF'S SAHEM PLATFORM



Source: sahem.ksarelief.org

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Promote peace GCC chief stresses Islamic unity at OIC summit

Jasem Albudaiwi, secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council, said that member countries value their Islamic roots and aim to strengthen ties with other Islamic nations at all levels. He made the comments during the 15th session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Banjul, Gambia.

Albudaiwi, said: "The common challenges we face require collective action and solidarity to promote the values of peace and prosperity, particularly considering what Palestine and the Gaza Strip are subjected to — a brutal attack by Israeli occupation forces."

He pointed out the significant threats to security and stability, especially because the escalating crises in the Middle East are linked to the turmoil in Palestine and Gaza. **AN Riyadh**

Modern technologies Riyadh expo to showcase poultry innovations

"Value Engineering" is the theme of the third Middle East Poultry Expo, to be held at Riyadh International Convention and Exhibition Center from May 13-15.

Sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture, the exhibition will feature over 300 companies from 40 countries.

The event will bring together international companies and experts in the poultry industry and showcase the latest technologies and innovations in poultry breeding, production, animal health and the feed industry. It aims to promote the use of modern technologies, foster the exchange of experiences and best practices, develop the poultry industry and enhance investment opportunities. **AN Riyadh**

Relief efforts Saudi project clears 719 Houthi mines in Yemen

Saudi Arabia's Project Masam cleared 719 mines in Yemen — which had been planted by the Houthi militia — between April 27 to May 3, according to a recent report.

Overseen by the Kingdom's aid agency KSrelief, the project's special teams destroyed 631 pieces of unexploded ordnance, 83 anti-tank mines, three improvised explosive devices, and two anti-personnel mines.

The explosives, which were planted indiscriminately by the Houthis across Yemen, posed a threat to civilians, including children, women and the elderly.

A total of 439,132 mines have been cleared since the start of the initiative in 2018, according to Ousama Al-Gosabi, the project's managing director. **AN Riyadh**

SCIENCE & CULTURE

Jeddah to host ALECSO Executive Council, General Conference meetings

Arab News Riyadh

Jeddah is to host the Executive Council and General Conference of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization. Ministers and heads of national committees from 22 Arab countries will attend the event, which takes place from May 14-17 and highlights the Kingdom's commitment to education, culture, and science, as well as its focus on strengthening ties with Arab and Islamic nations.

The event aligns with the directives of Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan, the Saudi

TIES THAT NOURISH

Guided by an illustrious legacy

Dr. Sara Philby, granddaughter of iconic explorer Abdullah Philby, recounts his influence on her life and pursuits

Nada Hameed Jeddah

As the granddaughter of the renowned explorer Abdullah Philby, Dr. Sara Faris Abdullah Philby's decision to pursue her medical education in Saudi Arabia echoes the pioneering spirit that defined her grandfather's historic exploration of the Arabian Peninsula.

In honoring her family's heritage, Sara follows in the footsteps of Sheikh Abdullah Philby, whose multifaceted contributions continue to inspire generations.

"My grandfather led a truly remarkable life," Sara told Arab News. "From his legendary expeditions to his conversion to Islam, his influence extends far beyond our family."

She said he has had a profound impact on her life: "Simply contemplating his image fills me with warmth and optimism. My grandfather, Abdullah, possessed a rare combination of traits — uniqueness, dedication, and punctuality — that set him apart. As an explorer and writer, he navigated uncharted territories with grace and determination, leaving an indelible mark on history."

Who was Abdullah Philby?

Harry St. John Bridger Philby, an explorer and Arabist, received his education at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. After joining the Indian Civil Service, where he mastered several languages including Urdu, Punjabi, Baluchi, Persian, and Arabic, Philby was recruited to Basra in Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) in 1915 by Percy Cox. His service in Baghdad and Basra eventually led to a mission to meet Ibn Saud in Riyadh, a journey across Arabia for which he was awarded the Royal Geographical Society Founders Medal.

From their first encounter, Philby was captivated by the magnetic personality of Ibn Saud, and the two formed a friendship that lasted 36 years. Despite his involvement in business and writing, Philby's true passion lay in exploration. Over three decades, he embarked on extraordinary journeys, notably crossing the Empty Quarter in 1932, a feat that tested the limits of endurance.

Traveling by camel and later by Land Rover, Philby meticulously documented his expeditions, recording place names, temperatures, compass bearings, and more. His scholarly contributions earned him high honors from academic



In honoring her family's heritage, Sara Philby follows in the footsteps of Sheikh Abdullah Philby, whose multifaceted contributions continue to inspire generations. Supplied/AN photo by Abdulrahman Bin Shalhoub

societies worldwide.

"He lived to witness a golden chapter in his life, marked by numerous creations of detailed maps, priceless books including unmatched details of his journeys, and contributions to several fields such as history, politics, and wildlife. Some of the specimens he has gathered are held in the British Museum in London," Sara told Arab News.

As a trusted adviser to Ibn Saud, Philby's insights and candid opinions were valued by the monarch. His conversion to Islam in 1930 further strengthened their bond, and Philby was bestowed the name Sheikh Abdullah.

In 1960, at the age of 75, Philby died during a visit to Beirut, leaving behind a legacy as one of the greatest Arabian explorers. He was

HIGHLIGHTS

- Harry St. John Bridger Philby, or Sheikh Abdullah, left behind a legacy as one of the greatest Arabian explorers.
- Over three decades, he embarked on extraordinary journeys, notably crossing the Empty Quarter in 1932, a feat that tested the limits of endurance.
- His granddaughter Dr. Sara Philby pursued her education in Alfaisal University in Riyadh.
- After completing a bachelor's degree in medicine and another in surgery, she was drawn to the intricate world of embryology.



buried in the Muslim graveyard at El-Bouchara, with his son Kim's inscription on his grave marking his profound impact on exploration and scholarship.

"(He) left behind a spectacular life story and a loving family, led by my beloved uncle Khaled Philby and my beloved father Faris Philby, who would adore him for the rest of time," Sara said.

His involvement in Arabia during World War I, his close relationship with Ibn Saud, and his pivotal role in the Arab Revolt and the creation of Saudi Arabia highlight his enduring influence on the region's history and culture.

Sara explained that her grandfather's legacy continues to influence her approach in life and her career in medicine: "His interests in exploration and travel might differ from my academic interests in medicine and clinical embryology. However, that doesn't diminish his huge impact on my educational decisions."

"With his legacy as a beacon, I am motivated to continuously push myself to new heights, embracing challenges and opportunities for growth along the way," she added. "His love for history, the desert, maps, and wildlife will forever capture my heart, despite my academic pathway heading somewhere different."

Sara pursued her education at Alfaisal University in Riyadh. After completing a bachelor's degree in medicine and another in surgery, she was drawn to the intricate world of embryology.

"My interest in this field stemmed from a personal fascination with reading books on embryology and reproductive sciences," she noted. "Moreover, I was deeply inspired by the noble goals of this discipline, particularly in addressing infertility and assisting couples in starting families according to God's will."

Sara's religious and cultural background plays a

British explorer and documentarian Harry St. John Philby captioned the picture 'Prayer under an acacia.'

pivotal role in shaping her career aspirations. "As a Muslim, my faith serves as a guiding light," she affirms. "Islam's teachings emphasize compassion and kindness, influencing my academic pursuits. The profound references to embryology in the Holy Qur'an have deepened my interest in this field."

"The Holy Qur'an beautifully elucidates the stages of human embryonic development in multiple verses," she noted. "This further solidified my conviction to pursue a career in clinical embryology and reproductive biology."

Following her passion, this year Sara graduated from Alfaisal University with a master's degree in biomedical sciences, specializing in clinical embryology and reproductive biology, achieving first honors.

Speaking about the enriching experience at the university, she said: "Alfaisal University has been an integral part of my life for many educationally fruitful years ... I am hopeful for its continued success and prosperity in the future."

Her journey through academia had its own challenges: "The rigorous demands of the field required unwavering commitment and patience. However, these experiences have shaped me into the person I am today, instilling in me a sense of resilience and determination."

"Embrace the journey, stay true to yourself, and remain dedicated to your goals," she advises aspiring professionals. "Believe in your abilities and seize the opportunities that come your way."

Balancing personal aspirations with her family's legacy is a central theme for Sara. "I place great importance on aligning my personal aspirations with the expectations associated with my family's legacy," she explains. "By staying true to myself and honoring my family's heritage, I find harmony in pursuing my goals."

For me, honoring my grandfather's legacy is not merely a goal but a life purpose.

Dr. Sara Faris Abdullah Philby Alfaisal University graduate



CULTURAL EXCHANGE

French classical concert tour for children comes to an end

Jasmine Bager Alkhobar

Fresh from performances in Riyadh and Jeddah, the Concert Impromptu, a classical ensemble made up of French musicians that was established in 1991, journeyed into Alkhobar on Saturday for the final stop on a tour presenting a program designed specially for children.

There was a palpable energy at the concert, which was held at the newly opened Saudi Music Hub space, a colorful cluster of buildings near the corniche.

Yves Charpentier played the flute; Violaine Dufes the oboe; Jean Christophe Murer the clarinet; Emilien Drouin the French horn; and Vincent Legoupil the bassoon.

They started with Mozart, who had famously started off composing as a child, and then



Concert Impromptu, a classical ensemble made up of French musicians, presented a program designed specially for children. Supplied

went on to other classical compositions that they joked were possibly something the audience had heard previously only as somebody's ringtone.

The audience was mostly made up of parents with young children.

One such attendee was Abul Fahimuddin, who recently moved

to Dhahran with his wife, Joana Macutkevici, and their two young daughters. As soon as he heard about the concert, he immediately signed them all up.

"Me and my family have just arrived from Norway several months (ago) ... we came to know there is a music concert.

FASTFACTS

- Concert Impromptu was held at the newly opened Saudi Music Hub space, a colorful cluster of buildings near the corniche.
- Yves Charpentier played the flute; Violaine Dufes the oboe; Jean Christophe Murer the clarinet; Emilien Drouin the French horn; and Vincent Legoupil the bassoon.

We're very keen on what's happening in the Alkhobar area because we're living here in Aramco Camp," Fahimuddin told Arab News.

His two daughters, dressed in pretty blue and white dresses, were plainly delighted to be there.

"I'm excited to see what instruments will be played and how the theater will look. I used to play piano but because of (the pandemic), I had to stop my piano lessons," Kaja, 11, told Arab News before the show.

Stella, 8, who likes to sing, was giddy. "I'm also excited — like Kaja," Stella said. "Now in my school, we started to play the xylophone."

The Fahimuddin family came to the concert to enjoy the experience, but also with the aim to connect with other families that have recently arrived in the Kingdom and to be part of the budding creative community in the area.

"Music is a universal language; we don't need to speak the same language to enjoy and feel the same atmosphere and the vibe," Macutkevici told Arab News. "And,

for the girls, hopefully the concert will make them more curious about the instruments and about the music," she added.

Each musician took the time to playfully interact with the audience, ask and answer questions and to explain what each instrument was and how to play it.

While the musicians played as an ensemble, they also had solo parts and, at the end, Dufes took the lead, instructing the audience to snap their fingers, clap and make specific sounds while her fellow musicians played along.

"Now you are all musicians," she told the crowd at the end, to roars of laughter.

The event was organized by Alliances Françaises in partnership with the French Embassy in Saudi Arabia and other French organizations.

MILITIA MENACE

Houthis claim Red Sea victory against US Navy

Saeed Al-Batati Al-Mukalla

The Houthis have reiterated a warning of strikes against ships bound for or with links to Israel — including those in the Mediterranean — as they claimed victory against the US Navy in the Red Sea. The Houthi-controlled SABA news agency reported that the fourth phase of the militia's pro-Palestine campaign would involve targeting all ships en route to Israel that came within range of their drones and missiles, noting that the US, UK, and other Western navies "stood helpless" in the face of their attacks. "The fourth phase demonstrates

the striking strength of the Yemeni armed forces in battling the world's most potent naval weaponry, the American, British and European fleets, as well as the Zionist (Israel) navy," SABA said. Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said on Friday strikes against Israel-linked ships would be expanded to the Mediterranean. Attacks would be escalated to include any companies interacting with Israel if the country carried out its planned attack on the Palestinian Rafah. Since November, the Houthis have launched hundreds of ballistic missiles and drones at commercial and navy vessels in the Red Sea,

Houthis are expanding their campaign against ships to avoid growing public resentment in areas under their control after the militia had failed to pay public employees and repair services.

Brig. Gen. Mohammed Al-Kumaim
Military analyst

Bab Al-Mandab Strait and the Gulf of Aden. They claim attacks are only aimed at ships linked with Israel in a bid to force an end to its siege on the Gaza Strip. They have also fired at US and UK commercial and navy ships in international waters off Yemen after the two countries launched strikes against Houthi-controlled areas. On Saturday, Houthi information minister Dhaif Allah Al-Shami claimed the US was forced to withdraw its aircraft carrier and other naval ships from the Red Sea after failing to counteract attacks. He added new offensives would begin against Israeli ships in the

Mediterranean in the coming days. "They failed badly. Yemeni missiles and drones beat the US Navy, and its military, cruisers, destroyers and aircraft carriers started to retreat from our seas," Al-Shami said in an interview with Lebanon's Al-Mayadeen TV news channel. Yemen specialists have disputed Houthi assertions that they have military weapons capable of reaching Israeli ships in the Mediterranean. Brig. Gen. Mohammed Al-Kumaim, a Yemeni military analyst, told Arab News on Sunday the Houthis would only be able to carry out such attacks if they had

advanced weaponry. He said the Houthis were expanding their campaign against ships to avoid growing public resentment in areas under their control after the militia had failed to pay public employees and repair services. Al-Kumaim added the Houthis might claim responsibility for an attack on a ship in the Mediterranean which was carried out by an Iran-backed group operating in the region. "Theoretically and technologically, the Houthis lack any technical or military capability to achieve their objectives (in the Mediterranean)," Al-Kumaim said.

GRAVE RISK

Hezbollah fires rockets at Israel after south Lebanon strike kills 4 members of family

● Shells fall on Kiryat Shmona and reach northern Golan ● Maronite Patriarch Bechara Al-Rahi calls for end to war

Najla Housseini Beirut

An Israeli airstrike killed four members of a family in a border village in southern Lebanon on Sunday, security sources said.

Hezbollah, in retaliation, fired Katyusha rockets at the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona, close to the Lebanese border. The four family members killed in Mays Al-Jabal were identified as Fadi Hounaikh and Maya Ali Ammar, and their sons Mohammed, 21, and Ahmad, 12. The attack occurred when the family took advantage of a de-escalation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel to return to their properties to assess damage and move goods from their supermarket to a location outside the village. A security source in the area told Arab News that while the family was gathering their groceries from the supermarket, an Israeli military drone spotted them and launched an attack, destroying the area and killing all the members of the family and injuring several civilians in the vicinity. The source clarified that villages in the area were empty because "residents fled the area seven months ago."

He added: "When residents want to enter these villages to attend victims' funerals, they send their names and car number plates to the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL, who in turn coordinate with the Israeli side to spare these funerals (from attack). "In general, people cannot enter border villages without taking into consideration the Israeli danger, as Israeli reconnaissance planes and drones are hovering over the area 24/7. However, what Israel committed against this family is a terrible massacre."



Debris is scattered around buildings damaged by an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese border village of Mays Al-Jabal on Sunday amid ongoing cross-border tensions. AFP

Hezbollah responded to the incident by launching dozens of Katyusha and Falaq missiles at Israel. The group said the operation was "in response to the crime committed by Israel in the Mays Al-Jabal village." The Israeli Upper Galilee Regional Council announced that missiles hit buildings in Kiryat Shmona, while Israeli Army Radio reported that some of the rockets

fell inside the city, causing a power outage. An Israeli army spokesman reported that 65 rockets were launched from southern Lebanon toward Israeli settlements in the Upper Galilee region. Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes hit the villages of Al-Adissa and Kafr Kila, while artillery shelling hit the village of Aitaroun. Maronite Patriarch Bechara

Al-Rahi in his Sunday sermon called for an end to the war in southern Lebanon, urging an end to the "demolition of homes, the destruction of shops, the burning of the land and its crops, and the killing and displacement of innocent civilians and the destruction of their livelihood in an economic condition that has already impoverished them."

Mohammed Raad, leader of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc, meanwhile, expressed his disapproval of the West's backing for Israel. He said that Israel "faces no international deterrent. On the contrary, some support it in committing crimes." He accused those who support Israel of being "hypocrites and liars who falsely claim to champion

human rights, civilization, and progress in the West, (yet) they provide Israel with financial aid, weapons, smart bombs, and a continuous air bridge." Raad concluded: "We are not afraid of Israel's insanity. We are prepared to confront them directly. We are prepared to sacrifice and shed blood to protect our homeland, independence, and honor."

AGGRESSION

Israel PM accused of Gaza truce talks sabotage

AFP Doha

Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh on Sunday accused Israel's prime minister of sabotaging efforts by mediators involved in ongoing talks aimed at a truce and hostage exchange in Gaza. Haniyeh said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wanted to "invent constant justifications for the continuation of aggression, expanding the circle of conflict, and sabotaging efforts made through various mediators and parties." Qatari, Egyptian, and US mediators met a Hamas delegation in



Palestinians transport an injured man pulled from the rubble of a house destroyed in an Israeli strike in the center of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. AFP

Cairo on Saturday in the latest bid to halt the devastating almost seven-month-old war that has triggered worldwide protests. A senior Hamas source near the negotiations said on Sunday would see "a new round" of talks. Negotiators seeking to halt the devastating war have proposed an initial 40-day pause in the fighting and an exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners. Haniyeh said Hamas had approached the talks with "seriousness and positivity" but questioned "the meaning of an agreement if a ceasefire is not its first result." Earlier, Netanyahu had rejected

Hamas's demand to end the war. Israel was "not ready to accept a situation in which the Hamas battalions come out of their bunkers, take control of Gaza again, rebuild their military infrastructure, and return to threaten the citizens of Israel," he said. Egypt, Qatar, and the US have been trying to mediate an agreement between Israel and Hamas for months. The leader of Hamas's political office said the US had "provided cover for this occupation, should be the one to stop it instead of supplying it with weapons of destruction and extermination."

News International

DESPAIR

Tunisian town gripped by youth exodus

Families urge authorities to bolster economic conditions, educational programs, and cultural activities to discourage risky trips

AFP El Hencha, Tunisia

When Mohammed Lafi vanished at sea one fateful night, it marked yet another tragedy for a Tunisian town struggling with the exodus of its youth.

Mohammed's disappearance adds to the deepening despair in El Hencha, situated just 150 km from the Italian island of Lampedusa.

His sister, Ines, stayed behind, confronting the harsh reality many families face as their loved ones risk everything for a better life in Europe.

Mohammed, a 30-year-old taxi driver, left home on Jan. 10 with little more than his mobile phone.

"He went without saying anything to my parents, without a change of clothes or a bag," said Ines, 42.

It seemed as though he "was going to meet his friends," she said.

Mohammed was one of 40 would-be migrants who had boarded a boat — all Tunisians aged between 17 and 30, including a woman and her four-month-old baby.

Despite adverse weather conditions and rough seas, their families said they were determined to set sail.

More than 1,300 migrants died or disappeared last year in shipwrecks near the Tunisian coast, said the Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights — a non-governmental organization.

Italian government official figures show that in 2023, Tunisians accounted for the second-highest number of irregular migrant arrivals in Italy, at 17,304, second only to Guineans, at 18,204.

Last year, the EU signed an agreement to provide financial aid to Tunisia in return for its commitment to curb migrant departures.

The sense of hopelessness is palpable in Tunisia, whose economy is stagnant.

Growth was only 0.4 percent in 2023, and unemployment hovers around 40 percent.



Political tension has also shaken the country after President Kais Saïed introduced administrative measures in July 2021.

FTDES said that those missing from El Hencha, mainly from the middle class, shared a grim outlook for the future.

"Irregular migration cannot be explained only by economic and social factors," said Romdhane Ben Amor, spokesman for the rights organization.

He added that "the political factor and the feeling of despair of Tunisians who do not believe in the future of the country" also play a significant role.

Meftah Jalloul, the father of

Family members of Tunisian migrants who were lost at sea in January gather with their pictures in El Hencha, about 45 km north of Sfax in central Tunisia. More than 1,300 migrants died or disappeared last year in shipwrecks near the Tunisian coast. File/AFP

another young migrant, was aware of his son Mohammed's longing to cross the Mediterranean for a brighter future.

The 62-year-old fishmonger had pleaded with Mohammed to wait for better weather before embarking on his journey.

But the 17-year-old, intent on making the perilous voyage, simply kissed his father on his head and left.

"He wanted money to migrate," said Jalloul, taking responsibility for providing the funds.

With daily earnings of 20 dinars (about \$6), Mohammed Lafi was left with little prospects for building a stable future, said his sister Ines.

"He was unable to make plans, build a house, or get married," she lamented.

Yousri Henchi, a 22-year-old migrant, dropped out of high school and earned a meager income of 10 to 15 dinars a day working at an Internet cafe.

His uncle, Mohammed Henchi, attributed the allure of Europe to frustrated youths like Yousri being influenced by successful migrants

who shared their experiences on social media.

"They see that and want to change their future. They see Europe as a paradise," he said.

Jalloul had sought to persuade his son, who also quit high school, to undergo vocational training and migrate legally to Italy, France, or Germany.

"He should not have left without skills or qualifications," he said.

"He could have learned a trade — plumbing, carpentry, or mechanics."

Jalloul clings to the hope that the boat Mohammed boarded drifted toward Libya, although family contacts' searches there have yielded no leads.

"Four months have passed, and I am still crying for my son," he said, overcome with emotion.

Ines Lafi expressed anger toward the person who smuggled her brother's group, a figure well-known in El Hencha for facilitating clandestine crossings to Italy.

"He had always returned here but disappeared this time."

The families have urged Tunisian authorities to bolster economic conditions, educational programs, and cultural activities in the town of around 6,000 people to encourage youths to stay.

"We must enhance the industrial zone and create job opportunities for young people," said Henchi.

HOT ISSUE

Turkiye applies to have doner kebab protected under EU law

Arab News London

Turkiye has applied to have the doner kebab protected under EU law, Metro newspaper reported.

The bloc famously enforces strict regulations on certain foods

— including French Champagne, Spanish Serrano ham and Neapolitan pizza — in order to safeguard their production and preserve regional culinary heritage.

Issues including the sourcing of ingredients, method and place



The doner kebab is to undergo a three-month evaluation process.

of production all go into determining what can and cannot be labeled as a protected food, with harsh penalties for those found to be profiting from items deemed not to match the legal criteria.

The doner kebab will undergo a three-month evaluation process to determine whether it too will join the exclusive list of dishes and foodstuffs.

During the process, other countries will be permitted

BACKGROUND

Beef and lamb slices should be 3-5 mm in thickness, while chicken should be thinner at 1-3 mm per slice

to challenge the application over similarities to their own products, as happened in 2021 when Italy voiced opposition to the Croatian sparkling beverage Prošek receiving protected status due to its apparent similarities to Prosecco.

Traditionally formed of meat marinated in salt, pepper, a

number of other herbs and spices as well as tomato puree and yoghurt, the doner kebab can contain beef, lamb or chicken.

It is placed on a skewer and rotated against a fire, with thin strips sliced off and served in a flatbread or pitta with lettuce, tomato and onion.

Beef and lamb slices should be 3-5 mm in thickness, while chicken should be thinner at 1-3 mm per slice.

The dish is believed to be worth around \$3.6 million annually to Europe's economy, according to the Association of Turkish Doner Producers.

SECURITY

Niger receives new Russian advisers, equipment

AFP Niamey

New Russian military advisers and military equipment have arrived in Niger, according to state television in the African country that wants US forces to leave.

A first set of about 100 Russian advisers arrived in Niger on April 10, along with air defense systems.

Two military transporters arrived on Saturday, according to Tele Sahel that said Russia has now sent three cargo planes of military material and instructors in the past month.

The Africa Corps, seen as the successors of the Wagner paramilitary group in Africa, confirmed the instructors' arrival in a posting on the group's Telegram account.

On Saturday, it said more trainers, equipment, and food products had arrived.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin indicated on Thursday that Russian troops were now installed at a Nigerien air base near the Niamey airport that also houses US troops.

Niger's military regime, which took power in a July 2023 coup,

FASTFACT

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin indicated that Russian troops were now installed at an air base near the Niamey airport that also houses US troops.

expelled French troops based in the country and then denounced a military cooperation agreement with the US.

It said this had been "unilaterally imposed" by Washington.

Washington agreed in April to withdraw roughly 1,000 soldiers from the country.

Negotiations are underway between the United States and Niger about the withdrawal.

US forces have a key drone base near Agadez, built at a cost of about \$100 million.

Niger's military leaders have moved closer to Russia, as have Mali and Burkina Faso, which also have military coup leaders and are fighting rebel groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and Daesh.



CONSULATE GENERAL OF INDIA, JEDDAH

Quotations are invited in sealed envelopes from interested firms/reputed companies for:

Services of three security guards round the clock on shift basis at the premises of Consulate General of India in Jeddah.

Please visit www.cgijeddah.gov.in for detailed information including terms & conditions.

POLITICAL GIMMICKS

Fake videos of Modi aides trigger political showdown in India election

Congress social media coordinator arrested by Delhi police

Reuters Bengaluru/Lucknow
Manipulated videos are taking center stage as campaigning heats up in India's election, with fake clips involving two top aides of Prime Minister Narendra Modi triggering police investigations and the arrest of some workers of his rival Congress Party.

In what has been dubbed as India's first AI election, Modi said last week fake voices were being used to purportedly show leaders making "statements that we have never even thought of," calling it a conspiracy "to create tension in society."

Indian police — already investigating the spread of fake videos showing Bollywood actors criticizing Modi — are now investigating a doctored online clip that showed Federal Home Minister Amit Shah saying the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party will stop certain social guarantees for minorities, a subject sensitive for millions of voters.

Shah retorted on X, posting his



The social media chief of India's opposition Congress Party has been arrested over accusations he misleadingly doctored a widely shared video of Amit Shah, police said on Saturday. File/AFP

"original" and the edited "fake" speech and alleging — without providing any evidence — that the main opposition Congress was behind the video it created to mislead the public. The minister said "directions have been issued to the police to address this issue."

Indian police arrested at least nine people, including six members of Congress' social media teams, in the states of Assam, Gujarat, Telangana and New Delhi last week for circulating the fake video, according to police statements.

Five of the Congress workers were released on bail, but the most high-profile arrest made by the cyber crime unit of New Delhi police came on Friday, when they detained a Congress national social media coordinator, Arun Reddy, for sharing the video. New Delhi is one region where Shah's ministry directly controls police. Reddy has been sent into three-day custody.

The arrest has sparked protests from Congress workers with many posting on X using the #ReleaseArunReddy tag. Congress lawmaker Manickam Tagore said the arrest

was an example of "authoritarian misuse of power by the regime." Congress' head of social media, Supriya Shrinete, did not respond to messages and an email seeking comment.

India's election from April 19 to June 1 will be the world's largest democratic event.

With nearly a billion voters and more than 800 million internet users, tackling the spread of misinformation is a high stakes job. It involves round-the-clock monitoring by police and election officials who often issue take down orders to Facebook and X as investigations start.

In India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, more than 500 people keep tabs on online content, flagging controversial posts and coordinating with social media companies for their removal when needed, police chief Prashant Kumar told Reuters on Saturday.

Another fake video that sparked a storm last week showed Yogi Adityanath, the state's chief minister, criticizing Modi for not doing enough for families of those who died in a 2019 militant attack.

Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

White House

Driver dies after crashing into a security barrier

A driver died after a vehicle crashed into an outer perimeter gate of the White House complex, and the incident late Saturday was being investigated as a traffic crash, police said. President Joe Biden was spending the weekend in Delaware, and the Secret Service said there was no threat to the White House. The male driver, who was not immediately identified, was found dead in the vehicle following the crash shortly before 10:30 p.m., according to a Secret Service statement.

The Metropolitan Police Department said the vehicle crashed into a security barrier at the intersection of 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Police were called to the scene at 10:46 p.m. and said one adult male was pronounced dead from the crash into a security barrier around the complex. The Secret Service said security protocols were put in place and that there was no threat to the White House. The Secret Service and police will continue to investigate. **AP**

Rising mercury

Japan urges 400 to evacuate city over forest fire

More than 400 residents in northern Japan were urged to evacuate on Sunday over fears a forest fire that has been blazing for two days could spread to residential areas. Helicopters poured water for hours on the mountains around Nanyo city in Yamagata prefecture to douse the flames, but the operation was called off after dark with the fire still burning.

"We're urging over 400 residents in the three districts" of the city to evacuate, an official in charge of the disaster response told AFP.

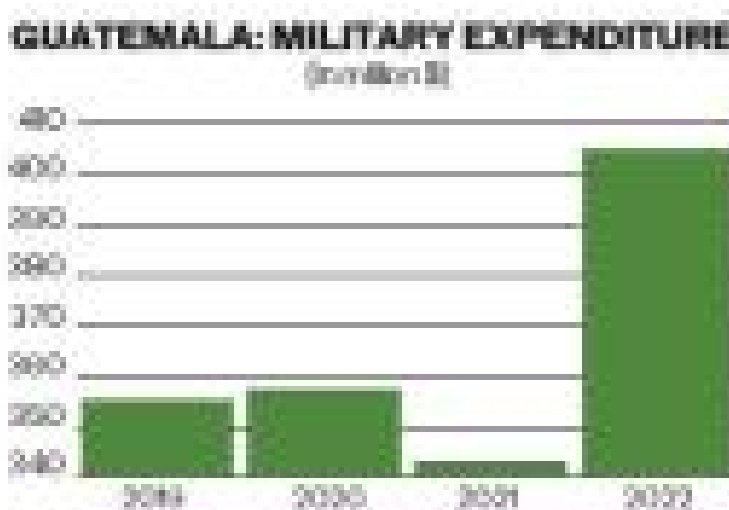
"There is a risk the fire will spread" to the residential area, she said, adding firefighting efforts will resume on Monday morning.

Footage from public broadcaster NHK showed white smoke rising from the mountains.

The northern city has been sweltering under higher-than-average temperatures and saw the mercury rise past 31 degrees on Sunday, according to private weather forecaster Weather News. **AFP**

The Day's FIGURES

Source: Statista



What We Are Reading Today

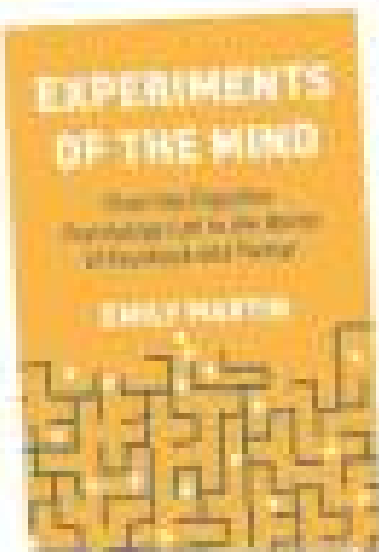
FROM AROUND THE WEB & IN PRINT

'Experiments of the Mind'

EMILY MARTIN

Experimental cognitive psychology research is a hidden force in our online lives. We engage with it, often unknowingly, whenever we download a health app, complete a Facebook quiz, or rate our latest purchase. How did experimental psychology come to play an outsized

role in these developments? "Experiments of the Mind" considers this question through a look at cognitive psychology laboratories. Emily Martin traces how psychological research methods evolved, escaped the boundaries of the discipline, and infiltrated social media and our digital universe.



Bilateral ties

Poland wants best ties with US no matter the leader

Poland wants "the best possible relations with America, regardless of who is in power," Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski said during a visit to Washington, according to a report by Poland's PAP newswire on Sunday.

"We will not make the mistakes of our predecessors by putting all our chips on one color," state-run PAP cited Sikorski as saying, in an apparent betting reference.

Poland's former nationalist government had enjoyed a good relationship with former US President Donald Trump, even as Warsaw's handling of policies raised concerns over its faithfulness to democratic values and strained the tolerance of EU allies.

After Joe Biden's 2020 election win, Warsaw did not officially recognize him as US president for several weeks. Sikorski was in Washington to discuss bilateral ties, security issues and the war in Ukraine with US officials. **Reuters**

Intelligence authorities

Afghan diplomat in India quits after \$2m gold smuggling

Afghanistan's top diplomat in India resigned days after she was reportedly caught by airport authorities smuggling nearly \$2 million worth of gold into the country.

Zakia Wardak, the Afghan consul-general in India's financial capital Mumbai, posted a statement on social media platform X announcing her resignation. The Afghanistan Embassy in New Delhi shut down in November, more than two years after the Taliban returned to power in Kabul following the collapse of the Western-backed government, leaving Wardak as the country's most senior representative in India.

Indian media reports said Wardak was last month stopped by financial intelligence authorities at Mumbai airport on arrival from Dubai — along with her son — carrying 25 kilograms of gold. **AFP**



Firefighters and volunteers pull in a boat transporting people rescued from an area flooded by heavy rains in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil, on Sunday. AFP

DOWNPOUR

Race against time to rescue Brazil flood victims after dozens killed

AFP Porto Alegre, Brazil

Authorities were racing against time on Sunday to rescue people from raging floods and mudslides that have killed more than 50 and forced nearly 70,000 to flee their homes in southern Brazil.

Viewed from the air, Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul state, is completely flooded, with streets waterlogged and the roofs of some houses barely visible.

The Guaiba River, which flows through the city of 1.4 million people, reached a record high level of 5.09 meters, according to the local municipality, well above the historic peak of 4.76 meters that had stood as a record since

devastating 1941 floods.

The water was still advancing into economically important Porto Alegre and around a hundred other localities, with increasingly dramatic consequences.

In addition to some 70,000 residents forced from their homes, Brazil's civil defense agency also said more than a million people lacked access to potable water amid the flooding, describing the damage as incalculable.

The agency put the death toll at 55, although that did not include two people killed in an explosion at a flooded gas station in Porto Alegre that was witnessed by an AFP journalist.

At least 74 people are also

FASTFACT

The Guaiba River, which flows through the city of 1.4 million people, reached a record high level of 5.09 meters, according to the local municipality, well above the historic peak of 4.76 meters that had stood as a record since devastating 1941 floods.

missing, it said.

Rosana Custodio, a 37-year-old nurse, fled her flooded Porto Alegre home with her husband and three children.

"During the night on Thursday the waters began to rise very quickly," she told AFP via a

WhatsApp message.

"In a hurry, we went out to look for a safer place. But we couldn't walk ... My husband put our two little ones in a kayak and rowed with a bamboo. My son and I swam to the end of the street," she said.

Her family was safe but "we've lost everything we had."

The rainfall eased Saturday night but was expected to continue for the next 24-36 hours, with authorities warning of landslides.

Authorities scrambled to evacuate swamped neighborhoods as rescue workers used four-wheel-drive vehicles — and even jet skis — to maneuver through waist-deep water in search of the stranded.

للفتى عقلٌ يعيشُ بهُ
حيثُ تُهدي ساقه قدمه
(طرفة بن العبد)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

A young man has a mind by which he lives;
wherever his foot leads, his leg follows.

Tarafa bin Al-Abd
(Pre-Islamic poet)

Opinion

Arabs' age-old election dilemma

SHARIF NASHASHIBI



Sharif Nashashibi is an
award-winning journalist and
commentator on Arab affairs.

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

The upcoming elections in the US and UK present an age-old dilemma for Arab communities in both countries: who to vote for when there is little separating the major parties regarding the Middle East and, at a time of particular crisis such as now, whether to vote at all.

In the 2004 American election and the 2005 British election, the big issue for Arabs was Iraq. Now it is Palestine. And, in both cases, the "opposition" provided no opposition. This poses a quandary for Arabs because it undermines the value and effect of a protest vote.

The "Abandon Biden" movement, which has made its presence felt in the primaries, reflects anger among Arab Americans and their allies that is entirely justified given the president's aiding and abetting of Israel's genocide in Gaza.

And just as Arab Americans demonstrated that their vote helped elect Joe Biden in 2020, there is political value — and moral satisfaction — in showing that they can hurt his chances of reelection.

But that will have no tangible effect on US support for Israel because Donald Trump would be no different. In his case, we have evidence not just in terms of rhetoric but in a previous presidential term, during which, for example, he broke with decades of American policy by recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

So, for Arabs, when it comes to Palestine, it does not matter whether the White House is occupied by a Democrat or a Republican.

The Abandon Biden campaign must know this and, while its supporters may celebrate if he is voted out, they will no doubt struggle internally with their role in the reelection of Trump, who has boasted that he "fought for Israel like no president ever before." And unlike the Republicans, there are at least elements of the Democratic Party that are sympathetic to the Palestinians.

In a sense, the situation in the UK is reversed because Keir Starmer, the leader of the main opposition Labour Party, has arguably come under greater pressure over Gaza than Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

This is largely due to three factors: higher expectations of a former human rights barrister than a staunchly pro-Israel prime minister, more sympathy for the Palestinians within the Labour Party than among the Conservatives, and the near certainty that Starmer will resoundingly defeat Sunak at the ballot box this year.

"It is clear that Keir Starmer's stance on the Gaza conflict has been unpopular among many Labour supporters," wrote Matthew Smith, head of data journalism at polling organization YouGov. However, unlike in the US, where a protest vote could materially affect the election result, the Conservatives' impending electoral

drubbing in the UK renders a protest vote against Starmer inconsequential.

One need only look at the results of Thursday's local elections in the UK. Labour's campaign chief Pat McFadden acknowledged that Starmer's stance on Gaza had an impact on votes, but the elections were still a resounding success for the party.

Unlike in America's two-party system, there are smaller parties in the UK that are more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, but they have no chance at governing and the expected size of Labour's victory in the upcoming general election means it will not need coalition partners.

Since at least the Second Intifada, opinion polls have shown greater sympathy in the UK toward the Palestinians than toward Israel. And that sympathy is gaining ground even in the US, which would have been unthinkable not long ago. But in both countries, that is not translating to a change in government policy. This is certainly disappointing but it is unsurprising.

Arab communities in the West often give equal importance to domestic and foreign policy, and sometimes — particularly during times of crisis — even prioritize the latter. But this is not the case among the wider public. Domestic affairs are almost always a greater concern to voters, even if a specific foreign policy is highly contentious.

So, while members of the public in the US

and UK may sympathize with the plight of the Palestinians, it is less likely to sway their vote than, for example, the economy or immigration. Indeed, the debacle of the occupation of Iraq did not stop its architect and his staunchest ally — George W. Bush and Tony Blair, respectively — from being reelected.

Given all this, Arab voters are now, as in the past, faced with three choices, none of which are attractive: vote for a candidate whose Middle East policy is unpalatable, vote for a party with no chance of governing, or do not vote at all. I understand the arguments for and against each option and have chosen all three at various times in my life, but always with a heavy heart.

This dilemma reflects Arabs' historical sense of disenfranchisement from political systems in which no major party represents them or their interests. And the solution to this is only long term. The hope is that Arabs' increased political and electoral participation over the years will eventually encourage politicians to choose genuine engagement rather than hostility, indifference or lip service.

They can look to other communities in the US and UK — Jewish, Black, Hispanic, Asian — as examples. But that kind of change is generational, so although worthwhile — vital, in fact — it offers no solace to the people of Gaza today, nor to Arabs and their supporters who, later this year, will have to choose between candidates who have all defended Israel's atrocities.

**For Arabs,
when it comes
to Palestine, it
does not matter
whether the
White House is
occupied by a
Democrat or a
Republican**



COURTESY: AMAR D. HANMADHANO AL-JABIR

**As Europe
confronts the
realities of
climate change,
environmental
sustainability
emerges as a
paramount
concern**

Peace, unity and challenges for the EU on Europe Day

DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH



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

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

Europe Day will be marked this week. This is a day that symbolizes peace and unity across the continent, as well as the imperative to acknowledge the multifaceted challenges the people of Europe face.

While the EU has made remarkable strides in fostering collaboration and solidarity over many decades, recent surveys and real-world developments underscore critical areas where progress remains elusive. Among these challenges, three stand out: economic pressures, environmental sustainability and immigration policies. These issues not only demand attention but also necessitate collective action and innovative solutions to ensure a future where peace and unity thrive alongside prosperity and justice.

First and foremost, economic concerns loom large over Europe, casting a shadow over the bloc's aspirations for stability and growth. The rising cost of living, escalating prices and inflationary pressures have become recurrent themes in the daily lives of millions. Some families grapple with stretched budgets, workers feel the squeeze of stagnant wages and small businesses strain under the weight of mounting expenses.

Moreover, as Europe confronts the realities of climate change, environmental

sustainability emerges as another paramount concern. The specter of environmental degradation looms large, fueled by carbon emissions, deforestation and pollution. As we have seen, from extreme weather events to biodiversity loss, the consequences of ecological neglect transcend national boundaries.

A report issued by the European Environment Agency last month sounded the alarm for Europe, emphasizing the pressing need for more robust action to address the risks posed by climate change. Its assessment underscored the imperative for immediate and decisive measures to confront the escalating threats to the environment and society. The report also served as a critical reminder of the challenges ahead, urging policymakers and stakeholders to prioritize sustainability, resilience and innovation in their responses to the climate crisis.

Last but not least, the issue of immigration remains divisive and contentious, testing the unity and solidarity of the European project. Against the backdrop of geopolitical upheavals, armed conflicts and humanitarian crises, the EU finds itself at a crossroads, torn between its humanitarian values and the pressures of managing migration flows.

It seems that this sentiment underscores deep-seated anxieties regarding cultural identity, social cohesion and economic security. While migration enriches Europe's

cultural tapestry and fills critical labor gaps, it also poses challenges in terms of integration, social cohesion and resource allocation. Striking a balance between pragmatism and compassion is essential as the EU navigates the complexities of migration governance, border management and refugee protection.

In confronting these challenges, the EU must continue drawing on the spirit of solidarity and cooperation that underpins its founding principles. The bloc, which was born from the ashes of war and strife, stands as a testament to the transformative power of unity in diversity. Now, as it grapples with the uncertainties of the 21st century, Brussels must reaffirm its commitment to collective action and shared prosperity.

But this requires visionary leadership, bold policy choices and meaningful engagement with citizens, civil society and stakeholders across the board.

One crucial avenue for addressing these challenges lies in the upcoming elections to the European Parliament, slated to be held between June 6 and June 9. These elections represent a pivotal moment for Europeans, offering citizens the opportunity to shape the future direction of the EU. Voters can scrutinize the policies, priorities and platforms of candidates and subsequently hold them accountable for their commitments to

addressing pressing issues such as economic inequality, environmental degradation and migration governance. Moreover, this serves as an important reminder of the importance of civic engagement in Europe.

Beyond the realm of electoral politics in the EU, meaningful change also requires grassroots mobilization, civic activism and cross-border solidarity. Civil society organizations, grassroots movements and youth initiatives play a vital role in driving social change, raising awareness and holding institutions to account. In other words, by harnessing the power of collective action, European citizens can amplify their voices, challenge entrenched interests and advocate for policies that prioritize the common good over narrow interests.

In a nutshell, as the EU celebrates peace and unity on Europe Day on Thursday, it must also confront the challenges that threaten to undermine its hard-won achievements. By fostering economic prosperity, safeguarding the environment and embracing diversity, the bloc can chart a course toward a future where peace, justice and solidarity prevail. This journey will undoubtedly be fraught with obstacles and setbacks but, as history has shown, the European spirit is resilient, adaptive and indomitable. Europe Day serves as a reminder of the shared values, aspirations and responsibilities that bind Europeans.

Saudi Arabia is paving the way for the future of clean energy.

King Leung
Global head of financial services and fintech, Invest Hong Kong



Business



Saudi Investment Minister Khalid Al-Falih speaks at the China-Saudi Investment Forum in December 2023 held in Beijing. The event witnessed signing of deals worth \$25 billion. File

This is not just about attracting inbound (investment), but also helping mainland Chinese companies use Hong Kong as a base to springboard to key markets like Saudi Arabia.

King Leung

INTERVIEW

Hong Kong, Chinese investors set eyes on Saudi market

A delegation of business leaders is set to explore diverse sectors in the Kingdom

Reina Takla, Manal Al-Barakatli
Riyadh

Hong Kong and Chinese companies are gearing up for substantial investments in the Saudi market, marking a significant step toward strengthening economic ties, a top official said.

A delegation of 30 business leaders from Hong Kong and mainland China is set to explore diverse sectors in the Kingdom, propelled by the ambitious Vision 2030 outlined by Saudi leadership, King Leung, global head of financial services and fintech at Invest Hong Kong, said in an interview with Arab News.

Explaining the reason for his visit to Riyadh, Leung said: "I'm bringing a delegation of 30-plus executives across different disciplines to explore ways to do business in Saudi Arabia. This is not just about attracting inbound (investment), but also helping mainland Chinese companies use Hong Kong as a base to springboard to key markets like Saudi Arabia."

Outlining the potential for co-investment between the two nations, he said: "Definitely, it's going to be a huge number," a sentiment that echoes the palpable excitement among Hong Kong investors who are eager to tap into the vast opportunities offered by the Saudi market.

The convergence of interests

between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia is underpinned by a notable synergy observed between businesses in both regions, the executive said, with an eye on forging strategic partnerships.

Hong Kong delegates, including private sector leaders and venture capitalists, are eager to explore avenues for collaboration that align with the objectives of Vision 2030.

"All these things that we are now finding out allow business leaders to see that some businesses from Hong Kong actually have very, very good synergy with Vision 2030 in your country."

"It's hard to quantify the exact number, but definitely, it's going to be (a) huge number. I have to say these investments cut across different sectors, where you can imagine the market size is enormous," he said, emphasizing the allure of megaprojects such as NEOM and the King Salman Park, which are set to transform the Saudi investment landscape.

These projects not only serve as magnets for investment but also catalyze growth in ancillary sectors such as financial services and consumer products, the head of financial services emphasized.

"These are megaprojects. So, all these things are going to really attract a lot of business activities, of course, initially in construction. But once you have all this construction coming in, then you need the other peripheral sectors to service them, like financial

services, consumer products, and payments. So, all these things present a lot of opportunities that really get our delegates and investors from Hong Kong and China very excited," he further explained.

Another testament to the nation's favorable investment ecosystem is its "impressive GDP growth and low debt ratio," factors that instill confidence among investors.

Among the sectors garnering attention are green energy and advanced manufacturing, the delegate said, affirming that Saudi Arabia is "paving the way for the future" of clean energy.

Hong Kong-based companies, armed with cutting-edge technologies, are eyeing opportunities to contribute to Saudi Arabia's sustainable development goals.

"I understand that your country is also paving the way for the future, including adopting green energy now. So, one green energy company that I have been talking to in mainland China, they have been in the green hydrogen space for some time, and they are evaluating to put a green hydrogen factory in Saudi Arabia."

Thus, projects such as the green hydrogen factory, poised to harness solar power for hydrogen production, exemplify this collaborative spirit.

"Now, of course, the reason why they've done that, part of it, is because the way they generate hydrogen is to use solar power. So they need to go to a place where

HIGHLIGHTS

● Hong Kong delegates, including private sector leaders and venture capitalists, are eager to explore avenues for collaboration that align with the objectives of Vision 2030.

● The convergence of interests between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia is underpinned by a notable synergy observed between businesses in both regions.

● Hong Kong-based companies, armed with cutting-edge technologies, are eyeing opportunities to contribute to Saudi Arabia's sustainable development goals.

● Fintech companies from Hong Kong are eager to leverage their expertise to enhance banking services and drive digital transformation initiatives in the Kingdom.

● Banks from Saudi Arabia are contemplating establishing a presence in Hong Kong to bolster their trade and financial services.

this is something in abundance. Now, at the same time, you also have some highly visionary, highly capable investment vehicles from the PIF and other funds," he noted.

Furthermore, the burgeoning fintech ecosystem in Saudi Arabia presents fertile ground for collaboration between Hong Kong and the Kingdom.

Fintech companies from Hong Kong are eager to leverage their expertise to enhance banking services and drive digital transformation initiatives in the Kingdom, the executive noted, adding, "In our delegation, we have roughly, I'll say between 10 to a dozen or so fintech companies that are very keen to see if they can bring the business and set up in Saudi Arabia so that they're able to service the banks here."

On the opposite end, recognizing the potential for synergy, banks from Saudi Arabia are contemplating establishing a presence in Hong Kong to bolster their trade and financial services, he said.

This strategic move aims to capitalize on Hong Kong's strategic position as a gateway to the Chinese market, thereby facilitating closer economic ties between Saudi Arabia and China.

"Of course, we would love to see some Saudi companies set up in Hong Kong. In fact, two of the significant meetings we had were with banks, and now these banks are interested in setting up a presence in Hong Kong," the official said.

"This is because of the close trading relationships, and they would like to have a presence in Hong Kong to serve, for example, Chinese customers. This way, they can facilitate services like trade finance and various other services handled by the headquarters in Riyadh," he added.

This comes after a pivotal moment in strengthening the economic ties between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia, marked by the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Invest Hong Kong and the Ministry of Investment of Saudi Arabia last year.

As a result of this agreement, delegates from Hong Kong have been afforded unique insights into Saudi Arabia's macroeconomic landscape, grand vision, and burgeoning investment opportunities, further fueling their enthusiasm for collaboration and investment in the Kingdom.

"Last year, our leader at Invest Hong Kong signed an MoU with MISA. That MoU brought us even closer together. They have been very kind to bring in leaders from different aspects to educate us about your country, from macro-economic data to the grand vision from leaders in both the public and private sectors," he said.

Leung said they also shared insights into projects that have already gained significant traction. "All in all, our delegation was super impressed by the progress made by the country," he concluded.

COLLABORATION

Japan keen to forge partnerships with Saudi Arabia in IT field

Projects like NEOM show the country is moving forward swiftly, says Japanese minister

Nada Hameed Jeddah

Lauding Saudi Arabia's efforts in developing giga-projects and the ongoing digital transformation in the country, a top Japanese official expressed his country's willingness to strengthen collaboration with the Kingdom in the field of information technology.

Speaking to Arab News, Japanese Minister for Digital Transformation Taro Kono described his recent visit to one of the crown jewels of Vision 2030, NEOM, as truly remarkable.

The minister said that he "had the opportunity to fly over the project and witnessing it firsthand was truly remarkable."

Since the launch of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has been in overdrive to diversify its economy away from oil and emerge as a hub of tourism, entertainment, technology, and renewable energy. On its road to transformation, the Kingdom is forging strategic partnerships with its global allies to achieve its target and work on mutually beneficial arrangements.

"I heard a lot about NEOM and The Line, I saw that the progress made was very impressive. And we heard the vision from the CEO. And it's very convincing. So I was very glad that I came to NEOM this time. It was a very short (trip), but I think it was worth it," the minister told Arab News.

NEOM, often referred to as the "city of the future," is a \$500-billion megacity project situated in the northwest region of Saudi Arabia. Encompassing 26,500 sq. km, the project aims to become a global leader in technology, innovation,



Japan has signed a memorandum of cooperation with Saudi Arabia to gain from the Kingdom's IT expertise and boost collaboration in the field. File

and tourism through futuristic urban design and sustainable energy solutions. Talking about Saudi Arabia's demography, the minister said it is "a very young country" where the majority of the people are under the ages of 30-35. "And I see the Kingdom becoming more vibrant. And projects like NEOM" show that the country is moving forward swiftly.

Acknowledging the Kingdom's success in adapting to the latest technologies, particularly related to cybersecurity, Kono praised the country's leadership and its vision. He expressed his eagerness to

forge a partnership with his Saudi counterpart to "learn from the Kingdom's success."

"I think the Kingdom is building up its resilience against any

The Kingdom is building up its resilience against any malicious attacks in cyberspace.

Taro Kono
Japanese minister for digital transformation



malicious attacks in cyberspace. So, I believe it is very ready to take a bold step forward. And I had a meeting with Saudi Minister of Communications and Information Technology Abdullah Al-Swaha and I think there's a lot to learn from the Kingdom," the Japanese minister said, adding that he had instructed his team to get in touch with their Saudi counterparts to learn from their approach.

Kono, however, stressed the need to

develop non-English datasets to train artificial intelligence and proposed collaboration between Japan and Saudi Arabia in this regard. While Japan has historically led in hardware technology, the minister admitted a lag in digital technology investment. Recognizing this gap, he signed a memorandum of cooperation with Al-Swaha to learn from Saudi Arabia's IT advancements.

He said that although Japan excelled in analog technology during the 20th century, admittedly, they have fallen behind in investing in digital technology.

Their discussions reportedly included topics such as E-ID utilization, where Kono hopes to collaborate on developing mutual use cases to propel Japanese progress. He added: "I think the Kingdom and Japan could work together to advance in the of IT software AI, so very much looking forward to that." With shared visions such as Vision 2030 and upcoming events like Expo 2025 in Osaka and Expo 2030 in Riyadh, the two countries have maintained a strong relationship for nearly seven decades.

Kono believes there is immense potential for collaboration between the two countries, particularly in joint projects for Expo 2025 in Osaka and Expo 2030 in Riyadh. "I am looking forward to continue working closely with the Kingdom," he added.

Expo 2025 is scheduled to be held in Osaka, Japan. It will be held for 184 days This will be the third time for the Japanese city to host the event. Earlier Osaka hosted the global event in 1970 and then in 1990. The theme for Expo 2025 is "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," focusing on creating a better future through innovation and sustainability. The expo will provide a platform for countries to share their ideas and solutions to global challenges.

Expo 2030 is scheduled to be held in Riyadh. As the first World Expo to be hosted in the Middle East, it presents an opportunity for the region to showcase its cultural heritage, technological advancements, and vision for the future. The theme for Expo 2030 in Riyadh is "The Era of Change: Together for a Foresighted Tomorrow." It is expected to align with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals of diversifying the economy and promoting innovation.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Saudi Arabia posts budget deficit \$3.3bn in Q1 2024

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's non-oil revenues rose by 9 percent to reach SR11.51 billion (\$29.73 billion) in the first quarter of 2024 as compared to the same period in 2023, the Ministry of Finance said.

In its quarterly budget performance report, the ministry said the Kingdom posted total revenues of SR293.43 billion in the same quarter, while its public spending amounted to SR305.82 billion.

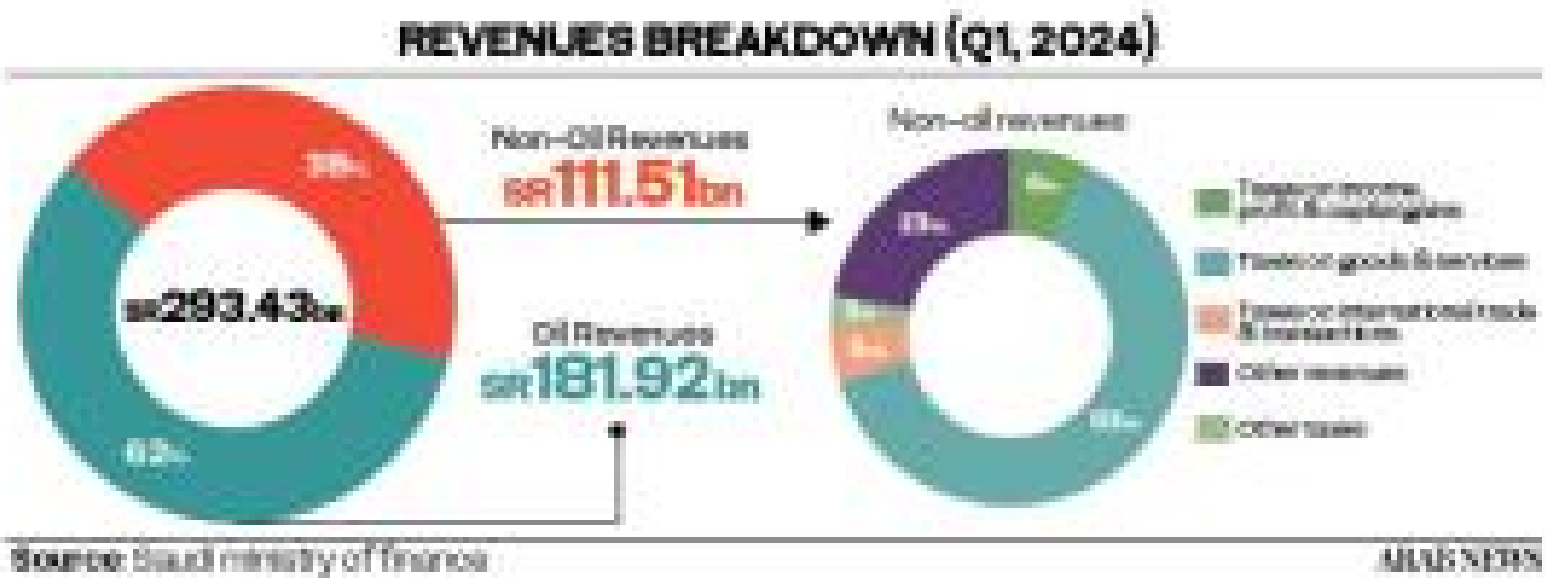
According to official data, total revenues increased 4 percent as compared to Q1 of 2023.

In the first quarter of the current

year, the Kingdom posted a budget deficit of SR12.39 billion with oil revenues reaching SR181.92 billion. The report added that oil revenues rose 1.9 percent as compared to the first quarter of 2023.

Taxes on goods and services amounted to SR69.9 billion up 11 percent compared to the first quarter of 2023, it showed.

Taxes collected from international trade and transactions rose 10 percent to reach SR6.03 billion as compared to Q1 of the previous year. The Kingdom allocated SR26.79 billion for municipal services in the first quarter of 2024, up 157 percent as compared



to the same period in 2023.

The Kingdom's public debt increased to nearly SR1.1 trillion in Q1 2024, from SR1.05 trillion by the end of 2023. The report showed that the Kingdom's spending on the development of economic

resources rose 8 percent to reach SR18.68 billion as compared to the same quarter in 2023.

Spending on public administration reached SR16.52 billion, a rise of 39 percent from Q1 of the previous year. Military spending

in the first quarter of 2024 was recorded at SR58.85 billion, a 16 percent decline from the same period in 2023.

Non-oil PMI

Saudi Arabia's non-oil private sector continued its growth momentum in April, driven by strong demand conditions across domestic markets, as indicated by an economic tracker.

The Kingdom's Purchasing Managers' Index in April remained unchanged at 57 compared to March, signifying a flourishing non-oil economy in the country, according to the Riyadh Bank Saudi

Arabia PMI report by S&P Global.

In February, PMI hit a five-month high of 57.2, while it was 55.4 in January. According to S&P Global, any PMI reading above 50 indicates growth in the non-oil sector, while readings below 50 signal contraction.

David Owen, a senior economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said: "The latest Saudi PMI has sustained a robust figure of 57.0 for the second consecutive month, signifying a flourishing non-oil economy. This uptrend hints at an anticipated spike in the non-oil GDP, likely exceeding the 4.5 percent mark for this year."

STOCKS

Saudi benchmark index rises to close at 12,373

Arab News Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's Tadawul All Share Index rose on Sunday, gaining 20.78 points, or 0.17 percent, to close at 12,373.11.

The total trading turnover of the benchmark index was SR5.26 billion (\$1.4 billion) as 92 of the stocks advanced, while 129 retreated. The Kingdom's parallel market, Nomu, also rose 332.34 points, or 1.26 percent, to close at 26,790.15. This comes as 27 of the stocks advanced, while as many as 31 retreated.

Meanwhile, the MSCI Tadawul Index jumped 4.56 points, or 0.29 percent, to close at 1,551.76.

The best-performing stock of

the day was Zahrat Al Waha for Trading Co. whose share price surged 9.97 percent to SR47.45.

Other top performers include Raydan Food Co. as well as Saudi Cable Co. The worst performer was Gulf Insurance Group whose share price dropped by 9.94 percent to SR34.90.

Other subdued performers included Al-Baha Investment and Development Co. as well as Salama Cooperative Insurance Co.

On the announcements front, Saudi Tadawul Group Holding Co. has announced its interim financial results for the period ending on March 31. According to a Tadawul statement, the company's net profit hit SR201.5 million in the

FASTFACTS

● The total trading turnover of the benchmark index was **SR5.26 billion (\$1.4 billion)** as **92 of the stocks advanced**, while **129 retreated**.

● The Kingdom's parallel market, **Nomu**, also rose **332.34 points**, or **1.26 percent**, to close at **26,790.15**.

first quarter of 2024, reflecting a 121 percent surge when compared to a similar quarter last year.

The increase was mainly driven by a rise in operating revenues, operating expenditures, and earnings per share as

well as a climb in gross profit and operational profit. Moreover, the National Agricultural Development Co. also announced its interim financial results for the first three months of 2024.

A bourse filing revealed that the firm's net profit reached SR101.3 million by the period ending on March 31, up 168 percent in comparison to the corresponding period in 2023.

The increase in net profits is primarily attributed to a rise in revenue, a decrease in the cost of sales, and a reduction in finance costs, among other factors.

Furthermore, Gulf Insurance Group also announced its interim financial results for the first

quarter of the year. According to a Tadawul statement, the company reported a net loss of SR20.2 million, contrasting with a net profit of SR56.6 million in the same period of the previous year.

This loss is primarily attributed to a decrease in insurance revenue combined with adverse movement in reinsurance contracts. Additionally, Saudi Aramco Base Oil Co., also known as Luberef, announced its interim financial results for the period ending on March 31.

A bourse filing revealed that the firm's net profit stood at SR239 million at the end of the first quarter of 2024, reflecting a 46.3 percent drop when compared to the same quarter a year ago.

Business News



A Purchasing Managers' Index reading above 50 indicates growth in the non-oil private sector, while readings below 50 signal contraction. File

ECONOMY

Non-oil sector in Kuwait records steady growth

The country's PMI dipped to 51.5 in April from 53.2 in March

Arab News Riyadh

Non-oil activities in Kuwait demonstrated steady growth in April, buoyed by effective advertising and competitive pricing, supporting the expansion in new orders, an economy tracker revealed.

According to the latest Kuwait Purchasing Managers' Index by S&P Global, the country's PMI dipped to 51.5 in April from 53.2 in March.

A PMI reading above 50 indicates growth in the non-oil private sector, while readings below 50 signal contraction.

The report noted that job creation scaled back for the first time in eight months as companies aimed to minimize costs, while the rate of purchase price inflation was one of the sharpest on record in April.

According to the survey, this reduction in workforce, coupled with a shortage of available raw

materials, led to a buildup of backlogs of work in April.

"The slowdown in growth seen in April is not cause for immediate alarm as Kuwaiti firms were still able to generate solid expansions in new business and output at the start of the second quarter," said Andrew Harker, economics director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

The report mentioned that output prices increased only modestly in April, as companies endeavored to limit price hikes to customers by offering discounts.

Furthermore, input costs also surged sharply in April, driven by a marked rise in purchase prices.

"Growth continued to be predicated, at least in part, on competitive pricing. This put pressure on margins given rapidly increasing input costs, however. In a bid to limit expenses, firms cut back on employment numbers, thereby restricting the extent to which they were able to fulfill orders," said Harker.

He added: "There are clearly risks

HIGHLIGHTS

● Job creation in Kuwait scaled back for the first time in eight months as companies aimed to minimize costs.

● Output prices increased only modestly in April, as Kuwaiti companies endeavored to limit price hikes to customers by offering discounts.

● The rate of purchase price inflation was one of the sharpest on record in April.

that this will prove unsustainable and so companies will be hoping that either cost inflation moderates or that demand strengthens sufficiently to reduce the need for discounting in the months ahead."

UAE's growth

Meanwhile, in another report released last week, S&P Global revealed that the UAE's non-oil private sector maintained robust output growth in April. The

country's PMI reached 55.3, down from 56.9 in March but remained firmly above the 50 mark, indicating expansion. According to the survey, this slowdown was attributed to floods and rains that hit the country in April.

"April data highlighted strong overall growth across the UAE non-oil private sector as buoyant domestic economic conditions helped to support long-term business expansion plans. However, the latest survey signaled a sharp slowdown in new business gains in the wake of heavy rainfall and flooding," said Tim Moore, economics director at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

He added: "Companies operating in Dubai recorded a particularly acute loss of sales momentum as adverse weather disruptions hit business and consumer spending."

S&P Global revealed that backlogs of work increased considerably in April, attributed to temporary business disruptions and heightened pressure on operating capacity.

BizBriefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Import rules

French cosmetic sector eyes Xi, Macron talks

France's cosmetics sector is counting on talks between Xi Jinping and Emmanuel Macron next week to help minimize the impact on French companies of tough new Chinese import rules requiring the sharing of formulas and manufacturing know-how.

President Xi's first visit to Europe in five years comes amid a backdrop of tense trade relations, with the EU threatening China's electric vehicle and green energy industries with tariffs. But progress toward a deal between France and China on the regulation of cosmetics could be a bright spot in discussions in Paris next week.

President Macron's office said ahead of the meeting that cosmetics would be a topic of "great attention," and that they sought to "find a solution that also protects the interests of our companies." **Reuters**

Metal

Argentina mining exports up 4.3% in 2023

Argentina's mining exports grew 4.3 percent in 2023 over the year, driven by lithium, an industry group said, expressing confidence that the country's ample metals and minerals deposits can help lift the economy from a prolonged crisis.

Exports reached \$4.032 billion last year, Roberto Cacciola, president of the Argentine Chamber of Mining Entrepreneurs, said in a meeting with journalists.

Lithium exports grew 20 percent over 2022 despite the collapse of international benchmark prices, while production increased 31 percent, CAEM said. Argentina is the world's fourth-largest producer of the white metal, a critical component in electric vehicle batteries.

A potential macroeconomic stabilization under President Javier Milei has encouraged cautious optimism in the sector. **Reuters**

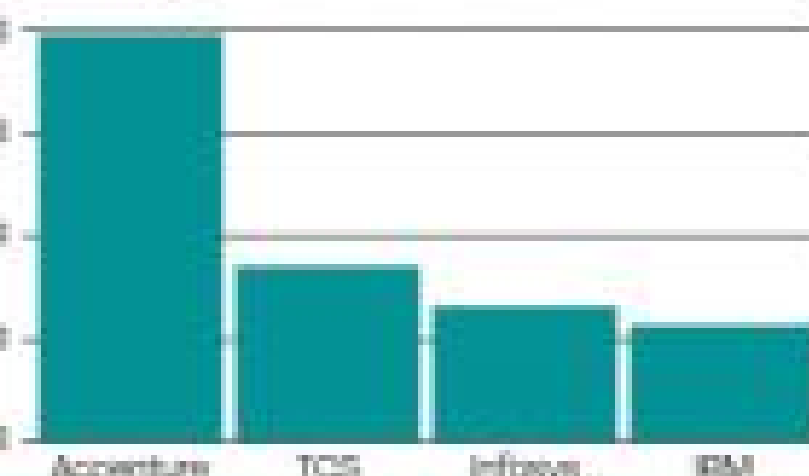
Chart of THE DAY

According to a survey, Accenture emerged as the top IT company by brand value in 2023.

Source: Statista

LEADING IT COMPANIES IN 2023

(By brand value, in billion US dollars)



What We're Reading

FOR THE TRAIN OR ON THE PLANE

Co-Intelligence

ETHAN MOLICK

Consumer artificial intelligence has arrived. And with it, inescapable upheaval as we grapple with what it means for our jobs, lives and the future of humanity. Cutting through the noise of AI evangelists and AI doom-mongers, Wharton professor Ethan Mollick has become

one of the most prominent and provocative explainers of AI, focusing on the practical aspects of how these new tools for thought can transform our world. In "Co-Intelligence," he urges us to engage with AI as co-worker, co-teacher and coach, says a review published on goodreads.com.



Wage growth

Weaker US jobs data brings some relief to Fed

Federal Reserve officials, buffeted in recent months by concerns the economy might again overheat, got relief when jobs data for April showed a marked cooling in wage growth and a pace of hiring in line with levels seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The gain of 175,000 payroll jobs last month was the lowest in more than a year, while the 3.9 percent annual change in average hourly earnings was the smallest since May of 2021 and continued what has been a steady decline towards the mid-3 percent range that policymakers feel is consistent with their 2 percent inflation target.

Fed Gov. Michelle Bowman said after the release of the data that her outlook remained "that inflation will decline further with the policy rate held steady." **Reuters**

Business activity

Canada services PMI climbs to 10-month high

Canada's services sector contracted at a slower pace in April as firms notched some unexpected sales and added workers, but increased wages led to inflation pressures heating up, S&P Global Canada services PMI data showed on Friday.

The headline business activity index rose to 49.3 from 46.4 in March, posting its highest level since June last year.

A reading below 50 indicates contraction in the sector, with the index stuck below that threshold for 11 straight months, the longest such stretch in three years.

"Another fall in activity during April reinforced the general underlying weakness that pervades the Canadian services economy," Paul Smith, economics director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said. "But there was some positivity to be found in the survey data." **Reuters**

AGRICULTURE

UAE's Mubadala Capital plans \$13.5bn investment in Brazil's biofuel sector

Arab News Riyadh

Brazil's biofuel market is set for substantial growth as UAE's Mubadala Capital has committed to invest \$13.5 billion over the next decade.

Oscar Fahlgren, head of Brazil strategy at the sovereign wealth fund, disclosed the budget for the initiative during an interview with the Financial Times. He divulged the details of the fund's plans to produce renewable diesel and sustainable aviation kerosene primarily utilizing non-food plant matter.

In his interview with the newspaper, Fahlgren said Mubadala's Brazilian subsidiary, Acclen, will initiate the development of a large-scale biofuel project by 2026. The fund's executive stated that the funds will be sourced through a blend of

equity and debt over a span of five to 10 years.

The endeavor will encompass five modules, each valued at \$2.7 billion, housing a new biorefinery capable of processing 20,000 barrels of fuel per day. Additionally, it will include the necessary infrastructure and cultivated acreage to sustain the input crop.

"It's all about feedstock (which) in reality is agriculture. And Brazil is probably the best-placed country on the planet when it comes

We're very bullish on the investment climate in Brazil right now and the opportunities we see.

Oscar Fahlgren
Mubadala Capital, head of Brazil strategy



to agricultural proficiency because of the climate and the fertile soil," said Fahlgren, adding, "Brazil is to agriculture what Abu Dhabi is to oil." The project will also include the conversion of an existing oil refinery in the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia acquired from government-owned Petrobras in 2021.

"It's a very important capital project," Fahlgren said. "I see tremendous opportunity to invest in the green energy transition space in Brazil," he added. Mubadala's venture into bioenergy will leverage its existing \$6 billion investments in the country, constituting approximately a quarter of the group's global portfolio.

"We've been very active investing in Brazil, for the

past 10-plus years, in an environment where most foreign investors have been shying away," Fahlgren said.

Mubadala also plans to open a stock exchange in Brazil next year through its Americas Trading Group.

"Brazil is a very large country. It has only one stock exchange. And I think that's suboptimal infrastructure for the players that operate in this segment," said Fahlgren.

"It will probably be a staged launch — perhaps start with equities, then expand. No asset classes are off the table."

The asset management arm of the Emirati sovereign wealth fund is increasing its bets on Latin America's largest economy, where its holdings span metro lines and medical universities to a majority stake in the local owner of the Burger King brand.

Nova Water has become the first Saudi water brand to introduce a water bottle made of 100 percent recycled bottles.



Corporate

PRESS RELEASES FROM THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE

REGIONAL TRAILBLAZER

ArabExpo: A pioneering journey in Middle East's exhibition industry

Established in 2013, ArabExpo has emerged as a trailblazer in the Middle Eastern exhibition industry. Headquartered in Saudi Arabia, the company has since grown into a multi-faceted enterprise, providing a wide range of services to support the region's thriving exhibition landscape.

In its formative years, ArabExpo made a significant mark when it secured the role of official contractor for DMG Events and shortly after for Reed-Sunaidi. These partnerships paved the way for the company's expansion, as it established a dedicated office in Dubai in 2014 to better serve the growing demands of the region.

The year 2016 witnessed a significant milestone for ArabExpo, as it unveiled new production facilities in Dubai. These state-of-the-art facilities enabled the company to enhance its capabilities and deliver high-quality event solutions to its clients. This strategic move solidified ArabExpo's position as a reliable and versatile player in the industry.

In 2017, ArabExpo secured a groundbreaking contract with the Turkish authorities to construct the Türkiye country pavilion. Soon after a similar contract with Germany saw ArabExpo as the main contractor for the German pavilions. These achievements showcased the company's expertise in large-scale project management and demonstrated its ability to collaborate seamlessly with international partners.

The year 2018 marked another pivotal moment in ArabExpo's history, as it was appointed as the official contractor for all shows organized by Informa Markets in Saudi Arabia. This prestigious contract strengthened the company's reputation as a trusted and reliable partner in the region's exhibition industry.



Headquartered in Saudi Arabia, ArabExpo has grown into a multi-faceted enterprise, providing a wide range of services to support the region's thriving exhibition landscape.

The following year saw a significant expansion of ArabExpo's premises in Dubai, Jeddah, and Riyadh. This move allowed the company to accommodate its growing client base and enhance its service offerings, solidifying its position as a dominant player in the Middle Eastern exhibition landscape.

The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 did not deter ArabExpo's momentum. The company was contracted by the Dubai authorities to facilitate vaccination efforts and implement comprehensive COVID-19 safety protocols, demonstrating its

FASTFACT

In 2018, ArabExpo was appointed as the official contractor for all shows organized by Informa Markets in Saudi Arabia, strengthening the company's reputation as a reliable partner in the region's exhibition industry.

adaptability and commitment to supporting the community during unprecedented times. Additionally, ArabExpo was awarded various production and fit-out contracts for Expo 2020 Dubai, further cementing its reputation

as a reliable partner in large-scale event execution.

As the growth in Dubai continued, so did the activities in Saudi Arabia; ArabExpo won a major contract and became the official contractor for the World Defense Show in Riyadh. The excellent planning, partnership and expertise demonstrated by ArabExpo ensures that they remain the exclusive service provider for WDS in the 2024 edition as well.

In 2023, ArabExpo continued its growth trajectory, expanding its offerings in the realm of fit-outs and interior decorations with the launch of "ArabDeco." Furthermore, the company secured a

contract with Sela, the leading venue management company, to provide comprehensive venue services through its innovative "Venue Hive" branch.

As ArabExpo looks to the future, its growth strategy remains firmly focused on developing and supporting the exhibition industry in the Middle East. By leveraging its expertise, innovative solutions, and deep understanding of the region's needs, the company aims to add significant value to Vision 2030, contributing to the transformation of the Saudi capital into a vibrant global hub for trade, investment, and cultural exchange.

Corporate Briefs

THE BEST OF THE BEST

Sustainability Goals

Nova Water launches 100% recycled bottles

Nova Water has become the first Saudi water brand to introduce a water bottle made of 100 percent recycled bottles.

The introduction of the new bottles is in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and the Saudi Green Initiative's goals and sustainability objectives.

Introduced to help safeguard the environment and natural surroundings, the new eco-friendly bottles will play a key role in advancing the Saudi circular economy and lowering CO2 emissions. Featuring distinctive green labeling, bottle caps, and cases, the new sustainable bottles complement Nova Water's existing lineup of water products.

Serdar Seyhanli, CEO of Health Water Bottling Company, the owner of Nova Water products, said: "Nova Water has become the go-to bottled water brand of choice for people and families across the country, and it owes a great deal to the purity of the water we offer. So much so that — for many — Nova has become synonymous with the word 'purity.' This speaks to our focus on quality and the well-being of the people we serve."

Regional Gathering

AMF joins Dubai Fintech Summit as strategic partner

Arab Monetary Fund has joined the Dubai Fintech Summit, organized by Dubai International Financial Centre, as a strategic partner.

Founded in 1977, AMF is a regional Arab organization with 22 member countries. With an objective to strengthen economic, financial, and monetary stability, it promotes economic development in Arab countries.

AMF is hosting the Eleventh Meeting for the Arab Regional Fintech WG on May 5-6, followed by a workshop on Formulation of Effective Suptech Frameworks on May 7. Both events are part of the Dubai Fintech Summit.

The summit, scheduled for May 6-7, at Madinat Jumeirah, will see an unprecedented gathering of more than 8,000 decision-makers, over 300 thought leaders and over 200 exhibitors showcasing cutting-edge technologies.

Empowering Entrepreneurs

Mastercard announces 3rd Women SME Leaders Awards

Mastercard has announced the return of Women SME Leaders Awards for its third edition, shining a spotlight on the remarkable achievements of women-owned and led businesses across Eastern Europe, Middle East, and Africa.

Nominations are now open for the awards, inviting entries from women-owned and operated SMEs with a turnover of less than \$13.6 million and a workforce of six to 50 employees. All women executives or business owners who have their headquarters or offices in EEMEA or offer their services to these markets can submit their nominations by May 20. "Women-owned and led businesses are vital contributors to the global economy, fostering economic growth and stability. By empowering women entrepreneurs and business leaders, we unlock the boundless potential they have and drive inclusive prosperity. The Mastercard Women SME Leaders Awards aim to recognize and celebrate their remarkable contributions," said Amnah Ajmal, executive vice president, market development, EEMEA for Mastercard.

MEDICAL INNOVATION

Saudi hospital offers novel angioplasty procedure

King Fahd Armed Forces Hospital has become the first facility in the Kingdom to begin clinical research and now offer a new type of angioplasty procedure with the DynamX bioadaptor implant, an innovation beyond stents designed to restore vessel function. The bioadaptor is a transforming implant that, after the period of healing, unlocks and allows the artery to pulse and function more naturally in response to a patient's exertion and heart's changing needs. More normal artery motion and expansion help the artery restore its healthy function and reduce the risks of secondary adverse events such as heart attacks or repeat procedures. The new procedure is being offered to patients under the leadership of Dr. Mirvat Alasnag, head of catheterization lab; Dr. Khalid Al-Shaibi, director of cardiac center; and interventional cardiologists Dr. Waqar Ahmed, Dr. Salem Assiri, and Dr. Sultan Al-Otaibi.

"We are pleased to offer bioadaptive angioplasty at King Fahd Armed Forces Hospital to patients suffering from coronary artery disease, and especially for those who are younger and seek to reclaim an active lifestyle," said Dr. Alasnag.

King Fahd Armed Forces Hospital, one of the premier hospitals and clinical research centers, is also participating in the global BIO-RESTORE post-market registry



From left: Dr. Salem Assiri, Dr. Khalid Al-Shaibi, Dr. Mirvat Alasnag, and Dr. Waqar Ahmed.

DECODER

The bioadaptor is a metallic coronary device that is implanted via a minimally invasive angioplasty procedure and is designed to provide dynamic vessel support.

for the bioadaptor to generate diverse, in-market experience, specifically in Saudi patients.

The bioadaptor is a metallic coronary device that is implanted via a minimally invasive angioplasty procedure. It is designed to provide dynamic vessel support and establish adaptive hemodynamic modulation of the artery, enabling vessel function and motion and increased blood flow. It consists of three thin

metal alloy helical strands held together temporarily by a bioabsorbable coating to provide strength when opening artery blockage. Unlike traditional stents, after the period of healing and coating resorption in the first six months, the bioadaptor unlocks and the helical strands separate thereby uncaging the vessel and establishing more natural and dynamic support of artery motion and function.

Bioadaptors can also expand slowly over time along with the artery in order to maintain good blood flow. Recent findings also show stabilization and even shrinking of plaque volume in arteries treated with bioadaptors.

Coronary artery disease is the most common form of heart disease in the world and a leading cause of death.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Kate Fleetwood appointed as Serco's head of operations for western region

Serco has announced the promotion of Kate Fleetwood to the role of head of operations for the western region of Saudi Arabia. The promotion of Fleetwood into this newly created role reaffirms Serco's commitment to supporting the Saudi government and Vision 2030, with a special focus on enhancing the safety and readiness of projects across the western region.

Fleetwood is responsible for overseeing the financial and operational delivery of Serco's contracts on the west coast of Saudi Arabia, including within the Red Sea and NEOM area, where Serco holds a number of contracts supporting the development of the gigacities infrastructure, including providing fire and rescue services at Red Sea International Airport and supporting Red Sea Global's carbon-neutral mobility services.

In her new role, overseeing around 200 staff, Fleetwood and her team have a core objective of bringing Serco's many years of experience and knowledge within the transport and emergency services industry to the rapidly developing region.

Since joining Serco

in October 2022, having previously worked with Rolls-Royce and National Nuclear Laboratory in the UK, Fleetwood has been instrumental in leading multiple large-scale negotiations and mobilizations, swiftly establishing herself as a key contributor to Serco's growth in the Middle East. Additionally, Fleetwood's promotion is also reflective of the progressive efforts of Serco's commitment to fostering female leadership within the operations sector.

"It's a privilege to represent Serco, a company that actively challenges the status quo in promoting the progression of women into operational roles," said Fleetwood. "This advancement paves the way for a new generation of women to shape their own futures in the industry.

As Vision 2030 unfolds, revealing an increased need for adept and experienced partners, our team is dedicated to playing a significant and important role in impacting a better future for the community here in the region, delivering top-tier transport and emergency services across the west coast and ensuring our operations both support and keep pace with the ambitions of the Saudi government."

Kate Fleetwood



COLLABORATIONS

How La Liga is building bridges with KSA and regional partners

Managing Director for Middle East and Africa Maite Ventura speaks to Arab News about recent Futures FC tournament in Riyadh and promoting the Spanish league's brand and its clubs

All Khaded Dubai

On and off the pitch, La Liga's ties with Saudi Arabian football are growing.

At the start of March, the La Liga FC Futures U14 tournament was held at the Mahd Sports Academy in Riyadh and won by Spanish club Villarreal.

The competition had been organized in partnership with the Kingdom's Ministry of Sports and saw 12 teams taking part, including eight EA Sports La Liga teams — Barcelona, Cadiz, Atletico Madrid, Sevilla, Villarreal, Real Betis and Osasuna — as well as AS Roma from Italy, Portugal's SL Benfica, Olympique de Marseille of France and Saudi Arabia's own Mahd Academy.

Just last week, Barcelona-based Espanyol became the latest Spanish club to welcome a delegation of the Saudi Future Falcons program, with the team from the Kingdom beating the La Liga reserve team 3-2 at Dani Jarque Sports City.

There have been several other collaborations and Maite Ventura, La Liga managing director for the Middle East and North Africa, says more projects are set to come to fruition in the coming months and years — all part of La Liga's mission to grow its brand.

"Our goal in the case of Saudi is about understanding that the popularity of La Liga and the popularity of football in Saudi is huge," Ventura told Arab News at La Liga's headquarters in Dubai. "I think more than 80 percent of the population follows football, so we wanted to be there. It's one of the main countries in the region, so for us was very important to be there."

"We not only want to be there with a small project," she added. "We have many different projects there, with the General Entertainment Authority, with the Ministry of Sports, and (recently) we were celebrating FC Futures in Riyadh, which Villarreal won. We want to know the countries in which we have fans of La Liga."

Off the pitch, other ventures include the opening of themed bar and restaurant LaLiga TwentyNine and the world's largest football museum, Legends, both in Riyadh in collaboration with Saudi events company SELA and the GEA.

"So, this is our mission there, it's about connecting with all of the fans, engaging with the main institutions there," said Ventura. "We want to be present there, and we don't want to be there just doing FC Futures, we want to be there for a long time, and we want to be there for our fans."

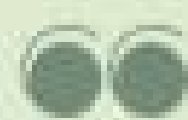
When La Liga's office in Dubai opened in 2014, it became its first ever outside Madrid, with an urgent brief to spread the Spanish league's brand.

"Our president, Javier Tebas, understood that the limit was the population in Spain, so the only way to keep growing was to go beyond our borders."

Dubai was seen as the ideal strategic location from which the operation would be carried out in the rest of the region.

"This is not only the 10-year anniversary of the Dubai office, but (of) the international expansion strategy," said Ventura. "It's been a long journey, but actually working in the MENA region, where football is the No. 1 sport and where La Liga is the most consumed competition, it's a pleasure."

Regionally, Real Madrid and Barcelona have enjoyed huge support for decades in the Middle East, while others like Atletico



We have many different projects, with the Saudi General Entertainment Authority, with the Ministry of Sports.

Madrid, Athletic Bilbao and Valencia have accumulated big followings as well. La Liga's mission is not just to promote its collective brand, but the individual clubs as well among Arabic-speaking audiences.

"We are doing this in different areas" said Ventura. "From a data perspective, we are working with around 12 clubs from La Liga, we are managing their Arabic social media accounts, we are putting weekly content plan for them to be connecting with their own fans."

"The clubs have understood as well that their fans are not only in Spain, in Valencia or Sevilla or Vigo, but they are in Cairo, Dubai or Jeddah," she said. "So, this clicked in their heads, and in the last four to five years, the clubs have changed their strategy to go abroad and to connect with their fans. For us, we started with just three people back in 2013. And, right now, we are almost 20 people working only for the MENA region in eight different countries."

Alongside its strategic projects in Saudi Arabia, La Liga also has representatives working in Qatar, Morocco, Egypt and Iraq.

"Right now we have three people fully based in Baghdad, because we have a very interesting project with the football association there," said Ventura. "In at the end, our way of doing this is always to be on the ground, physically here, understanding who our fans are, how they consume our product, how they like it, and this allows us to understand and to have this market intelligence and to go to the clubs to let them understand how this works."

"Being in Morocco is not the same as being in Dubai or Baghdad, for example. Our mission is basically to increase the brand value and the value of the TV rights to reach other audiences, other profiles, and of course, to generate business opportunity for La Liga and the clubs."

In 2022, La Liga and Dubai-based media



Maite Ventura, La Liga managing director for the Middle East and North Africa, says more projects are set to come to fruition in the coming months and years — all part of La Liga's mission to grow its brand. Below: 'The clubs have understood as well that their fans are not only in Spain, but they are in Cairo, Dubai or Jeddah.' Supplied

HIGHLIGHT

• Off the pitch, other ventures include the opening of themed bar and restaurant LaLiga TwentyNine and the world's largest football museum, Legends, both in Riyadh in collaboration with Saudi events company SELA and the GEA.

multinational Galaxy Racer signed a 15-year joint venture to promote the league's brand in the MENA region and Indian subcontinent.

"We are totally convinced that (for La Liga) to penetrate any market, we need to go hand in hand with a partner. It doesn't matter if it's a local authority, football federation, local league or a club. We are here to

connect with the fans, to connect with the people that like football in each of the countries. So, it's not like we are in Dubai, and we are managing everything from here. In the case of Iraq, we have a strategic agreement with the football association there. We are working with them to transform the local league, the Iraqi Stars League."

The highest number of users from the region registered on La Liga's app comes from Iraq, Ventura revealed, and technology and artificial intelligence are ways through which Spanish clubs will be reaching out to fans, as well as, in the cases of Sevilla and Deportivo Alaves to name two, to gain an advantage in the fields of scouting and recruitment of players.

"We (La Liga) have been working very hard in strengthening the brand of each of the clubs," Ventura said. "Because the clubs are not just depending on their players — if one player leaves, the club has to keep being strong. So, of course, these are very important lessons that we have been working on now over the last 10 years. First it was international strategy, they understood this, and right now for example, they are working a lot in technology, and definitely AI is going to play a key role in La Liga, not only in this region, but worldwide

in the coming years.

"Each of the clubs have their own approach," said Ventura. "Some of them, they have very strong grassroots systems. Some of them are in involving themselves a lot in technology. Each of them are specializing in (ways) to enter into the market. It's not the same from one club to another, and they understood this in the right way."

Ventura expects more partnerships to be signed in 2024 and beyond.

"Last year, it was very important because we partnered with a Galaxy Racer," she said. "In the MENA region, 50 percent of the population is less than 30 years old. We are very focused on connecting with the youngest generations, Millennials and Gen Z population mainly. So, that is why, from this season, we have started to produce a lot of local content. This means that here we are creating content in Arabic for our Arab fans. We have a very strong strategy right now. We just launched the first Arabic podcast from La Liga, it is called 'Vamos La Liga'."

She continued: "We were expecting big numbers, but the feedback has been amazing. We had more than 5 million views on the second episode that was with (renowned journalist) Achraf Ben Ayad."

Ventura says the episode was one of the most consumed pieces of content ever produced by La Liga's global accounts.

"The experience has been amazing, and we will keep increasing the (amount) of local content, and we are working with a lot of content creators. We will have very big names coming to this podcast very soon," she added. "We are very focused on the production of local content, and by that I mean everything will be in Arabic, and with people from the region. So the experience has been great."

"We are also doing documentaries, we are producing other type of programs and everything will be rolled out in the coming months so it's very exciting."

Sport Briefs

THE BEST OF THE REST

Football

PSV Eindhoven crowned Dutch champions

PSV Eindhoven were crowned Dutch champions for the 25th time on Sunday, the club's first title since 2018, in a season also notable for the implosion of rivals Ajax.

Peter Bosz's men made sure of the Eredivisie trophy with two games to spare via a 4-2 win over Sparta Rotterdam in a party atmosphere at a sunny Philips Stadium.

This meant second-placed Feyenoord could no longer catch PSV, who celebrated in front of their jubilant fans at the final whistle. **AFP**

Boxing

Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez retains undisputed title

Saul "Canelo" Alvarez retained his undisputed super-middleweight world title with a convincing unanimous decision over fellow Mexican Jaime Munguia.

Alvarez handed Munguia the first defeat in 44 professional bouts, dropping the 27-year-old challenger in the fourth round and inexorably taking control to improve to 61-2-2 in his storied career.

The judges scored it 117-110, 116-111 and 115-112 for Alvarez, who retained his IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO belts.

Munguia, whose 34 knock-outs included victories inside the distance in four of his previous five fights, came out on the attack against the vastly experienced Alvarez, pushing him back with his jab and rattling the champion in the third round with a right to the jaw. **AFP**



French Open

Sinner to play only if 100 percent fit

Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner said Sunday that he will only compete at the French Open if he is fully fit after being forced to withdraw injured from this week's Italian Open.

Italian world No. 2 Sinner announced that he was dropping out of his home tournament in Rome on Saturday as he failed to recover from a right hip injury which forced him to retire from the Madrid Open last week.

"I will only take part in Roland Garros if I am 100 percent fit," said Sinner at a press conference held in Rome.

"I don't want to go into details (of the injury), we thought initially that it wasn't anything serious but the scans showed that there was something that wasn't right. **AFP**

Follow Arab News Briefs all through the day @ArabNews

Neve Campbell says that Spyglass Media Group upped her pay for 'Scream 7' after she spoke out about pay disparity during salary negotiations for 'Scream 6.' 'I'm really grateful that the studio heard me,' she told People.



Finally

CLOSE UP

Naomi Campbell sparkles in Nicolas Jebran gown

Arab News Dubai

British supermodel Naomi Campbell wowed fellow guests at the wedding of PrettyLittleThing founder Umar Kamani and model Nada Adelle, which took place at the Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc in Antibes, France.

Campbell wore a custom couture gown by Lebanese designer Nicolas Jebran, who took to social media to share the supermodel's ethereal look.

"It is not a catwalk: this is a Naomi-walk with grace & gardens of bliss! The gorgeous beauty queen takes it to the next level! @Naomi, a complete stunner, in a #NicolasJebran custom couture gown as she attended the #kamani-wedding yesterday!" wrote the designer to the stars.

Campbell herself posted three white heart emojis and: "My chosen family! Would not want to be anywhere else than with you on this day, TO WITNESS THIS BEAUTIFUL UNION OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE MR & MRS KAMANI @nadakamani @umarkamani WE LOVE YOU!"

The wedding was also attended by Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Al-Turki, the CEO of the Red Sea Film Festival Foundation. Other celebrity guests included former England international footballer Rio Ferdinand, fashion designer Manish Malhotra, singer Christina Milian, and Ronan and Stormy Keating.

Serenading the couple during the wedding ceremony was renowned Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli, who performed his rendition of "The Prayer," accompanied by a full orchestra, as Adelle walked down the aisle.

Supermodel Campbell enjoys a huge fan base in the Arab world. She has also been romantically involved with individuals from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt.

Late last year, she was among was among the celebrities spotted on the red carpet at the Middle East and North Africa premiere of "The Absence of Eden," on the third day of Jeddah's Red Sea International Film Festival.



"I love what Red Sea has become and that it's growing and growing. And it's really amazing and phenomenal what the team and Mo (Al-Turki) and Jomana (Al-Rashid) have created," said Campbell in a video posted on festival's Instagram page.

Her charitable organization,

Above: Supermodel Naomi Campbell wears Nicolas Jebran custom couture gown at the wedding of Umar Kamani and Nada Adelle in France. Instagram

Inset: Saudi Arabia's Mohammed Al-Turki and Campbell at the Kamani wedding in France. Instagram

Fashion for Relief, also joined forces with Qatar Creates to launch a new global initiative called Emerge. The catwalk star co-hosted a charity gala and fashion show to support creatives and business talents around the world, with a focus on Africa, the diaspora and developing communities.



Adam Driver

COPPOLA FILM

Adam Driver controls time in new role

Arab News Dubai

Adam Driver is an architect who can control time in Francis Ford Coppola's forthcoming film, "Megalopolis."

The film, which will premiere on May 17 at the Cannes Film Festival, is a Roman epic set in an imagined Modern America, according to the pre-publicity.

"The City of New Rome must change, causing conflict between Cesar Catilina, a genius artist who seeks to leap into a utopian, idealistic future, and his opposition, Mayor Franklyn Cicero (Giancarlo Esposito), who remains committed to a regressive status quo, perpetuating greed, special interests and partisan warfare," reads the promotional material.

"Torn between them is socialite Julia Cicero (Nathalie Emmanuel), the mayor's daughter, whose love for Cesar has divided her loyalties, forcing her to discover what she truly believes humanity deserves."

Rounding out the cast of the director's self-funded film are Dustin Hoffman, Laurence Fishburne, Aubrey Plaza, Shia LaBeouf, Jon Voight, Jason Schwartzman, Kathryn Hunter, Grace VanderWaal, Chloe Fineman, James Remar and D.B. Sweeney.

SCI-FI ADVENTURE

'The Maze Runner' set to return

Arab News Dubai

"The Maze Runner" series is on the move again.

20th Century Studios is rebooting the sci-fi action-adventure franchise, which ran as a trilogy from 2014 to 2018.

The Disney arm is in negotiations for Jack Paglen — perhaps best known for writing sci-fi movie "Transcendence," which starred Johnny Depp — to pen the script for a new installment.

Wes Ball, who directed the original trilogy, will also be involved as a producer.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the reboot is not a redo of the story nor is it a direct sequel to the original trilogy, which starred Dylan O'Brien and Kaya Scodelario.

TheSix

Arab weddings

Wedding season is almost upon us — check out these Instagram accounts for inspiration for dresses, décor and everything in-between.



@LebaneseWeddings

With 27 followers on Instagram, @LebaneseWeddings is the go-to account for decadent wedding inspiration from Arab nuptials across the world. From Beirut to Cairo, the account documents weddings in the region as well as destination nuptials in Europe and beyond.



@myperfect_bride

The account documents everything from the dazzling dress, to the first dance and multi-tiered cakes for its 611,000 followers.



@KhaleejiWeddings

The Gulf region is famous for its sumptuous marriage celebrations and this account manages to show them off while respecting cultural norms. The bride's face is rarely shown, but the gowns and elaborate décor are celebrated with stunning imagery.



@Bling.Weddings

From the Maldives to Dubai, this account celebrates couples from across the Middle East and their destination weddings, as well as celebrations in their home countries.



@arabiaweddings

The digital wedding planning platform in the Middle East boasts a website where couples can find and book wedding venues and vendors.



@EgyptianWeddingsOfficial

From shoreline to city, this account documents lavish weddings across Egypt, offering brides-to-be glittering inspiration and information on wedding halls, vendors and more.

INTERVIEW

Floris London's Edward Bodenham on designing scents for the Middle East

Saffiya Ansari Dubai

Established in 1730, British perfume label Floris London is the only perfumer to hold royal warrants in the UK. With a historic client list that includes British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe, the storied label is also particularly interested in the Arab world — besides designing bespoke fragrances for clientele in the region, the brand has released a men's scent that is exclusive to the Middle East.

Having designed custom

fragrances for individuals in the region before, Edward Bodenham, brand director of Floris London, told Arab News that that the perfumery team "noted a trend in warm, comforting, deep fragrances. Definitely, a strong connection to rose, patchouli and precious Cambodian oud oil ... a particular highlight to the forward-thinking taste of these clients is their interest in dynamic notes like cashmere and smoke."

The untrained nose will be able to detect the vast differences in typically European scents and those that are popular across the



Edward Bodenham is the brand director of Floris London. Supplied

Middle East, and Bodenham made further distinctions between British perfumes and those found in mainland Europe.

"The differences between traditionally English or British fragrances and those that are popular in the Gulf is that our classic scents generally tend to be lighter in comparison. I would say that French and Italian fragrances, generally speaking, tend to be more intense though, so more similar to fragrances popular in the Gulf," he said.

With regard to their latest regional offering, Santal Intense,

Bodenham explained that it builds on the same notes found in the Santal Eau de Toilette that was released in the early 2000s.

"When creating the original Santal we wanted to compose a sandalwood-themed fragrance for a new generation. We created a scent with a reassuring fougere theme, but with some modern and unexpected twists, like the inclusion of notes of green grass, black pepper, cardamom, nutmeg and tonka bean," he said, using the term "fougere" that means "fern-like" in French and describes one of the main fragrance families.